

THE WORD *Καῖρός* IN GREEK DRAMA

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One of the most interesting—and elusive—words in Greek is *καῖρός*.¹ Its first appearance (in adjectival form) is in the *Iliad* (4.185, 8.84, 326), where it denotes a *vital* or *lethal* place in the body.² At the other end of its development, however, a temporal meaning predominates and *καῖρός* eventually becomes a mere synonym of *χρόνος* or *ᾠρα*. But in between, from Hesiod well into the fourth century, *καῖρός* was one of several important *normative* words, often with little or no temporal connotation,

¹ Works devoted largely or entirely to the study of *καῖρός* include the following. G. Brancato, "Il fren dell'arte in Pindaro," *Quattro Note di Filologia Classica* (Messina & Florence 1960) 47–63; P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque* (Paris 1968) s.v.; G. Delling, "*καῖρός*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, G. Kittel, ed., G. W. Bromiley, tr. (Grand Rapids 1965) III 455–64; A. D. Delucchi, "La Teoría del *καῖρός* en la Poética pre-Platónica," *Revista de Filosofía* (La Plata) 23 (1973) 27–33; H.-C. Hahn, "*καῖρός*," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, C. Brown, ed. (Grand Rapids 1978) III 833–39; D. Levi, "La Psicologia dei Personaggi Sofoclei e l'Opportunità," *AeR* 4 (1923) 18–46, "Il *καῖρός* attraverso la Letteratura Greca," *RAL* 32 (1923) 260–81, and "Il Concetto di *καῖρός* e la Filosofia di Platone," *RAL* 33 (1924) 93–118; R. B. Onians, "*Καῖρός*," *The Origins of European Thought* (Cambridge 1951) 343–48; R. T. Otten, *Metron, Mesos, and Kairos: A Semasiological Study* (Diss., Michigan 1957), esp. 62–77; F. Pfister, "Kairos und Symmetrie," *Würzburger Festgabe für H. Bulle* (Stuttgart 1938) 131–50; M. Untersteiner, "*Καῖρός* come fonte del fatto 'poetico'," *La Formazione Poetica di Pindaro* (Florence 1950) 65–102; U. von Wilamowitz, "Excurse zu Euripides Medeia," *Hermes* 15 (1880) 506–11; and J. R. Wilson, "KAIROS as 'Due Measure'," *Glotta* 58 (1980) 177–204.

² Cf. also *κατακαίριον* at *Il.* 11.439. This sense is occasionally found in drama, but not (as in Homer) as a neuter adjective. Cf. Aesch. *Agam.* 1292: *καίριας πληγῆς*; 1343: *καίριαν πληγὴν*; 1344: *καίριως*; Eur. *Phoen.* 1431: *καίριους σφαγὰς*; and *Andr.* 1120: *εἰς καίριον τυπείς*. Perhaps the same spatial sense is retained when *καῖρός* is the equivalent of *σκοπός* "target"—the *proper* spot to hit. Cf. Aesch. *Agam.* 365: *πρὸ καιροῦ* "short of the mark" (LSJ's "prematurely" shows the intrusion of the temporal sense), and Eur. *Supp.* 744: *καιροῦ πέρα* "beyond the mark." R. B. Onians (above, note 1) argues that *καῖρός* means a "penetrable opening, an aperture, passage," and attempts to derive other meanings from this, but his evidence is very selective. Nowhere can I find an explicit indication of this meaning, nor do any later authors seem to show any acquaintance with it. On the difficulties involved in attempting to arrive at an "original" meaning (*Grundbedeutung*) cf. R. T. Otten (above, note 1) 72–73, note 29.

whose basic sense is *propriety*.³ Greek drama from Aeschylus to Menander provides an important corpus within which to study the full range of meanings of *καιρός*, and it is the purpose of this article to trace the various shades of meaning of the word, in order to arrive at a more precise understanding of passages in which the word occurs. In general, I have found that translators and commentators have overemphasized the temporal aspect, with such rule-of-thumb translations as "critical moment," "season," "(due) time," "occasion," "opportunity," and the like. Thus the primary difficulty is deciding in each case to what extent the *normative* and/or *temporal* sense is present.⁴

I. *καιρός* as the proper amount

The first occurrence of the noun is at Hesiod *Op.* 694:

μέτρα φυλάσσεσθαι καιρὸς δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἄριστος

This follows the warning not to put too many goods into a ship or a wagon, lest the greater part be lost. Here it is clear that *καιρός* (like *μέτρα*) is a *normative* word with no apparent reference to time.⁵ It concerns the

³ Several scholars have in passing called attention to the fact that the temporal meaning of *καιρός* is relatively late. Cf. Wilamowitz (above, note 1) 507 and H. Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, M. Hadas and J. Willis, trr. (Oxford 1975) 447, note 14. Concerning Pindar, E. L. Bundy, "The 'Quarrel Between Kallimachos and Apollonios' Part I: The Epilogue of Kallimachos's *Hymn to Apollo*," *CSCA* 5 (1972) 82, note 100, says: "*καιρός* (with its compounds) seems to me often mistreated in texts of the classical period and earlier. Its basic sense is 'propriety,' 'tact,' or 'decorum,' sometimes 'need,' sometimes 'fullness in brief compass.' In Pindar it never has any other meaning: 'opportunity,' 'the fitting time,' 'due season,' 'chance' all do it very scant justice." And in a very important note, W. S. Barrett, *Euripides Hippolytus* (Oxford 1964) 231, says: "*καιρός* in the 5th cent. has a range of meaning reducible to 'what is proper, appropriate, just right.' . . . The temporal 'right time' which predominates in later Greek is clearly not original, and in the 5th cent. is only one application among many." The article of J. R. Wilson (above, note 1), which appeared as the present article was about to go to press, reviews the evidence of *καιρός* as "due measure" from Hesiod to Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Many of the conclusions of this valuable study are similar to mine; I have noted some disagreement concerning individual passages.

⁴ It is, of course, often impossible to isolate one sense of such a complex word as *καιρός*, and in each case I have tried to determine which aspect *predominates*; that does not mean that other connotations may not also be present.

⁵ In Hesiod, and in the *Odyssey*, the "due season" is rendered by *ῥη* (and its various forms). In the period between Aristophanes and Menander, *καιρός* becomes increasingly temporal and gradually loses its normative meanings. One sign of this is the more frequent use (especially in scholastic glosses) of *ἐνκαιρία*. By the time of Menander, it has almost completely lost the classical sense of appropriateness, as is shown by the need to add a qualifying word such as *εἶ*. Cf. Men. fr. 149.3 Koerte: *ἀν λάβη<ς> τὸν καιρὸν εἶ*; fr. 150.2: *καιρὸν εἶν λάβη*; *Samia* 639–40 (Sandbach): *εἰς δέοντα . . . καιρόν*; *Dysk.* 129: *ἐνκαιρία*; and *εὐκαιρος* at *Epitr.* 171, 413, *Perik.* 266, and *Dysk.* 668. At fr. 62.1 and 611.2 Koerte, *καιρός* simply means "set of circumstances" with no normative aspect. At *Synk. Men. et Philist.* 2.17 even occurs the phrase *καιρῷ πονηρῷ*. A propos of the phrase *ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ* at *Epitr.* 232,

proper amount in the given circumstances, which in this case depends upon the number of goods which can be risked on shipboard or put onto a wagon without breaking the axle.

There are several important examples of this meaning in tragedy. At Aesch. *Supp.* 1059–61 occurs the following exchange:

μέτριον νῦν ἔπος εὔχου·
τίνα καιρόν με διδάσκεις;
τὰ θεῶν μηδὲν ἀγάζειν.

Coming between μέτριον and μηδὲν ἀγάζειν, καιρός must concern due measure, the proper amount. At Aesch. *Prom.* 507–08 the Chorus tells Prometheus, “Don’t give too much help (μὴ . . . ὠφέλει καιροῦ πέρα) to mortals, and yet be unconcerned with your own distress.”⁶ The point is that his excessive aid to mortals is matched by his deficient regard for himself. At Aesch. *Agam.* 785 ff. the Chorus deliberates how to address Agamemnon on his return:

πῶς σε προσείπω; πῶς σε σεβίζω
μήθ’ ὑπεράρας μήθ’ ὑποκάμψας
καιρόν χάριτος;

It may be impossible to determine with any certainty whether καιρός means σκοπός⁷ or “proper amount,” but the latter seems more likely in view of the many parallels in which a speaker tries to avoid over- or understating his case. To the often-cited parallel of Eur. *IA* 977 f. (cf. *λίαν*, 977, and *ἐνδεής*, 978) could be added the opening of Pericles’ “Funeral Oration” (Thuc. 2.35.2). And, even if καιρός does have the metaphorical meaning of σκοπός, the issue is still the proper amount, or degree, of χάρις.

Gomme-Sandbach note: “[it] does not mean simply ‘always’, but on every occasion on which there may be conflict. In classical Greek καιρός regularly means *significant* occasion.” But a comparison of fr. 300 and 421 Koerte will show that the “classical” meaning of καιρός no longer applies to Menander, any more than to Callimachus (cf. *Ep.* 7.3 and 35.2—note εὔ) and to Hellenistic usage in general.

⁶ At. Eur. *Supp.* 744 καιροῦ πέρα means simply “beyond the mark” (cf. above, note 2), but here it means “beyond what is proper,” “excessively.” This meaning is quite common. Cf. Eur. fr. 626.4: καιροῦ μείζονα; Arist. *Pr.* 30.1.954b35: ψυχροτέρα . . . τοῦ καιροῦ; Diodor. 1.52.1: ἐπικλύζων ἀκαιρως τὴν χώραν; Aristid. *Or.* 43.22 K.: πόρρω τοῦ καιροῦ and below, note 8. Grene’s “beyond all expediency” and Vellacott’s “to your own hurt” overemphasize the extended sense of καιρός as beneficial. L. R. Palmer, “The Indo-European Origins of Greek Justice,” *TPhS* (1950) 157, compares the similar expression at verse 30: βροτοῖσι τιμὰς ὥπασας πέρα δίκης, and argues that καιρός is one of a number of words (including δίκη) denoting limitation.

⁷ Cf. E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* (Oxford 1950) 2.358–60, for a full discussion of the possible connotations of μήθ’ ὑπεράρας μήθ’ ὑποκάμψας, although he chooses “the mark” in his translation (1.137).

Finally, in a very difficult passage at Eur. *IT* 419–20 the Chorus says:

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

Here, I think, ἄκαιρος has no temporal sense at all. The γνώμα . . . ἄκαιρος, like the ἐλπίς . . . ἄπληστος above in 413–15, concerns immoderate or excessive regard for wealth. Thus it contrasts with that which comes moderately (ἐς μέσον, 420) to others.⁸ On this interpretation, the closing two verses of this antistrophe are a refinement of the preceding observations that men pursue wealth κοινῇ δόξα (418): in fact, some are excessive in their desires, others moderate.⁹

II. καιρός in speech

At verse 341 Theognis opens his prayer to Zeus with the following words:

ἀλλὰ Ζεῦ τέλεσόν μοι Ὀλύμπιε καίριον εὐχὴν

It is difficult to determine the precise meaning of καίριον here, because there is no close parallel in Theognis for a prayer that is καίριος. What is clear, however, is that a gloss such as Hudson-Williams' "in good time,

⁸ This interpretation rests on the assumption that ἐς μέσον means "moderately" as it is usually interpreted (e.g., I. Flagg, *Euripides Iphigenia Among the Taurians* [Boston 1889] 89, and M. Platnauer, *Euripides Iphigenia in Tauris* [Oxford 1938] 96). Flagg *ad loc.* correctly notes of ἄκαιρος "here with a meaning similar to ἄπληστος v. 415." Platnauer's gloss of ἄκαιρος as "in season and out of season" makes no sense, and is an impossible translation of ἄκαιρος, which *always* has a bad connotation. For other examples where ἄκαιρος means excessive, cf. ἀκαίρως at Plato *Rep.* 606b3, *Tim.* 86c2, and παρακαίρως at Isoc. *ad Dem.* 9. In prose ἄκαιρος is sometimes coupled with πολὺς (in hendiadys) with the basic meaning of excessive: cf. Plato *Rep.* 569c2 and *Dem. de Cor.* 46.

⁹ There is one other difficult passage in which I think that καιρός does not mean "time" but "degree." At Eur. *Or.* 698–700 Menelaos tells Orestes:

εἰ δ' ἡσύχως τις αὐτὸν ἐντείνοντι μὲν
χαλῶν ὑπείκει καιρὸν εὐλαβούμενος,
ἴσως ἂν ἐκπνεύσειεν· ἦν δ' ἀνῆ πνοάς . . .

The phrase καιρὸν εὐλαβούμενος is regularly taken to mean "and watch for the right time." But to get his meaning, εὐλαβούμεναι must be given a singular sense (cf. LSJ s.v. II. 3.), whereas it usually means to "pay heed to." Furthermore, the temporal aspect is really supplied by the contrast ἐντείνοντι μὲν . . . ἦν δ' ἀνῆ, making καιρός as "right time" superfluous. Rather, I think, the phrase καιρὸν εὐλαβούμενος qualifies χαλῶν ὑπείκει and means, "if one should loosen and yield by heeding due measure. . . ." Menelaos is not counselling Orestes to let loose completely, but as much as is needed in the circumstances (and in that sense it is "timely"); καιρός does not refer to some future "opportunity" (= ἦν δ' ἀνῆ, 701), but to the requirements of the present situation. A possible parallel is at Pindar *I.* 2.22 (unfortunately a vexed passage), where Nicomachus "puts his hand to all the reins κατὰ καιρόν," not at the right time, but to the right degree (above he is called πλαξίπποιω φωτός, 21). In other words, he has the right amount of control, the proper balance between release and restraint.

before I die"¹⁰ does not suit the context. Furthermore, there is a considerable number of passages in drama (and elsewhere) where a form of *καίρος* applies to things said and where the point is that they are *apposite*, *to the point*, ultimately *correct* and *worthwhile*. Thus a *καίριος* *εὐχῆ* must be one which is appropriate, straightforward, and correct.¹¹

What does Polyneices mean when he opens Aesch. *Sept.* with

Κάδμου πολῖται, χρὴ λέγειν τὰ καίρια?

By comparing *Sept.* 619, *Choe.* 582, and fr. 208, it becomes apparent that Aeschylus frequently contrasts speaking *τὰ καίρια* with keeping silent, meaning that silence is preferable unless what one says is appropriate and worthwhile.¹² As will become clearer later, speaking to the point can also imply speaking briefly—saying only what *matters* (*τὰ καίρια*) by omitting everything extraneous. Thus Polyneices means that he must get down to business and speak to the issue.¹³

If all the connotations of saying something *καίριον* were present in one passage, it would mean "addressing the particular issue by concentrating on what is essential, saying what is called for with tact, and proffering what is ultimately correct or expedient." Our expression "hitting the nail on the head" conveys some of this sense. Often it is very difficult to determine which aspect—brevity, appropriateness, or effectiveness—predominates, and in grouping the passages below I do not mean to exclude the presence of other nuances.

¹⁰ T. Hudson-Williams, *The Elegies of Theognis* (London 1910) 199. Cf. J. Carrière, *Théognis* (Paris 1962) 44: "une prière qui ne vient qu'à son heure."

¹¹ D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric Poetry* (London 1967) 364, more correctly interprets the phrase as "the prayer which my circumstances demand, my apt prayer." Here, as in many other instances where speech is involved, one could use the word "timely" to express the idea of "appropriateness," as long as all the temporal connotations of the word were kept to a minimum.

¹² Cf. Anaxarchus, fr. 1 (72 B 1 DK): πολυμαθίη . . . βλάπτει δὲ τὸν ῥηιδίως φωνεῦντα πᾶν ἔπος κῆν παντὶ δῆμῳ. χρὴ δὲ καιροῦ μέτρα εἰδέναι· σοφίης γὰρ οὗτος ὅρος. οἱ δὲ ἔξω καιροῦ ῥῆσιν αἰδοῦσιν, κῆν πεπνυμένην αἰδῶσιν . . . αἰτίην ἔχουσι μωρίας. The καιροῦ μέτρα (cf. the same expression: τοῦ καιροῦ τὰ μέτρα at D.H. *de Dem.* 49) are the limitations of propriety, which must be observed even when one knows a great deal (πολυμαθίη), for it is folly to speak a wise word ἔξω καιροῦ, if it is out of place, inappropriate, or tactless. Cf. Theophrastus' discussion of ἀκαίρια and Aristoph. *Ran.* 358. It is impossible here to begin to review the notion of *καίρος* in rhetorical theory, where it often approaches *πρέπον* in meaning. Cf. M. Pohlenz, *Τὸ Πρέπον*, *NGG* (1933) 53–92, W. Steidle, "Redekunst und Bildung bei Isokrates," *Hermes* 80 (1952) 270–74, and W. K. Pritchett, *Dionysius of Halicarnassus: On Thucydides* (Berkeley 1975) 71, note 5. M. Untersteiner, *The Sophists*, K. Freeman, tr. (Oxford 1954) *passim*, collects many examples of *καίρος*, but his discussions often seem very eccentric.

¹³ For *τὰ καίρια* as the "gist" or "essentials" cf. Longin. 1.1 and 10.1; conversely, to speak ἔξω τῶν καιρῶν (Isoc. *Hel.* 29; *Panath.* 85), ἀπὸ καιροῦ (Aristid. 26.92), ἄνευ καιροῦ (Plato *Ep.* 7.339c), or παρὰ καιρόν (Pindar *P.* 10.4; Longin. 43.3) is to say things which are irrelevant, beside the point, or even pointless.

In a number of passages *καιρός* concerns brevity in speech. We have already mentioned that *καιρός* can designate the “proper amount,” and is associated with “moderation.” In the example from Hesiod *Op.* 694, if one does not wish to overload the wagon and break the axle, then he must observe *καιρός*—limitation—a suitable ratio between excess and deficiency. At *Politicus* 284e Plato defines a second class of measurements as:

ὁπόσαι πρὸς τὸ μέτριον καὶ τὸ πρόπον καὶ τὸν καιρὸν καὶ τὸ δέον καὶ πάνθ' ὁπόσα εἰς τὸ μέσον ἀπωκίσθη τῶν ἐσχάτων.

Here *ὁ καιρός* is included among several very important normative words which serve to “measure” how much is sufficient, decorous, appropriate, or needed. And as “moderation” (*εἰς τὸ μέσον*) and the avoidance of excess is the goal of such terms, so observing the *καιρός* in speaking often means saying just what is called for *and no more*.¹⁴ Thus speaking to the point often has the added sense of speaking briefly. For example, at *P.* 1.81–82 Pindar says:

καιρὸν εἰ φθέγγαιο, πολλῶν πείρατα συντανύσαις
ἐν βραχεί, μείων ἔπεται μῶμος ἀνθρώπων

“If you should speak to the point (*καιρόν*) by being brief (*ἐν βραχεί*), people will be less critical” (litotes for “more approving”). As the following reference to *κόρος* (82) shows, he is thinking primarily of the appropriate amount to say. Also, at *P.* 9.78–79 *ὁ καιρός* concerns elaborating a few things (*βαιά*, 77) when there is much to tell (cf. *πολύμυθοι*, 76, and *μακροῖσι*, 77). The same curtailment of treatment is also evident in *O.* 13.48, where the principle of *καιρός* in speaking is appealed to in order to abbreviate a topic (cf. 45–46).

There are several passages in drama where speaking to the point and brevity are combined. At Soph. *OC* 808–09, the following exchange occurs between Creon and Oedipus:

Κρ. χωρὶς τό τ' εἰπεῖν πολλὰ καὶ τὸ καίρια.
Οἰ. ὥς δὴ σὺ βραχεία, ταῦτα δ' ἐν καιρῷ λέγεις.

“It is one thing to say a lot (*πολλά*, 808) and another to speak to the point (*καίρια*, 808).” “Your words are, of course, brief (*βραχεία*, 809), but apposite (*ἐν καιρῷ*, 809).”¹⁵ At Eur. *IA* 829, after Clytemnestra’s curt introduction of

¹⁴ Cf. my “*Panathenaicus* 74–90: The Rhetoric of Isocrates’ Digression on Agamemnon,” *TAPA* 108 (1978) 181, note 14, for a brief discussion. For a good survey of “literary” *καιρός* in Pindar, cf. Wilson (above, note 1) 181–83.

¹⁵ Brevity and *καιρός* are combined at Men. fr. 150 Koerte, but here *καιρός* means “circumstances,” “occasion.”

τοῖς ἀναιδέσιν<ν> βοηθεῖ γὰρ λόγοις τοῦθ' ἐν μόνον,
ἀν βραχεῖς αὐτοὺς ποῇ τις τόν τε καιρὸν εὖ λάβῃ.

herself, Achilles says: "You have spoken well by giving the essentials (τὰ καίρια) in brief (ἐν βραχεῖ)." And at Soph. *El.* 1259, Orestes warns Electra not to forfeit her freedom of speech by wishing to go on too long: "Don't speak at great length (μακράν) when it is out of place (οὐ μὴ ᾽στι καιρός)."

These examples help to explain two difficult passages. The first is at Soph. *El.* 1288 ff., where Orestes tells Electra to avoid excessive explanations (τὰ μὲν περισσεύοντα τῶν λόγων, 1288), but rather to tell him what is appropriate to the present moment (ἃ δ' ἄρμόσει μοι τῷ παρόντι νῦν χρόνῳ, 1293). And as a reason for her not telling the whole tale, he explains (1292):

χρόνου γὰρ ἂν σοι καιρὸν ἐξείργοι λόγος.

"For your story would preclude the proper amount of time," i.e., would be *too long* in the present circumstances. Such translations as "the critical moment" (Kells) or "l'heure propice" (Mazon) do not suit the sense of the passage. Furthermore, there is no article with καιρόν. It is not particular (as is τῷ παρόντι νῦν χρόνῳ, 1293), but general, and the translations of Jebb, Bayfield, and Mather are correct in emphasizing quantity: *due length* of time. A parallel in prose will help to bring out the meaning of καιρός here. At [Dem.] 61.27 the orator says:

ἅπαντας μὲν οὖν εἰ διεξιόην τοὺς ἀγῶνας, ἴσως ἂν ἄκαιρον μῆκος ἡμῖν ἐπιγένοιτο τῷ λόγῳ.

"Were I to describe all the contests an unseemly length would perhaps accrue to this essay" (N. W. and N. J. DeWitt, tr.). This is almost a word-for-word parallel: χρόνου . . . καιρόν = ἄκαιρον μῆκος; σοι = ἡμῖν; ἂν ἐξείργοι = ἂν ἐπιγένοιτο; and λόγος = λόγῳ. The major variation is that in the Sophoclean passage the negative is expressed by the verb ("would preclude the proper amount"), whereas in the Demosthenic passage the negative is expressed by the adjective ("an undue length would accrue").¹⁶

The other difficult passage is at Eur. *Phoen.* 469–72, when Polyneices opens his apology:

ἀπλοῦς ὁ μῦθος τῆς ἀληθείας ἔφν,
κοὺ ποικίλων δεῖ τᾶνδιχ' ἔρμηνευμάτων
ἔχει γὰρ αὐτὰ καιρόν· ὁ δ' ἄδικος λόγος
νοσῶν ἐν αὐτῷ φαρμάκων δεῖται σοφῶν.

¹⁶ Cf. E. L. Bundy, *Studia Pindarica* I (Berkeley 1962) 17–19, who discusses this Demosthenic passage in relation to Pindar *P.* 9.81, and *idem* (above, note 3), where he shows that ἀκαιρία at Isoc. *Ep.* 2.13 f. concerns "undue length," by comparing [Dem.] 60.6. At Plut. *de Garr.* 504c ἀδολεσχία and ἀκαιρία are coupled and at D.H. *de Comp.* 12, when the author is warning against repetitious beginnings and endings, occurs the phrase: ὑπερτείνοντας τὸν ἑκατέρον καιρόν "exceeding due measure in either case" (W. R. Roberts, tr.).

"A truthful tale is naturally simple and just causes do not need elaborate explanations, because all by themselves (*αὐτά*, 471) they are persuasive (*ἔχει . . . καιρόν*, 471)."¹⁷ And at the end of his speech, he insists that he has not "piled up complicated arguments (*οὐχὶ περιπλοκάς / λόγων ἀθροίσας εἶπον*, 494–95)." Here are combined the motifs of brevity (*ἀπλοῦς*, 469; *οὐ ποικίλων*, 470; and *οὐχὶ . . . ἀθροίσας*, 494–95) and of speaking to the point (*οὐ . . . ἐρμηνευμάτων*, 470; *φαρμάκων*, 472; and *περιπλοκάς / λόγων*, 494–95). Polyneices assures his listeners that he will speak the plain, direct truth, and that such a procedure is correct, appropriate, and ultimately convincing (*ἔχει . . . καιρόν*, 471) in and of itself (*αὐτά*, 471). As in Pindar, *P.* 1.81 cited above, *καιρός* refers to the decorous adjustment of stylistic expression to content, whereby a proper balance or tact is observed, so that nothing excessive or inappropriate is said that might detract from the argument's effectiveness.

In another group of passages from Aeschylus and Sophocles, *καιρός* refers to the subject matter as being *correct* or *expedient*. At *Soph. Ant.* 724–25 the chorus tells Creon and Haemon that each should take heed if the other says anything to the point:

ἄναξ, σέ τ' εἰκός, εἴ τι καίριον λέγει,
μαθεῖν, σέ τ' αὖ τοῦδ'· εὖ γὰρ εἴρηται διπληῇ.

At *Phil.* 862–63 the chorus cautions Neoptolemus, "Make certain that the things you are saying are expedient (*καίρια*)," for it feels that the correct or expeditious thing to do is to take the bow while Philoctetes is sleeping.¹⁸ Similar is *El.* 31, where Orestes says to the Paedagogus, "If I am at all off base (*εἰ μὴ τι καιροῦ τυγχάνω*), correct me."

The same thought can also be expressed in litotes. At *Aesch. Prom.* 1036–37 the chorus shows its agreement with what Hermes has said:

ἡμῶν μὲν Ἑρμῆς οὐκ ἄκαιρα φαίνεται
λέγειν.¹⁹

In the lines which follow it is clear that *οὐκ ἄκαιρα* has the force of good counsel which one should obey. At *Supp.* 446–47, Pelasgus says, "And when the tongue has misspoken (*τοξεύσασα μὴ τὰ καίρια*), further speech can heal."

¹⁷ L. R. Palmer (above, note 6) 155 uses this as one of two passages to assign a meaning of "boundary mark" or "dividing line" to *καιρός* and translates *ἔχει . . . καιρόν* as "they are clearly defined." This interpretation is very doubtful and makes little sense here. Cf. *Arist. Meta.* 1043b25, where the *ἀπορία* of Antisthenes and his students is "*ad rem*," "has some validity" (*ἔχει τινὰ καιρόν*).

¹⁸ In this passage *καίρια* at 862 and *καιρός* at 837 are tinged with a sense of "opportunism," for the chorus is advocating a "sophistic" expediency, which is one of the leading motifs in the play. Cf. below the discussion concerning *Aesch. Agam.* 1372 ff.

¹⁹ Cf. *οὐκ ἄκαιρα* "right on" (not "well timed") at *Aristoph. Thes.* 462.

At Soph. *OC* 31–32 Antigone advises Oedipus, “Tell him what is appropriate (and beneficial) for you to say (χῶ τι σοι λέγειν / εὐκαιρόν ἐστιν, ἐννεφ’).²⁰ Finally, there is the remarkable use of *καιρός* when Clytemnestra opens her great speech after the death of Agamemnon at Aesch. *Agam.* 1372–73:

πολλῶν πάροιθεν καιρίως εἰρημένων
τᾶναντί’ εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἀπαισχυνηθήσομαι.

Fraenkel correctly explains *καιρίως* as “so as to be suitable to the moment or to the issue at hand,” but here it is stripped of its ethical value and approaches the bare meaning of “advantageous,” “opportunistic.” This is the first “sophistic” use of the term in the cause of ethical relativism, and the same sense may be behind Aesch. fr. 302: *ψευδῶν δὲ καιρὸν ἔσθ’ ὅπου τιμᾶ θεός*, which is quoted to support a relativistic argument at *Diss. Log.* 3.12 (= 2.411.9 DK). “There are times when (ἔσθ’ ὅπου) God approves the appropriateness of (telling) lies.” As at *Choe.* 582, *ὅπου* provides the temporal aspect and *καιρός* the normative. Here *ψευδῶν καιρὸν* = *καίρια ψευδῆ*, which is almost oxymoronic.

III. *καιρός* as need, advantage, and success

At Theogn. 919 occurs the phrase *ἐς ἄκαιρα πονεῖν*, “to labor in vain.” Here and in similar passages, *καιρός* has the extended connotation of the *success* (cf. LSJ s.v. IV) which results from action which is *appropriate* to or *needed* in the particular circumstances.

The phrase *πρὸς καιρὸν* occurs five times in Sophocles, and each time it implies success. For example, at *Ajax* 38 Odysseus asks Athene: *πρὸς καιρὸν πονῶ*; “Is my effort worthwhile?” “Am I doing what is needed for success?” At *Phil.* 525 the emphasis is also on the requirements for success. Here Neoptolemos tells the chorus: “But it would be disgraceful for the stranger to think that I was less eager than you to do what is needed (*πρὸς τὸ καίριον πονεῖν*).” At *Tr.* 59 the Nurse says to Deianira, “And so, if you think I counsel what is necessary for success (*τι . . . πρὸς καιρὸν*), you can use both him and my advice.” At *Phil.* 1279 Neoptolemus says to

²⁰ Jebb’s “Speak as the moment prompts you” is very improbable. At Eur. *Rhes.* 339 Hector admits that the messenger’s advice is good and that his considerations are “to the point” (*καιρίως σκοπεῖς*). In this category may also belong the difficult passage at Eur. *IA* 796–800:

εἴτ’
ἐν δέλτοις Πιερίσιν
μῦθοι τὰδ’ ἐς ἀνθρώπους
ἤνεγκαν παρὰ καιρὸν ἄλλως.

Since it contrasts with *φάτις ἔτυμος* at 794, the phrase *παρὰ καιρὸν* must bear an extended sense of “off base” (cf. Soph. *El.* 31) or “incorrect.” There is surely no temporal aspect involved. The *ἄλλως* emphasizes the sense of pointlessness.

Philoctetes, “If what I say is pointless (μή τι πρὸς καιρόν), then I quit.” This meaning is confirmed by Philoctetes’ response: “Yes, everything you say will be in vain (μάτην, 1280)”. Finally at OT 324–25 Teiresias says to Oedipus, “I see that what *you* are saying will not be successful (οὐδὲ σοὶ τὸ σὸν φώνημ’ ἶον / πρὸς καιρόν).” Whether “unsuccessful” here means “in vain” or is litotes for “disastrous” is not clear from what Tiresias goes on to say: “And I fear lest the same thing happen to me.” What is clear is that Jebb’s “unseasonably” is too vague and introduces an unnecessary temporal element.²¹

At Aesch. *Agam.* 1030–34 the chorus expresses its hopelessness in ever accomplishing anything *effective*:

νῦν δ’ ὑπὸ σκότῳ βρέμει
θυμαλγῆς τε καὶ οὐδὲν ἐπελπομέ-
να ποτὲ καίριον ἐκτολυπέουσιν
ζωπυρουμένας φρενός.

The poetic phrase οὐδὲν . . . καίριον ἐκτολυπέουσιν is the opposite of πρὸς τὸ καίριον πονεῖν and indicates effort which does not accomplish what is needed for success.²² At Eur. *Tro.* 742–44 Andromache laments that it was Hector’s very prominence which proved to be Astyanax’ undoing:

ἡ τοῦ πατρὸς δέ σ’ εὐγύνει ἁπώλεσεν
ἡ τοῖσιν ἄλλοις γίγνεται σωτηρία,
τὸ δ’ ἐσθλὸν οὐκ ἐς καιρὸν ἦλθε σοὶ πατρός.

“Your father’s nobility did not come as an *advantage* to you” (744).²³ Such translations as “ill-timed” (Lattimore, Way) place too much emphasis on the temporal aspect. Here οὐκ ἐς καιρόν is litotes for ἁπώλεσεν (v.l.

²¹ J. C. Kamerbeek, *The Oedipus Tyrannus* (Leiden 1967) 86, states, “In my opinion the notion ‘advantage’, ‘profit’ is here more dominant than ‘opportunity’, ‘proper moment’.” Indeed, it is difficult to find even a trace of “timeliness.” If φώνημα refers to Oedipus’ edict (as Kamerbeek claims) then “disastrous” is the most likely interpretation.

²² E. Fraenkel’s “the right moment” (above, note 7) 2.466 makes little sense. Vellacott’s translation “to achieve some timely word” shows that he regards ἐκτολυπέουσιν as a metaphor for speaking, but I think that it is more naturally concerned with “accomplishing.”

²³ This is the interpretation of K. H. Lee, *Euripides Troades* (London 1976) 204, who has a brief, but good discussion of the passage. Similar is the difficult passage (cited by Lee) at Eur. *Hel.* 1081, where Helen remarks that Menelaos’ dress, which betokens the earlier disaster, will be advantageous now:

ἐς καιρὸν ἦλθε, τότε δ’ ἄκαιρ’ ἀπώλλυτο·
τὸ δ’ ἄθλιον κείν’ εὐτυχὲς τάχ’ ἂν πέσοι.

“It has turned out to be advantageous (ἐς καιρόν), although at the time the loss was harmful (ἄκαιρ’).” The following line (1082) repeats the thought (in chiasmic order), showing the relationship between καιρός and success (εὐτυχές). Cf. Eur. *Rhe.* 52: ἐς καιρὸν ἦκεις, καίπερ ἀγγέλλων φόβον, “Your arrival is advantageous in spite of your fearful report.”

ἀποκτενεῖ) at 742, and in contrast to σωτηρία (743) means downright destructive.²⁴

At Eur. *And.* 484–85 the chorus enunciates the principle that one man should have the power in the home and city “when the inhabitants want to prevail (ὁπότεν εὖ- / ρεῖν θέλωσι καιρόν),” that is, discover what is *appropriate*, ultimately *successful*.²⁵ In the same play at 130–31 the chorus asks Andromache what *point* (τί σοι / καιρός) there is in carrying on so.²⁶ At Soph. *Phil.* 151 the *dat. commodi* (σοι) is expressed by a possessive pronoun (thereby almost personifying καιρός). The chorus says that it has continually been on the lookout for Neoptolemus’ interest (ἐπὶ σὺ μάλιστα καιρῷ, 151), that is, they have looked to his *needs* and *advantage* above all else.²⁷ At Eur. *Heracl.* 471–72 Demophon asks Iolaos if he knows of any *more expedient* plan (καιριωτέραν / βουλήν) to rescue him from his distress.

These examples help clarify the difficult passage at Eur. *Med.* 127–30, where the Nurse says:

τὰ δ’ ὑπερβάλλοντ’
οὐδένα καιρόν δύναται θνητοῖς.
μείζους δ’ ἄτας, ὅταν ὀργισθῇ
δαίμων οἴκοις, ἀπέδωκεν.

Here, as Page correctly argues,²⁸ the extended sense of “profit” is intended. However, the context allows one to be more precise, for the Nurse has a habit of using parallel constructions, and she goes on to say that an angry god repays such excess with greater destruction. Thus οὐδένα καιρόν here, like οὐκ ἐς καιρόν at Eur. *Tro.* 744, is litotes for destruction: “Excess achieves no advantage” is a poetic way of saying that it is harmful. Likewise, at Eur. *Bacch.* 1287, when Kadmos exclaims:

δύστην’ ἀλήθει’, ὥς ἐν οὐ καιρῷ πάρει.

he is decrying a truth which comes in circumstances in which there is no benefit (i.e., when it is positively disastrous).²⁹

²⁴ Lee (above, note 23) notes the similar pattern of thought at Eur. *Hel.* 304–05.

²⁵ The schol. *ad loc.* (ii. 287.3 Schwartz) gloss καιρόν as ἀντὶ τοῦ κέρδος εὐκαιρίαν.

²⁶ The schol. *ad loc.* (ii. 261.9 Schwartz) gloss καιρός as ὠφέλεια. Wilson (above, note 1) 195 argues that καιρός here means “proper,” but as part of the standard consolatory topic of “what boots it to . . .” and followed by τὸ κρατοῦν δέ σ’ ἐπείσει· τί μόχθον / οὐδὲν οὔσα μοχθεῖς; it more naturally means “what’s the point of. . .”

²⁷ On the “sophistic” overtones of the chorus’ use of καιρός, cf. above, note 18. Perhaps there is an element of “expediency” in καιρός at Soph. *El.* 75–76, where it is very difficult to determine the extent to which it is temporal or a synonym of χρέος (74). Cf. also Soph. *Phil.* 466–67.

²⁸ D. L. Page, *Euripides Medea* (Oxford 1952) 77.

²⁹ E. R. Dodds’ translation (*Bacchae* [Oxford 1960] 231) “at the wrong moment” conveys this thought, but the word “moment” is a bit strong. Here the temporal aspect is supplied by

At Aesch. *Choe.* 1064 occurs the expression *καιρίοισι συμφοραῖς*, by which the chorus hopes that Orestes' circumstances may prove to be advantageous (cf. *εὐτυχίης* at 1063). At Eur. *Hec.* 592–95, Hecabe says the following as she develops an analogy between the earth and men:

οὔκουν δεινόν, εἰ γῇ μὲν κακῇ
 τυχοῦσα καιροῦ θεόθεν εὖ στάχυν φέρει,
 χρηστή δ' ἄμαρτοῦσ' ὦν χρεῶν αὐτὴν τυχεῖν
 κακὸν δίδωσι καρπόν, . . .

Here *τυχοῦσα καιροῦ* (593) is clearly equivalent to *ὦν χρεῶν . . . τυχεῖν* (594), and as W. S. Barrett points out means "the right things . . . that it needs."³⁰

IV. *καιρός* as fitting, proper, right

It is often difficult to distinguish this connotation of *καιρός* ("proper") from that of "beneficial," for what is proper or fitting is generally also advantageous. For example, at Soph. *OT* 873 ff. the chorus sings about the tyrant's *ὑβρις*, which vainly surfeits on many things

ἂ μὴ ἑπίκαιρα μηδὲ συμφέροντα (875)

"which are neither proper nor beneficial" (litotes for wrong and destructive). Unless Sophocles intends *ἐπίκαιρα* and *συμφέροντα* to be tautological, then the former must convey more of the sense of fitting.³¹ At Soph. *El.* 228, however, *καίρια* must have more of a sense of "proper." At 226–28 Electra exclaims, "from whom would I hear a fitting word, from what man whose thought is correct?" Mazon's "ayant le sens de l'heure" places

the preposition *ἐν* (circumstantial), not by *καιρῷ*, which describes the state of affairs (when there is no benefit to be derived, when the need or propriety for such knowledge is not present). There is nothing here of a "critical moment" of brief duration, but one set of circumstances is being contrasted with another.

³⁰ W. S. Barrett (above, note 3). Cf. *κατὰ καιρὸν ἀπαντᾷ* at Aristoph. *Pax* 941, which means "according to its need."

³¹ At Aesch. *Agam.* 807–09 the chorus tells Agamemnon that he will learn in time which of the citizens has been behaving justly and which *improperly*:

γνώσῃ δὲ χρόνῳ διαπευθόμενος
 τὸν τε δικαίως καὶ τὸν ἀκαίρως
 πόλιν οἰκουροῦντα πολιτῶν.

L. R. Palmer (above, note 6) 156–57 notes the close association of *καιρός* and *δίκη* here and at Hes. *Op.* 329, Theogn. 199, and at Aesch. *Choe.* 624–36 (unfortunately a very vexed passage) in an attempt to find common semantic origins for the two words. Although they share obvious similarities as normative words (what is fitting is also just), nevertheless, the overlap is quite small and confined to these examples. Palmer notes the proximity of *ἔνδικος* and *καιρός* at Eur. *Phoen.* 469–72, but there they have very different meanings; cf. above, note 17.

too much stress on the temporal aspect; here *τῖνι φρονούντι καίρια* designates someone with a sense of propriety.³² At Soph. *Ajax* 119–20 Athene asks Odysseus if there was anyone with more foresight or who was better at doing the right things (*τὰ καίρια*, 120)—that which is needed,³³ appropriate—in contrast to Ajax' present behavior.

There are also several instances in which the notion of propriety also may include the notion of amount as well as of kind. For example, at Soph. *Ajax* 1084 Menelaos says:

ἀλλ' ἐστάτω μοι καὶ δέος τι καίριον

"a fear that is appropriate in kind and degree." At Soph. *Phil.* 637–38 Philoctetes insists: "a timely haste (*ἢ τοι καίριος σπουδή*) brings rest and relaxation when toil is done."³⁴ Here the *καίριος σπουδή* (an appropriate amount of zeal in the proper circumstances)³⁵ is parallel to the *δέος καίριον* (a proper fear). And just as *δέος*, which is usually undesirable, can be *καίριον*, so at Eur. *Hipp.* 385–87 Phaedra distinguishes between two aspects of *αἰδώς* and comments (386–87):

εἰ δ' ὁ καιρὸς ἦν σαφής,
οὐκ ἂν δὴ ἤστην ταῦτ' ἔχοντε γράμματα.

She means that if it were clear just what kind and amount of *αἰδώς* were appropriate, we could distinguish an *ἄκαιρος αἰδώς* and call it by another name.³⁶ But as in the case of *δέος* and *σπουδή* its propriety and effectiveness are determined with reference to the circumstances.³⁷

There are several instances where *καιρός* approaches *χρή* or *πρέπει*. For example, at Eur. *Or.* 122 Helen says that she will perform all the rites for her sister which are appropriate: *ἃ δ' εἰς ἀδελφὴν καιρὸς ἐκπονέειν ἐμέ*.

³² Cf. Soph. *OT* 1516, where Creon tells Oedipus to stop crying and go inside, and in justification he says: *πάντα γὰρ καιρῷ καλά*, "propriety makes all things right." I think that the temporal and quantitative connotations (i.e., "moderation" on the analogy of Critias fr. 7 West) are minimal, and that Creon is principally concerned with maintaining decorum.

³³ Cf. J. C. Kamerbeek, *The Ajax* (Leiden 1963) 43: "Schol. M. defines *καίρια* with *ἀναγκαῖα* 'what is required by the condition of things'."

³⁴ Cf. the variation at Pindar *Pa.* 2.33–34: *μόχθος ἥσυχίαν φέρει / καιρῷ καταβαίνων*. Here (and at *P.* 8.7) *καιρός* denotes what is *appropriate* or required in the circumstances. Cf. Eur. fr. 745, which may have a greater temporal aspect.

³⁵ *σπουδή* and *καιρός* are connected in two other important passages: Theogn. 401 (*μηδὲν ἄγαν σπεύδειν καιρὸς . . . ἄριστος*) and Plato *Politicus* 277a (*παρὰ καιρὸν . . . σπεύδοντες*). Both concern "excessive" eagerness (= "haste"). Cf. also Eur. *Tel.* 18 (Austin): *σπεύδειν γὰρ ἐν καιρῷ χρεών*.

³⁶ W. S. Barrett (above, note 3) 231 rightly rejects the idea, which begins with Wilamowitz and continues with Palmer and Onians, that *καιρός* means "dividing line." Wilson's "distinction" and "discrimination" (above, note 1) 194 seem to be in the same vein.

³⁷ At Eur. *Supp.* 509 *ἥσυχος καιρῷ* denotes a *καίριος ἥσυχία*, which like the *σιγὴν καιρίαν* at Chares 2.3, is *appropriate* inaction. In connection with *καιρὸς σαφής*, cf. Ades. *Eleg.* 23 West.

Here there is no discernible temporal element, but in other examples it is difficult to determine to what extent time (= circumstances) is involved. For example, at Eur. *Med.* 80–81, the Paedagogus tells the Nurse:

ἀτὰρ σύ γ'—οὐ γὰρ καιρὸς εἰδέναι τόδε
δέσποιναν—ἥσυχάζε καὶ σίγα λόγον.

It might be argued that time is implied (“now is not the time”), but I think it just as likely that the Paedagogus simply means that the Nurse should not tell Medea the rumor “because it is not good (οὐ . . . καιρός = οὐ χρή) for her to know it.”³⁸ Likewise, at Eur. *IA* 325 Agamemnon says to Menelaos, “Did you break the seal and learn what you shouldn’t know (ἦ γὰρ οἶσθ’ ἂ μὴ σε καιρὸς εἰδέναι)?” At Eur. *IA* 1106–08 Agamemnon says that he wishes to tell Clytemnestra some things which brides should not hear (οὗς οὐκ ἀκούειν τὰς γαμουμένας πρέπει, 1108), and she answers:

τί δ’ ἔστιν, οὐ σοι καιρὸς ἀντιλάττει;

Although there may well be an element of time involved (i.e., what is fitting now?), the preceding *πρέπει* and the content of Agamemnon’s answer indicate that the emphasis is on the need for doing something, and she is merely asking what he thinks it is appropriate to do.

At Eur. *El.* 988–97 the chorus sings a hymn of greeting to Clytemnestra, which they conclude with (996–97):

τὰς σὰς δὲ τύχας θεραπεύεσθαι
καιρὸς. <χαῖρ’ > ὦ βασίλεια.

“It is fitting (*καιρός*) for your good fortune to be worshipped.” The chorus can say this because they have just compared Clytemnestra to the gods for her wealth and happiness. The use of *θεραπέω* in such hymns is common in Euripides (cf. *Bacch.* 82, *IT* 1105, and *Ion* 111, 183), and the “sinister” sense which Denniston approves is purely conjectural.³⁹

³⁸ When Prometheus at *Prom.* 522–24 says:

ἄλλου λόγου μέμνησθε, τόνδε δ’ οὐδαμῶς
καιρὸς γεγωνεῖν, ἀλλὰ συγκαλυπτέος
ὅσον μάλιστα.

there is probably no temporal element (= “now is by no means the time”), but rather he means that this discussion is utterly out of place and positively harmful to him.

³⁹ J. D. Denniston, *Euripides Electra* (Oxford 1954) 173. He goes on to say, “At first sight it appears that *καιρός* (ἔστι) = *χρή*, *συμφέρει*. But this is to extend the sense ‘due measure’ rather far, so as to include all that is ‘appropriate’.” I think that it has been shown that *καιρός* can indeed approach *χρή* in meaning, and is the natural way to take it in this passage, far preferable to Denniston’s proposal: “The sense is, I think, ‘I venerate you, and this is an opportunity to pay homage to your majesty’. These country women have probably seldom or never set eyes on the queen before.”

At Eur. *Ion* 1551 when Athene appears, Ion tells his mother, "Let's flee to avoid seeing the divinity," but adds (1552):

—εἰ μὴ καιρός ἐσθ' ἡμᾶς ὁρᾶν.

". . . unless it is right for us to look." Here there is no question of timing (now or later), but whether or not it is *fas* for them to look upon the god. There may be a tacit temporal aspect ("in these circumstances"), but it is subordinate to the idea of propriety.

At Aesch. *Choe.* 710, when Clytemnestra says that it is the fitting thing (ὁ καιρός) for travelers who have come a long way to receive appropriate compensation, it is not so much a question of the late hour (although it may play a part), but of the propriety of entertaining a messenger after a long journey. Translations such as Verrall's "the appropriate hour" and Smyth's "it is the hour" probably overemphasize the temporal element.⁴⁰

V. καιρός as the appropriate time/circumstances

There are a number of passages in Greek drama where the temporal aspect of καιρός seems to be as pronounced as the normative, and the two parts of the phrase "fitting time" are complementary. Of course, by "time" is meant the particular circumstances, and by "fitting" are included the ideas of propriety and success.

When Prometheus says at *Prom.* 379–80:

ἐάν τις ἐν καιρῷ γε μαλθάσση κέαρ
καὶ μὴ σφριγῶντα θυμὸν ἰσχυαίνῃ βία.

ἐν καιρῷ seems to mean "in the proper circumstances so as to be effective."⁴¹ At Soph. *El.* 22 the Paedagogus concludes:

ἴν' οὐκέτ' ὀκνεῖν καιρός, ἀλλ' ἔργων ἀκμή.

This example illustrates the difficulty in determining just to what extent καιρός indicates "time." On the one hand, it is clear that the speaker

⁴⁰ Perhaps in the same category is the difficult verse at Eur. *Hel.* 302:

σμικρὸν δ' ὁ καιρὸς σάρκ' ἀπαλλάξαι βίου.

R. Kannicht, *Euripides Helena* (Heidelberg 1969) 2.99, gives two explanations, one spatial and the other temporal. Neither is satisfactory. I would propose "In a short time (σμικρόν, adv.) it is fitting (ὁ καιρός) (one ought) to die." The point is that a swift death is the proper one for a well-born lady. The phrase μικρὸς ὁ καιρός at Aristoph. *Lys.* 596 is of no help, since there καιρός means "period." At Aristoph. *Aves* 1688–89, however, when Peisthetairos exclaims: ἐς καιρὸν ἄρα κατεκόπησαν οὔτοι / ἐς τοὺς γάμους, the temporal aspect is perhaps exaggerated by B. B. Rogers' "just in time." "It was appropriate after all," "how fitting!" give better sense.

⁴¹ We have already mentioned this meaning with respect to Pindar (above, note 34), and the medical metaphor (cf. Pindar *P.* 4.270) may also be intended.

means to say that it is high time to act, and *καιρός* in a sense reinforces *ἀκμή*. But the temporal aspect is provided by *οὐκέτι* and it is more natural to emphasize the normative aspect: “it is no longer appropriate (= *οὐκέτι πρέπει*) to delay, but rather high time for action.”⁴² Furthermore, at *Phil.* 111 a similar thought (with the temporal sense given in *ὅταν*) is expressed by:

ὅταν τι δρᾷς ἐς κέρδος, οὐκ ὀκνεῖν πρέπει.

Other examples of *καιρός* meaning “right time” with infinitives include *Soph. El.* 1368: *νῦν καιρὸς ἔρδειν*; *Soph. OT* 1050: *ὥς ὁ καιρὸς ἡγύρησθαι τάδε*; *Soph. OC* 826: *ὕν ἂν εἴη τήνδε καιρὸς ἐξάγειν*; *Eur. Rhés.* 10: *καιρὸς γὰρ ἀκοῦσαι* and 543–44: *ἐγείρειν / καιρός*. Also, at *Soph. El.* 75 *καιρός*, a due regard for circumstances, is described as *ἀνδράσιω / μέγιστος ἔργου παντός . . . ἐπιστάτης*.

VI. *καιρός* as opportunity, chance

καιρός can also be closely associated with *τύχη* (designating the circumstances within which it is possible or expedient to do something). At *Soph. OT* 1513, Oedipus uses the phrase: “wherever occasion (*καιρός*) allows (you) to live.”⁴³ At *Soph. El.* 39 Orestes tells the Paedagogus, “You go inside whenever opportunity (*καιρός*) leads you in.” At *Eur. Ion* 659 Xuthus says, “eventually I shall find a fitting occasion (*καιρόν*) to persuade my wife to let you take my scepter.” At *Soph. Phil.* 1449 ff. Heracles urges Philoctetes to delay no longer, because “the appropriate circumstances (*καιρός*, 1450) and this fair wind urge you.” Finally, there is the meaning of “opportunity” “favorable circumstances” at *Eur. Ion* 1062, where the chorus says that if the queen’s plot fails “and the opportunity (*καιρός*) for daring passes away (*ἄπεισι*),” then she will commit suicide. The temporal sense of *καιρός* is reinforced by the *νῦν* in the next line (1063).

⁴² Cf. Aesch. *Pers.* 407: *κοῦκέτ’ ἦν μέλλειν ἀκμή*. Even more than *καιρός*, which can denote a state of affairs, *ἀκμή* refers to a point, a watershed in time. *καιρός* (in its temporal aspect) need not be so brief, and carries much more sense of propriety, *ἀκμή* of urgency. For Aristophanic examples, cf. *Plut.* 255–56 and *Thes.* 660–62. At *Eccl.* 576 *καιρός* implies both time and propriety.

⁴³ This is a very difficult passage. R. C. Jebb, *Oedipus Tyrannus* (Cambridge 1920) 155, defends reading *ἐᾷ* by referring to *Eur. IA* 858. Many editors retain the mss *ἄεί* and supply (*ἔστι*) with *καιρός*, which is grammatically possible, but the *ἄεί* is difficult to translate. A good parallel is at *Thuc.* 4.54.4: *οὗ καιρὸς εἴη ἐδήουν τὴν γῆν*, “at whatever place they found it convenient, they ravaged the land” (C. F. Smith, tr.). Kamerbeek’s “*καιρός* seems to mean ‘what is appropriate’” (*Oedipus Tyrannus* [Leiden 1967] 268) does not make sense.

VII. καιρός and the timely arrival

Even in the many instances in drama when someone enters *καιρόν* (adv. or internal acc.),⁴⁴ or *εἰς καιρόν*,⁴⁵ *ἐν καιρῷ*,⁴⁶ or *καίριος*,⁴⁷ the point is that the person's arrival is *appropriate* to the circumstances. So Odysseus' arrival at Soph. *Ajax* 1316 is *καιρόν provided that* he intends to settle the quarrel. Likewise Jocasta arrives *καιρίαν* at Soph. *OT* 631 for the same reason (*νείκος εὔ θέσθαι χρεών*, 633). We may say that her arrival was "timely" as long as we also mean that it is "fitting" or "beneficial." Timing is just one aspect. The same is true of Hippolytus' arrival at Eur. *Hipp.* 899. And at Eur. *Hec.* 666 Hecabe's arrival is appropriate because the handmaid has something to tell her.⁴⁸

VIII. Conclusion

By examining the contexts of all the occurrences of *καιρός* (in all of its forms), we have attempted to show that in the majority of cases in fifth-century drama the *normative* connotations are dominant. With Aristophanes, and especially with Menander, the *temporal* aspect becomes much more pronounced, until *ἐνκαιρία* and *εὐκαιρος* are needed to supply the diminishing normative sense. Although it is extremely difficult to decide in each instance how much emphasis on "time" is intended, the main conclusion of this survey is that in fifth-century drama, unless the temporal aspect is clearly indicated, a more fitting interpretation usually results when one of the normative meanings is supplied. Indeed, the temporal sense often enters the question because we naturally think of "times," "occasions," and "moments," when we are dealing with given circumstances or situations that change in time, and it is a short step from "appropriate to the given situation" to "correct at the moment" to "timely." But by keeping the basic meaning of propriety foremost, the meaning of *καιρός* is clearer and more specific than most translations and many commentaries indicate.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Soph. *Ajax* 1316, Eur. *Hel.* 479, *Hyps.* 212 (Page), and *Mel. Capt.* 34 (Page).

⁴⁵ Soph. *Ajax* 1168 (strengthened by *αὐτόν*), Eur. *Hipp.* 899, *Hec.* 666, *Or.* 384, *HF* 701 (with an ironic edge), and *Phoen.* 106. The text is too faulty at Men. *Perik.* 784 (Sandbach) to make interpretation certain.

⁴⁶ Eur. *Rh.* 443.

⁴⁷ Soph. *OT* 631 and Eur. *El.* 598.

⁴⁸ At Eur. *HF* 701 Lycus sarcastically characterizes Amphitryon's arrival as *εἰς καιρόν*, "high time."

⁴⁹ There is one use of the word *καιρός* which completely baffles all attempts at interpretation, for I can find no analogue. It occurs at Men. fr. 568.7–8:

καιρός ἐστιν ἡ νόσος
ψυχῆς· ὁ πληγείς δ' εἴσεθ' ἢ τιτρώσκεται.

Plutarch read the same text, but his comments on it in *περὶ ἔρωτος* (fr. 134 Sandbach = Stob. 4.20.34) are as obscure as the text itself. It is hard to imagine just how *καιρός* could possibly be a *νόσος*.