

Se, come suppongo, nei versi 373–5 Esiodo allude ad una donna del tipo di Iynx, sua preoccupazione è che una donna così prepotente e seducente, che svia dal rapporto monogamico normale, richieda di essere accolta in casa come concubina e, magari, dia all'uomo altri figli, mentre il numero ottimale è di uno solo. come vien chiarito subito dopo. Ad ogni rapporto di seduzione infatti corrisponde almeno un figlio: lo stesso Zeus ingannato da Era, enumerando alcune delle varie amanti, non poteva tacere così un catalogo seppure parziale della propria ricca prole, divina ed umana (*E* 315–28; un catalogo più ampio, è noto, è in *Th.* 885–944).

### KAIROS as "Due Measure"<sup>1)</sup>

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Grade solche Wörter, die in keiner anderen Sprache ein Aequivalent haben, lehren nicht nur griechisch verstehen, sondern griechisch fühlen.

—Wilamowitz, *Sappho und Simonides*, 247.

In its classical usage *kairos* is a beautifully flexible word of both moral and aesthetic significance<sup>2)</sup>. Yet its very flexibility seems to have made it the victim of persistent misinterpretation. The usual practice is to squeeze as many passages as possible into what became in the second half of the fifth century B. C. the dominant meaning of "due time" and to restrict as much as possible the application

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Genière, *Une roue à oiseaux du Cabinet de Médailles*, "Revue des Etudes Anciennes" 60, 1958, pp. 27–35.

<sup>1)</sup> To E. L. Bundy (in memoriam).

<sup>2)</sup> The following discussions of *kairos* will be referred to by page number and author's name only: Ulrich Wilamowitz von Moellendorf, "Exkurse zu Euripides *Medeia*", *Kleine Schriften* I (Berlin 1935) 42–45 [= *Hermes* 15 (1880) 506–10]; J. T. Sheppard, ed., *The Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles* (Cambridge 1920) lxxv–lxxvi; Friedrich Pfister, "Kairos und Symmetrie", *Würzburger Studien zur Altertumswissenschaft* 13 (1938) 131–43; L. R. Palmer, "The Indo-European origins of Greek justice", *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1950) 149–68; R. W. B. Burton, *Pindar's Pythian Odes* (Oxford 1962); W. S. Barrett, ed., Euripides, *Hippolytos* (Oxford 1964) 231; E. L. Bundy, "Studia Pindarica I", *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 18 (1962) 17–19; Hermann Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums*, 2nd edition (Munich 1972) 509f.

of the more general sense "due measure". In their treatment of the word Liddell and Scott go so far as to include a large number of the early citations of *kairos* under the dubious heading "profit" or "advantage", whereas they make much better sense under the rubric "due measure"<sup>3</sup>).

Although Stephanus in his *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* was fully aware of the breadth of meaning in *kairos*, extended discussion of the non-temporal aspect of the word apparently begins with Wilamowitz, and has since been continued by (among others) Sheppard, Pfister, Palmer, Burton and Barrett. But the impact of such work has been minimal, even among the authors themselves. Typical is the discussion of *kairos* at Aeschylus, *Su.* 1060<sup>4</sup>). Stephanus had already correctly interpreted the word in that passage as "due measure", but that interpretation was then successively rediscovered by Sheppard, Pfister and Palmer, all without acknowledgement. Furthermore, discussions of *kairos*, even when acknowledged, are not often heeded. An example is Slater's *Lexicon to Pindar*, s.v., who, in spite of references to Bundy, Fränkel and Barrett, prefers to impose a conventional sense of "due time" wherever possible. A thorough study of the non-temporal sense of the word, particularly in its pre-fourth century occurrences, is obviously desirable<sup>5</sup>).

### I.

The earliest instance of *kairos* in Greek is at Hesiod, *Works and Days* 694, where it already has the fully developed sense of due measure:

*μέτρα φυλάσσεσθαι· καιρὸς δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἄριστος.*

The immediate context is the overloading of a wagon, which can cause the axle to break. The need to "keep the measure" in this

<sup>3</sup>) See my "Kairos as 'profit'", forthcoming in *Classical Quarterly*.

<sup>4</sup>) For simplicity I give line references only to the *kairos* word itself and not to its context.

<sup>5</sup>) For a list of indices and lexica consulted, see the asterisked volumes in Harald and Blenda Riesenfeld, *Repertorium Lexicographicum Graecum*, Stockholm 1954, to which add or substitute the following: the indices to M. L. West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, to Denys Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci*, and to Edgar Lobel and Denys Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta*; G. Fatouros, *Index Verborum zur frühgriechischen Lyrik*; W. J. Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar*; G. Italie, *Index Aeschyleus*; J. T. Allen and G. Italie, *Concordance to Euripides*; C. Collard, *Supplement to same*; W. A. Goligher and W. S. Maguiness, *Index to the Speeches of Isaeus*; L. Brandwood, *Word Index to Plato*.

particular case is generalized by the statement that "*kairos* is best in all matters". *Kairos* is here "the right degree" between too much and too little (clearly in this context a translation of "the right time" must be ruled out, since there can be no right time for overloading a wagon). This sense of what is "just right" comes out even more clearly in Theognis' adaptation of the line (401), who substitutes *μηδὲν ἄγαν σπεύδειν* for Hesiod's *μέτρα φυλάσσεσθαι*:

*μηδὲν ἄγαν σπεύδειν· καιρὸς δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἄριστος  
ἔργμασιν ἀνθρώπων.*

*Kairos* is the opposite of excess, and Theognis goes on to justify the need for such prudence by noting how easily the gods can ruin a man's judgement.

Ethical-prudential associations reappear in the only other instance of *kairos* in Theognis. At 199 the impermanence of unjust gain "against what is appropriate" is contrasted with the security of a legitimate acquisition:

*χρῆμα δ', δ μὲν Διόθεν καὶ σὺν δίκη ἀνδρὶ γένηται  
καὶ καθαρῶς, αἰεὶ παρμόνιμον τελέθει·  
εἰ δ' ἀδίκως παρὰ καιρὸν ἀνὴρ φιλοκερδέει θυμῷ  
κτῆσεται, εἴθ' ὄρκω παρ τὸ δίκαιον ἐλών . . .*

*Παρὰ καιρὸν* is clearly non-temporal here, since unjust gain can never be "opportune". What is "against *kairos*" is the opposite of what is "with *dike*"<sup>6</sup>).

The concept of *kairos* in the sayings attributed to Chilon and Pittacus (two of the traditional Seven Wise Men) accords well with the usage of Hesiod and Theognis, and their proverbial wisdom may well date back into the sixth century. *Καιρὸν γνῶθι*, "recognize moderation", is one of the numerous two word apophthegms of Pittacus (*Vorsokr.* I 64,11), and like the other *γνῶθι* exhortations this one draws attention to man's limitations as a human being. It could, of course, in theory mean "recognize your opportunity", but the pattern of the other *γνῶθι* statements militates against this. Furthermore, if there is room for doubt about the precept of Pittacus, there is none about the saying of Chilon (best known through the epigram of Critias [7 West]):

*ἦν Λακεδαιμόνιος Χίλων σοφός, ὃς τὰδ' ἔλεξεν·  
'μηδὲν ἄγαν καιρῷ πάντα πρόσεστι καλά.'*

<sup>6</sup>) For the association between *kairos* and *dike* see Burton 178.

Here, as in Theognis, the recommendation of *kairos* ("all fair things belong to *kairos*") is linked with the injunction against excess.

The solitary example in Hesiod, the two citations of Theognis, and perhaps the sayings of Pittacus and Chilon are the only instances of *kairos* before Pindar. This poverty, however, can be supplemented by a study of the adjectival form, *kairios*, which already appears in Homer. Here we see a *kairos* word in a concrete sense from which it is reasonable to suppose that the figurative sense developed. At *Iliad* 8. 84 and 326 the phrase *μάλιστα δὲ καιρόν ἐστιν* is used to mark the lethal or critical point for the body to receive a wound. Though this concretely spatial sense of *kairios* persists down to Xenophon and is even found in Polybius and in Dio Chrysostom<sup>7</sup>), it is worth noting that outside Homer the early examples of *kairios*, like the early examples of *kairos*, are figurative in sense. What is physically the critical or right point has become figuratively the moderate or proper position. Thus at 341 Theognis prays to Zeus that he grant his "moderate prayer", *καίριον εὐχὴν*. The moderation consists in the re-establishment of due proportion or *kairos* in his affairs. In Hesiod, too, *kairios* appears in the unique formation *παρακαίριος*. At *Works and Days* 329 a man who violates his brother's wife is described as *παρακαίρια ῥέζων*, "acting against what is proper", *παρακαίρια* here being scarcely distinguishable from *παρὰ καιρόν* at Theognis 199.

## II.

From the slender evidence before the 5th century, it is tempting to associate *kairos* exclusively with the didactic moralizing tradition of wisdom literature<sup>8</sup>). In that case Pindar, as a master of the gnomic style, could be thought of as introducing *kairos* into the tradition of choral poetry. Certainly Pindaric *kairos* in its broadness of application carries on the tradition of Hesiod and Theognis, and has not yet been confined to a temporal straightjacket. In fact Burton (46) goes so far as to suggest that in Pindar *kairos* may never be temporal.

<sup>7</sup>) See the citations in LSJ s.v. and add Dio Chrysostom 66.19 (*καιρίων* Casaubon, *κυρίων* MSS.). Interestingly enough, *kairios* is used of a benign penetration at Theophrastus, *De Caus. Pl.* 3.15.4, where water is said to penetrate "to the most vital parts of the shoots".

<sup>8</sup>) See M. L. West, ed., Hesiod, *Works and Days* (Oxford 1978) 24.

Most instances of Pindaric *kairos* concern either right behaviour in general or right behaviour in the poet, i. e. literary tact. Literary *kairos*, what the poem demands at any given point, is only temporal insofar as a poem is an event in time. But this limitation applies to all human experience and does not thereby define it. The *kairos* or "appropriateness" demanded of the poet takes its cue from the general situation of his client, the generic requirements of the epinician, the personal involvement of the poet, etc. Literary *kairos* is usually drawn attention to when the poet wants to abbreviate or make a transition. Thus at *Pythian* 9.78 the poet, following the terms of his contract, has just mentioned the Pythian victory of his client and is about to proceed to a catalogue of his past victories at Thebes, Aegina, Megara and Athens. In the gnomic passage sandwiched between the two statements of victory the mention of *kairos* justifies the compression of what might have been a much longer catalogue:

ἀρεταὶ δ' αἰεὶ μεγάλαι πολύμυθοι·  
 βαιὰ δ' ἐν μακροῖσι ποικίλλειν  
 ἀκοὰ σοφοῖς· ὁ δὲ καιρὸς ὁμοίως  
 παντὸς ἔχει κορυφάν.

Much can be said about great excellence, but the development of a few points in a larger topic is what the discriminating enjoy listening to. *Kairos* gives the gist of everything just as well.

*Kairos* is here the appropriateness which comes from the proper selection both of subject matter and of style<sup>9</sup>). But even the greatest literary tact does not remove the need for a specific injunction against jealousy once the catalogue is finished (*P* 9.93–96).

At *O.* 13.48 *kairos* again appears in the context of a victory catalogue, this time in a transition from the catalogue itself to the praise of the athlete's city. A complete listing of Xenophon's athletic success would be like numbering the grains of sand on the shore:

ἔπεται δ' ἐν ἐκάστῳ  
 μέτρον· νοῆσαι δὲ καιρὸς ἄριστος.

Measure attends everything: appropriateness is the superior knowledge.

At this point in the poem appropriateness calls for a rest from the praises of the victor and a transition to the praise of the city as a whole.

<sup>9</sup>) For discussion of these passages see Bundy 17–19; Burton 45–49. I have borrowed freely from their translations.

Again at *N.* 1.18 *kairos* appears in a transition, though in exactly the reverse order from *O.* 13.48, in that the praise of the athlete follows the praise of the city. The praise of the city has just concluded with a general statement on its wealth and martial or athletic talent. This obviously prepares for the specific instance of Chromios, and the transition itself merely consists of a brief statement by the poet of his relevance and veracity:

πολλῶν ἐπέβαν καιρὸν οὐ ψεύδει βάλων.

I have touched on many things, striking the target unerringly<sup>10</sup>).

Here *βάλων* gives to *kairos* a spatial dimension: *kairos* is the appropriate point or target which the poet hits with accuracy. Perhaps, too, there is a feeling of economy: the target to aim at is a significant mention rather than a complete listing<sup>11</sup>).

*P.* 1.81 is similar in context, though in this passage the audience is deliberately misled. Pindar has just embarked on a priamel of victories against non-Greeks, of which the primarily Athenian Salamis and the primarily Spartan Plataea are capped by the Syracusan Himera. In the gnomic passage that follows, the poet comments as usual on his ability to compress, and notes that the effect of abbreviated praise is to minimize the jealous carping of the audience, who might otherwise suffer from satiety of *koros*<sup>12</sup>):

καιρὸν εἰ φθέγγαιο, πολλῶν πείρατα συντανύσαις  
ἐν βραχεῖ, μείων ἔπεται μῶμος ἀνθρώπων· ἀπὸ γὰρ κόρος ἀμβλύνει  
αἰανῆς ταχείας ἐλπίδας,  
ἀστῶν δ' ἀκοὰ κρόφιον θυμὸν βαρύνει μάλιστ' ἐσλοῖσιν ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίοις.

If one utters what is *kairos*, compressing in short compass the essence<sup>13</sup>) of many themes, there ensues less blame from men. For tedious satiety blunts

<sup>10</sup>) LSJ (s.v. III) take *καιρὸν* as the object of *ἐπιβαίνω* against the normal syntax of the verb, rather feebly translating *καιρὸν ἐπιβαίνειν* as "to light on the fit time".

<sup>11</sup>) The antithesis between *πολλῶν* and *καιρὸν* suggests poetic economy. For its pervasiveness see Burton 46–47.

<sup>12</sup>) For *koros* as a transitional device see Erich Thummer, ed., Pindar, *Die Isthmischen Gedichte* (Heidelberg 1968) I, 122–25. There is a surprising revival of the *kairos/koros* antithesis at Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De Comp. Verb.* 67.

<sup>13</sup>) My translation of *πείρατα* attempts to get the conceptual sense of *πείρα* as the "bond and boundary" that gives everything its specific value. See especially Solon 16.2 West and Theognis 1172 and in general Ann L. T. Bergren, *The Etymology and Usage of PEIRAR in Early Greek Poetry*, New York 1975.

their quick moving desires, and what the citizens hear about the good of others disturbs them most in their heart or hearts.

And yet, contrary to expectation, the appeal to *kairos* and the threat of *koros* are grandly ignored with the command to "let out the sails all the same".

As Wilamowitz has observed<sup>14</sup>), this surprise in turn brings with it still another surprise. It develops that the command to "let out the sails" is but one in a series of imperatives that refer no longer to the poet and the skilful exercise of his craft, but to the ruler (whether Deinomenes or Hieron) and the skilful exercise of power.

Our final example of poetic *kairos* is from the earliest epinician, *Pythian* 10, in which Pindar already displays a sophisticated technique. The opening invocation in praise of the victor's country, perfectly relevant in itself, is rhetorically considered irrelevant so as to give more prominence to what follows. The brag about Thessaly is (4) *παρὰ καιρόν* or "off target", the real centre of interest being Pytho and the Aleuadae.

Those passages where *kairos* refers to the laudandus are naturally more varied and miscellaneous in character.

At *N.* 7.58, after some gnomic preparation that comments on the variety of nature's gifts and the impossibility of any single human being acquiring "the whole of happiness", Fate is said to have given Thearion "a fitting measure of wealth" and not to have impaired his judgement in his striving for glory:

*Θεαρίων, τὴν δ' εἰκότα καιρόν ὄλβου  
δίδωσι, τόλμαν τε καλῶν ἀρομένῳ  
σύνεσιν οὐκ ἀποβλάπτει φρενῶν.*

Thearion has all the ingredients of success: a sufficiency of means, the courage to act, and good sense.

Thearion is only a boy and only a private citizen. But *kairos* applies even to the greatest rulers. At *P.* 1.57 Hieron of Syracuse and Aetna is said to have immense power and wealth, but in his physical affliction he is compared to Philoctetes. Like Philoctetes, too, he is a man of destiny. In accordance with this destiny the poet wishes that the god will succour him in the future,

*ᾧν ἔραται καιρόν διδούς*  
giving him the *kairos* of what he desires.

<sup>14</sup>) *Pindaros* (Berlin 1922) 302–3.

Like Theognis with his *καίριος εὐχὴ*, Hieron can be trusted to desire “what is appropriate”, i.e. what is within human limits.

At *O.* 2.54 *kairos* again concerns a tyrant. In Theron a combination of wealth, talent (*aretai*) and savage determination will produce “the right degree of this and that”:

ὁ μὲν πλοῦτος ἀρεταῖς δεδαιδαλμένος  
φέρει τῶν τε καὶ τῶν  
καιρὸν βαθεῖαν ὑπέχων μέριμναν ἀγροτέρων.

What “this and that” might mean emerges from a comparison with *N.* 1.30, where *τῶν τε καὶ τῶν χρήσιες* refers to the effective employment of both word and deed. In Theron the proper blend of wealth, talent and will produces correctly proportioned speech and action.

At *P.* 8.7 *kairos* is a quality of action. Benignant Hesychia, the spirit of Tranquillity, knows how to “both give and receive kindness with unerring correctness”:

τὸ γὰρ τὸ μαλθακὸν ἔρξαι τε καὶ παθεῖν ὁμῶς  
ἐπίστασαι καιρῷ σὺν ἀτρεκεῖ.

“Correctness” here includes time, circumstance and degree in an indissoluble whole. In Aegina, where Hesychia presides, the properly timed and properly regulated exchange of favours produces social peace. However in the succeeding lines that same Tranquillity also knows how to deal with her enemies with equal “correctness”. That *kairos* can apply to enemies as much as to friends becomes clear from a comparison with *Paeon* 2.34:

εἰ δέ τις ἀρκέων φίλοις  
ἐχθροῖσι τραχὺς ὑπαντιάζει,  
μόχθος ἡσυχίαν φέρει  
καιρῷ καταβαίνων.

If in helping one’s friends a man bears down harshly on his enemies, the toil brings tranquillity when entered on with propriety.

Just as at *P.* 8.7 an orderly exchange of favours produces internal peace, so at *Paeon* 2.34 the properly timed and properly regulated application of force produces external peace<sup>15</sup>).

Comparable to both passages is *N.* 8.4. Like Hesychia, Hora, who is the harbinger of the pleasures of young love, knows when to be

<sup>15</sup>) For the interpretation of *kairos* at *P.* 8.7 and *Paeon* 2.34 see Wilamowitz, *Sappho und Simonides* (Berlin 1913) 247–49, Fränkel 569 n. 9 and Burton 178–9.



rough and when to be gentle. This means that the humans who are subject to her power must make similar discriminations:

ἀγαπατὰ δὲ καιροῦ μὴ πλαναθέντα πρὸς ἔργον ἕκαστον  
τῶν ἀρειόνων ἐρώτων ἐπικρατεῖν δύνασθαι.

In every deed it is good by not straying from *kairos* to fulfil one's better aspirations.

This general statement is then applied to the consummation of the marriage between Zeus and Aegina.

At *P.* 4. 286 *kairos* is again connected with a discriminating choice, though here the temporal element is more prominent. Damophilos knows how to conduct himself properly in all company: he is playful among children, grave among elders. This is the positive side. Negatively speaking, he suppresses slander, hates insolence, does not wrangle with the nobility, and does not procrastinate:

ὁ γὰρ και-  
ρὸς πρὸς ἀνθρώπων βραχὺ μέτρον ἔχει.  
εὖ νιν ἔγνωκεν· θεράπων δέ οἱ, οὐδ' ὀδρά-  
στας ὀπαδεῖ.

From the human point of view *kairos* has only a small tolerance. He knows this well, and serves it willingly, not as a drudge.

No doubt the primary reference of *kairos* is to the opportunity gained by not procrastinating. However Wilamowitz (44–45) is right to insist that for Damophilos *kairos* is more than that: it is also the general flexibility described so forcibly in the preceding lines. Damophilos knows all the fine adjustments of the perfect courtier and is a man of perfect tact. What is more, the tact of the courtier is matched by the skill of the ruler. For in curing the body politic King Arkesilaos is described as an *ιατὴρ ἐπικαιρότατος* (270), "a healer of great discrimination". He would show his discrimination by a skilful diagnosis, a correct method of treatment, and proper timing.

I conclude with the use of *kairos* in prepositional phrases.

At *O.* 8.24 the connection of *kairos* with right discrimination is clear. In a commercial centre like Aegina, where a reputation for honest dealing with foreigners is important, Themis is particularly honoured:

ὅ τι γὰρ πολὺν καὶ πολλῶν ῥέπη,  
ὀρθῶν διακρίναι φρενὶ μὴ παρὰ καιρὸν  
δυσπαλές.

For when a thing weighs much and swings about, it is hard to make correct measurements that are not off the mark.

*Kairos* is the area between too much and too little, but in a commercial transaction this amounts to a precise measurement with no margin for error.

In two passages *κατὰ καιρόν* is connected with a person's age. At fr. 127.2 Snell, the spirit exhorted not to pursue an affair that is "older than its years". Rather, one should love and give into love *κατὰ καιρόν*, "appropriately". The appropriateness is partly a matter of years, but it also involves all the other limits of a contingent being. Fränkel (541 n. 11) compares the prayer at *Pythian* 11.51 ff.,

*θεόθεν ἐραίμαν καλῶν,  
δυνατὰ μαιόμενος ἐν ἀλικίᾳ,*

where for *δυνατὰ* one could well substitute *καιρόν*.

In fr. 123.1 the restraint of *kairos* is first invoked only to be overthrown by a greater propriety:

*χρῆν μὲν κατὰ καιρόν ἐρώ-  
των δρέπεσθαι, θυμέ, σὺν ἀλικίᾳ.*

My heart, you ought to have plucked the flowers of love appropriately, according to your age.

The mere fact that *σὺν ἀλικίᾳ* is added after *κατὰ καιρόν* shows that initially, at least, *kairos* has a broader reference than to age alone. And sure enough, the poem proceeds to reverse itself by stating that the beauty of Theoxenos is so extraordinary that it would be perverse not to respond to it. In this case the poet's passion is after all entirely *κατὰ καιρόν*.

At *I. 2.22* *κατὰ καιρόν* is applied to a purely physical operation. The charioteer, as he rounds the turning post, shows a skilful hand

*τὰν . . . κατὰ καιρόν  
νεῖμ' ἀπάσαις ἀνίαις,*

which he applied to all the reins in proper measure,

that is, he pulled at some of the reins and slackened the rest so as to effect a perfect turn. This conception is much richer than the conventional "at the right time" (though *κατὰ καιρόν* is catholic enough to accommodate that idea as well). Furthermore, a reference to the skilful handling of each rein individually explains why Pindar writes *ἀπάσαις*: the charioteer's skill consists in the proper handling of *all* the reins one by one.

Finally, at fr. 168, the phrase *πολλὸς ἐν καιρῷ χρόνος* appears to mean "there was [not] a long time at the critical point" (for an observer to make out exactly how Herakles devoured an ox, bones and all). The combination of *διακρίναι* and *καιρός* in this generally corrupt passage makes one suspect that behind the Greek as we have it there lurks an expression similar to *O.* 8.24–25 (see above), and that *kairos* is once again connected with discriminating judgment.

With the dubious exception of fr. 168, our survey of *kairos* in Pindar indicates that it is never exclusively temporal or temporally derived in meaning. On the contrary, it always maintains a broad flexibility in which temporal appropriateness may be included but is not usually prominent. Pindaric *kairos* is always open ended, and the reader should always be encouraged to give it the widest application.

The only attested instance of *kairos* in Bacchylides conforms to this pattern<sup>16</sup>). At fr. 25.2 Snell, it is stated that fate allows very few mortals to reach old age

*πράσσοντας ἐν καιρῷ . . .*

*. . . πρὶν ἐγκύρσαι δῦα,*

faring as they should . . . without encountering grief<sup>17</sup>).

*Kairos* is that difficult trouble free region between extremes.

### III.

If in Pindar purely temporal *kairos* is doubtful, there can be no doubt about some of the examples in Aeschylus. This is not to say that the sense of "appropriateness" in *kairos* has been diminished, only that the appropriateness is for the first time narrowly temporal in application. The earliest certain example of *kairos* in the sense of "appropriate time" or "opportunity" is at *Sept.* 65 (467 B.C.):

*καὶ τῶνδε καιρὸν ὄστις ὄκιστος λαβέ.*

It is however significant that there are only three other instances of temporal *kairos* in Aeschylus, two of which come from the ever

<sup>16</sup>) The unwary reader of Sheppard lxiix should be warned that *kairia* at 3.74 is Jebb's supplement.

<sup>17</sup>) In his edition Jebb translates "living opportunely", but in his exegesis "as they would wish at each successive step in life" he is closer to the truth.

problematical *Prometheus Bound* (379, 523) and the other from *Dictyulci* (823). In Aeschylus *kairos* is still overwhelmingly non-temporal or at least more than temporal in its meaning.

At *Su.* 1060 *kairos*, as with Hesiod and Theognis, occurs in the context of *μηδὲν ἄγαν*. In a dialogue between a divided chorus<sup>18</sup>) one party advises moderation while the other asks for clarification:

- μέτριον νῦν ἔπος εὖχου.
- τίνα καιρόν με διδάσκεις;
- τὰ θεῶν μηδὲν ἀγάζειν.

A. Let your prayer be moderate.

B. What *kairos* do you advise?

A. Not to be excessive in matters to do with the gods.

In this exchange *μέτριον ἔπος*, *καιρός* and *μηδὲν ἀγάζειν* are all parallel to each other. Given the context, it is truly astounding that *kairos* here has ever been interpreted as anything but “moderation”<sup>19</sup>).

The two instances of the word in *Agamemnon* treat *kairos* as a target to be aimed at<sup>20</sup>). This is explicit at *Ag.* 365, where it is claimed that in destroying Troy Zeus aimed his bow

ὅπως ἄν  
μήτε πρὸ καιροῦ μήθ' ὑπὲρ ἄστρον  
βέλος ἠλίθιον σκήψειεν.

The chorus is equally “on target” in its attitude to Agamemnon (787),

μήθ' ὑπεράρας μήθ' ὑποκάμψας  
καιρὸν χάριτος,

neither exceeding nor falling short of the right degree of courtliness.

Similarly at *P. V.* 507 Prometheus is urged not to help mortals “beyond what is appropriate”.

<sup>18</sup>) Marsh McCall, “The secondary choruses in Aeschylus’ *Supplices*”, *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 9 (1977) 117–31, convincingly argues that the divided chorus here are the Danaids themselves.

<sup>19</sup>) See introductory section for further comments. For LSJ’s interpretation of *kairos* in this passage as “profit”, see my article *op.cit.* n. 3.

<sup>20</sup>) I agree with Barrett (231) that Palmer (154ff.) is wrong to derive from such passages a primary sense of “mark” or “limit” for *kairos*. The sense of “target” is rather derived from the verb of aiming. The etymology of the word is quite uncertain (see the dictionaries of Chantraine and Frisk), and so is of no help in determining its semantic field.

More elusive is *Ch.* 710, where Clytemnestra promises to reward the messenger in spite of his 'bad' news:

ἀλλ' ἔσθ' ὁ καιρὸς ἡμερεύοντας ξένους  
μακρᾶς κελεύθου τυγχάνειν τὰ πρόσφορα.

But the right thing is that a guest who has been traveling all day should receive what he needs after his long journey.

If *kairos* were temporal in its reference, meaning "It's high time that . . .", then ξένους would have to be translated as "these strangers", which would require a demonstrative or at least a definite article. Furthermore, by taking 710–11 as stating a general principle of behaviour, line 714,

κάκει κυρούντων δόμασιν τὰ πρόσφορα,

becomes meaningful as its particular realization.

Finally, at fr. 602 Mette,

ψευδῶν δὲ καιρὸν ἔσθ' ὅπου τιμᾷ θεός

There are times when the god honours a well placed lie,

*kairos* refers to that combination of time, place and moral situation which makes a lie "just right".

Aeschylus' use of *kairios* is also worth considering. In a temporal sense (meaning "timely" or "opportune"), *kairios* qualifies fortune (*Ch.* 1064, *Ag.* 1042). In a local sense ("at the critical spot") *kairios* continues the Homeric sense of "mortal" as applied to well directed blows (*Ag.* 1292, 1343–44). But *kairios* can also have some of the same figurative applications as *kairos* itself. At *Su.* 446 the tongue is compared to a bowman who shoots out words that are not "on target":

. . . γλῶσσα τοξεύσασα μὴ τὰ καιρία,  
ἀλγεινά, θυμοῦ κάρτα κινητήρια . . .

Intemperate speech does not "hit the mark" and so produces anguish and anger. Similarly (though without the overt imagery) Eteocles at *Sept.* 1 says that the leader must "say what is appropriate", λέγειν τὰ καιρία. Similarly *kairia* at fr. 351 Mette is best interpreted as "appropriate" in the broadest sense:

σιγῶν θ' ὅπου δεῖ καὶ λέγων τὰ καιρία.

Again at *P. V.* 1036 the chorus suggest to Prometheus that Hermes "does not seem to have spoken off the point (ἄκαιρα)".

At fr. 494.21 *Μette τού]ς ἄκαιρα μωμένους* appears to mean “men in their overreaching passions”.

At *Ag.* 808 *ἀκαίρως* as the negative counterpart of *δικαίως*<sup>21)</sup> provides one of the clearest examples of the ethical possibilities of *kairos*:

γνώση δὲ χρόνῳ διαπενθόμενος  
τόν τε δικαίως καὶ τὸν ἀκαίρως  
πόλιν οἰκουροῦντα πολιτῶν.

#### IV.

Aeschylean *kairos* is still well within the pattern established by Hesiod, Theognis and Pindar. With Sophocles, however, *kairos* takes on a predominantly temporal sense. In fact two out of every three examples of *kairos* in Sophocles are temporal. But at this early stage even so called temporal *kairos* only implies time without actually expressing it. In its temporal usage *kairos* means “the right (time)”, not “the right time”. Hence the possibility of such fullness of expression as *χρόνου . . . καιρόν* (S., *El.* 1292)<sup>22)</sup>. This makes it easier to understand how, in a play like *Electra*, where temporal *kairos* is thematically significant, it is possible to interweave instances of non-temporal with temporal *kairos* to contribute to an overall theme of “appropriateness”. Thus in the prologue the Pedagogue and Orestes repeatedly insist that this is “the right time” for action (22, 39, 75). But, contributing to the general theme of *kairos*, Orestes also asks his companion to correct his plan (31)

εἰ μή τι καιροῦ τυγχάνω  
if I don't hit the target right.

Related to this example of *kairos* as the target of counsel is the phrase *πρὸς καιρόν* “towards the mark”. So the investigative agent Odysseus asks Athena (*Aj.* 38)

ἦ . . . πρὸς καιρόν πονῶ;  
Am I getting warm?

<sup>21)</sup> In their edition, Headlam-Thomson suggest a similar correspondence between *ἀκαίρως* and *ἐνδίκως* at *Ch.* 624/638. I would however agree with most editors that the passage is beyond repair.

<sup>22)</sup> Cf. Eur. *Ion* 659.

Similarly Teiresias at *O. T.* 325 remarks to Oedipus:

ὄρω γὰρ οὐδὲ σοὶ τὸ σὸν φώνημ' ἰὸν  
πρὸς καιρόν.

I see that *your* utterance is off target.

Again at *Tr.* 59 the Nurse, after giving advice, diffidently suggests that if she has spoken "to the mark" there is now an opportunity of acting on her words.

Perhaps the most telling instance of *kairos* in Sophocles is at *O. T.* 1513<sup>23</sup>). The hero is about to leave the stage, but before doing so he gives his daughters some parting advice. They should pray

ὄῃ καιρὸς αἰεὶ ζῆν,

always to live at the point of *kairos*,

i.e. in that moderate position between extremes which was so tragically unattainable for Oedipus himself. This concept is picked up by Creon a few lines later (1516), who answers Oedipus' bitter acceptance of the need for obedience with the proverbial

πάντα γὰρ καιρῶ καλά

everything is fine through propriety.

Even for Oedipus in his extremity there is a *kairos* to regulate his actions.

Unlike *kairos*, *kairios* in Sophocles is predominantly non-temporal. The sense of "timely" (temporally appropriate) occurs only at *Ph.* 637 and *O. T.* 631. Somewhere in between is *Ph.* 862, where the chorus question whether Neoptolemus' objections to taking the bow without Philoctetes along with it are "to the mark" or "opportune". In their simplicity they have a different idea about *kairos* than Neoptolemus himself. They think only in opportunistic terms<sup>24</sup>), while for Neoptolemus *kairos* develops an ethical tinge.

At *Ph.* 525 this ethical sense comes to the fore when an activity *πρὸς τὸ καίριον*, "tending to what is right", is opposed to a shameful

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<sup>23</sup>) For extended comment see Sheppard *passim*. C. M. Bowra gives a sensible interpretation of the passage in his *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford 1944) 166. Dindorf's *ὄῃ καιρὸς ἐᾶ ζῆν*, popular among nineteenth century editors, could only have gained currency from a prejudice against non-temporal *kairos*.

<sup>24</sup>) Cf. *Ph.* 151, discussed in my article *op.cit.* n. 3.

evasion of responsibility. It would be disgraceful were Neoptolemus to prove more remiss than the chorus

ξένῳ . . . πρὸς τὸ καίριον ποιεῖν

in making all suitable efforts to serve a stranger.

Similarly at *Aj.* 120 δρᾶν . . . τὰ καίρια probably refers to the whole gamut of acceptable behaviour rather than to a more narrow “what the occasion demands”. In the past, as Athena admits, Ajax was second to none in good sense and in the ability “to do the right thing”.

In *Ajax kairos* also plays a part in the ethical system of Menelaus. Society, so he claims, needs “a healthy fear”, δέος τι καίριον (1084), to regulate its members.

In extreme cases normalcy itself would be abnormal. This is Electra’s position. Her plight forces her into what would normally be a quite unnatural hatred of her mother. But the chorus, she insists, should not attempt to mollify her or change her attitude (*El.* 228):

τίμι γάρ ποτ’ ἄν, ὃ φίλια γενέθλα,  
 πρόσφορον ἀκούσαιμ’ ἔπος,  
 τίμι φρονοῦντι καίρια;

for in the eyes of what person<sup>25</sup>), dear friend, I mean of what right minded person, could I hear anything relevant?

The “right minded person”, “the one who thinks moderate thoughts”, would as a rule recommend traditional *sophrosyne*, but would recognize that in her insoluble situation (230) the normal rules do not apply. As she exclaims soon after (236), “What measure (μέτρον) is there in evil?”

Finally we should note the occurrences of *epikairos*, a word attested for the first time in Sophocles. At *O. T.* 875 it appears in the context of excess and *hubris*, and should probably be endowed with all the ethical meaning of *kairos* itself:

ὑβρις, εἰ  
 πολλῶν ὑπερπλησθῆ μάταν,  
 ἃ μὴ ἴπικαιρα μηδὲ συμφέροντα . . .

*Hybris*, if it be vainly filled with too many things that are neither moderate nor beneficial . . .

<sup>25</sup>) For the difficulty of taking the dative any other way see Jebb’s note ad 226ff.



More prosaic is the use of *epikairos* at *Aj.* 1405, where it refers to a spatially "convenient" tripod.

## V.

In Euripides, as in Sophocles, about two thirds of the instances of *kairos* are temporal or at least temporally derived. Worth noting among the latter is the innovation of treating *kairos* as a "negative opportunity", i.e. a crisis or disaster (*Or.* 384, 699, *Su.* 509), a meaning which became common in the fourth century.

Among the non-temporal instances, *Su.* 744 exemplifies the image already familiar from Aeschylus and Sophocles of *kairos* as the archer's target:

ὃ καιροῦ πέρα  
τὸ τόξον ἐντείνοντες . . .

A similar use of *kairos* after a comparative is found at fr. 626.4, where the advice not to throw out a man who is trusted by the people is balanced by the warning

μηδ' ἀῖξε καιροῦ μείζον

but do not exalt him more than is proper.

At *Andr.* 484 *kairos* appears to indicate the right political-domestic arrangement required for efficient management. Power generally tends to be concentrated on one man

ὁπότεν εὔρειν θέλωσι καιρόν

when people want to find the right balance.

Yet another variety of *kairos* appears at *Andr.* 1120, where Neoptolemus is described as not "mortally wounded", *εἰς καιρόν τυπείς*. *Kairos* is here the appropriate or critical place on the body, and *εἰς καιρόν* is equivalent to *καιρίως*.

At *I. A.* 325 *kairos* is ambiguous. Menelaus, as Agamemnon indignantly exclaims, has broken the seal of his letter and learned

ἄ μή σε καιρὸς εἰδέναι

what it is not proper/timely for you to know.

Similarly ambiguous is *Ion* 1552, where Ion thinks of flight at the epiphany of Athena,

εἰ μή καιρός ἐσθ' ἡμᾶς ὄραῖν

if it is not proper/timely that we look.

Another difficult case is *El.* 996, where the chorus greet the arrival of Clytemnestra and her retinue at Electra's cottage with the remark:

τὰς σὰς δὲ τύχας θεραπεύεσθαι  
καιρός.

It is timely/proper that your fortune be attended to.

Temporal *kairos* here would suggest an ironical reference to Electra's deadly way of "attending to" her mother. Non-temporal *kairos*, on the other hand, would accent the invidious nature of the chorus' greeting, who have just equated Clytemnestra with the gods (994). In the same ambiguous category is *Or.* 122, where Helen promises all the rites "appropriate to" or "timely for" her sister's tomb.

Different again is the *kairos* of favourable weather which, if everything is "just right", can make a bad soil a better producer than a good soil (*Hec.* 593):

γῆ . . . κακῆ  
τυχοῦσα καιροῦ θεόθεν . . .

bad soil getting the right measure from heaven . . .

A *kairos* of natural rhetoric appears at *Ph.* 471. The just cause (τᾶνδικα) ἔχει . . . αὐτὰ καιρόν, "bears its propriety in itself", and contrasts with the adventitious decorum of false rhetoric. Similarly the false myth is described at *I. A.* 800 as spreading its tale to mankind παρὰ καιρόν ἄλλως, "vainly and inappropriately".

Still another variety of *kairos* appears at *Hi.* 386, where it marks the distinction between good and bad *aidos*<sup>26</sup>):

εἰ δ' ὁ καιρός ἦν σαφής . . .

If the discrimination<sup>27</sup>) were plain . . .

The trick is to know the limit beyond which good turns to bad.

More difficult is *Andr.* 131, where most interpreters follow the lead of the scholia and render *kairos* as "profit" (ὠφελία). Such a

<sup>26</sup>) J. Pigeaud, *Les Etudes Classiques* 44 (1976) 17–19, attempts without success to re-introduce a temporal interpretation of *kairos* in this passage. For σαφής in such discriminations cf. ὄρος . . . σαφής at *H. F.* 669–70 and κανὼν σαφής at *Su.* 650 (both passages are noted in this connection by Ernst Mielert, "Ausdrücke für Wahrheit und Lüge in der attischen Tragödie", Diss. Munich 1958, 62).

<sup>27</sup>) My translation here does not imply support for an etymology from κείρω (see n. 20 above).

meaning of *kairos* is not normal in the fifth century<sup>28</sup>) and, even if it were possible, the context militates against it. The chorus ask Andromache, who cannot as a slave pretend to any special treatment,

τί σοι  
 καιρὸς ἀτυζομένα δέμας αἰκέλιον καταλείβειν  
 δεσποτῶν ἀνάγκαις;

How is it *kairos* for you in your frenzy to stain your body with weeping at the compulsion of your masters?

Just before, they had urged her to realize her position (126 γνῶθι τύχην). As the native of a conquered city, she should not struggle against her mistress, who is a native of Sparta (127f.). A few lines later (136ff.) they continue in the same vein: she should realize her position as a slave in a foreign land (γνῶθι δ' οὖσ' ἐπὶ ξένας δμῳίς). In the context of this appeal to the reality principle through the language of γνῶθι σεαυτόν, *kairos* should be given an ethical interpretation. How is it "proper" for a slave to be accorded the same consideration as a princess?

*Kairos* at *Med.* 128 is closely related in the exegetical tradition to *Andr.* 131, in that here too *kairos* is assigned the meaning "profit". The context, however, provides even less encouragement for such a meaning here than in *Andromache*. In a soliloquy the Nurse discourses on the dangerous passions of princes. She herself would prefer the security of a modest, bourgeois existence:

τῶν γὰρ μετρίων πρῶτα μὲν εἰπεῖν  
 τοῦνομα νικᾶ, χρῆσθαί τε μακροῦ  
 λῶστα βροτοῖσιν· τὰ δ' ὑπερβάλλοντ'  
 οὐδένα καιρὸν δύναται θνητοῖς.

Already Elmsley in his edition saw that in this context of moderation and excess *kairos* must have an ethical sense. But what exposed him to the scorn of Hermann and discouraged further interpretation on these lines was the apparent tautology of τὰ ὑπερβάλλοντα οὐδένα καιρὸν δύναται, which Hermann mockingly renders *immodica supra modum valent*. It is however better, with Denys Page in his edition, to take οὐδένα καιρὸν as the object of δύναται, meaning "does not signify [have the force of] *kairos*"<sup>29</sup>). To this is attached

<sup>28</sup>) See in general my article op.cit. n. 3.

<sup>29</sup>) See Otto Regenbogen, "Randbemerkungen zur *Medea* des Euripides", *Eranos* 48 (1950) 24.

the important proviso "for mortals", a proviso which removes any tautology. Excess is not "the right degree" for mortals, but may very well be "the right degree" for gods. In fact the gods can altogether do without *kairos* and the ethics of moderation. They are at the opposite pole from a slave like Andromache, for whom not even the slightest liberty is *kairos*. The espousal of *kairos* and the rejection of excess in *Medea* is closely paralleled by fr. 893.3, where the speaker vows to reject "everything inappropriate and excessive" (τὸ δ' ἄκαιριον ἅπαν ὑπερβάλλον τε μὴ προσείμαν).

Another instance of ethical *kairos* is probably to be found in *Alexandros* fr. 23.12 Snell (= Page, *Literary Papyri*, p. 58 v. 23) in a passage where Deiphobus and Hector discuss the athletic triumph of the 'slave' Alexander over the royal contenders. Deiphobus is outraged, while Hector is more moderate. Deiphobus accuses Hector of taking the matter too lightly, while Hector appears to claim that it is "[not] *kairos* to be upset", οὐ τοι] καιρός ὠδίνειν φρένας. The *kairos* or appropriate behaviour espoused by Hector is rejected by Deiphobus, who in conjunction with Hecuba plots the upstart's murder.

In Euripides the adjective *kairios* has all the variety of the noun. Temporal *kairios* appears at *El.* 898; at *Ph.* 1431 it appears in the Homeric sense of "lethal" (*καιρίους σφαγᾶς*); at *I. A.* 829 and *Hrclld.* 471 it is used with verbs of speaking or knowing in the sense of "relevant", "to the point". Thus at *I. A.* 829 Achilles congratulates Clytemnestra on the brevity of her self introduction (ἔλεξας . . . τὰ καιρία, "you mentioned the relevant points"), while at *Hrclld.* 471 Demophon asks the chorus if they know "a more suitable plan", *καιριωτέραν βουλὴν*.

I conclude with an example of *akairos* from *I. T.* 419. The chorus, in speculating on how Orestes and Pylades came to distant Tauri, suggest an insatiable desire for profit as a possible motive. They conclude that

γνώμα δ' οἷς μὲν ἄκαιρος ὄλ-  
βου, τοῖς δ' ἐς μέσον ἦκει.

Some people's judgement does not hit the right measure of wealth [i.e., they are too greedy], while with others it reaches the mean<sup>30</sup>).

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<sup>30</sup>) For μέσον in the sense of τὸ μέτριον see Platnauer's commentary ad loc.

## VI.

For most prose authors the preponderance of temporal *kairos*, already apparent in poetry with Sophocles, is overwhelming<sup>31</sup>). For example Herodotean *kairos* is entirely temporal or circumstantial, while in Thucydides it is generally so. Similarly in Comedy *kairos* is almost exclusively temporal, the only exception being a passage in Alexis (fr. 173.0 Kock), the leading poet of Middle Comedy, on the ideal temperature between too hot and too cold for serving cooked food:

τοῖσιν γὰρ ἐστιωμένοις  
τὸν καιρὸν ἀποδίδωμι τῆς συγκράσεως.

for I provide for the guests the right degree of blending between the two.

And yet, as Xenophon, Isocrates and Plato show, *kairos* was still capable of being freely used in its archaic sense in normal Attic of the fourth century. Furthermore, the use of *kairos* in Democritus and particularly some of the works in the *Hippocratic Collection* shows that it can retain its full flexibility in Ionic as well. Only by the latter part of the fourth century does non-temporal *kairos* appear to become a rarity in all types of literature.

The preponderance of temporally derived meanings of *kairos* in Thucydides, e.g. "tactical moment", "critical situation", and the like, should not blind us to those passages where *kairos* shows a spatial rather than a temporal appropriateness. For example, towers are built (4.90.2) ἢ καιρὸς ἦν, "in tactical locations". More interesting are the examples of an ethical use. In two cases the *kairos* of the well regulated state contrasts with the *akolasia* of extreme democracy. At 2.65.9, in his summation of Pericles' achievement, Thucydides remarks that whenever the statesman noticed that the people were

παρὰ καιρὸν ὑβρεῖ θρασυῶντας,  
immoderately self-confident in their *hubris*,

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<sup>31</sup>) It is not the purpose of this article to trace the meanings that developed out of temporal *kairos*, such as circumstance or juncture, critical time or crisis, opportunity, misfortune and the like, nor to trace the degeneration of temporal *kairos* to a mere synonym of *chronos*. For a helpful collection of material see J. H. H. Schmidt, *Synonymik der griechischen Sprache* (Leipzig 1878) II, 60–62, 71. Some of the ramifications of temporal *kairos* are discussed in my article op.cit. n. 3.

he would instill fear into them, while conversely, if he saw they were irrationally afraid, he would bolster up their self-confidence. Again at 8.1.3 Thucydides describes how, under the effect of defeat, the Athenians decided “to make sobering economies (*ἐς εὐτέλειαν σωφρο-νίσαι*) in the state administration and choose a governing body of elders who were to frame resolutions about the current situation in whatever way was appropriate (*ὡς ἂν καιρὸς ἦ*)”<sup>32</sup>). *Kairos* rather than extremism ruled the deliberations of the Probouloi under the reformed constitution. In another passage *kairos* is enlisted to help express the relativistic ethics of empire. At 6.85.1 an Athenian spokesman explains that an imperial city should only make friends and enemies out of rational considerations of advantage and reliability. With this in view,

*δεῖ ἢ ἐχθρὸν ἢ φίλον μετὰ καιροῦ γίγνεσθαι*

one must become friends and enemies with discretion.

Xenophon shows a remarkably varied application of non-temporal *kairos*. This is perhaps due more to the variety of his subject matter than to any essential difference from Thucydides. For, to judge from the evidence of Sturz’s *Lexicon Xenophonteum*, there are very few instances of non-temporal *kairos* in his purely historical work.

Non-temporal *kairos* in Xenophon is, as one might expect from such an author, usually down to earth. For example at *Symp.* 2.19 Socrates is said to have a stomach “greater than it should be”, *μεῖζω τοῦ καιροῦ*. In *Ages.* 5.1 *kairos* describes the right degree of appetite between gluttony and compulsive dieting. In *Peri Hipp.* 10.14 it marks the mean between excessive and inadequate exercise. In this passage, however, there is the further generalization that *ὑπερβάλλον δὲ τὸν καιρὸν οὐδὲν τῶν πάντων ἡδὺ οὔτε ἵππῳ οὔτε ἀνθρώπῳ*. Again at *Peri Hipp.* 9.1 a horse can be “more spirited than is proper”, *θυμοειδестέρῳ . . . τοῦ καιροῦ [καιρίου A]*, while at *Peri Hipp.* 8.4 Xenophon prescribes a method for making a reluctant horse jump over a ditch

*οὐ τὸ μέτρον, ἀλλὰ πολὺ πλεόν τοῦ καιροῦ [καιρίου A]*

not just the right amount, but much more than the right amount.

<sup>32</sup>) This phrase cannot mean “whenever the proper time arose”, for in the fifth century B.C. *ὡς ἂν* with the subjunctive did not yet admit the meaning “whenever”. See LSJ s.v. *ὡς*, section Ad.; Schwyzler, *Gr. Gramm.* II, 664.3, 665.8.

At *Hipparch.* 1.8, as in Thucydides, the Athenian democracy can offend against *kairos* "if it becomes excessively angry", ἦν τι παρὰ καιρὸν χालεπαίνη. Frequently *kairos* has a spatial application, indicating the "right" distance to advance or retreat<sup>33</sup>).

In Isocrates we see the *kairos* of rhetorical theory, which presumably descends from Gorgias' lost work on the subject<sup>34</sup>). *Kairos*, too, is important in the work of Gorgias' pupil Alcidas. While enlarging on the advantages as well as the difficulties of impromptu as opposed to written speech, Alcidas asserts that a speaker from a prepared text cannot fully respond to the circumstances in which a speech is delivered. "For those who work hard on a written text before a contest sometimes miss the right response (τῶν καιρῶν ἀμαρτάνουσιν): they either become hateful to their audience by speaking longer than is desired or they stop prematurely when the audience wants to hear more" (Radermacher, *Artium Scriptores* B XXII, 15.22). For an impromptu speaker the *kairos* of the speech itself consists of a sensitive response to the *kairos* of the ever changing outward circumstances.

Isocratean *kairos* has been minutely and sensitively studied by H. Wersdörfer<sup>35</sup>), and only the briefest sampling is necessary here. Like Pindar, Isocrates is a panegyrist, and like Pindar his *kairos*, or (as he prefers it) *kairoi*, alternate between the ethical and the aesthetic.

Purely ethical *kairos* is well represented in the moralizing discourse *To Nicocles*. Nicocles is advised to control his words and actions so as to make as few mistakes as possible (2.33): κράτιστον μὲν τῆς ἀκμῆς τῶν καιρῶν τυγχάνειν, ἐπειδὴ δὲ δυσκαταμαθήτως ἔχουσιν, ἐλλείπειν αἰροῦ καὶ μὴ πλεονάζειν· αἱ γὰρ μετριότητες μᾶλλον ἐν ταῖς ἐνδείαις ἢ ταῖς ὑπερβολαῖς ἐνεῖσιν. In this context of too much and too little as opposed to the mean, the *kairoi* represent a realistic approximation to "das rechte Handeln zur rechten Zeit am rechten Ort" (Wersdörfer 61).

Literary *kairos* in Isocrates is extraordinary for its Pindaric technique. As in Pindar, it is a reason to abbreviate, but, also as in Pindar, it can be artfully ignored. At *Ev.* 34, the inordinate length of comparing Evagoras to all the princes of the past forces

<sup>33</sup>) E.g. *Cyr.* 6.3.29, *Anab.* 4.3.34, *Hell.* 2.3.24, 5.3.5, 7.5.13.

<sup>34</sup>) For speculations on this see Wilhelm Süß, *Ethos* (Leipzig 1910) 18–24.

<sup>35</sup>) *Die Philosophie des Isocrates im Spiegel ihrer Terminologie*, Diss. Bonn, 1940.

on the laudator a principle of selection. At *Hel.* 29, the consciousness of being carried  $\xi\xi\omega$  . . .  $\tau\tilde{\omega}\nu$   $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\tilde{\omega}\nu$  forces the speaker to abbreviate his account of Theseus. On the other hand, at *Pan.* 85 an excessively long digression on the virtues of Agamemnon, which appears to “disregard due measure”,  $\tau\tilde{\omega}\nu$   $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\tilde{\omega}\nu$   $\acute{\alpha}\mu\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\nu$ , and spoil “the balance (*συμμετρία*) of the speech”, is justified because of its uplifting subject matter<sup>36</sup>). As in Pindar (*P.* 1.81), literary *kairos* is ignored in the interests of a higher cause<sup>37</sup>).

In the other Attic orators non-temporal *kairos* is of small importance. It appears at pseudo-And. 4.7 (early fourth century?) in reference to those who flatter  $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho$   $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\tilde{\omega}\nu$ . It does not occur at all in Antiphon, Lysias, Isaeus, Aeschines, or the minor orators, while of the hundred or so instances of *kairos* in Demosthenes only two are non-temporal<sup>38</sup>). At 16.23 those who wish to strengthen either the Thebans or the Spartans  $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha$   $\tau\tilde{\omega}\nu$   $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\tilde{\omega}\nu$ , “beyond the right amount”, are equally castigated. At 23.122 Demosthenes, like Thucydides before him (6.85.1), expresses the relativity of both friendship and hostility in terms of *kairos*:  $\acute{\alpha}\chi\rho\iota$   $\tau\tilde{\omega}\nu$   $\kappa\alpha\iota$   $\phi\iota\lambda\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\nu$ ,  $\omicron\tilde{\iota}\mu\alpha\iota$ ,  $\chi\rho\eta$   $\kappa\alpha\iota$   $\mu\iota\sigma\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\nu$ ,  $\mu\eta\delta\epsilon\tau\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omega\nu$   $\tau\tilde{\omega}\nu$   $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\tilde{\omega}\nu$   $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho\beta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omicron\nu\tau\alpha\varsigma$ .

In Plato non-temporal *kairos*, though it does not have the technical importance that it does for Isocrates, is nevertheless significantly represented. About half of the fifty odd examples of *kairos* in Plato are non-temporal or at least partially so. Of these, half again have a literary or artistic reference, though here it is sometimes impossible to separate art from philosophy. Thus at *Soph.* 260 A 1 it is remarked that the arguments for merging the forms have been “appropriately” ( $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$   $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\tilde{\omega}\nu$ ) treated as a necessary preliminary to further discussion. Naturally if a choice has to be made, aesthetic must give way to philosophic considerations (*Theaet.* 172 D).

At *Pol.* 284 E 6 *kairos* is, at least by association, elevated to a principle of great importance. In that dialogue the Stranger makes a distinction between the art of measurement through opposites and through a norm. Normative measurement makes reference  $\pi\rho\tilde{\omicron}\varsigma$

<sup>36</sup>) For the connection between *symmetria* and *kairos* see Pfister 136–38 and Wersdörfer 62ff.

<sup>37</sup>) For the rhetoric of this passage as a whole see William H. Race, “Panathenaicus 74–80”, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 108 (1978) 175–85.

<sup>38</sup>) But *akairos* is used rhetorically at Dem. 60.6 and [Dem.] 61.27 (see Bundy 18).



τὸ μέτριον καὶ τὸ πρόπον<sup>39</sup>) καὶ τὸν καιρὸν καὶ τὸ δέον καὶ πάνθ' ὁπόσα εἰς τὸ μέσον ἀπωκίσθη τῶν ἐσχάτων. Of these terms τὸ μέτριον is the only one favoured by Plato for serious philosophic use, and it is interesting to note that Aristotle favours the even more neutral τὸ μέσον. *Kairos* is obviously useful as part of a litany of traditional value words which lend emotional support to the Stranger's position. Furthermore, a few pages later (307B1), we see *kairos* operating in an aesthetic context as a norm of music. "Music that appropriately employs a slow tempo", *μοῦσαν ἐν καιρῷ βραδυτῆτι προσχρωμένην* produces an effect of measured gravity, whereas its inappropriate use produces stupefaction. Just so with fast tempi. They are intended to produce feelings of vigor and courage, but when they are "more intense than they should be", *ἄξύτερα . . . τοῦ καιροῦ*, they produce a dangerous excitement.

On a practical level we might note the case of the guardians who arrange marriages *παρὰ καιρόν*, "improperly" (*Rep.* 8.546D2). Adam's note in his edition is worth quoting: "The phrase does not, as I once thought, imply that Nature has appointed certain periodic times or seasons in the life of men and women when their union will produce good offspring, but refers to the unions of wrong couples, superabundance of marriages, and the like: cf. V 459E ff."

More ethical in tone is *Laws* 11.938B2, where *πολυδικεῖν*, "being litigious", is modified by *παρὰ καιρόν*, "contrary to due measure". Since litigiousness is always wrong, the inappropriateness here cannot be temporal.

Worth noting are two occasions where *kairos* refers to a dangerously subjective norm. Both at *Alc. II* 148A7 and *Laws* 3.687A5 the phrase *τοῦ καιροῦ τυχεῖν* is used of those who "obtain their aim" without knowing their own good.

In strong contrast to Plato, there is apparently only one instance of non-temporal *kairos* in the genuine works of Aristotle<sup>40</sup>). At *Met.*

<sup>39</sup>) For τὸ πρόπον and its relationship to *kairos* see Max Pohlenz, *Kleine Schriften* I (Hildesheim 1965) 100–39.

<sup>40</sup>) For *kairos* in Aristotle see Pierre Aubenque, *La Prudence chez Aristote* (Paris 1963) 95–105. Non-temporal *kairos* appears in the spurious and late *Problemata* (954A35), where in a discussion of drunkenness a mix that is *ψυχροτέρα καιροῦ* is said to have a dire effect. We might add that if, with Diels (*Vorsokr.* 58D5), we assign the discussion in Iamblichus on Pythagorean "tact" to Aristoxenos, then we have the spectacle of a pupil of Aristotle assigning to *kairos* the function and prestige of *dikaiosune*. But the attribution is guesswork and the passage is not included in Fritz

1043B25 a crude difficulty brought up by the school of Antisthenes is said to "have a certain point or appropriateness", ἔχει τινὰ καιρόν. But at *E. N.* 1.1096A26ff., *kairos* is firmly relegated to the temporal sphere and separated from τὸ μέτριον: ἐν τῷ ποσῷ τὸ μέτριον . . . καὶ ἐν χρόνῳ καιρός.

To judge then from both the orators and from Aristotle, by the end of the fourth century B. C. *kairos* in Attic would appear to be almost entirely temporal or temporally derived in its meanings.

Despite the evidence of Herodotus, where *kairos* is always temporal, Ionic prose of the fifth and fourth century is at least as receptive to non-temporal *kairos* as Attic. In the ethics of Democritus *kairos* expresses the right measure of physical indulgence beyond which the ultimate pain outweighs any immediate pleasure (*Vorsokr.* 68.B235): ὅσοι ἀπὸ γαστροῦ τὰς ἡδονὰς ποιέονται ὑπερβληκότες τὸν καιρόν ἐπὶ βρώσεσιν ἢ πόσεσιν ἢ ἀφροδισίοσιν, τοῖσι πᾶσιν αἱ μὲν ἡδοναὶ βραχεῖαι . . . αἱ δὲ λῦπαι πολλαί.

But it is above all in some of the writings of the *Hippocratic Collection* that non-temporal *kairos* is most evident<sup>41</sup>). The author of the embryological series *Genit.*, *Nat. Puer.*, *Morb. IV* consistently uses *kairos* in a nontemporal sense. What is more, all fourteen instances<sup>42</sup>) are syntactically alike, being in the genitive after a comparative. Thus wombs are (*Genit.* 9.2) "narrower than they should be", στενότεραι . . . τοῦ καιροῦ or conversely they (*Genit.* 4.1) "gape more than they should", χάσκωσιν . . . μᾶλλον τοῦ καιροῦ. A humour is (*Morb. IV* 39.4, 51.1) "more abundant than it should be", πλεῖον τοῦ καιροῦ or (*Morb. IV* 47.1) "more stirred up than it should be", μᾶλλον τοῦ καιροῦ τετάρακται. The same formula μᾶλλον τοῦ καιροῦ also appears at *Acut.* 53.1, 53.2, 54.1, 67.1, 67.2, though in that work there are also several instances of temporal *kairos*.

In all the above examples, *kairos* represents the state of normality and health<sup>43</sup>). But it may also refer to the conditions that provide

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Wehrl's collection of the fragments of Aristoxenos (see *Die Schule des Aristoteles* II [Basle 1945] 59). For rank speculation on what is meant by the Pythagorean identification of *kairos* with the number seven see P. Kucharski, "Sur la notion pythagoricienne du kairos", *Revue Philosophique* 153 (1963) 141-69.

<sup>41</sup>) This is not to deny the overriding importance of temporal *kairos* in parts of the *Hippocratic Collection*. See especially *Morb.* 5.

<sup>42</sup>) I rely here on the index verborum to Robert Joly's Budé edition.

<sup>43</sup>) Plato, *Tim.* 85D1 provides an interesting example of this medical use of *kairos*: the fibrine (*ινες*) is credited with maintaining the "normal composition" of the blood (*καιρόν* . . . τούτων . . . φυλάττουσιν).

good health. For example at *Aer.* 10.8 a healthy winter is μέτριος καὶ μήτε λίην εὐδῖος μήτε ὑπερβάλλον τὸν καιρὸν τῷ ψύχει.

Naturally, too, it can refer to the correct dosage of a medicine, and this is what, in a well known passage, the author of *Loc. Hom.* has in mind in his proposition (44)

ἡ δὲ ἰητρικὴ ὀλιγόκαιρός ἐστι

Medicine has little margin for error.

One MS offers an alternate reading ὀλιγοχρόνιος, but, as the development of the author's argument shows, this cannot be right even as an 'explanation' of ὀλιγόκαιρος. For in this passage *kairos* has to do with quantity, not time. In the administration of purgatives *kairos* consists in giving the right quantity for the individual body to handle. A wrong amount produces contrary results: ὁ δὲ καιρός ὁδ' ἐστὶ τὰ σιτία προσφέρειν, ὅσων μέλλει τὸ σῶμα προσφερομένων τὸ πλῆθος κρατεῖν, ὥστ' ἦν μὲν οὕτω ποιῆ, πᾶσα ἀνάγκη τὸ ὑποχωρητικὸν σιτίον προσφερόμενον ὑποχωρητικὸν εἶναι . . . ἦν κρατῆ οὖν τὸ σῶμα τῶν σιτίων, οὔτε νοῦσος οὔτε ὑπεναντίωσις γίνεται προσφερομένων, καὶ οὕτως ὁ καιρός ἐστὶν ὃν δεῖ τὸν ἰητρὸν εἰδέναι· ἐπὴν δὲ τὸν καιρὸν ὑπερβάλλῃ, τὸ ὑπεναντίον γίνεται . . .

If one exceeds the *kairos* of a right dosage, the effect is the opposite of what is intended. This demonstrates in a concrete manner the author's original proposition<sup>44</sup>).

## VII.

Our study of *kairos* in Attic suggested that the non-temporal meanings were largely in abeyance by the end of the fourth century B. C. However as a literary-rhetorical term *kairos* is still vigorously championed by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the Augustan period. At *Lysias* 5 he describes the orator as being ἄκαιρος, "ill balanced", in the treatment of his subject matter. This contrasts with Hyperides' quality of τὸ τῶν πραγμάτων εὐκαιρον (*Din.* 7). At *Thucyd.* 1 he explains his own relative neglect of the historian in an earlier work by his "aim of writing a well balanced composition", τῆς εὐκαιρίας τῶν πραγμάτων στοχαζόμενος<sup>45</sup>).

<sup>44</sup>) For further discussion of *kairos* in *Loc. Hom.* see Hippocrate, v. 13, ed. Robert Joly (Paris 1978) 28–31.

<sup>45</sup>) For the phrase compare Diodorus' formulaic στοχαζόμενος τῆς συμμετρίας (Pfister 137 n. 15) and contrast Dionysius' curious τοῦ χρόνου στοχαζόμενος (*Lys.* 10).

*Kairos* receives an extended treatment at *De Comp. Verb.* 67–68, where Dionysius suggests that monotony should be relieved by the tasteful introduction of variety. The degree of variety to be aimed at is a question of *kairos*, “good taste”, and this depends on judgment (*doxa*) rather than knowledge (*episteme*)<sup>46</sup>).

At *Lys.* 11 *kairos* is linked with *χάρις* and *τὸ μέτριον* as the elusive object of a non-rational but trained perception. In attempting to define the *χάρις* of Lysias’ style, Dionysius asks himself a number of specific questions about aesthetic beauty, which are then generalized as follows:

*τίς ὁ λεγόμενος καιρὸς καὶ ποῦ τὸ μέτριον;*

What in general is so-called *kairos* and right measure?

He answers that it is the object of a non-rational perception, *ἄλογος αἴσθησις*, painstakingly developed in a critic whose feelings are unprejudiced by reason (*ἄλόγῳ πάθει*).

For Dionysius *kairos* in its flexibility and vagueness gives convenient expression to his deliberately irrational aesthetics. But a century later Plutarch once again provides examples of its traditional ethical application. At *Moralia* 988E he maintains that at the approach of danger the ratio of passion to reason in a human being becomes greater and, like wine that has not been sufficiently diluted, “departs from due measure”, *ἀπολείπει τὸν καιρόν*. In the same context (989B), *sophrosyne* is said to control the instincts “with due measure and moderation”, *καιρῶ . . . καὶ μετριότητι*. Most striking of all in its traditionality is the passage at *Ages.* 8 where Plutarch describes Lysander as

*ὑπερβάλλον τῆ φιλοτιμίᾳ τὸν καιρόν*

exceeding all proportion in his ambition,

and concludes that “ambitious and proud natures get more harm than good from not guarding against excess (*τὸ ἄγαν*)”. This is unmistakably a return to the classical *kairos*, and Plutarch’s conclusion reads like a paraphrase of the Nurse’s reflections on her mistress in Euripides’ *Medea*. If the tendency to restrict *kairos* first to temporal appropriateness and then to a mere synonym for *chronos*<sup>47</sup>) began in the middle of the fifth century B. C., it still had not run its course more than five centuries later.

<sup>46</sup>) This distinction goes back to Isocrates. See Wersdörfer 61.

<sup>47</sup>) The earliest examples I can find of *kairos* as a mere synonym of *chronos* all occur in Thucydides *Book VIII* (8.5.3, 8.6.1, 8.44.3).