We usually approach the current state of crisis in terms of a problematic financial situation, which has a broader sociocultural or ideological impact on a second level of analysis. This is the mainstream approach to the crisis we have been facing within Greece, but also within Europe in general, over the last five years. To talk about crisis in Greek seems quite an easy thing to do, as κρίνειν, etymologically speaking, means to judge and to decide, and was firstly elaborated by Greek physicians, and secondly within the sphere of political-juridical action, and rhetorical deliberation. Nevertheless, the current use of the term seems to echo something quite different within the context of philosophical modernity, which has often been stigmatized by the awareness of being critical or in crisis. On a different level, the 17th and 18th centuries defined themselves as being “critical” times, that is times when critique and crisis, a decision regarding the humanity’s future, finally coincided. But very soon, Enlightenment optimism was put aside, as modernity from the 19th century onwards has perceived itself solely as the consciousness of crisis. Therefore, it seems that modernity, and even more so late modernity, has reflected upon its condition as a condition of crisis, as a “critical” condition. This shift in the understanding of crisis and the disentanglement of critique and crisis often led to the weakening of philosophical reflection on what is after all a state of crisis. The latter has often been identified as a state of degeneration, decadence and, philosophically speaking, loss of meaning and nihilism.

It is this complex semantics of crisis, and its historically situated juncture with philosophy, that this two-volume collection of essays intends to explore in order to generate the insight needed for the road ahead. Its aim is twofold: first, to introduce as many philosophical perspectives as possible on the topic of crisis – pragmatic, semantic and hermeneutical, normative and evaluative, religious and secular and, second, to bring forth the conceptual and historico-philosophical ramifications of the current discourse on crises – ecological, financial, European or global – so as to acquaint the reader with some of the chief debates on controversies surrounding the issue.

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