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Chronos and Kairos of Hope
Chronos in kairos upanja

Abstract: Hope finds its place in moments of negativity as a glimpse beyond the things themselves towards the things to come. Hope is based on a structure of vision that suddenly allows us to see the invisible and the unapparent beautiful in a way that goes beyond chronological time. Even though it refers us to eschatology, this vision of hope exists only in the present time rooted in waiting and should be as such the transforming force of daily life. By referring to Plato, Heidegger, the Old and New Testament, and some ecclesiastical documents, this article presents *Chronos* and *Kairos* of hope.

Keywords: Hope, *Chronos*, *Kairos*, Bible, Kingdom of God, Eucharist, Fulfillment

Povzetek: Upanje v negativnih trenutkih je kot bežen pogled, ki gre onkraj stvari samih v smeri stvari, ki prihajajo. Upanje temelji na strukturi vizije, ki nam nenadoma dopusti videti nevidno in nepojavno kot čudovito na način, ki presega kronološki čas. Čeprav se navezuje na eshatologijo, ta vizija ali upanje obstaja samo v sedanjem času in je ukoreninjena v čakanju. Kot taka je tudi preobražajoča moč vsakdanjega življenja. Opirajoč se na Platona, Heideggerja, Staro in Novo zavezo in nekatere cerkvene dokumente predstavlja ta članek *chronos* in *kairos* upanja.

Ključne besede: upanje, *chronos*, *kairos* Sveto pismo, Božje kraljestvo, evharistija, izpolnitev

1. Introduction

In general, the word *hope* describes a feeling that something desirable is likely to happen. This feeling includes an expectation of obtaining what is desired,¹ which goes beyond simple wishes or longing. This relatively broad description of hope in English gains new dimensions by referring to the Hebrew equivalent word *tikvah* (te-

¹ Desire too, in the Hebrew Bible includes intention, which goes beyond simple wishes or longing. The term desire in the Hebrew Bible covers a wide range of human longings, emotions, and cravings. Although, in the Hebrew Bible, desire is indicated by a variety of lexical forms (roots), the direct and explicit term indicating desire is limited to only two roots – the verb forms of the lexical roots *hmd* and *'wh*, which reflect not only the dynamics of desire occurring in human beings but also those found in God. (Skralovnik and Matjaž 2020, 507)

ek-VAH), translated as a cord, expectation, and hope. The root of this word is *kavah*, which means to bind together, to collect, to expect, to wait (for, on, upon). While hope in English remains an abstract notion, it becomes very visual in Hebrew as a cord or rope that one can see with the eyes and hold in hand. Consequently, hope becomes something that is not out of our reach but real enough that we can cling to it so as to ensure our safety and security. It does not imply, however, that simply by holding the rope one will be automatically safe. This depends on what the rope is tied onto, as well as on waiting, patience, and expectation for the expected outcome. Biblical hope is tied to the promises of God, which are tangible and secure. Prior to digging into biblical-theological dimensions of hope, as will be presented in the second half of this paper, let us analyze hope as a philosophical phenomenon.

2. Hope as a Philosophical Phenomenon

Hope as expectation of something better is that dimension of human existence that is cultivated and nourished in our daily life, and in a particular way in the moments of negativity, despair, and suffering, when we wait for what is beyond our immediate reach, i.e. promised or hoped for safety and security. Hope introduces, then, a glimpse beyond the things-themselves towards the things-to-come (Žalec 2020, 274). This glimpse is rooted in an eschatology that allows us to envision the invisible and the unapparent in a temporality that goes beyond time.

What is the relationship between time and hope, or where does hope take its place, is the first question calling for our attention. Referring to Kierkegaard's statement that »All other media have space as their element. Only music occurs in time« (Kierkegaard 1987, 68), we claim that hope also occurs only in time. As music cannot exist somewhere in space but only in time, so too does hope. Space as such can contain a painting or a sculpture; architecture takes place in a strictly defined place; however, no space can contain music; only time can do so. Of course, every piece of music is performed in a specific space, but it is not the space that contains music; it is time. The same is the case for hope, whose existence cannot be bounded by space but only by time. In addition, for music to exist, one has to perform it; similarly, for hope to exist, one has to live it. Again, this is possible only in time. What time do we talk about?

The Greek distinction of temporality in terms of *chronos* and *kairos* bring us a step deeper. *Chronos* is simply a time of duration and passing by of moments measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days. *Chronos* allows us to count the span of our lives or place historical events within a certain period of our history. Even though it is essential for understanding history, time as such does not exist; it is only an indefinite repetition of ‚nows‘ that cannot be adequately measured. In his Confessions, Book XI, Augustine explains that what is passing cannot be measured because once we start measuring it, it is already the past.

Similarly, we cannot measure the future because it does not exist yet. We cannot measure past and future time because they do not exist. What remains is

the now that comes from nothing and disappears in nothing. Augustine goes even further with his claims that the past, the present, and the future exist only in our minds as memories, sight and expectations (Augustine 2006, 246–247). In his *Being and Time*, Heidegger goes even further and calls such chronological understanding of time vulgar and inauthentic. The idea of time as a linear and infinite series of ‚now‘, based on *Aristotle’s Physics*, is an ordinary conception of time, where priority is always given to the present (Heidegger 1962, 472–473).

In opposition to the chronological understanding of temporality, which is horizontal and based on duration and continuation of ‚now‘, lies *kairos*, which is vertical, discontinuous, and cannot be measured at all since it occurs only at the moment. This one moment or all moments together cannot be measured with categories through which we measure chronological temporality. Each moment of *kairos* presents something unique and irrepeatable in the sense that we cannot create two or more identical moments of *kairos*. In ancient Greek literature, *kairos* was the time of opportunity, calling for decisive and courageous action (Kinneavy 1986, 80). In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle uses the word *kairos* as the matter of right timing and due measure, which creates the moment when a rhetorical proof will be delivered and consequently, the audience will be prepared to accept the proposed argument. Hence, *kairos* becomes the crucial rhetorical tool or moments in political, legal, ethical discussions, especially in treating emotions and mental confusion (1994, 135–140).

The Ancient Greek understanding of *kairos* finds new dimensions in the Christian liturgical context. The liturgical celebration of the past events, such as Jesus’ death and resurrection, takes place now, i.e., in the time of celebration of the liturgy. Consequently, liturgy is not a memorial event of the past historical events; liturgy is a repetition of the past events in a unique and irrepeatable way that can take place and its actualization only in the ‚now‘, i.e., in the moment of celebration. Even more, the liturgy is at the time of celebration also a connection with a future reality, eternity, that is reaching us in the present. By celebrating Jesus’ resurrection now, we are invited to enter into eternity, an eschatological reality, which is in its fullness awaiting on us at the end of time, but we become part of it already in the present. In Kierkegaard’s words, the understanding of *kairos* reaches new dimensions in Christianity: »The pivotal concept in Christianity, that which made all things new, is the fullness of time, but the fullness of time is the moment as the eternal, and yet this eternal is also the future and the past.« (1980, 90)

Let us return now to the question about the relationship between time and hope. As already stated, hope, like music, can exist only in time. However, this time, if reduced to a chronological understanding of temporality, offers only a partial explanation of the connection between hope and time. It is true that our actualization of hope always resides in time; nonetheless, that actualization can take place only in the present moment (Pineda et al. 2020). Our hopeful and courageous action in the past as such does not exist anymore; what remains of them are more or less inspiring memories imbued in hope. These memories become crucial for the actualization of hope in the present moment as positive energy and encouragement. If one’s mind and past actions were permeated by hope, some-

thing similar would likely happen now and continue in the future. As past events can positively impact our present time, they can also become an unbearable weight conditioning our present. Past events cannot be changed; they are fixed facts conditioning our present identity, our way of thinking, feeling, and acting, following us like a shadow (Vodičar 2020, 263). What can be changed is our relationship with them. One's readiness to change the relationship towards his or her past is already an act of hope that the quality of the past events does not pre-determine the quality of one's present and future. Again, this readiness or hope can take place only in the now; there is no other time.

What seems to be easy to grasp intellectually is hard to practice and actualize in our society, overwhelmed by archaeological memories and the wish to know what happened in the past. Ongoing collections of financial, medical, and police records, transcripts, searching for new achievements in view of improving our resumes, our need for digging into our psyche with the hope of re-discovering remote reasons for present traumas are expressions of an understanding of our existence primarily in chronological dimensions (Terelak 2021). As stated previously, chronological time can be measured, observed, written down in files and recorded, and by doing so, one believes he or she is able to determine the cause for certain effects in the present.

The question is how to transcend such a way of thinking (Roszak 2017). A chronological interpretation of temporality, and within it our actualization of hope, is challenged by a series of events that as such did happen in the past, but their true meaning is revealed only if they are seen from the future. For example, if trying to understand the 'cause' of Jesus' crucifixion, it does not make much sense to look for it in the events of Jesus' life before his death on the cross. The true cause is the resurrection that follows. This resurrection cannot be seen as a result or the effect of Christ's passion; the true meaning of the resurrection is simply much more than that, something that has not come yet. »Even the historical event of our Lord's resurrection would make no sense if there was not to be a final resurrection of all human being in the end: ›if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ was risen.« (Zizioulas 1999, 7) So, the cause does not lie in the beginning but at the end, staying in the kingdom of God that is the origin of the cause. At this point, we are already in the kairological dimension, which with its verticality cannot be measured chronologically. Kairological reality is complete discontinuation, something unrepeatable and unique. Consequently, hope as such cannot find its grounding in the past events because the past events can provide only positive memories of hopeful acting. The true foundation of hope are the events coming to us from the future. In the Christian context, this is the promise of God's unchanging and unconditional bondage with us human, as this is explained in the second half of this reflection.

Within this framework of eschatology, hope with its gaze fixed on future events that are already taking place in the present, combined with patient waiting, become the transforming forces of daily life. This transformation takes place in a moment that cannot be measured chronologically because it is not bounded by

time. Hope takes place in a moment that is a glimpse of the timelessness which allows us to see the invisible. In this glimpse, hope moves us beyond the things-themselves toward the things-to-come. There are at least two ways to describe this glimpse: Plato talks about *exaiphnes* (ἐξαίφνης), and Heidegger about *der Augenblick*. Both terms should be taken within the tradition of eschatological anticipation of the kingdom's advent and its *kairos*.

Following the interpretation of J. P. Manoussakis, Plato's *exaiphnes* is generally translated with 'suddenly', or 'the instant', or 'the moment' (Manoussakis 2007, 64). In Parmenides (156d-e), Plato himself writes that *exaiphnes* seems to signify that from which something changes to something else.² The preposition 'ex' means the 'from which' or 'from out of', and the second half of the word (*a-phanes*) can be etymologically translated as 'in-visible'. Therefore, the *exaiphnes* is the occasion of 'coming out of what is in-visible'. What is in-visible in this case is what is different, unknown, unforeseen, something that will be revealed only in the future. Since it is hard to foresee it, the translation 'sudden' seems to be appropriate. This appearance of the in-visible cannot be measured chronologically, hence 'in an instant' or 'in a moment.' In any case, on the occasion of *exaiphnes*, the apparent things have to disappear in order to allow the in-visible to appear.

It is Luther who introduced the German word *Augenblick* in his translation of St. Paul's first letter to Corinthians: »We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye /*Augenblick*/, at the last trumpet.« (1 Cor 15:51-52) This moment cannot be described in chronological terms; it is a kairological moment indicating eschatological change that is beyond any historical measurements. Kierkegaard takes it a step further and makes an explicit connection between Plato's *exaiphnes* and *Augenblick*, when he writes: »A blink is, therefore, a designation of time, but mark well, of time in the fateful conflict when it is touched by eternity. What we call the moment [*Augenblick*] Plato calls τὸ ἐξαίφνης. /.../ whatever its etymological explanation, it is related to the category of the invisible.« (1980, 87–88)

Aware of this connection between *exaiphnes* and *Augenblick*, Heidegger in his analysis of the first and second letters to Thessalonians, uses the word *Augenblick* to translate St. Paul's comprehension of *kairos* (Heidegger 1995, 102). *Kairos* becomes the occasion when from the meeting of something temporal with something that cannot be measured chronologically, emerges the invisible at the blink of the eye. That blink of the eye designates a temporality that is beyond time, in which the invisible and the unapparent can be caught.

This short analysis of time in its chronological and kairological dimensions leads us to a deeper understanding of hope as it is presented in the Bible.

² »So, when does it change? For it does not change while it is at rest or in motion, or while it is in time?« – »Yes, you're quite right.« – »Is there, then, this queer thing in which it might be, just when it changes?« – »What queer thing?« – »The instant. The instant seems to signify something such that changing occurs from it to each of two states. For a thing doesn't change from rest while rest continues, or from motion while motion continues. Rather, this queer creature, the instant, lurks between motion and rest – being in no time at all – and to it and from it the moving thing changes to resting and the resting thing changes to moving.« (Plato 1997, 388)

3. »The time has come!« (Mark 1:15)

The Bible tells us that God created time for a man by creating the world (Gen 1:14-19). Time, therefore, has a start and is linear (Luke 3:23-28; 21:7-28; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:1-11) and will cease when its purpose is fulfilled at the end of time (Gen 8:22; Rev 21:1-6a).³

The Greek word *chronos* used by Septuagint and New Testament means linear or chronological time. This is the quantitative time measured by successive objects, events, or moments (Zodhiates 1992, 1487). However, when God enters time, or when eternity coincides with time, this time becomes *kairos*, which means the time of fulfilment (Luke 21:24; 1 Thess 5:1-2). It is a qualitative time. The most prominent example of *kairos* is the incarnation of the Son of God, of which the apostle Paul speaks in Gal 4:4. In the Old Testament, however, we can see several examples of this time; Abraham's covenants with God (Gen 15:17); the three visitors (18); the sacrifice of Isaac (22:1-18); Jacob fights with God (32:24-32); Moses talks to God in the burning bush (Exod 3:1-4:16); Job's conversations with God (Job 38:1-42:9), etc. In the New Testament, *kairos* can be found in Jesus' baptism (Matt 3:13-17), transfiguration (17:1-13), crucifixion (27:32-56), resurrection (28:1-10), ascension (Mark 16:19-20) and in the future – the Lord's Day (Rev 22). In all these and many other cases, we can see how *chronos* and *kairos* coexist.

In the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament (e.g. Gen 15:17; Mark 1:15), we can see that the true foundation of hope is in God's promise. There is, of course, a progression from the promise towards its fulfilment that does not mean an end, but it makes sense of the whole journey (Globokar 2019, 612-614). In such a view of time, every moment is important. So, time becomes a 'space' where the hope given by God's promise is fulfilled. Time becomes a 'space' of progression towards the novelty that God gives through his Son, in whom God also shows and reveals God-self.

The highest goal of the spiritual life is not the abundance of knowledge, information or the experience of space or things, but the encounter with sacred moments, i.e., *kairos*. The spiritual experience is not about things that are given to man but about the Presence experienced by man (Roszak and Huzarek 2019). The moment of insight, the touch of the eternal in time, happens within the man and not in the place or space where this event took space (Heschel 2013, 17-21; Avsenik Nabergoj 2020, 522-534).

In Mark's gospel, Jesus' first words are: »The time has come! God's kingdom will soon be here. Turn back to God and believe the good news!« (Mark 1:15) These words make it clear that he ended the time of expectation. Now, this moment has been set by God to save mankind. No longer will the law of repetition apply, the law under which man perceives time as circling, as the rhythm of the seasons, as birth to death. Such an understanding of time poisons the entirety of

³ According to the Hebrew conception of time, the history of mankind is like a tree: it has its beginning, its growth and development. This history is goal-oriented, fruit-oriented. It is a progressive, growing and evolving reality (Skralovnik 2021, 130-131).

a man's life and kills him because it takes away his hope. »This natural conception of time stifles hope and history: ›it cuts the wings of every possibility of a path that would lead to something different and positive.« (Fausti 2007, 32)

Jesus first draws attention to the value of the present. Everything is decided in it. A favourable time, *kairos*, comes when a man understands that the moment of choice for God, his kingdom, is now. »The decisive moment«, as Fausti (33) highlights, »is the decision itself. The present is, therefore, the point in which it is flowing, what it was, and from which it comes what it will be, and both are united in a decision that makes sense of the past and the meaning of the future.«

In such an understanding of time, Jesus is faithful to Judaism, which, as Rabbi Heschel (2013, 20) points out, is 'the religion of time': »Unlike a man who is oriented to a space for which time is monotonous, repetitive, immutable and for which all hours are equal, without peculiarities, empty shells, the Bible perceives the varied character of time. Not even two hours are the same. Every hour is unique and the only one which is given to us at that moment, is the first-class and infinitely precious.«

With Jesus came a decisive moment in the history of mankind (Celarc 2019) because with him came the kingdom of God, which makes visible and unites all the expectations of the people of the Old Testament. When we listen to Jesus' teachings and look at his life, we see this kingdom. Fausti (2007, 34) points out that this kingdom is Jesus himself, »God for man and man for God, who fully realizes God's love for man and man's love for God. No one is far from it or excluded from it; everyone enters into it when he turns to him, loves him and follows him on his path by 'following him' and sharing his destiny of cross and glory, struggle and victory (Mark 8:34-38).«

Of course, it is always necessary to have the awareness that when we listen and watch Jesus Christ, we see the Father and his kingdom. Therefore, Jesus focuses all of his proclamation on the coming of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14.15.38; 2:10; 9:45-47; 10:25.26). This is good news, a gospel, an announcement of hope – the kingdom of God is for all (for sinners, the poor, the oppressed, the suffering) (Mark 2:9-11; Matt 9:1-8; 11:2-6; 12:18-21). This hope is given to a Christian by invitation to the Kingdom of God. He renews this hope whenever he prays: »Thy kingdom come.« (Sorč 2003, 399–401) The kingdom of God is a free gift of God, but entry is left to man's freedom. Conversion, to which Jesus encourages us, means turning to him and following him on the path he has shown and shows through his Spirit (Prijatelj 2018, 445; Petkovšek 2019).

Christian hope is the entire life of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:1-16; 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:6-11), which, due to his resurrection, carries within it the dimension of the end – the eschaton (Rom 6:9.10) (Benedict XVI 2007, no. 6.26-28). This hope comes from the eschatological gift of the Resurrected – the gift of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13; 8:2-3; Gal 5:5). The Spirit is the one that awakens in the heart of the faithful son's trust in the Father (Rom 8:1-16; Gal 4:5-7). Through the Spirit, believers are given hope, which does not embarrass, because after him God's love is poured out into their hearts (Rom 5:5) (Sorč 1995, 123–125; Benedict XVI 2007, no. 4–8.50; Doud 2019, 92–96).

The Judeo-Christian faith is not opium, allowing a man to forget the present evil or dream of a good future. It calls every man to live the present moment in its fullness (Godawa 2018, 829–832). We can say that every passage of the gospel contains the promise of God on which hope is based, which does not deceive (Rom 5; Heb 6). For the one who reads it, it becomes ‚reality‘ when he realizes that ‚the time has been fulfilled‘ in which God, through his Son, wishes to do for him in the power of the Holy Spirit what the narrative speaks of if he is willing to ask and accept his free gift with trusting faith.

In a special way, Christians renew and live this hope in the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice of thanksgiving on Sunday, which is »a day of blessed hope and a day of hope for ultimate bliss« (Krajnc 2009, 27). The Eucharist makes it possible to taste in advance the taste of Christ’s promises of full joy (John 15:11).

It expresses a trusting expectation of fulfilling the promise of the final arrival of Jesus Christ in glory, explicitly summed up by the mass prayer/embolism of the Our Father: »when we are full of hope we await the arrival of our Saviour Jesus Christ.« (Rimski missal [Roman Missal] 2010) When the Church brings before God everything humanity carries in itself, »joy and hope, sadness and anxiety,« (GS, no. 1), it receives through Christ the indestructible and firm hope (2 Thess 2:13–17) (John Paul II 1998, 42–43).

Sunday is a weekly Easter for Christians when they celebrate the memory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the victory over death, evil and sin, and the beginning of the ‚new creation‘ (2 Cor 5:7) (John Paul II 1998, 13). This is the day of remembrance of baptism when every Christian rises to a new life and hope in Christ (Col 2:12; Rom 6:4–6). Through the celebration of Sunday Eucharist, Christians collectively »testify to God’s holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.« (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1993, no. 2182)

This day is a living memory and thanksgiving for the creation of the world and for God’s blessing of the Sabbath (Gen 1:1–2; 3), and also for the ‚last day‘ when Christ will come to eternal glory (Acts 1:11) and will renovate all creation (John Paul II 1998, 13). This day is a never-ending prediction of the last day, an immortal life (32). Within it, *chronos* becomes the ‚time of grace‘, *kairos* (Krajnc 2009, 17). This is a day for joy when Christians thank God for their rebirth through the resurrection of his Son that gave them hope that never dies. (John Paul II 1998, 17)

This is a festive day that allows a man to become a man of hope. Without festive days, as Krajnc (2018, 800) points out, »hope has no space to exist«. Celebrating Sunday deters Christians from the danger that everyday times could shut them down. With the eucharistic celebration and festive rest, he can direct his view of Christ and his second coming, and so opening the *chronos* to the *kairos* that Christ brought and brings him again and again, especially on this day. When the whole Christian community cries out together, »Maránatha, come, Lord Jesus!« (Rev 22:20), full of hope and expectation of the last day, it revives its hopes and supports the hope of all people (Paul VI 1975, 78).

4. Conclusion

Either in the philosophical reflection or the biblical texts, hope is primarily an invitation to transcend the factual reality measured in terms of horizontal *chronos*, which is also an invitation to find the meaning of life. »Anyone /.../, who seeks to understand temporality without restriction as the necessary mark of human existence will find hidden from him not only the ‚life beyond‘ time, but also the very meaning of life in *time*.« (Pieper 1986, 16–17) Humans reach their deepest expectations, desires, wishes and longing only if rooted in a spaceless *kairos*, which is vertical, discontinuous, and beyond measurement. *Kairos*, as a look into the future, takes place only in the present ‚now‘, which is as such the foundation of hope. While in the philosophical context *kairos* and hope become an encounter with the invisible that is beyond time, the same encounter in the Biblical context presents the fulfilment of God’s promise.

Abbreviation

GS – Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* 1965.

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