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Krzysztof Cichon

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3705-1648>

Institute of History of Art, Faculty of Philosophy and History

University of Lodz

krzysztof.cichon@filhist.uni.lodz.pl

Agnieszka Kuczyńska

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4436-0038>

Institute of Arts Studies, Faculty of Humanities

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

agnieszka.kuczynska@kul.pl

CRISIS AND CREATIVITY: SELECTED EXAMPLES OF THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Abstract: François Jullien returns to the understanding of artistic creativity as a situation of existential crisis. We propose a comparison of the concept of de-coincidence with other notions linking crisis with artistic creativity. In traditional terminology, the notion of crisis was expressed through the category of decisive moment describing an intense change (*kairos*). The kairotic leap appears to be a term that still aptly describes the situation of cognitive disorientation accompanying creation, the brief loss of personal identity and the complete transfer of attention to the artwork. A more recent approach is the psychological theory of positive disintegration proposed by Kazimierz Dąbrowski in the early 1960s. The article attempts to compare various ways of conceptualizing creativity as a crisis based on selected examples.

Keywords: crisis, *kairos*, kairotic leap, de-coincidence, positive disintegration

We suggest juxtaposing the notion of de-coincidence with theories linking crisis and artistic creation. We emphasize the significance of the decisive moment (*Kairos*) as a key concept for understanding creation as an act of spontaneous creativity.

The commonly used phrase “moment of crisis” in relation to creativity emphasizes not the aesthetic, but the existential significance of art – art understood as a realm of activity where, more than in other human actions, what unexpectedly resonates with personal experience, often inexpressible in words, comes to light.

In Jullien’s texts on de-coincidence, the concept of “crisis” does not play a significant role¹. However, in numerous lectures, he often refers to the Chinese term *wei-ji* (*wēiji*), where *wei* means danger and *ji* means opportunity². This Chinese term may correspond to the European concept of crisis, which is often seen as a moment of dangerous turning point that, nevertheless, contains positive potential.

However, it is impossible to imagine the biographical approach to art history without the concept of “crisis”. Entering the phrase “creative slump” into a search engine brings up dozens of tutorials, trainings and blogs. In contemporary culture, “crisis” is an omnipresent concept. Since the 18th century, “crisis” has become, initially in England, a word used to describe a situation of impotence, a conflict preventing the functioning of the state. It often appears as a subtitle of polemical writings in political debate³. By the late 18th century, publications with that title had gained popularity⁴. The political and economic significance of crisis, obvious for late 20th-century culture, is a result of the metaphorical portrayal of the state as an organism or human body in the modern era⁵.

¹ See also: *Making Ambiguity Fertile is the Present Mission of Thought. Karoline Feyertag in Conversation with François Jullien, Paris, 26th May 2015* <https://www.on-dizziness.com/resources-overview/francois-jullien> [16.04.2025].

² “Or on peut proposer une autre approche de la « crise », notamment à partir d’une autre tradition de langue et de pensée, telle la chinoise. En chinois – c’est même devenu aujourd’hui une banalité dans les milieux du management – « crise » se traduit par *wei-ji* : « danger-opportunité ». La crise s’aborde comme un temps de danger à traverser en même temps qu’il peut s’y découvrir une opportunité favorable ; et c’est à décoder cet aspect favorable, qui d’abord peut passer inaperçu, qu’il faut s’attacher, de sorte qu’il puisse prospérer. Aussi le danger vient-il à se renverser dans son contraire. De tragique, le concept se dialectise et devient stratégique.” (as cited in: *Entretiens avec François Jullien, in: Hypotheses*, 21/04/2020; <https://francoisjullien.hypotheses.org/1950>). “*kairos/wei-ji* – “*kairos*” means “the right or opportune moment” in ancient Greek; the Chinese expression “*wēiji*” means “crisis”, Jullien explains the character “*wēi*” as “danger” and “*ji*” as “opportunity” but the graph for “*ji*” itself indicates “quick-witted(ness); resourceful(ness)” and “machine; device.” And the *ji* of *wēiji*, in fact, means “incipient moment; crucial point (when something begins or changes).” (see: <http://pinyin.info>).

³ An example can be the pamphlet by Richard Steele. *The Crisis: Or, a Discourse Representing, From the Most Authentic Records, the Just Causes of the Late Happy Revolution* (1714).

⁴ E.g. Thomas Paine *The American Crisis* (1776-1783) or Robert Owen, *The Crisis* (1832-1834).

⁵ See: G. Frühsorge, *Der politische Körper: zum Begriff des Politischen im 17. Jahrhundert und in den Romanen Christian Weises*, Metzler, Stuttgart 1974.

Earlier, the Latin term *crisis* usually referred to the body, to a sudden weakening or illness. Seneca uses this word to describe the loss of teeth: “(...) nos eandem crisin habere, quia utrique dentes cadunt.” (Seneca, *Ep.* 83, 4)⁶. Augustine mentions crisis as a term “employed by doctors” to describe a turning point, “the transition from sickness to health”. According to Homer (*Iliad*, 1, 309), this word means a verdict or choice, decision (*Odyssey*, 12, 440)⁷.

This oldest meaning is closer to the scope of the concept of a “creative crisis”. It also better fits our thesis about the direct, deep, inseparable connection between the intellectual-cognitive layer in art and the physiological burden imposed on the whole body experiencing the crisis. Despite numerous attempts to completely intellectualise the creative process, initiated by the First Avant-Garde and later pursued systematically by such movements as Conceptualism in the second half of the 20th century, art continues to be an activity that involves the entire organism in an unpredictable way; in other words, all mental and physical dimensions of the person. Unlike many other areas of personal effort and activity that are so consuming they generate an experience of crisis, art – with its diversity that escapes algorithms – is closely observed due to the unpredictability of crisis symptoms recognised in artworks. This is one of the central issues in academic disciplines that declare interest in art and the creative process. The commonly recognised scientific measure of cognitive effectiveness, the ability to construct syntheses based on the analysis of many cases that facilitate quicker and easier observation of symptoms of subsequent crises remains highly problematic in the case of art.

It is not always appropriate to apply the categories of cause and effect to the creative process, especially given its disorientation caused by the transition from everyday linear time to a kairotic leap. The time accompanying creativity, understood as engaging the whole person (both conscious and unconscious elements), traditionally called *kairos* (καῖρός)⁸ (the moment of decision, action), cannot be described as coherent and linear. The intensity of such a moment is felt as beyond the order of everyday time⁹. Similarly, the psyche registers the situation of crisis.

Traditional art history willingly describes the situation preceding the creative act and its effects. Yet, the most important resolutions, strongly apparent in the work, are often left without interpretation, or the focus shifts to

⁶ “(...) per quam transiturum me ab aegritudine ad sanitatem, intercurrente artiore periculo, quasi per accessionem, quam criticam medici vocant, certa praesumebat.” Confesiones, VI, 1; <https://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/latinconf/6.html>

⁷ See *krino, krisis*, in: *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, Verlag von Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1950, vol. 3, pp. 920-955.

⁸ M. Kerkhoff, E. Amelung, *Kairos*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, eds. J. Ritter, K. Gründer, G. Gabriel, vol. 4, Schwabe Verlag, Basel 1971-2007, pp. 667-668.

⁹ Ibid.

describing the work's reception by society. This decisive moment of creation remains as elusive as the Greek personification of fate – *Kairos*. The sparse ancient iconography of *Kairos*¹⁰ shows him with a lush tuft or a long lock of hair (Ion of Chios, after Pausanias V, 14, 9). This detail bears the trace of intuition that, in a literal and sensual way – *per manum* – the right moment, the perfect measure in harmony with the cosmos can be seized only when one encounters *Kairos* along their path (Figure 1). In the mythical plane, *Kairos* is a boy who passes us by on the road, whose long lock of hair we can grasp. The motif of capturing, with precision, the *Wholeness* of the work or “what is essential” recurs in countless discourses on art. The motif of agency associated with the hand, understood as the harmony of action and meaning, later found continuation in the medieval formula guaranteeing the authenticity of the document in relation to the actual state of affairs: *datum per manus, transivit per manus*¹¹. Seemingly, this domain bears no apparent relation to art. Nevertheless, the anticipation that art fulfils a comparable function, namely authenticates and reveals reality, persists as one of the most resilient notions concerning “good” art. Traditionally, the expectation of the *accuracy* of art is accompanied by the belief, established by the Pythagorean school, that *Kairos* is a force capable of capturing proper rhythm aligned with the universe¹². This parallelism between the tradition of natural philosophy focused on numerical order and art becomes more evident once we recognise the persistent importance of accurate proportions in art, regardless of the era it comes from. Jullien's concept of de-coincidence, depicting a situation where the artist abandons intentions and opens up to chance, corresponds to the mythological characterisation of *Kairos*.

A significant problem concerns the change, or transformation occurring throughout the process of art creation, which modifies the consciousness of both the creator and the observer. We wish to emphasize the relationship between what we recognise as art – whether by convention or through our own spontaneous perception – and the classical Latin verb *trans-scendere*, denoting a transition, a crossing beyond what has been so far, as clear as a boundary or a gate. The abstract category of transcendence has always been associated with art, as well as with religion and magic¹³. Among the most common convict-

¹⁰ See P. Moreno, *Kairos*, in: *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)*, vol. 5, Artemis & Winkler Verlag Zürich, München/Düsseldorf 1990, pp. 920-926.

¹¹ See: A. Adamska, *Formuła transivit per manus...*, “Archiwa, Biblioteki, Archiwa i Muzea Kościelne” 1960, vol. 65, pp. 393-400.

¹² See: Arystoteles, *Metaphysics*, 985 b 27. <https://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.7.vii.html>.

¹³ As cited in: E. Agazzi, *Granice wiedzy naukowej a hipoteza transcendencji*, “Zagadnienia Filozoficzne w Nauce” 1992, vol. 14, pp. 5-6.

ions regarding art is the idea that it takes us “beyond”¹⁴. So far “beyond” that no other frameworks that describe and systematise reality reach that place. It adequately explains such frequent associations of art and crisis. The state of crisis/dis-orientation is very difficult to distinguish from the moment of noticing a new path that leads deeper, offering new perspectives.

We wish not to confine our argument solely to words. Considering remarks on experiencing art as a pathway beyond language and explicit sign notation, we want to highlight images as arguments that allow a better (deeper) recognition of the scope and meaning of the concept of “crisis” in relation to art. The well-known series of works by Andrzej Wróblewski featuring bus drivers depicts a situation where someone gazing toward an enigmatic horizon moves further (or perhaps deeper?) – the choice of words depends on whether the horizon is perceived as external or internal (Figure 2). The issue of finding good proportions between these two realms of human existence was a subject of interest for the Polish psychologist Kazimierz Dąbrowski (1902–1980). Inspired by Wróblewski’s drivers, we will explore the work of this key figure in humanistic psychology and psychiatry¹⁵: “Let us now address the issue of exceeding one’s own psychological type. Is such transcendence even possible? We believe that not only is it possible, but it is indeed an indispensable developmental imperative: the essential requirement of psychological one-sidedness and transcending the limitations of life attitudes. This mechanism facilitates genuine understanding oneself and others, forming the basis for both interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary reasoning. A rigid type, a non-developing type, incapable even of partially transcending certain psychological traits, will proceed automatically, schematically”¹⁶. We quote Dąbrowski to highlight the closeness between psychological terminology and the concept of transcendence/transmutation describing the creative process and the functioning of art. The rigid type – could these be the drivers depicted by Wróblewski (Figure 3)? There is a haunting harmony between the words used by the psychologist and the figures depicted in the

¹⁴ In medieval Latin, the word “transcendentalia” was used as a *nomen defectivum* (*plurale tantum*). In its adjectival form – “transcendental” – it signifies the universal qualities of beings, which alongside cause, constitute the aim of metaphysical cognition. The term *enstanscendens* (“transcendent”) was probably first used by St. Augustine in *De civitate Dei* (VIII 6); it also appears in Boethius’s *De consolazione philosophiae* (c. V). According to both authors, it denotes a being that radically differs from others, reaching beyond earthly reality. The notion of a transcendent being was understood as God or an entity surpassing the usual categories of being. A. Maryniarczyk, *Transcendentalia w perspektywie historycznej (od arche do antytranscendentaliów)*, “Roczniki Filozoficzne” 1995, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 139-164.

¹⁵ For more on Dąbrowski see, i.a., J. Mikołajczyk, *Rozwój w trudzie egzystencji. Aksjologiczno-egzystencjalne aspekty Teorii Dezintegracji Pozytywnej Kazimierza Dąbrowskiego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UPJPII, Kraków 2012.

¹⁶ K. Dąbrowski, *Dezintegracja pozytywna*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 2021, p. 102.

paintings¹⁷. When looking toward the horizons toward which Wróblewski's buses are heading, it is worth returning to Jullien's remarks on transformation. Nonetheless, within this context, it is apparent that the philosopher does not address the problem of movement and stillness at the individual level. He limits his focus to comparative descriptions of entire cultures and the perspective of the "whole bus". This is a critical drawback that complicates employing the concept of de-coincidence to European art. What remains crucial for European culture is Maffesoli's conviction that "... all groups are founded, in the simplest sense of the word, on the transcendence of the individual. This is what drives me to speak of *immanent transcendence*, which both surpasses individuals and springs from the continuity of the group. This is a mystical interpretation which can perhaps be compared to that other kind of mysticism contained within a number of psychoanalytical traditions. For example, one could cite the case of Groddeck, whose vitalist roots are well known"¹⁸.

Commenting on contradictions and inconsistencies in Western philosophy, François Jullien emphasizes the role of the moment. "The difficulty in thinking about transformation lies in the fact that it requires processual and anticipatory/ future-oriented thinking, which prompts us to pinpoint exactly the moment at which our (European) mode of thought errs. This difficulty stems from the essence of transformation residing at the very centre of transition (*la transition*). It means that I can organize the term "transformation" by relating it to the term "transition", developing it in such a way as to best capture the trans in "trans-formation": the "transition", if I may put it that way, allows reaching the next "form" – *trans form*. Yet, precisely because transformation is not a "being", the transition escapes our thought. At this very moment, our thought halts, having nothing more to say; it falls silent, and thus transformation is soundless. By reducing transition to silence/soundlessness, a literal rupture emerges in European thought. Evidence of this can be found in what Plato says – or rather, what he does not say – regarding the One principle in *Parmenides*, when he asks: how can one pass from non-being to being or from immobility to mobility?"¹⁹ Jullien aptly identifies a fundamental aporia in European intellectual tradition: the transition "from non-being to being, or from immobility to movement", as a "flaw of Platonic thought, confined merely

¹⁷ The issue of cultural context lies beyond the scope of this article. Around 1948–49, Wróblewski painted the interiors of a bus moving towards various horizons. In the new postwar political reality, the relationship was being established between individual freedom and the state's legal authority to enforce a singular, all-encompassing perspective.

¹⁸ M. Maffesoli, *Czas plemion. Schyłek indywidualizmu w społeczeństwach ponowoczesnych*, transl. M. Bucholc, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2008, p. 112.

¹⁹ F. Jullien, *Ponownie otworzyć możliwości: de-koïncydencja i kolejne życie*, ed. and transl. E. Marynowicz-Hetka, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2024, pp. 74–75.

to the realm of symptoms”²⁰. Jullien does not limit himself to criticizing “Plato immersed in his theory of participation in Forms-Ideas”²¹. He finds the same difficulty in addressing the problem of the “>between< the transition from one state to another versus their mutual permeation”²² in Aristotle, and draws the following conclusion: “Both Aristotle and Plato feared the formlessness of the term >transition< and the disappearance of the concept of essence-form, which simultaneously was their *logos*, discourse-reason, concept of cognition (...)”²³. Decades before Jullien’s reflections, Wróblewski had embodied comparable problems in visual form.

Juxtaposition of the subsequent versions of Wróblewski’s *Drivers* (Figure 4) reveals the same problem of transition, which several decades later interested Jullien: „from non-being to being, or from immobility to movement”.

We suggest focusing on psychological experience – the distinct sense of otherness at the moment of contact with an artwork or act – while avoiding the polemics surrounding transcendence and the conflicts of dogmatic materialism with dogmatic religiosity²⁴. Following the old counsel of Karl Jaspers, who, in reflecting on “generalizing consciousness”, noted that we are unable to separate the condition of our own consciousness from “transcendence as reality” in the absence of the possibility of empirical verification²⁵.

Since, with respect to transcendence and transcendental movement, precision quickly leads to paradox, we will content ourselves with general formulations. In contemporary typologies, transcendence reveals itself most clearly through relationships. “If the boundary is understood as the limit of my subjectivity, then transcendence – with respect to my subjectivity – can be considered any other individual, the world of material objects, or even society. However, if the boundary is interpreted as the world of material objects, transcendence – with respect to this limit – will be a reality beyond the world or beyond sensory experience. We should also note the widespread tendency, despite the risk of cognitive paradox, to construct hierarchies of boundaries transcended by the transcendent movement. In the transcendent relation of a human being to the world, the number of >levels< of reality (spheres, domains, fragments and moments) is practically unlimited”²⁶.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 76.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., p. 77.

²⁴ See: K. Jaspers, *Filozofia*, vol. III, *Metafizyka*, transl. M. Żelazny, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, Toruń 2020, pp. 18-21.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ As cited in: W. Pilch, *Filozoficzne poziomy relacji człowieka: zmysły, metafizyka, transcendentja*, in: *Człowiek i relacyjność. Ujęcie socjologiczno-filozoficzne*, eds. K. Ciula-Urbanek, M. Jabłoński, B. Koperski, B. Piotrowski, Wydawnictwo Novum, Krosno-Kraków 2015, p. 93.

The unpredictability of art seems synonymous with Jullien's often-described concept of sense of liberation from conformity to previous patterns of conduct, which is the starting point for initiating independent activity. Jullien highlights the bond between this state and freedom – absolute freedom disregarding the “realities”. Among various similar observations, the most significant ones emerge at the intersection of classical metaphysics and existentialism, understood as both a philosophical current and a life attitude. A common feature among various existentialist schools is the acute awareness of pre-reflective actions that precede systematic cognitive effort. Such an attitude is also characteristic of certain artistic movements, such as actionism and performance, in which spontaneous activity assumes a central role (Figure 5), the action during which the entire attention of the acting subject is absorbed by an object external to their consciousness. Only after a moment, through a separate act of reflection, does awareness of the action arise. This artistic activity is described systematically as a cognitive act revealing novel coincidences of meanings and senses. In the first moment, a moment of disorientation and spontaneity, the object of action appears to the actor as a simple “presence” reflecting reality. As a result, an existential judgement is formed and articulated (not always through language or words). Art is attributed exceptional worth due to its capacity to construct situations or sensations of immediate contact with reality. This contact remains free from entanglement in sequences of subsequent meanings, which appear moments later, diminishing the primal sense of incomprehensible intensity.

The intensity, frequently overpowering at the point of contact with art or during the creative act itself, more often increases unrest than provides reassurance. It partly explains the criticism of art as irrational or absurd (Figure 6). These feelings and dilemmas, seemingly tied only to the present, can already be seen in the mythological iconography of the personification of Kairos. The contemporary abstract-logical *absurdity* corresponds to the Latin equivalent of the Greek term *atopos*. *Atopos* can be most straightforwardly understood as “non-place”. It is something that offers no support, no stability needed to complete a thought or form a judgement. *Atopos* causes disorientation²⁷. *Atopos* is the source of crisis for reason accustomed to continuous and modular metrics of space and time characteristic of Enlightenment thinking. *Atopos/absurdity* forces a kairotic leap – an instant act whose purpose is not understandable at the moment of execution. Elusive Kairos with a long lock of hair effectively escapes everyone by virtue of his rapidity. This power is depicted by winged

²⁷ For more on the concept of “non-place” (*non-lieu*), see: M. Augé, *Nie-miejsca. Wprowadzenie do antropologii hipernowoczesności*, transl. R. Chymkowski, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2010.

feet, often placed upon spinning wheels. Uncertainty, instability and absurdity are the characteristics associated with contemporary art that manifests crisis. Figure 7 juxtaposes two ancient examples underscoring the staggering speed of Kairos. The remaining three illustration elements are contemporary examples: Performance *Rest Energy* from 1980²⁸, fragments of Wróblewski's paintings: *Liquidation of the Ghetto* painted on the reverse of *Blue Driver* (1949) and *Execution VIII* (1949). In both paintings, Wróblewski accentuates the motif of feet that provide no support, feet already rendered useless. This constitutes a clear manifestation of existential absurdity and simultaneously a crisis climax. *Absurdity/atopos* depicted in the historical experience by Wróblewski (Figure 8) exerts a stronger impact than the intellectual-logical absurdity in Escher's moment of self-referential creation. It represents a straightforward expression of the absurdity of a reality dominated by violence.

Within the context of art, the relation between freedom and truth holds great importance. The meaning of art emerges when we acknowledge that the act of perceiving something external to ourselves – so vivid and engaging that it temporarily marginalizes our own being – precedes any judgement of truth. Immediate pronouncement of existence is infallible, as affirmation presupposes the presence or sensation of the object.

Truth, articulated in predicative judgments, constitutes the basis for differentiating real states from unreal ones. The primordial moment of art's arising, an act akin to an existential judgement, places the artist in a position that anticipates conventional, argumentative truth. Thus, art can disregard the sense of truth that prevails in other areas of life or culture. This is a moment of manifesting freedom, again – reminiscent of Jullien's notion of liberation from the requirement of conformity²⁹.

The aspect of precedence of what is disclosed through art compared to conventional, defined truth constitutes a condition that is challenging to differentiate from the experience of an abrupt crisis. Art frequently causes disorientation, alters axiology, highlights alternative configurations of value hierarchies and, above all, their plurality.

In the classical conception, crisis is primarily identified with resolution, taking of a decision³⁰. The Greek term *κρίσις* (derived from *κρίνω* – to separate, select, judge, decide, and indirectly from *κρίνομαι* – to measure oneself,

²⁸ <https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/243/3120> [28.05.2025].

²⁹ "(...) this adequacy does not allow doubt, suspension of that conformity, immobilizes, and does not favour self-transcendence (...) as a result, a blockage occurs." (p. 148); Jullien references the concept of adequacy, as well as the release from adequacy. This resonates with the classical Thomistic definition of truth, *veritas est adequatio rei et intellectus*.

³⁰ This word is used by Parmenides in the context of a decision and a defining moment, *PARMENIDES*, VS B 18, 15.

contend, fight) initially signified quarrel or dispute, subsequently also the decision resolving the conflict and the judgement or evaluation³¹. According to Aristotle, the words *κρίσις* and *ἀρχή* describe two activities belonging to a rightful citizen of the polis: judging and ruling³². Within the political framework, it remains accepted that these two functions ought to be distinct – one cannot judge oneself. The specificity of art, however, lies in the artist's simultaneous enactment of both functions at the moment of creation³³. This aspect underlies the ancient reproach that art may represent pure arbitrariness.

Given our interest in crisis as a state of temporary disorientation toward the new and incomprehensible, one cannot overlook Karl Jaspers' reflections on the connections between "collapse" and ciphers.

"One cannot know why the world exists; perhaps it could be experienced in the collapse, but then it cannot be *expressed*. In being here, due to the scope of collapse, the whole language falls silent when turned toward being. Only silence is possible in the face of the silence of being here." Since language falls silent before collapse and creation is a crisis/re-solution, let us move immediately from words to images. It is difficult to find a more brutal exemplification of Jaspers' observation about the impossibility of *expressing* the experience of collapse than involuntarily clenched lips, painted repeatedly by Wróblewski just moments before death (*Execution VIII*, 1949). In the most frequently reproduced painting from the entire Execution series, *Execution VIII* ("surrealist"), Wróblewski depicted the victim's lips with a single simple line. At the level of reflexive perception, clenched lips are associated with tightly clenched hands. These are purely physiological symptoms of crisis, collapse, which can no longer be narrated (Figure 9, Figure 10).

Noticing and *re-cognizing* such relationships that eliminate the distance between seemingly distant worlds triggers a cognitive crisis. Rather than one linear chronological sequence anchored by spatial context, at least two perspectives arise abruptly: the first one enumerates temporal and spatial coordinates, while the second one, in which emotions (the experience of collapse, crisis) cause two points of the first perspective to appear as one and the same moment. Such a cognitive crisis introduces a symbolic order. In the kairotic approach relevant to us, emphasizing the connection between crisis and the moment of time, an image that displays symptoms of strong, uncontrolled emotions forces a departure from Newton's concept of absolute time. The existential collapse that cannot be "expressed" (Figure 10) weakens the conviction that time

³¹ *Krise*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter, K. Gründer, G. Gabriel, vol. 4, Schwabe Verlag, Basel 1974, p. 1235.

³² Aristotle, *Politics*, 1275 a; see: 1253 a. 1326 b.

³³ Separation of creation (*arche*) and the evaluation of this act (*krisis*) is, similarly to the political order, the basis for distinguishing and complementing art and, for example, art history.

is an infinite “continuum”, continuously flowing and unchanging, an absolute existence independent of matter’s movement and human perception, flowing uniformly and independently of anything outside itself”³⁴.

From a psychological perspective, the disorienting intellectual overlay or identification of different spatial or temporal indices is usually connected with strong emotional engagement³⁵. Even from a dispassionate, scientific semiotic perspective, it is quite evident that symbols which do not evoke “living” emotions are weak and ineffective symbols. What Jaspers calls “ciphers” and connects with the experience of “collapse” appears to be an earlier, more analytical attempt than Jullien’s *de-coincidence* to describe the cognitive engagement in encountering something so strange and unnatural that it demands a sudden “transcendence” of one’s usual mode of reacting to novelty. This situation (collapse, crisis) characterizes the encounter with art, with creativity – both one’s own and that of others. Jaspers’ remarks show that even without referring to Chinese tradition, the situation of momentary disorientation holds a positive aspect within European culture. According to Dąbrowski, emphasizing the role of “positive interactions” “among the three higher forms of increased excitability, namely: the affectionate, imaginative and intellectual (...) provides great developmental benefits. We know that the combination of the three higher forms creates ideal conditions for development, uniting the richness of higher feelings, imagination and fantasy with a high level of intellectual activity”³⁶. These remarks were made in a culture radically different from today’s one, dominated by the compulsion or reflex of immediate “communication” through technology and the concept of a global network. Nevertheless, Dąbrowski’s description still seems accurate in relation to most situations in which we currently (whether involuntarily or consciously) participate.

In summary, drawing attention to the kinship between creativity and crisis allows for a better understanding of the role art plays in culture. Art is capable of accurately capturing the kairotic leap – the brief moment in which individual experience ceases to align with the continuum of universal reason: objective, and always expressible clearly in language. Such crises also help build an equally important sense of continuum (the idea) of personal freedom that goes beyond the safe and comfortable horizon of perceiving oneself as *animal rationale*/ζῷον λόγικον.

³⁴ S. Mazierski, S. Zięba, *Czas*, in: *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, vol. 2, Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, Lublin 2001, p. 350. The inadequacy of images and the concept of time understood as a physical continuum is one reason for the persistent discrepancy between the chronologically ordered history and the history of art, which tries to signal kairotic discontinuities experienced under the influence of images (both painted and mental).

³⁵ For Dąbrowski, this is an issue of transcending one’s own psychological type.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

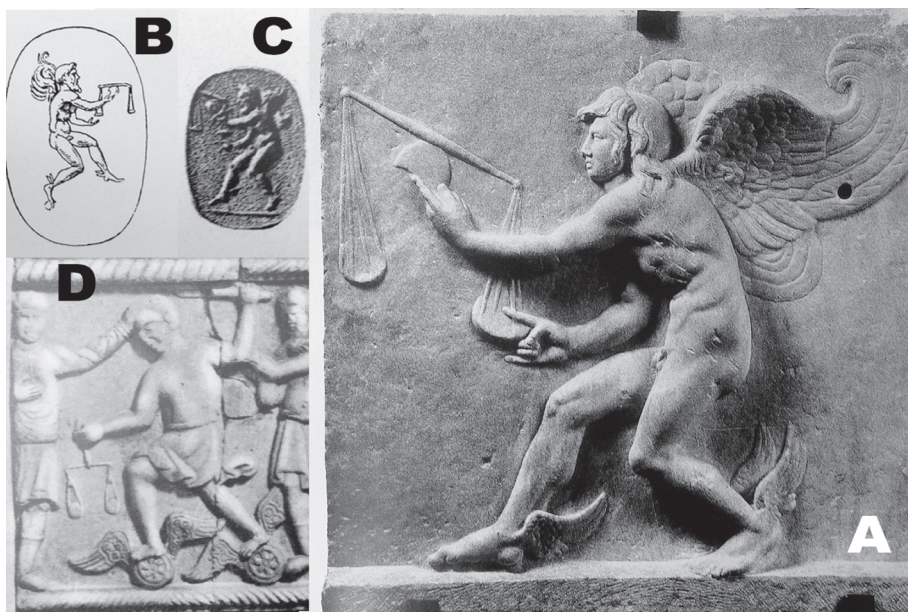


Fig. 1. Kairos and Creativity. Elusiveness and effective agency (*per manum*) makes Kairos and art similar.

A. Kairos, relief, marble, Roman work after the original by Lysippos ca. 350-330 BCE, Turin, Museum of Antiquities

B. gemma, London British Museum, no. 1772, Coll. Louis, Duc de Blacas

C. gemma, London British Museum, no. 1771, Coll. Louis, Duc de Blacas

D. Kairos, relief, marble, Torcello Cathedral, XI C.



Fig. 2. Movement, transcendence and the abyss/depth of creativity.

- A. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Szofer autobusu*, gouache, undated, National Museum in Krakow
- B. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Szofer*, 1957, National Museum in Warsaw
- C. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Szofer z zimowym pejzażem*, 1957, watercolor, gouache, National Museum in Warsaw
- D. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Szofer z czerwonym niebem*, undated, National Museum in Krakow
- E. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Szofer (Szofer niebieski)*, 1948, oil on canvas, priv. collection



Fig. 3. The rigid type and crossing certain psychological features/horizons.

- A. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Szofer autobusu*, undated, gouache, National Museum in Krakow, fragment.
- B. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Szofer z czerwonym niebem*, undated, National Museum in Krakow, fragment.
- C. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Szofer niebieski*, 1948, oil on canvas, priv. collection, fragment

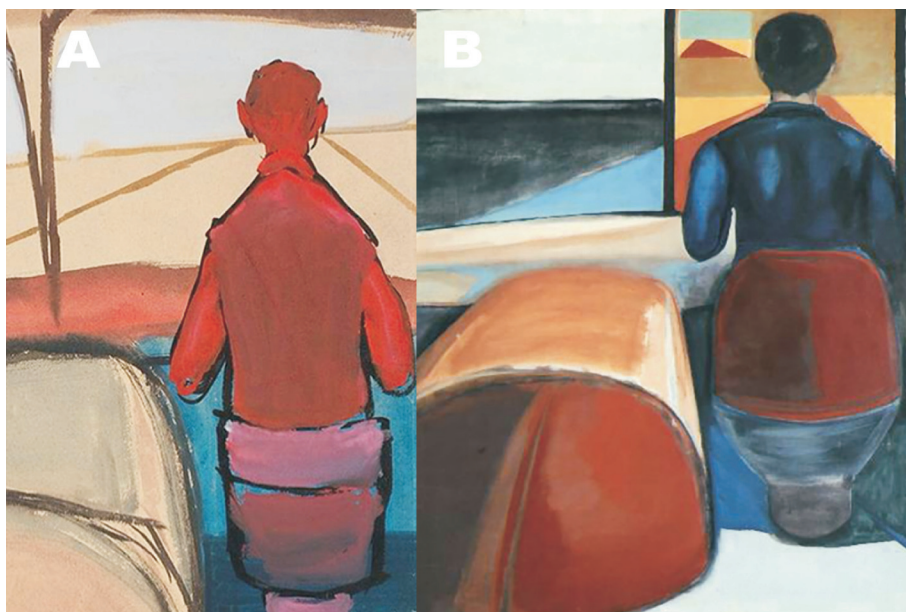


Fig. 4. “best capture the trans in “trans-formation”: the “transition” (p. 6)

A. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Szofer z zimowym pejzażem*, 1957, watercolor, gouache on paper, National Museum in Warsaw.

B. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Szofer*, 1957, National Museum in Warsaw

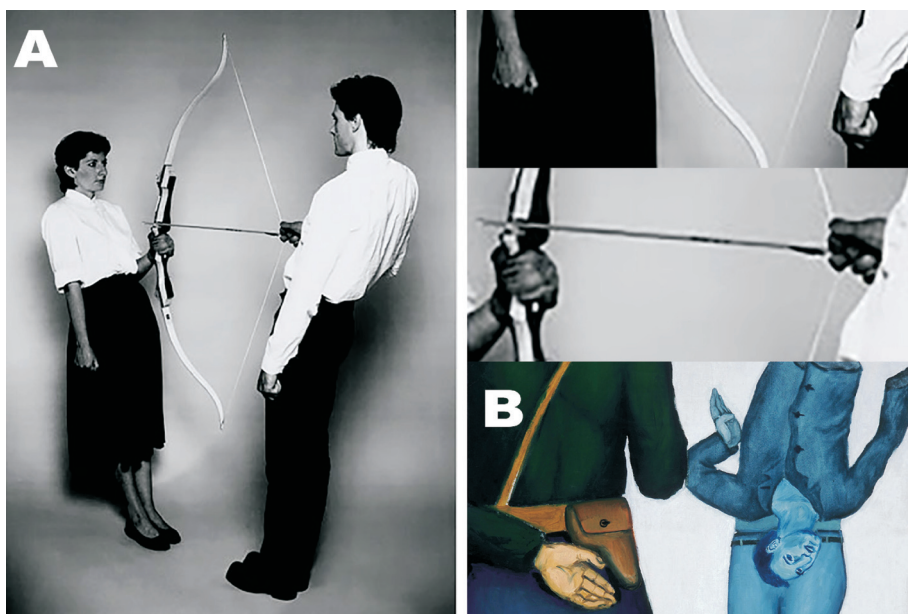


Fig. 5. Performance, pre-reflective actions

A. Marina Abramović & Ulay, *Rest Energy*, performance, 1980.

B. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Rozstrzelanie z gestapowcem (Rozstrzelanie VI)*, oil on canvas, 1949, priv. collection

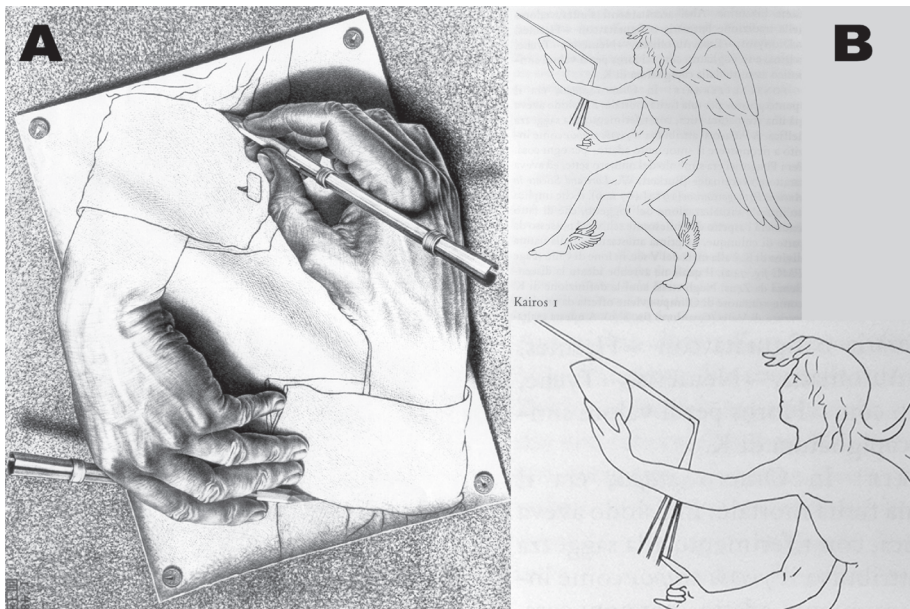


Fig. 6. Intensity (depth, new dimension), absurdity of creation, paradox of art = kairotic leap

A. Maurits Cornelis Escher, *Drawing Hands*, 1948, lithograph.

B. *Kairos calibrating the scale*

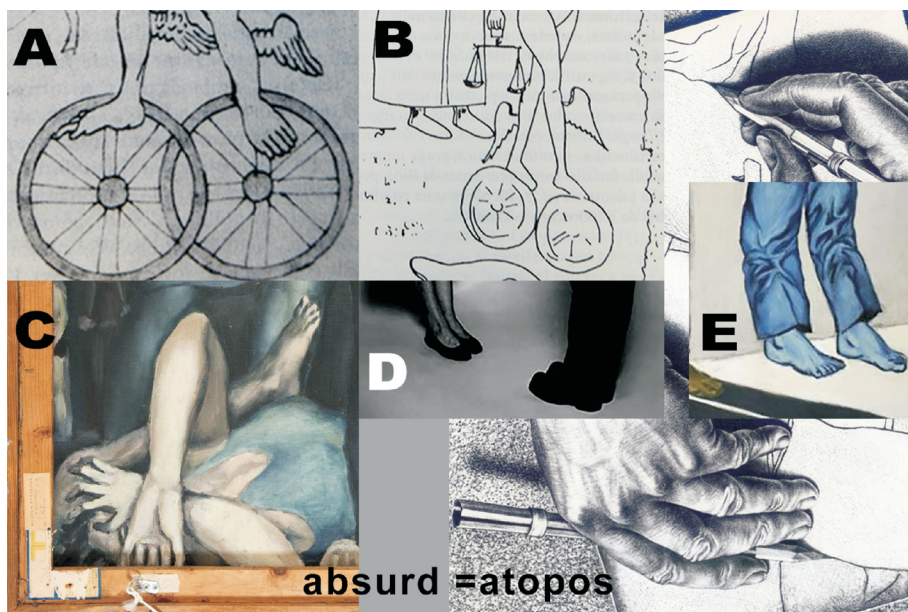


Fig. 7. *Atopos*/absurdity forces, kairotic leap – immediate, risky action

- A. *Kairos's feet on wheels*, fragment of an illustration from codex H.16 n° 671, folio 48, 1602, Athos, Monastery of Great Lavra.
- B. *Kairos's feet on wheels*, fragment of the painting from the church Panagia Krina, Chios, 1734.
- C. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Likwidacja getta* (reverse of the painting *Niebieski szofer*), 1949, fragment.
- D. feet of Marina Abramowicz and Ulay during the performance *Rest Energy*, 1980.
- E. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Rozstrzelanie VIII*, 1949, oil on canvas, National Museum in Warsaw, fragment

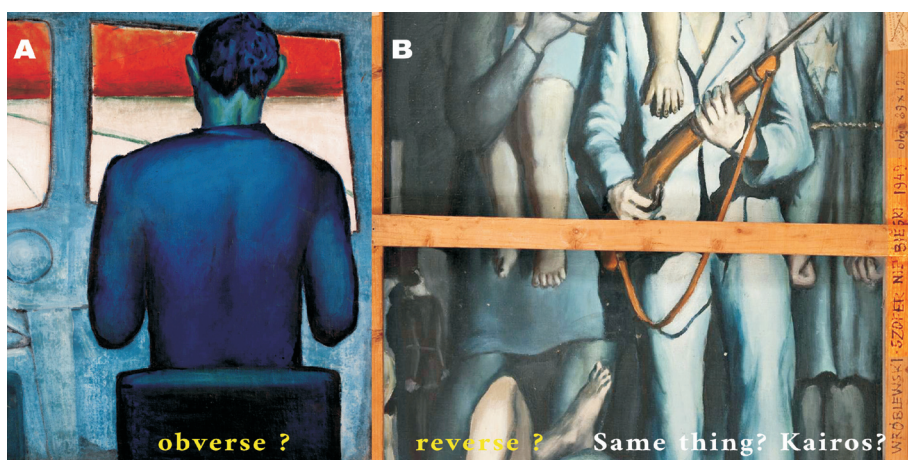


Fig 8. Obverse/reverse. Trauma as a moment of crisis. The memory of a kairotic leap.

A. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Niebieski szofer*, 1948.

B. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Likwidacja getta* (reverse of the painting *Niebieski szofer*), 1949



Fig. 9. Clenched hands

- A. Andrzej Wróblewski, sketch for *Rozstrzelanie*, 1949, gouache on paper.
- B. Photograph of a street execution in Bydgoszcz, 8th or 9th of September 1939, author unknown.
- C. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Rozstrzelanie II* (poznańskie), oil on canvas, 1949, National Museum in Krakow, fragment.
- D. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Rozstrzelanie VIII*, 1949, oil on canvas, National Museum in Warsaw, fragment



Fig. 10. Clenched lips.

A. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Rozstrzelanie VIII*, 1949, oil on canvas, National Museum in Warsaw, fragment.

B. Andrzej Wróblewski, sketch for *Rozstrzelanie*, 1949, gouache on paper, fragment

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KRYZYS I TWÓRCZOŚĆ: WYBRANE PRZYKŁADY UJĘĆ TEORETYCZNYCH (streszczenie)

François Jullien powraca do sposobu rozumienia twórczości artystycznej jako sytuacji kryzysu egzystencjalnego. Proponujemy zestawienie pojęcia de-koincydencji z innymi pojęciami łączącymi kryzys z twórczością artystyczną. W tradycyjnej terminologii pojęcie kryzysu było wyrażane przez kategorię czasu krótkotrwałego, opisującego intensywną zmianę (kairos). Skok kairotyczny wydaje się terminem nadal dobrze opisującym sytuację dezorientacji poznawczej towarzyszącej kreacji, chwilowego zatracenia własnej osobowości, przeniesienia całej uwagi na dzieło. Nowszym ujęciem jest zaproponowana na początku lat 60. psychologiczna teoria dezintegracji pozytywnej Kazimierza Dąbrowskiego. Artykuł będzie próbą zestawienia różnych sposobów konceptualizacji twórczości jako kryzysu w oparciu o wybrane przykłady.

Słowa kluczowe: kryzys, kairos, dekoincydencja, dezintegracja pozytywna

Agnieszka Kuczyńska, PhD, works at the Catholic University of Lublin. Current interests: existential semiotics and cultural psychology, artists' books, post-war surrealism.

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Krzysztof Cichoń, PhD; education: 1985-9: Art History at the Catholic University of Lublin; 2000: PhD at the Academy of Fine Arts in Lviv. Works at the University of Lodz. Current interests: visual culture, iconic traditions in modern art.

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