

SPACE, TIME AND KAIROS

[Professor Evangelos A. Moutsopoulos](#)

Department of Philosophy, University of Athens
Member of the Academy of Athens
Greece

A dozen decades ago, when Le Verrier calculated exactly where the supposedly existing planet Neptune could be observed on a precise day and at a certain moment thus fixing a 'date' for its encounter by astronomers in the whole world he undoubtedly created the modern astronomical technique of suspense, to the general admiration of science, which, although aware of what was going on, received an interesting lesson through a striking example, or rather through an illustration of what kairos is at scientific level. Le Verrier had been, of course, preceded in this way by a handful of wise men who, since antiquity, and starting with Thales of Miletus, had taken advantage of astronomical predictions concerning, for instance, the exact time of lunar eclipses, to impress ignorant minds and exert a certain influence on the further course of historical events.

Deception as a practice does not come into account here. One should rather insist on the practical importance that the adequacy of the changing objective faces and of the intervention of human intentionality into them may acquire for the fruition of the facts in question and, finally, for the good of mankind, be it through pure science or through technological initiatives. It is precisely this adequacy that allows a favorable coincidence of spatial and temporal data to be appropriately used and exploited in a way that may well turn out to be the suitable and profitable solution at which the intentionality of consciousness aims. It is understood that this intentionality itself entails establishing such an adequacy.

In this respect, one should admit that whenever the notion of kairos, i.e. the opportune moment, intervenes within the human consciousness, it creates a climate which is conducive to the abandoning of any kind of speculative attitude, and directs the activity of the human mind, through its own intentionality, towards practical aims: further, to seeking the kairicity or profitability of situations; and finally, to establishing always new relations by means of which the consciousness becomes aware of the applicability of the kairic models it creates to the objective situations it intends to take advantage of. In the same respect, every philosophy of kairicity is merely a pragmatism implying speculation whose practical value had been rejected up to our days, or at least until Bergson's time. There is more to it than this however; such a speculation is not only a theoretical but also a practical one; and, above all, to be acceptable, it has to be profitable to the general aspirations of mankind. In other words, it has to obey fundamental moral principles and be determined by as precise as possible legal structures which will help avert and punish any personal or group deviation prejudicial to the general good.

One might follow here the stoic principle of living according to, and hence obediently to nature, as formulated by Francis Bacon who introduced the conception of commanding nature after having obeyed it. The intervention of consciousness in objective situations which are susceptible of kairic exploitation presupposes an increased activity of human intentionality. The latter, can only be understood as the ability of the mind to direct human activities in various directions according to precise options which are manifested as particular intentions and are further defined as projects. The kairic factor intervenes within such a field of interactions to introduce and impose a concern to avoid both exaggeration or overacting and defection or omission and, hence, a concern for rightness and measure and, consequently, for rejection of the categories too much and not enough which are of course quantitative categories, but can also be considered as qualitative ones when conceived as being related to intensiveness. Not yet and not any more, not here yet and nowhere any more, are thus understood as categorical criteria suited to determining the best moment and the best place that may render a situation highly profitable to the human factor through a decisive dialectic that would not shirk exploiting unpredictable resources offered by infinitesimal calculus.

By helping science and technology restructure space and time and hence the world, to the profit of humankind, kairos becomes in our days a highly moral value according to which human action within cosmic space may be regulated. Not only, under its categorical expressions, is kairos decisive in elaboration programs, but it also acquires an extreme importance in rendering them effective. Accordingly, kairicity, the notion of which is a conclusive factor of the functioning of the intentionality of consciousness, provided it is openly and officially introduced into calculations of future activities within cosmic space, can prove to be of inestimable help as far as attempts for encounter of space vehicles or parts thereof and other manipulations of any kind are concerned. The whole behavior of man towards cosmic reality can acquire a new dimension only through the understanding of the important role kairicity has always played, albeit implicitly, at the level of human activity.

Scientific and technological progress make this role still more capable of becoming a catalytic one thus helping the better organization of human activities both 'in heaven and on earth' in the most profitable way for human life and for man himself.

Professor **Evangelos A. Moutsopoulos** studied at the Universities of Athens (M.A.) and Paris (Doctorat d'Etat). He has lectured and held the post of visiting Professor and research fellow at numerous universities and research institutions in Europe and the U.S.A. A member or honorary member of numerous national and international societies, Dr. Moutsopoulos has presented papers to more than 200 international meetings on philosophy and organised several of them. He is President of the Foundation for Research and Editions of Neohellenic Philosophy, director and editor of the Corpus Philosopharum Graecorum Recentiorum, and also director and editor of the international philosophical review *Diotima*. He has written some 40 volumes and 400 articles on ontology, axiology, aesthetics, the philosophy of history and the history of philosophy.