

KAIROS AS ‘PROFIT’

Lexicographers have always considered ‘advantage’, ‘profit’ as a possible meaning of *kairos*. And yet none of the ten passages cited in *LSJ* under this meaning (s.v. iv) is convincing. No less than four of these instances exemplify *kairos* as ‘due measure’ (s.v. i). Three other instances exemplify spatial *kairos* (a sense ignored by *LSJ* but recognized in W. Pape’s *Griechisch-Deutsches Handwörterbuch* s.v.). The remaining instances exemplify the meaning ‘opportunity’ that develops from temporal *kairos* (‘the right time’). In none of the examples are we encouraged to take the further step from ‘what is morally, spatially or temporally appropriate’ to the ‘profit’, if any, deriving therefrom. Before considering whether *kairos* can ever bear this meaning, I will start from the citations in *LSJ*.

A. *Kairos* as ‘due measure’

1. Pi. O. 2. 54. In Theron a combination of wealth and talent *φέρει τῶν τε καὶ τῶν καιρόν*, ‘produces the right degree of this and that’ (probably of word and deed; cf. N. 1. 30). *Kairos* here retains the moral-aesthetic sense it almost always has in Pindar.¹

2. Pi. P. 1. 57. The poet wishes that the god will help Hieron, *ὦν ἔραται καιρόν διδοῦς*, ‘giving him due measure of his heart’s desires’.² Neither Hieron nor the poet is foolish enough to wish for the impossible. They are content with what Theognis (341) calls a *καίριος εὐχῆ*.

3. A. *Supp.* 1060. In a choral dialogue, speaker A advises a ‘moderate prayer’ (*μέτριον... ἔπος*) to which speaker B responds with the query *τίνα καιρόν με διδάσκεις*. Speaker A thereupon clarifies with *τὰ θεῶν μηδὲν ἀγάζειν*. Both in his positive and his negative recommendations speaker A imparts an ethical sense to the *kairos* or ‘moderation’ of speaker B.³

4. E. *Andr.* 131. The chorus ask Andromache how it can be *kairos* for her to weep at her enslaved condition. The scholiast glosses *kairos* here as *ὠφελία* or ‘profit’. But the context is one of *γνώθι σεαυτόν* (126 ff., 136 ff.). Andromache must ‘know her place’, and in this vein the chorus questions the ‘appropriateness’ of her acting as though she were still a princess.⁴

B. Spatial or tactical *kairos*

1. Th. 4. 90. 2. Towers were erected *ἧ καιρὸς ἦν*, ‘where spatially appropriate’, i.e. ‘in tactical locations’.

2. Th. 4. 54. 4. Athenian raiders made camp *οὗ καιρὸς εἴη*, ‘wherever it was strategically appropriate’.

3. Dem. 23. 182. The city of the Cardiani is as strategically important for the Chersonese as Calchis is for Euboea. Those familiar with its position can easily understand ‘the strategic reason why’ (*τίνος εἵνεκα καιροῦ*) Cersobleptes is unwilling to part with it.

¹ For *kairos* in Pindar see especially R. W. B. Burton, *Pindar’s Pythian Odes* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 46–8. See also my article in *Glotta* 58 (1980), 177–204.

² Burton’s translation, op. cit., p. 101.

³ The meaning of *kairos* in this passage was already recognized by Stephanus in his *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

⁴ The other supposed instance of *kairos* as ‘profit’ in Euripides is at *Med.* 128, for which see Wilamowitz, *Kleine Schriften* 1, pp. 42–6 and Otto Regenbogen, *Eranos* 48 (1950), 24.

4. Th. 1. 36. 1. In a difficult phrase, Corcyra is described as a place which *μετὰ μεγίστων καιρῶν οἰκείουται τε καὶ πολεμοῦται*. *LSJ* suggest for *μετὰ μεγίστων καιρῶν* 'with the greatest odds, the most critical results'. The translation is good, but does not accord with the general meaning 'advantage, profit'. *Καιροί* here (note the plural) should probably be given a negative as well as a positive sense: Corcyra is of the greatest strategic importance both for those who control it and for those who do not. For negative *kairos*, cf. the common fourth-century sense of *καιροί* as 'critical times' (*LSJ* s.v. III. 4) and the sense of 'negative opportunity' that *kairos* attains at E. *Or.* 384, 699; *Supp.* 509.

C. *Kairos* as 'opportunity'

1. Hdt. 1. 206. Tomyris urges Cyrus to reconsider his invasion of her land, οὐ γὰρ ἂν εἰδείης εἴ τοι ἐς καιρὸν ἔσται ταῦτα τελεόμενα. 'Opportunely' is a suitable all-purpose translation of ἐς καιρὸν both here and elsewhere in Herodotus (4. 139; 7. 144; 9. 87). In this passage the emphasis happens to be on results (τελεόμενα). This is the only reason why 'profitably' (the result of 'opportunely') is at all plausible in this context. I note that Powell in his *Lexicon* does not subscribe to such a meaning for Herodotus.

2. S. *Ph.* 151. Neoptolemus has just asked the chorus τὸ παρὸν θεραπεύειν, 'to attend to the situation in hand'. In reply, the chorus assure Neoptolemus that they are eager φρουρεῖν... ἐπὶ σῷ μάλιστα καιρῷ, 'to keep watch over your *kairos* above all'. Here a sense of 'opportunity' is superior in its immediacy to the 'profit' that may result therefrom.

A study of the instances of *kairos* down to the end of the fourth century B.C., complete as far as the available indices and lexica allow,⁵ has convinced me that, except in very limited circumstances, and then only in Xenophon, there are no grounds for positing a semantic development from 'appropriateness' to 'profit' in the classical period. Many of the instances of *kairos* as 'profit' suggested in the special lexica have already been considered above. The main additional candidates are the thirteen examples that Sturz lists in his *Lexicon Xenophonticum* under the heading *commodum, utile*. These will now be briefly considered.

Of the thirteen passages, *Cyr.* 7. 1. 8 refers to spatial appropriateness (our group B), while *Cyr.* 8. 7. 9 refers to appropriateness in general (our group A). Five of the examples have to do with the selection of a piece of information or of an action where 'what is appropriate or *kairos* in the circumstances' amounts to 'what is relevant or important'.⁶ Typical of this group is *Cyr.* 5. 3. 56: a system of spies is set up to communicate ὅ τι καιρὸς δοκοίη εἶναι, 'anything that seems relevant'. This is in effect glossed later in the sentence by τὸ ἄξιον λόγου, 'a matter of importance'. Compare *Cyr.* 6. 1. 43, 6. 3. 17, 8. 2. 10, 4. 1. 11 (cf. also *Anab.* 3. 1. 36). None of these passages encourages a further step from what is 'important' to what is 'useful'.

Sturz's remaining six instances involve the phrase ἐν καιρῷ. At *Anab.* 3. 1. 39 the phrase is used adverbially, and means 'appropriately for the occasion'. At *Hell.* 4. 3. 2 it is used predicatively in an impersonal construction: ἄρ' ἂν... ἐν καιρῷ γένοιτο

⁵ 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. Golligher and W. S. Maginness, *Index to the Speeches of Isaeus*; L. Brandwood, *Word Index to Plato*.

⁶ For this meaning see Pape's *Lexicon* s.v. ad fin.

‘Would it be appropriate?’. But in the remaining four passages it is predicated of a person who appears ‘at the right time in the right place’. In such instances the phrase *ἐν καιρῷ εἶναι/γενέσθαι* might be translated ‘to come in handy’. This verges upon ‘to be useful’, and in fact at *Cyr.* 6. 1. 38 *χρήσιμος* appears as an intrusive gloss on *ἐν καιρῷ*, while at *Hell.* 7. 4. 8 *ἐν καιρῷ γενέσθαι* is opposed to *οὐδέποτε χρήσιμοι ἔτι ἔσεσθαι*. The four passages are as follows:

1. *Cyr.* 5. 1. 17. ἴσως . . . ἂν πάνν ἡμῖν ἐν καιρῷ γένοιτο αὕτη ἡ γυνή.
2. *Cyr.* 6. 1. 38. εἰ γὰρ γένοιτο . . . ὃ τι ἐγώ σοι ἐν καιρῷ ἂν γενοίμην [*αὐ* *χρήσιμος*].
3. *Hell.* 3. 4. 9. ὅπου γὰρ ἂν ὦ, πειράσσομαι ἐν καιρῷ σοι εἶναι.
4. *Hell.* 7. 4. 8. σωθέντες μὲν γὰρ ἴσως ἂν αὖθις ἔτι ποτὲ ἐν καιρῷ ὑμῖν γενοίμεθα· ἔὰν δὲ νῦν ἀπολώμεθα, δῆλον ὅτι οὐδέποτε χρήσιμοι ἔτι ἐσόμεθα.

Strangely enough, there are no parallels elsewhere in classical Greek to Xenophon’s personal predication of *ἐν καιρῷ*. In other writers the phrase is mostly adverbial and means either ‘at the right time’ or ‘appropriately’.⁷ The only examples of a predicative use of *ἐν καιρῷ* are at *And.* 1. 145 and [*Dem.*] 50. 2. At *And.* 1. 145 the speaker urges the jurors to profit from his accumulated experience *ὅπου ἂν ἐν καιρῷ τι ὑμῖν γίγνηται*, ‘whenever you have an opportunity’ (trans. MacDowell ad loc.). At [*Dem.*] 50. 2 a trierarch describes his services (*πράξεις*) as *ἐν καιρῷ . . . καὶ χρήσιμοι*, ‘timely and useful’. In the last example it is very clear that what is *ἐν καιρῷ* is also *χρήσιμος*, but it is equally clear that the expressions are not synonymous.

University of Alberta

JOHN R. WILSON

⁷ *Th.* 4. 59. 3; *A.* *PV* 379; *S.* *OC* 809; *E.* *Ba.* 1287, *Rh.* 443, fr. 149. 18 Austin (*Nova Fr. Eur.*); *Bacch.* 25. 2 Snell; Plato, *Soph.* 260A1, *Pol.* 307B1, *Laws* 916D8. At fr. 745. 1 Nauck, Euripides uses the phrase attributively in the sense of ‘timely’.