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KAIROS REVISITED: THE RHETORICAL SITUATION AND THE ART OF BECOMING A RHETOR

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Debra Hawhee Wilhoit

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Brian, my parents, Edward and Mary Hawhee, and my sister, Dawn Bowers, all of whom have supported and encouraged me through this process.

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ABSTRACT

In his article "Concepts of Art and the Teaching of Writing," Richard Young points to four different conceptions of the art of rhetoric: "glamour," "knack," "grammar" and "craft." If placed on a continuum, one pole would be art as "glamour," a genius theory of art that stresses the creative dimension of art, but frequently mystifies the creative process. The other pole would be art as "craft" or rules and norms of style and usage (131). Those who believe that art is a "gift," that the composing process is irrational and cannot be taught, leave composition teachers to perform the putative task of remediation (Berlin 35) and the transference of mechanics and/or rules (Young 131). What is at stake? A teachable, transferable art of rhetoric.

The concept of *kairos*, the subject of this text, is one way to examine these conflicting conceptions of art. Like the notion of art, *kairos* is multidimensional, and its dimensions are, at times, oppositional. If placed on a continuum, ancient notions of *kairos* reveal a "temporal" pole, "right timing" and a "normative," "proper measure" pole. The temporal can be irrational and mysterious, as in Gorgias' rhetoric (de Romilly, Vitanza). The normative side

of *kairos*, however, approaches the notion of decorum, a key term in the Latin rhetorics of Cicero and Quintilian. Indeed, these are two distinct meanings: temporal *kairos* is highly contingent on the immediate exigency, while normative *kairos* is less contingent upon situation and more closely tied to rules or universal notions of propriety. *Prepon*, a Greek term meaning "that which is seemly, fitness, propriety" (L&S 1234) merges with this notion of *kairos* (Kennedy 67, Kinneavy, Pohlenz). This merger de-emphasizes the temporal aspect of *kairos*. In its ancient contexts, these two meanings of *kairos* were kept separate; indeed, these two meanings can be viewed as two oppositional poles of *kairos*. How, then, have modern rhetoricians come to combine these two meanings of *kairos* into one? Perhaps more interestingly, what, if anything, lies between these poles? The complexity of *kairos* has given rise to confusion over its various meanings. The purpose of this text is twofold: 1) to re-examine ancient contexts of *kairos* and the rhetorical situation and 2) to explore the relationship between an ancient conceptions of the art of *kairos* and the art of rhetoric, conceptions which ultimately impinge upon the art of becoming a rhetor.

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INTRODUCTION

A few semesters ago in an American Literature class, I presented a paper on Emerson's contribution to rhetoric. When I concluded the presentation, the professor looked at me and asked, "Do you *really* think you people can teach students how to write?" In my mind, his question served to widen the gap between literary and rhetorical studies, but it also betrayed an ancient conflict between two opposing conceptions of rhetorical art: the creative, genius-driven and the utilitarian, rule-governed. This dichotomy represents what is perceived by many as an unteachable, mysterious "natural ability" and the teachable conventions and precepts of writing. This age-old opposition has been cast and re-cast, for as Richard Young observes, "it reemerges every time we think seriously about the discipline" (139). Jacqueline de Romilly writes that this opposition between the creative and utilitarian traditions "amounts to a struggle between the spell of the irrational and the desire to master it by means of reason . . ." (85).

Young has approached this conflict by outlining conceptions of art within these two extremes. According to Young, one can point to at least four different conceptions

of the art of rhetoric: "glamour," "knack," "grammar" and "craft." If placed on a continuum (fig. 1), one pole would be art as "glamour," a genius theory of art that stresses the creative dimension of art, but frequently mystifies the creative process. The other pole would be art as "craft" or rules and norms of style and usage (131). Those who, like my American Lit professor, believe that art is a "gift," that the composing process is irrational and cannot be taught, leave composition teachers to perform the putative task of remediation (Berlin 35) and the transference of mechanics and/or rules (Young 131). What is at stake? A teachable, transferable art of rhetoric.

Young demonstrates that what lies between the poles is of critical importance. Here, Young locates two more conceptions of art. On one side lies art as "grammar," defined as "the knowledge necessary for producing preconceived results by conscious, directed action" (134). In Young's scheme, art as "grammar" contrasts with art as a "knack" or "habit acquired through repeated experience" (134). Heuristic procedures serve as the basis for an art as "grammar" and attenuate the genius/rules opposition, for according to Young, "although more or less systematic, a heuristic search is not wholly conscious or mechanical; intuition, relevant knowledge, and skill are also necessary" (135).

art	glamour	knack	grammar	craft
description	magical	habitual	technical	mechanical
means of achieving art	genius	experience	heuristics	rules

Fig. 1: Young's conceptions of art

The concept of *kairos*, the subject of this text, is one way to examine these conflicting conceptions of art. Like the notion of art, *kairos* is multidimensional, and its dimensions are, at times, oppositional. On the one hand, *kairos* has a cluster of meanings dealing with time: "right time, opportunity, occasion, season" (L&S 689). This notion of time is distinguished from linear time, *chronos*, with which we are more familiar, which may be defined as "a certain, definite time or period" (L&S 1076). On the other hand, *kairos* includes notions of measure and proportion, and can be defined as "right measure, the right proportion of one thing to another, measure proportion, fitness" (L&S 689). *Prepon*, a Greek term meaning "that which is seemly, fitness, propriety" (L&S 1234) merges with this notion of *kairos* (Kennedy 67, Kinneavy, Pohlenz). This merger de-emphasizes the temporal aspect of *kairos*. In its ancient contexts, these two meanings of *kairos* were kept separate;

indeed, these two meanings can be viewed as two oppositional poles of *kairos*.

In modern rhetoric, for the most part, these two meanings have been condensed into one definition: the "principle of right timing and the principle of proper measure" (Kinneavy 85). Here the "temporal" pole, "right timing" co-exists with the "normative,"[1] "proper measure" pole. The temporal can be irrational and mysterious, as in Gorgias' rhetoric (de Romilly, Vitanza). The normative side of *kairos*, however, approaches the notion of decorum, a key term in the Latin rhetorics of Cicero and Quintilian. Indeed, these are two distinct meanings: temporal *kairos* is highly contingent on the immediate exigency, while normative *kairos* is less contingent upon situation and more closely tied to rules or universal notions of propriety. How, then, have modern rhetoricians come to combine these two meanings of *kairos* into one? Perhaps more interestingly, what, if anything, lies between these poles? The complexity of *kairos* has given rise to confusion over its various meanings. We should bear in mind that *kairos* is known as an artistic element in rhetorical theory (Kennedy 67). As such, *kairos* can further explicate these

[1]William Race divides *kairos* into these two categories in his study of the term in Greek Drama, 197.

different conceptions of art, because it brings a critical component of rhetorical theory: the rhetorical situation.

Thesis

The task of this work is to examine the history of the concept of *kairos* in ancient rhetoric, using its ancient contexts to understand more fully its complex meaning. Central to this task will be 1. a study of the different degrees of emphasis *kairos* receives in the rhetorics of Gorgias, Isocrates, Aristotle and Plato, and 2. a close examination of the term *prepon*, particularly in relation to the "normative" dimensions of *kairos*. A better understanding of the term *kairos* might 1) prevent us from falling into the genius/rules binary, 2) help us to elaborate subtle differences between art as "knack" and art as "grammar," and 3) allow a more enriched perspective of ancient conceptions of the art of rhetoric.

To begin this examination, we shall first examine the concept of *kairos* in ancient rhetorical theory.

CHAPTER 1

GORGIAN AND ISOCRATEAN PERSPECTIVES ON *KAIROS*

Gorgias

I begin my examination of *kairos* in ancient rhetorical theory with Gorgias, for the sophist is said to have brought the notion to the realm of rhetoric. George Kennedy, for example, marks *kairos* as Gorgias' unique contribution to rhetoric (66). For Gorgias, *kairos* was identified with improvisation. Philostratus writes that Gorgias ". . . [seems] to have begun extemporaneous oratory. For coming into the theater of the Athenians he had the boldness to say 'suggest a subject,' and he was the first to proclaim himself willing to take this chance, showing apparently that he knew everything and would trust to the moment (*tôi kairôi*) to speak on any subject" (Sprague 30 trans. Kennedy).[2] Untersteiner contends that *kairos* permeated Gorgias' ethic, aesthetic and rhetoric (161).

Gorgias is the best representative of Young's concept of art as glamour. Eric White calls Gorgias' concept of

[2]The complete writings of Gorgias no longer exist; we are left only with fragments of his work or accounts of his work. Hence, I draw from Sprague's The Older Sophists, (a complete translation by several hands of the fragments in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, (The Fragments of the Presocratics)*.

kairos "a radical principle of occasionality" (14); Gorgias' rhetoric is so contingent upon the immediate that it eludes detailed description. Dubbing *kairos* a "Pre-Socratic legacy," James Baumlin writes: "The observance of *kairos* becomes above all an interpretation of mutable, contingent, temporal nature, giving the speaker or writer what amounts to creative control over the world he lives in and presents, by words, to others" (188). In the language of Baumlin, "The rhetorician creates a world through persuasive speech, and invites his audience to bring this new world into existence" (180). And Untersteiner supports this notion, claiming that Gorgias realized a "*kairos* endowed with the property of breaking up the cycle of the antitheses and *creating something new* . . ." (161). If each time the rhetor "breaks up the cycle," then the art becomes something magical, irrational (Vitanza, deRomilly). Thus, Gorgias' art is "glamour" and represents a genius theory of rhetoric: the art is so tied to the situation that it cannot be transferred or taught.

Pierre Bourdieu uses Gorgias to illustrate his conception of "practical mastery." Bourdieu observes that Gorgias "aimed to secure and transmit practical mastery of a language of action" (Logic 287). "Practical mastery" is a key concept that deserves some attention, for its relevance extends to Isocrates' rhetoric as well.

Bourdieu's term "practical mastery" serves to describe Gorgias' conception of art. Bourdieu dubs practical mastery a "feel for the game" or the "sense of the game" (81) and describes it as follows:

> A player who is involved and caught up in the game adjusts not to what he sees but to what he fore-sees, sees in advance in the directly perceived present; he passes the ball not to the spot where his team-mate is but to the spot he will reach - before his opponent - a moment later, anticipating the anticipations of the others and, as when 'selling a dummy,' seeking to confound them. He decides in terms of objective probabilities, that is, in response to an overall, instantaneous assessment of the whole set of his opponents and the whole set of his team-mates, seen not as they are but in their impending positions. And he does so 'on the spot,' 'in the twinkling of an eye,' 'in the heat of the moment,' that is in conditions which exclude distance, perspective, detachment and reflexion (82).

When describing the practical scheme, Bourdieu uses the metaphor of an athletic contest, "the game." The key to this comparison is time. In the language of Bourdieu, as

in an athletic contest, practice is "immersed in the current of time . . . inseparable from temporality" (81). Time is also the distinguishing factor between the practical scheme and the scientific scheme. Scientific practice is detemporalized because the analyst arrives "after the battle . . . [and] cannot have any uncertainty as to what can happen" (81). The words of Bourdieu describing a practical logic represent the most temporal notion of *kairos*: "It is unaware of principles that govern it and the possibilities they contain; it can only discover them by enacting them, unfolding them in time" (92). Therefore, these principles are so tied to the situation that they cannot be taught; *kairos* is rather achieved through what Bourdieu might call "intuitive, rule-of-thumb decisions" (98). This accurately describes Gorgias' art, art as "glamour."

Isocrates

Although Isocrates wrote a treatise entitled Against the Sophists, he still adhered to some of the sophists' basic tenets, especially the purpose of their rhetoric and the importance of practical mastery. Isocrates himself distinguishes his rhetoric from that of Gorgias in that it was to help a "man who does not aim merely to make an oratorical display, but desires to accomplish something as

well" (*Panegyricus* 17, 1). Isocrates was a student of Gorgias (Enos 39), and Isocrates' rhetoric, like that of Protagoras and Gorgias, was practiced --in the words of John Poulakos -- "in the public domain, where uncertainty, contingency, and fluctuation reign supreme" ("Gorgias' Encomium" 6). As a result, Isocrates' approach to rhetoric "emphasizes the art as creative performance" (Leff 311). Michael Leff contends that "for Isocrates, rhetoric is first and foremost a kind of action, action that must encompass an infinite variety of changing circumstances" (311).

In his speech Panathenaicus, Isocrates discusses the effect of *kairos* on his own discourse: "But it was difficult, or rather impossible to postpone the things which at that time occurred to me to say at the present occasion (*ton kairon*), which I could not foresee would come to me" (127, 3). In this passage, Isocrates portrays himself as a rhetor so involved in performance that he does not have time to reflect on his words. He does not rely on abstract principles to shape his discourse, but confident in his sense of the "game" so to speak, that he, like Gorgias, relies on the moment for eloquence. The occasion is paramount. Like Gorgias, Isocrates' rhetoric is tightly bound with action. Though translated different ways, *kairos* in Isocrates indicates the "moment for action." In

Panegyricus, such a moment is critical for the very act of speaking:

> . . . the moment (*oi kairoi*) for action has not yet gone by, and so made it now futile to bring up this question; for then, and only then, should we cease to speak, when the conditions have come to an end and there is no longer any need to deliberate about them . . . (5,2).

For Isocrates, the need for good oratory arises out of a need for action. Later in Panegyricus, *toioutois kairois* is translated "in such times of crisis" (139,9). The word often conveys an imminent sense of urgency. Again, Bourdieu's scheme becomes relevant, for urgency is a necessary property of practice (82): "Urgency . . . is the product of playing in the game and the presence in the future that it implies. One only has to stand outside the game, as the observer does, to sweep away the urgency . . ." (82). Urgency is a critical characteristic of Isocrates' rhetoric of action, and this urgency is demonstrated in his use of the term *kairos*. In the above passage in Panegyricus, Isocrates directly addresses his specific exigency--the chaotic state of Greece, posing the question:

> But so long as conditions go on as before, and what has been said about them is inadequate, is

> it not our duty to scan and study this question, the right decision of which will deliver us from our mutual warfare, our present confusion, and our greatest ills? (6,3)

Isocrates continues with his discourse only after foregrounding the need for action, bringing to life the exigency for the audience.

Certainly an art that is so contingent on the occasion is difficult to teach, yet Isocrates, unlike Gorgias,[3] strives to make his art transferable. Through his own speeches, Isocrates implies the importance of attaining a practical mastery of rhetoric. A young person who wants to become an orator, then, should become immersed in the practice of rhetoric, speaking and listening to great speakers. Isocrates discusses this in Antidosis, where he advises one who wants to create worthy discourses to

> . . . select from all the actions of men which bear upon his subject those examples which are the most illustrious and the most edifying; and, habituating himself to contemplate and appraise such examples, he will feel their influence not only in the preparation of a given discourse but in all the actions of his life. (277, 3-9)

[3]Or at least, we have no evidence of Gorgias' pedagogical practices.

Thus by subjecting oneself to the practice of great oratory, one may develop a practical mastery or the "feel for the game." The notion of habituation suggests a conscious "artistic" dimension. This practical mastery comes when one is comfortable and confident in different situations and knows how to act and react. Such a level of comfort and confidence indeed strengthens a rhetor's *ethos*, thus providing an advantage for the rhetor. Such a practical mastery, when applied to Isocrates' notion of habituation, points to Young's conception of art as "knack," which is, as we shall see, closely tied to *kairos*.

Like Bourdieu, Isocrates invokes athletics to help describe the process of achieving a practical mastery. For Isocrates, athletics serves a two-fold purpose. First, athletics had already been established as a means of achieving *arete* (virtue, skill, prowess)[4] through success in competition. In this sense, athletics can serve as sort of a model for the field of rhetoric. Secondly, and more importantly, in antiquity, people were eager to master the skills necessary to compete. Here, the very questions of teachability and transferability press both the fields of athletics and rhetoric. Just as aspiring orators sought rhetorical training, young children met with gymnastics

[4]For an elaborate discussion on the meaning of *arete* and its connection with ancient athletics, see Miller, Arete.

trainers for their "physical education." Isocrates recognizes the ties between the two areas and invokes their similarities. For instance, in Antidosis, Isocrates compares the process of learning rhetoric to learning gymnastics:

> Physical trainers instruct their followers in the postures which have been devised for bodily contests, while the teachers of philosophy impart all the forms of discourse in which the mind expresses itself. Then, when they have made them familiar and thoroughly conversant with these lessons, they set them at exercises, habituate them to work, and require them to combine in practice the particular things which they have learned, in order that they may grasp them more firmly and bring their theories into closer touch with the occasions (*tôn kairôn*) for applying them -- I say "theories," for no system of knowledge can possibly cover these occasions, since in all cases they elude our science. (183-184)

Here, Isocrates directly addresses *kairos* as central to a mastery of rhetoric, which he allies with the term philosophy. He articulates, as George Norlin's note to the text explains, "a working theory based on practical

experience--judgment or insight in dealing with the uncertain contingencies of any human situation which presents itself" (290-291).

The use of athletics as a metaphor is yet another link between Isocrates and the work of Bourdieu. R. Johnson explicates this analogy in his description of Isocrates' teaching methods. After detailing the way in which *paidotribes* taught fluency of movement and techniques of wrestling, Johnson demonstrates how Isocrates applied these techniques in his teaching of rhetoric. After all, as Johnson points out, "The pupil's business in each case is the same--to diagnose the methods of his enemy and to choose the appropriate course of action" (28). According to Johnson, Isocrates even

> pits pupil against pupil in the rhetorical counterpart of the wrestling match. . . . Just as the wrestler learns by experience that a particular opening is best exploited by a certain type of attack, so the young rhetor learns what arguments are most convincing in a given case, in a given part of speech, or against a particular opponent. (28-29)

Thus, Isocrates' pedagogy privileges the rhetorical situation by setting up a real situation, an "occasion," a

kairos, and encouraging the students to "try out" different rhetorical techniques. Johnson goes on to discuss the importance of *kairos* in Isocrates' teaching methods. By placing his pupils in direct competition with each other, Isocrates demonstrates that he values practical experience obtained through situational practice. Competition simulates the pressures felt in "real" oratory, and only such realistic practice will give the pupil the "knack," or the practical mastery allowing him to be "generally able to hit upon the best solution in (his) judgements" (*Antidosis* 271). Such foundations, Johnson claims, are the reason Isocrates was, according to R.C. Jebb, "greatly superior in the practical department of teaching" (431); this superiority, Jebb contends, explains why Isocrates produced a host of notable orators, while Aristotle produced none (Jebb 431).

Isocrates also evokes the normative dimension of *kairos* in several instances. The meaning of *kairos* as the right point of time, fit, proper time, the season of action is found a great deal in speeches on the political state of the Hellenic world, such as Isocrates' Panegyricus. Here, Isocrates appeals to Athenians to take a leadership role in uniting the Hellenic world against the Persians, and he asks the Greeks to accept the leadership of Athens to regain Greek supremacy. Isocrates refers to the *kairos* ten

times in this speech; each repetition conveys a sense of urgency in "such times of crisis" [*tois toioutois kairois*].[5] Toward the end of the speech, Isocrates observes how the Greeks can deliver themselves from their "present discord": ". . . for we do not settle our wars, but only postpone them and wait for the opportune moment when we shall have the power to inflict some irreparable disaster upon each other" (172, 6). Isocrates recognizes the *kairos* as an opportunity to gain a persuasive advantage. He writes to Nicocles, ". . . it is best to grasp your opportunities at the right moment [*tôn kairôn*]" (To Nicocles 23, 5). Nicocles, Isocrates' companion piece to To Nicocles, advises the king's subjects and praises the monarchy (Norlin 74). There, Isocrates writes that members of the monarchy ". . . do not let opportunities pass them by, but act in each case at the right moment [*tôn kairôn*]" (19, 7).

Kairos and *prepon* are both important for Isocrates' rhetoric. Three times he uses the terms in close proximity to each other. In Against the Sophists Isocrates describes good oratory as that which demonstrates "fitness for the occasion" [*tôn kairôn*], and "propriety of style" [*tou prepontôs*] (13, 4). As if to re-emphasize the importance

[5]Section 139, line 9; Section 169, line 2

of the two concepts, just two passages later Isocrates writes:

> But to choose from these elements those which should be employed for each subject, to join them together, to arrange them properly, and also, not to miss what the occasion demands [*kairôn*] but appropriately [*prepontôs*] to adorn the whole speech with striking thoughts and to clothe it in flowing and melodious phrase -- these things, I hold, require much study and are the task of a vigorous and imaginative mind. (16-17)

Here, *kairos* and *prepon* represent two different artistic elements. *Kairos* is the occasion, while *prepontos* refers to stylistic propriety. Undoubtedly, Isocrates still hints that natural ability is necessary,[6] but he also advocates training: "Formal training makes such men more skillful and more resourceful in discovering the possibilities of a subject . . ." (15). Such training includes Isocrates' canon of rhetoric, outlined in the above classes to include invention, arrangement and style, of which *kairos* and *prepon* are important elements. Isocrates also uses the *kair-* and *prep-* roots together in Antidosis, his fictional speech designed to clear his name. At 74, 4-5, he writes

[6]see Against the Sophists, section 15, 5-9

that he "shall use whatever I may think appropriate to the present occasion" [*ei ti moi doxeie* ***prepon*** *Sinai tô paronti* ***kairô***]. In Isocrates' scheme, then, *kairos* and *prepon* are separate yet complementary artistic elements. Interestingly, in this particular speech, the *paronti kairô*, the present occasion, is entirely Isocrates' creation. The Antidosis is Isocrates' defense against fictional charges that he corrupts his pupils (Norlin, 182). Indeed, the rhetorical situation is fiction, Isocrates' creation, and Isocrates constructs his response accordingly.

In sum, *kairos*, in its richest senses, always considers the immediate exigency: the rhetorical situation. Situations are necessarily tied to the conception of art as knack. Here, Isocrates is the most appropriate spokesperson. In Isocrates' view, an aspiring orator should become immersed in the practice of rhetoric, experiencing first- and second-hand rhetorical situations as they arise. If we recall Isocrates' advice in Antidosis that a rhetor should habituate himself to the examples of successful orators, then it becomes evident that Isocrates' art is habit acquired through practice, or knack. Such an art, directly tied to *kairos*, or situations, is transferable through habituation.

CHAPTER 2

PRECEPTUAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS: ARISTOTLE AND PLATO

Aristotle

Young establishes Aristotle as the best representative of the technical theory of art, or art as "grammar" (135). Young maintains that this conception of art is transferable through heuristics. At the same time, he recognizes the importance of the situation:

> To use a heuristic appropriately writers must see the situation they are confronting at the moment as a specific variant of the *kind* of situation for which the procedure was designed; they must behave as though in some sense they have been there before." (136)

In regards to the rhetorical situation, one key difference persists in these two conceptions of art: those with "grammar" *act as though* they have been in a similar situation, while those with "knack" probably have.

The practical mastery emphasized by the sophists and Isocrates contrasts with Aristotle's rhetorical theory, which emphasizes rules or guiding precepts. Leff observes

that "Aristotle emphasizes the art as a coherent body of precepts" (311). Still, Aristotle's rhetoric is more than just a book of rules. Precepts certainly comprise a portion of Aristotle's rhetoric, yet the precepts are fluid, not rigid. Again, Bourdieu's work provides insight into the implications of such an emphasis. In *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu applies the analogy of a map to a "culture," where "an outsider who has to find his way around in a foreign landscape and who compensates for his lack of practical mastery, the prerogative of the native, by the use of a model of all possible routes" (2). This analogy works well when applied to Aristotle's rhetoric. A practical mastery of rhetoric eliminates the need for precepts or maps, because the rhetor "knows the way around." Aristotle, with his list of *topoi koinoi* and his codification of rhetoric, "mapped out" the foreign territory of rhetoric for aspiring rhetors. Aristotle favored what Bourdieu might term a "symbolic mastery," a theoretical analysis that produces

> . . . externally, in objectivity, in the form of explicit principles, that which guides practice from inside, [making] possible a conscious awareness of the scheme into a representation which gives symbolic mastery of the practical principles that practical sense enacts either

> without representing them or while giving only partial or inadequate representations of them (102).

Thus, Aristotle, as "map-maker," engaged in both production and analysis of an art of rhetoric. A good example of Aristotle's scientific analysis of rhetoric may be found in Book 2 of the Rhetoric. Here, Aristotle outlines different emotions that might be useful for rhetoricians. In each chapter, Aristotle defines an emotion such as anger and suggests ways to elicit that emotion. Aristotle thus provides a thorough analysis of human nature; this territory can not be entirely foreign to his readers. What, then, does Aristotle achieve through this careful examination of human emotions? Aristotle's detail provides a *heightened consciousness* regarding these emotions. He outlines and classifies that which most experienced rhetoricians might take for granted, thus providing a "laundry-list" of possible situations for the rhetor to consider before hand. Aristotle's rhetoric is not prescriptive, but descriptive. He offers *accounts* of the art that might serve as heuristics, or points for exploration.

Throughout his corpus, Aristotle uses *kairos* primarily to mean occasion. Four different times in the Politics he digresses and gets back on track by recognizing it is not

the "*kairos*" for such discussion. One example occurs in his discussion of Cretan social arrangements. Here Aristotle discusses how lawmakers in Crete segregated the women so they would not bear children, thus instituting homosexual activity. At this point, Aristotle finds his way out by saying, "as to which there will be another occasion [*kairos*] to consider whether it was a bad thing or a good one" (1272 a, line 26).[7] At 1269a, line 28, Aristotle abandons a discussion of instituting changes in laws, claiming such a discussion "belongs to other occasions [*allôn gar esti kairôn*]." In both these instances, Aristotle decided that it was neither the appropriate time nor the place to discuss those matters. For Aristotle, then, *kairos* provided a rhetorical means of gracefully backing out of a particular discussion. This occurs again at 1336a, line 27, where Aristotle discusses attendance of the young in certain places: ". . . on the present occasion [*ton paronta kairon*] we have touched on the question only in the manner necessary." Here, Aristotle emphasizes the sense of *kairos* found in Pindar : distinguishing the fine line between too much and too little and striking a balance by saying only the right amount. Again, this use leans toward the notion of "fit"

[7]The other three uses of kairos in this manner are 1269a, line 28; 1276a, line 31; and 1336, line 27.

or "proper." Aristotle invokes *kairos* in the same manner once in the Rhetoric: "Now enough has been said about virtue and vice in general and about their parts for the present occasion [*kairon hikanôs*]." These examples serve to illustrate Aristotle's use of the term *kairos* in his own discourse. He clearly recognizes the importance of staying "on track" and treating subjects in just the right manner, thus achieving the balance necessary for effective communication.

In the Rhetoric, however, *kairos* becomes the subject, and the occurrences of *kairos* here emphasize time and circumstances and their importance to successful persuasion. Here, Aristotle discusses an art of *kairos* and its relationship to other key concepts. Indeed, the art of *kairos* might secure a speaker's honor [*timê*], which helps shape *ethos*, a critical means of proof in Aristotle's scheme. Aristotle discusses the relationship of *kairos* to *timê* at 1361a, line 34, where he writes of honor and good reputation, ". . . many people obtain honor through things that [in other situations would] seem trifles, but the place and occasion [*hoitopoi kai hoi kairoi*] make the difference." Clearly these contingencies play an important role in Aristotle's rhetoric, where the audience largely constitutes the rhetorical situation. He also writes,

that, among other things, *kairos* can yield the noble [*megethos*], the good [*kalôn*] and the just [*dikaiôv*]:

> . . . the more difficult and rarer is greater, so opportunities [*hoi kairoi*] and ages in life and places and times and powers make things great; for if a person [acts] beyond his power and beyond his age and beyond such things and if [the actions are done] in such a way or place or at such a time, he will have greatness of fine and good and just things and their opposites. [365a, line 20]

For Aristotle, *kairos* can be an intensifier, affecting the degree to which a speech or an act is positively perceived. Such a degree of emphasis may offer the rhetor an "edge" or advantage, leading to successful persuasion. In a discussion about benevolence [*kharis*], Aristotle again invokes *kairos* as an intensifier, for "[*Kharis*] would be great if [the recipient] is either greatly in need or in need of what is great and difficult [to get] or in times of crisis [*en kairois*] . . ." (1385a, 20). At 1385a, line 27, Aristotle gives an example of extending kindliness at the "opportune time" [*kairos*], citing "the person who gave the mat in the Lyceum," an example that George Kennedy suggests refers to when the Lyceum was used as a gymnasium; Kennedy portrays "a scene in which a boy or man was injured and

someone gave him a straw mat to lie on" (On Rhetoric, 150, note 67). Taking this as the source of Aristotle's example, we might see how the occasion of physical injury or pain would cause the offering of the mat to seem more benevolent than if, say there were no injury or apparent need for the mat. Thus, the right *kairos* may magnify the smallest of actions.

It is the rhetor's job, then, to be closely attuned to the rhetorical situation so that the right parts of his speech might be magnified. Aristotle writes of this in Book 3 in a discussion about the *prooemia* in relation to the audience's level of attentiveness:

> Furthermore, making the audience attentive is a feature common to all parts of a speech, if there is need of it [at all]; for these remedies are sought everywhere, not just when beginning. Thus, it is ridiculous to amass them at the beginning, where all listeners are most paying attention. As a result, whenever there is an opportunity [*kairos*], one should say [things like] "And give me your attention, for nothing [that I say] pertains more to me than [it does] to you" and "I shall tell you something strange, the like of which you have never heard" or "[something] so marvelous . . ."(1415b, 12-16).

In this context, the rhetor must constantly look out for the opportunity to exhort the audience explicitly so that the most powerful parts of the speech might be emphasized.

Aristotle devotes ten chapters in Book Three of On Rhetoric to *lexis*, or style. It is in this section that his use of *kairos* approaches that of *prepon*. In a discussion of the causes of frigidity of style, Aristotle lists as the third cause the "use of epithets (descriptive words or phrases) that are long or untimely or crowded" (1406a, 12). The word for untimely here is *akairois*. The very next phrase suggests a close relationship between the *kair-* and *prep-* roots: "In poetry it is appropriate [*prepei*] to speak of 'white milk,' but in speech such things are . . . rather unsuitable [*aprepestera*]" (line 13). Thus, untimely epithets, or descriptions given with little regard for the *kairos*, are inappropriate [*aprepei*].

In his own discourse, Aristotle uses *kairos* to mean "occasion," as in the subject of discussion. He is careful to say only that which is necessary for the occasion and to demonstrate his particular points. In the Rhetoric, however, an art of *kairos* emerges; this art is tied to the structure of the speech and emphasis given to particular parts of the speech. Aristotle's discussion of *kairos* focuses on the needs of the audience: the rhetor must be attuned to the audience's emotion, taste, and level of

attentiveness. In Aristotle's theory of style, however, *kairos* becomes but a subheading to *prepon*.

Plato

Plato's notion of *kairos* approaches the normative side. When Plato often discusses *kairos* in a context that foregrounds Stoic principles. This connection between a "right/proper" *kairos* and Stoicism lays the groundwork for a strict normative sense of decorum that emerges in Latin rhetoric.

Plato uses *kairos* in his discourse much like Aristotle, as occasion. Socrates is explicitly aware of the importance of *kairos* as the right time or occasion. For example, in the Theatetus, the title character asks Socrates to slow down, reminding Socrates that he himself said "there is no hurry in discussions of this sort" (187 d, 11-12). Socrates agrees: "perhaps this is a good time [*kairou*] to retrace our steps" (187 e, 1). In The Sophist, the Stranger calls attention to his own adept awareness of *kairos* when he tells Theatetus to "Observe then, that we have now been just in time [*en kairô*] in carrying our point against the supporters . . ." (260 e, 1). *Kairos* is used in much the same way in Protagoras when the presence of Prodicus prompts Socrates to exclaim, "Upon my word, how

opportunely [*eis kairon*] it has happened that Prodicus is here to join in our discussion!" (340 e, 8-9).

In Plato's scheme, *kairos* is paramount in speaking, cultivating the land, and in marrying. In The Republic, Plato echoes Pythagoras when he writes about marriage and the determinacy of geometrical numbers, instructing that ". . . when your guardians, missing this, bring together brides and bridegrooms unseasonably [*para kairon*], the offspring will not be well-born or fortunate" (546 d, 2-4). The result would be an inferior generation characterized by weakness and dissension (547). This marks a point where Plato upholds Stoic beliefs. Plato portrays the universe as a rationally organized structure, an idea that is clearly Stoic (Long 108). The notion of marrying "seasonably" is tied to the Stoic goal of human existence, which, according to A.A. Long "is complete harmony between a man's own attitudes and actions and the actual course of events" (108). Thus *kairos* plays a critical role in the structuring of the universe; indeed, Plato invokes *kairos* in a discussion of the creation of the universe. The Stranger in The Statesman explains that the universe was at one time guided by an extrinsic divine cause, only to be "left to itself at such a moment [*kata kairon*] that it moves backwards through countless ages" (270 a 5-8). This conception of *kairos*, then, seems unchanging or static, and

as in the case of the bride and groom, approaches a notion of propriety or decorum.

For Plato, *kairos* is often a primary consideration. In The Republic, while describing a kind of communal living, Socrates emphasizes the significance of *kairos*, stating what he calls the "obvious"--"that if one lets slip the right season [*kairon*], the favorable moment in any task, the work is spoiled . . ." (370, b, 8). Socrates concludes that "more things are produced, and better and more easily when one man performs one task according to his nature [*en kata phusin*], at the right moment [*en kairo*] and at leisure from other occupations [*scholên tôn allôn agôn, prattê*]" (370 c, 4). Again, Stoic principles emerge in Plato's work. This time the concept of nature (*phusis*) along with *kairos* and *scholê* are tied with man's level of productivity. This passage illustrates the Stoic relationship between conduct--here signified by *kairos* and *scholê*--and nature (Long 120), and the normative sense of *kairos* emerges.

Plato's epistles are perhaps more telling of the importance of *kairos* in Plato's epistemology. In his own discourse, Plato uses *kairos* to mean "proper." In a letter to Dionysius, he writes "Indeed, I may appropriately [*kata kairon*] quote the verse of Euripides . . ." (309, d 2). In another epistle to Dion's associates, Plato is responding

to requests that he support Dion's policy. To do so, he is going to tell how he himself came to share Dion's views about government, for, he contends, ". . . the manner in which these views originated is a story well worth hearing for young and old alike, and I shall endeavor to narrate it to you from the beginning; for at the present moment [*nun*] it is opportune [*exei . . . kairon*]" (324 b, 4-7). In his description, Plato refers to *kairos* as his guiding principle in political affairs; at 326 A, line 2, he writes, ". . . yet as regards political action I kept constantly waiting for an opportune moment [*kairous*]." A little later in his narrative, Plato describes how Dion invoked *kairos* to try to persuade Plato to involve himself with the rule of Dionysus. According to Plato, Dion asked, "'What opportunities [*kairous*] are we to wait for that could be better than those that have now been presented by a stroke of divine good fortune?'" (327 E, 3-6). Apparently Dion knew that *kairos* was a primary consideration for Plato, and invoking the concept helped him persuade Plato to offer his philosophical views to Dionysus. In another letter to Archytas, Plato begins by discussing how one's time in life is divided. Here Plato asserts that while tending to one's own personal affairs is the most pleasant thing, he asks Archytas to

> bear in mind that no one of us exists for himself alone, but one share of our existence belongs to our country, another to our parents, a third to the rest of our friends, while a great part is given over to those needs of the hour [*tois kairois*] with which our life is beset. (358 a,1-8)

Again, Plato presents a Stoic view of life: a very harmonious, structured, almost hierarchical way of living. As such, his view of *kairos* leans to the "normative" side, stressing the "right" or appropriate time for action.

An art of *kairos* emerges in Plato's treatments of the art of rhetoric. In a long speech in the Phaedrus, Socrates establishes two domains of knowledge for the rhetorician: (1) practitioners of rhetoric must know the various forms of the soul, since the function of speech is to lead souls [*psychagôgia*] through persuasion (271 d, 1-3); and (2) students of rhetoric must also be familiar with the various classes of speeches, so that they may distinguish which kinds of people are persuaded by which kinds of speeches, so that the rhetorician attains a "practical application of a certain kind of speech in a certain way to persuade his hearer to a certain action or belief" (272 a, 3-5). These two kinds of knowledge provide the foundation for the art; yet Socrates adds one more

ingredient for the art to "be fully and completely finished": *kairos* (272 a, 9). Socrates states that the student of rhetoric must obtain "a knowledge of the times [*kairous*] for speaking and for keeping silence" (272 a, 4), as well as the ability to distinguish "the favourable occasions for brief speech or pitiful speech or intensity and all the classes of speech which he has learned . . ." (272 a, 5-6). Even here, the *kairos* is normative; the student learns the right time to speak and learns to "distinguish" (and respond appropriately to) situations, a far cry from Isocrates' "boxing match" rhetorical practice.

Although *kairos* retains its temporal dimension in Plato, it is closely associated with *prepon*, or decorum. One such instance occurs in the Statesman, when the Stranger seeks to distinguish between two kinds of measurement:

> One part comprises all the arts which measure number, length, depth, breadth, and thickness in relation to their opposites; the other comprises those which measure them in relation to the moderate [*to metrion*], the fitting [*to prepon*], the opportune [*ton kairon*], the needful [*to deon*] and all other standards that are situated in the mean between the extremes (284 e, 7-10).

Already *kairos* and *prepon* fall under the same strict category, labeled as "standards . . . situated in the mean." That Plato refers to *kairos* as a "standard" shows that he had a far more normative sense of the term than Gorgias and Isocrates. Further evidence of a normative *kairos* persists in The Statesman, when the Stranger and young Socrates discuss praiseworthy actions. At 306 e, 3-7, the Stranger observes that quick, energetic, and acute actions are often admired, yet he later (307 a, 7-10) observes that at other times restrained, slow, and gentle actions are praised as well. Further, the Stranger claims that "when these two classes seem to us out of place [*akaira*], we change our attitude and blame them each in turn . . ." (307 b, 4-6). When young Socrates urges him to elaborate, the Stranger responds, "Why, whatsoever is sharper than the occasion [*tou kairou*] warrants, or seems to be too quick or too hard, is called violent or mad, and whatever is too heavy or slow or gentle, is called cowardly and sluggish . . ." (307 b, 10-14). This discussion, in which *kairos* is crucial, is about achieving the "right" or "proper" action according to the situation. The knowledge of "proper" action later becomes a principle of Stoicism, where right action necessarily follows from knowledge (Long 112).[8]

[8]Long extensively discusses Socrates' influence on Zeno.

In the Timaeus, Plato uses *kairos* much like Aristotle does, to leave a particular discussion behind. In a discussion at 38 b 6 about the existent and non-existent, Timaeus diverges from his discussion about time. To get back on track, he invokes *kairos* and *prepon*: "But the present is not, perhaps, a fitting [*prepôn*] occasion [*kairos*] for an exact discussion of these matters" Plato then resumes his original topic. In this passage, the *prep-* root modifies *kairos*, suggesting that Plato wanted to emphasize the "fitting" dimension of *kairos* by using an allied term, *prepon.*

Thus, Plato's work provides a clear example of how *kairos* and *prepon* become allied terms, and *kairos* shifts to its normative sense of meanings, "due proper measure," and "*right* or *proper* time." For Plato, the rhetorical situation is less dynamic and is structured by "nature" with a goal of harmony or balance.

CHAPTER 3

LATIN RHETORIC

Cicero

I now turn to Latin rhetoric to discuss significant tensions in the work of Cicero, tensions which result from his Stoic and ancient rhetorical heritage. The notions of *kairos* and *prepon* provide one way to assess these conflicting traditions with Cicero's work. Cicero's rhetoric attempted to synthesize ancient Greek rhetorical traditions, particularly the rhetorics of Aristotle and Isocrates. The result, as Michael Leff observes, is "a problem of considerable magnitude" (310): Isocrates and Aristotle represent two different conceptions of art. Cicero's rhetoric, arguably the last of the ancients to be tied to the notion of situation and thus *kairos*, struggles to accommodate two conflicting conceptions of art: art as knack and art as grammar.

The struggle is not limited to the influences of Greek rhetoric, however. Indeed, Cicero's Greek rhetorical heritage is also in conflict with his Stoic heritage. When the Stoic tradition surfaces, Cicero demonstrates a strict sense of *decorum*, as a universal, static "propriety."

However, another sense of decorum arises from Cicero's background in Greek rhetoric, a more *kairotic* decorum. This struggle coincides with Cicero's attempt to assimilate his notion of art. At times he focuses on the notion of an Ideal Orator; still others, as in *De Oratore*, he offers rhetorical precepts.

In Stoic thought proper decorum secured a normative model of the subject by serving as the agent that was to harmonize the four personae: that which makes us human, that which distinguishes us as individuals, our social position, and finally our career choice (See also *De Officiis* 94-95).[9] Cicero discusses these personae in relation to decorum in *De Officiis* 94-95, after introducing the passage with a direct reference to *decorum* and the Greek *prepon*. He begins section 27:

> We have next to discuss the one remaining division of moral rectitude. That is the one in which we find considerateness and self-control, which give, as it were, as sort of polish to life; it embraces also temperance, complete subjection of all the passions, and moderation in all things. Under this head is further

[9]Gill, Christopher. "Personhood and Personality." Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy VI, 1988.

included what, in Latin, may be called *decorum* (propriety); for in Greek it is called *prepon*.

It is this heavily Stoic passage that leads into an equation of *prepon* (the normative side of *kairos*) with that which is morally right. These ethical ideals come into play in Cicero's rhetoric in what Michael Leff calls "intrinsic merit." Leff's categories, intrinsic merit and extrinsic accommodation, illustrate the tension in Cicero between the classical rhetorical tradition and Stoic doctrine. The terms also recast the two sides of *kairos*: the temporal and the normative. While Leff uses these categories to critique functionalism, the terms also help illustrate critical distinctions in Cicero's conceptions of decorum.

Building on Elaine Fantham's work, Leff defines "intrinsic merit" as "the absolute standard of aesthetic worth 'at which the speaker should aim'"[10] In *Orator*, this absolute standard is "that eloquent orator whom Antonius never saw"[11]: Cicero's Ideal Orator. The Ideal Orator represents that unattainable level of oratory, that disembodied entity that according to Cicero "we can only behold with the mind's eye."[12] The Ideal Orator springs from Cicero's Stoic background, and he functions to secure

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[10]"Decorum" p. 118.
[11]*Orator, 100.*
[12]*Orator, 101.*

principles of oratory just as the Stoic sage secures the values that determine conduct.[13] The tension, then, lies at the very point where this abstract ideal intersects with what is more immediate and temporal: the rhetorical situation. In passage 74 of *Orator*, Cicero distinguishes propriety from what is "right": "For by 'right' we indicate the perfect line of duty which every one must follow everywhere, but 'propriety' is what is fitting and agreeable to an occasion or person." If Cicero allowed the Stoic sense of absolute "right" to govern his conception of decorum in oratory, then he would render the rhetorical situation static.

These exigencies, however, are anything but static. Thus the "extrinsic sense" of decorum emerges. Leff defines "extrinsic accommodation" as that aspect of decorum which "stresses the adjustment of thought and style to context and circumstance,"[14] This extrinsic sense of decorum invokes the notion of *kairos*, because it recognizes the dynamic and temporal character of the rhetorical situation. In Cicero's *Orator*, we can see this powerful notion of *kairos* at work under the heading *propriety* or *decorum* as he writes, "When a case presents itself in which the full force of eloquence can be expended, then the

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[13]Long, A.A. Hellenistic Philosophy, 207.
[14]"Decorum" p. 118.

orator will display his powers more fully; then he will rule and sway men's minds, and move them as he will, that is as the nature of the cause and the exigency of the occasion demand." Recognizing that situations may not be standardized, Cicero accords decorum this extrinsic dimension. This extrinsic sense of decorum foregrounds the rhetorical situation. It also allows Cicero to resist the normalizing tendencies of Stoicism and to preserve the Classical Rhetorical tradition by privileging situation, thus resisting the normalizing tendencies of Stoicism.

Still, both faces of Cicero survived, and Quintilian adopted the moral "intrinsic merit" with which Cicero struggled, making moral rectitude the very foundation of his rhetoric. In the two centuries that separated Cicero and Quintilian, both Rome and rhetoric underwent major changes.

Quintilian

By Quintilian's time, two centuries later, rhetoric had been severely restricted. The emperors exerted strict control of public oratory, whether ceremonial or deliberative. George Kennedy explains why the conditions of Quintilian's time were not conducive to public oratory: "political activity under an emperor like Domitian was unfeasible and the philosophical environment was sterile"

(131). Private law was the only place oratory could still function, and it was forensic rhetoric in which Quintilian excelled. Still, as Kennedy points out, "with . . . opportunities for legal practice severely limited by the chaotic conditions of the time, Quintilian apparently decided to open a school of rhetoric" (19). The emperor Vespasian subsidized Quintilian's school, for he felt education served to create "an intelligent and responsible ruling class" (Kennedy, *Quintilian* 19).

These changes were critical for rhetoric. Quintilian's rhetoric was largely confined to the classroom. As a result, the purpose of rhetoric shifted from Isocrates' creative performance for political action to academic performance. A far cry from Isocrates' athletic training tactics, Quintilian's training required passive, docile students. Until the students completed their studies, the institution was the place where oratory was both learned and applied.

As a result of these changes in rhetoric, normative notions of *decorum* and goodness provide the foundation for an orator in Quintilian's scheme. "Good speaking," not success, was Quintilian's measure of an orator, as Quintilian writes in *Institutes*:

> my orator and his art, as defined by me, do not depend upon the result [persuasion]; he indeed

> who speaks directs his efforts towards victory, but when he *has spoken well*, though he may not be victorious, he has attained the full end of his art. (II, XVII, 23)

Quintilian's normative model of the subject can be found in his *vir bonus*. Indeed, the orator's goodness precluded everything in Quintilian's scheme; this becomes evident at II. XVI. 11: "If our definition of rhetoric as the science of speaking well implies that an orator must be a good man, there can be no doubt about its usefulness." Quintilian's orator illustrates the normative side of *kairos*, a rhetoric based on *decorum*.

If we recall Young's four conceptions of art, Quintilian's normative rhetoric would fall on the side of rules. Of the ancient rhetoricians, Quintilian is perhaps the best representative of art as craft. Still, Quintilian recognizes that to an extent, even rules must be tied to the situation. As Patricia Bizzell writes, "we cannot formulate universal rules for context-bound activities" (234). Although *kairos* was not a priority with Quintilian, there are a few passages that demonstrate he was familiar with its importance. These occur in discussions of expediency, like the one in Book II: ". . . expediency is sometimes determined by the nature of things, sometimes by the circumstances of the time [*tempore*] (II,IV 39)." Here,

Quintilian acknowledges a contingent rhetorical situation. He also does so again in a rather long passage in the same book:

> If the whole of rhetoric could be thus embodied in one compact code, it would be an easy task of little compass: but most rules are liable to be altered by the nature of the case, circumstances of time and place, and by hard necessity itself. Consequently, the all-important gift for an orator is a wise adaptability since he is called upon to meet the most varied emergencies. What if you should instruct a general, as often as he marshals his troops for battle, to draw up his front in line, advance his wings to left and right and station his cavalry to protect his flank? This will perhaps be the best plan, if circumstances allow. But it may have to be modified owing to the nature of the ground if, for instance, he is confronted by a mountain, if a river bars his advance, or his movements are hampered by hills, woods or broken country. Or again it may be modified by the character of the enemy or the nature of the crisis by which he is faced. On one occasion he will fight in line, on another in column, on one he will use his

> auxiliary troops, on another his legionaries; while occasionally a feint of flight may win the day. So too, with the rules of oratory. Is the *exordium* necessary or superfluous? Should it be long or short? Addressed entirely to the judge or sometimes directed to some other quarter by the employment of some figure of speech? Should the statement of facts be concise or developed at some length? Continuous or divided into sections? And should it follow the actual or an artificial order of events? The orator will find the answers to all these questions in the circumstances of the case . . . in all his pleadings the orator should keep two things constantly in view, what is becoming and what is expedient. (II. XIII, 2-8)

Even Quintilian's strong sense of representative of art as "craft" recognizes the importance of the rhetorical situation. Still, he ties expediency with propriety, or "what is becoming."

Still, at other places, Quintilian seems to scoff at a notion of *kairos*,: "You may also occasionally find not merely pleaders, but, what is far more shameful, teachers as well, who, after a brief training in the art of speaking, throw method to the winds and, yielding to the

impulse of the moment, run riot in every direction (II, XII, 11). Although Quintilian does not specify, he is likely referring to the sophistic tradition, which privileges *kairos*. Certainly the art of rhetoric and the notion of *kairos* has undergone intense scrutiny and numerous shifts since Gorgias' day.

To conclude, in Latin Rhetoric, we see the contradictions arising from the complex notion of *kairos*. The differing, sometimes opposing dimensions of *kairos* are manifest in the tensions of Cicero's work. The tension persists in Quintilian, as his rhetoric seeks to establish a normative model of the subject. Though Cicero's rhetoric struggles with both the normative and temporal senses of *kairos* as he struggles to attenuate Stoicism and ancient rhetoric, Quintilian's rhetoric draws on Cicero's normative uses of *prepon*. While Quintilian is forced to acknowledge the temporal aspects of rhetoric, still, the normative sense of *kairos* dominates. *Kairos* certainly underwent a number of shifts from its beginnings in Gorgias: Isocrates founded his rhetoric on it; Aristotle analyzed and assimilated it to his symbolic mastery of rhetoric; at times Plato attempted to standardize it; Cicero struggled with the different dimensions of it, and Quintilian tried unsuccessfully to suppress it.

CHAPTER 4

ANCIENT CONTEXTS: AN HISTORICAL SURVEY

Translators of ancient texts encounter difficulties with the term *kairos*. These problems are played out in footnotes and journal articles, where classical scholars debate context and intention. Such problems are indicative of the term's complexity. Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles, though not rhetoricians *per se*, certainly exhibited rhetorical techniques (Kennedy 35) and informed later practitioners or "practices" of the art, and they evoke the variegated meanings of *kairos*. These ancient contexts of *kairos* allow us to understand more fully the sources of its different meanings and its importance for rhetoric. Indeed, these ancient contexts reveal more than just two dimensions of *kairos*.

Origins of kairos

Liddell and Scott suggest that the word *kairos* is derived from the same root as *kare* or *kara*, which is translated "the head and front, chief thing" (689). The word *kairios, kairia* marks the first appearance of the *kair-* root. *Kairios* appears in four passages in the

Iliad[15] and is usually translated "fatal spot," or "vital parts, where wounds are mortal" (L&S 689).[16] In Book 8 Nestor shoots Alexander "with an arrow upon the crown of the head where the foremost hairs of horses grow upon the skull, and where is the deadliest spot [*kairion*]." In Book 2, Athena saves Odysseus from being hit on "a fatal spot" [*katakairion*] (l. 439). Richard Onians observes that these occurrences in Homer "describe a place in the body where a weapon could easily penetrate to the life within" (344). In its earliest appearances in Greek literature, the root *kair-* is spatial and denotes a small area, a place so critical that whether it is hit (as in Alexander) or not (as in Odysseus) dictates the outcome.

In ancient literary texts, *kairios* finds its place in warfare and archery. This dimension of *kairos* can be traced to the sport of archery (Onians 344). In this sense, Odysseus habitually aimed "at a penetrable opening, an aperture, passage through the iron of an axe or rather of twelve axes set at intervals in a straight line" (Oedipus Rex 324; Onians 345). Indeed, *kairios* as critical place in warfare and athletics laid the groundwork for the related term, *kairos*, to mean both advantage and

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[15][15]Book II, line 439; Book IV, line 185; Book VIII, line 84; and Book VIII, line 326.

[16]According to Liddell and Scott, this form and meaning carries over to Latin, manifested in the word *tempora*, the temples, also a vital spot on the body. *Tempora* has a "temporal" dimension as well.

opportunity. Archers and fighters alike aimed for the "critical spot" in hopes of seizing the opportunity and thus "winning" or at least gaining an advantage over the competition. The spatial imagery of "critical place" still inhabits our notions of opportunity, as Onians points out, "we, ourselves, speak of 'an opening' in just this sense" (345), we often refer to "a window of time," or a limited period in which we can "squeeze" an activity.

Kairios first finds its way into the art of speaking with an archery metaphor in Aeschylus' *The Suppliant Maidens*. The King, speaking of the notion of just retribution, proclaims "Now when goods are plundered from a homestead, other goods may come by grace of Zeus, guardian of household wealth; so a tongue that has shot arrows beside the mark [*kairia*] -- one speech may be the healer of another" (446). Here, as Wilson points out, "the tongue is compared to a bowman who shoots out words that are not 'on target' [*mê ta kairia*]." This marks the first passage that the *kair-* root is related--if only metaphorically--to speaking.

Right Time, Opportunity, Occasion, Season

As stated earlier, one sense of *kairos* invokes temporality: "a fit measure of time, the right point of time, fit, proper time, the season of action" (L&S 689).

This notion corresponds to the Latin term *opportunitas*, or opportunity. The Latin root, *porta, portus* means "entrance" or "passage through" (Onians 348). The Greek cognate for *porta, portus* is *ho poros*, which signifies "a means of passing, way, or passage" (L&S 1225). The antithesis of *poros, aporos, aporia* (no way or passage) is often invoked by students of Socrates. Socrates' method of questioning often leads them to proclaim hopelessly, "*aporô*," "I am at a loss" or literally, "I have no way out." Thus, opportunity or *kairos* describes "a way in."

Pythagoras viewed *kairos* as a major component of the universe. According to Pythagoras, when the First Unit (the Heaven) inhaled the Infinite (Void), it formed numbers, so that all things had a definite position or number in the universe (OCD 751). Aristotle mentions in Metaphysics that along with justice and soul or mind, opportunity [*kairos*] was among the numbered in the Pythagorean universe. Pythagoras did not randomly assign numbers; the numbers themselves conveyed meaning. For example justice [*dikaiosune*] is number 4, the first square number. The soul or mind [*psyche, nous*] is number 1, and opportunity or *kairos* is number 7 (de Vogel 115). C.J. de Vogel explains that in the Pythagorean scheme the number 7 "denoted a period of maturity in human life as well as in the cosmos as a whole" (115). This number also connects

kairos with the sun, then the seventh of the heavenly bodies when counting towards the center; thus the sun was thought to be the "cause of all critical periods" (de Vogel n.115).

Kairos as right time remains critical to the Neo-Pythagoreans of the third century, A.D. de Vogel, citing Porphyry says that Iamblichus advised people to

> . . . give particular care to two important moments [*duo kairous*] of the day: the moment before retiring, and the moment of rising. For it was fitting at each of these moments to enquire what had been done and what lay ahead of them, giving themselves an account of the past and meditating on the future. (188)

In Euripides' *Ion*, *kairos* signifies opportunity on two occasions. At line 659, Xuthus tells Ion, "in time [*chronô*] I shall find a fitting occasion [*kairon*] to persuade my wife to let you take my scepter" (trans. Race 212). At line 1062, the chorus says that the queen will commit suicide if her plot fails "and the opportunity [*kairos*] for daring passes away" (Race 212). In Sophocles' *Electra*, Orestes directs his servant to "go into the palace whenever opportunity [*kairos*] leads you in." This direction comes just after Orestes invokes the words of Phoebus: "Trust not to shields or armed hosts, but

steal/The chance thyself the avenging blow to deal" (36-37). Here, "stealing the chance" closely parallels Orestes' sense of *kairos* two lines later: watch for (and seize) the opportunity.

Measure, proportion

As we have noted, *kairos* can also signify "right measure, the right proportion of one thing to another, measure, proportion, fitness" (L&S 689). This definition serves as the "normative" dimension of *kairos*. An often cited passage from Hesiod demonstrates this notion of *kairos*: "Observe due measure: and proportion [*kairos*] is best in all things" (694). Because this passage has been extracted from Works and Days and made a proverb, the context of the passage, though telling, is little known. The famous line concludes a discussion about sailing where Hesiod, fearing that sailors will "die among the waves" (687), beseeches them to leave most of their goods behind, as too great a load may break the axle, causing the goods to spoil. Aside from concern for the sailors' well-being, preservation of the cargo seems to be underlying reason for Hesiod's warning. Hesiod's early use of *kairos* enforces two senses of the word: the normative dimension, "due measure," an equilibrium, and the transformative dimension, securing material gain by preventing material loss.

Aeschylus captures the normative sense of *kairos* in Agamemnon, as the crowd shouts praise to the king upon his return to Ilium: "All hail, my King, stormer of Troy, offspring of Atreus! How shall I greet thee? How do thee homage, not overshooting or running short of the due measure [*kairon*] of courtesy?" (787). Here the context clarifies the meaning of *kairos*; it represents a line between too much and too little, a line that is difficult to distinguish. It is this dimension of *kairos* that approaches propriety and fitness, the primary components of *prepon*.

As R.W.B. Burton contends, Pindar was guided by this principle of *kairos* (47), explicitly conscious of the tenuous equilibrium. Pindar writes in Olympian Ode 13: "in each thing there is a measure which suits, and the right mark [*kairos*] is the best thing to know" (47). Perhaps spawning a tradition of Kairos' mythical representation, Pindar relates *kairos* to scales in Olympian 8: "it is difficult to distinguish with correct judgment according to the right mark [*para kairon*] whatever weighs much and swings many ways in the balance" (23). As Burton points out, this passage associates *kairos* with quantity, as "the use of *diakrinein* (judgment) suggests that the selection of *kairos* is like knowing how to

discern the exact line of equilibrium in a pair of scales" (47).

The metaphorical comparison of *kairos* to scales, as Wilson points out, has ethical overtones (196). Wilson cites *Agamemnon* 809 as "one of the clearest examples of the ethical possibilities of *kairos*" (190). Here, the Chorus tells the King on his return, "In course of time thou shalt learn by enquiry who of thy people have been honest [*dikaiôs*], who unfitting [*akairôs*], guardians of the State."[17] Here, *akairôs* negates *dikaiôs*, "honest or just" (L & S 353-354), thus reinforcing its ethical implications.

Wilson also observes that in Sophocles' *Ajax*, *kairos* is important to Menelaus' ethical system, as he contends at line 1084 that society needs "the right degree of fear" [*deos ti kairion*] to regulate its members (Wilson 192).[18] Thucydides notes this same spirit in Pericles' leadership, remarking that when the people were "immoderately [*akairon*] self-confident," Pericles would make them afraid, whereas if they were fearful, he would instill confidence in them. Thus, the meaning of *kairos* as equilibrium, balance, or fitness occurs a great deal in ancient contexts. This meaning of *kairos* adds another layer of meaning to the earlier "critical" dimension, that of fitness, the *right* or

[17]trans. Smyth, 1946.
[18]trans. Storr, 1912.

proper amount. It is this meaning that provides the critical link between *kairos* and *prepon*.

Advantage, profit

Still another meaning lexicographers attribute to *kairos* is that of advantage or profit (L & S 689). William Race cites several instances of *kairos* which he contends have "the extended connotation of the *success* which results from action which is *appropriate* to or *needed* in the particular circumstances" (205). This meaning is largely overlooked by contemporary scholars.

The implication of advantage or success by *kairos* is most prominent in the works of Sophocles. For example, in *Trachinae*, the nurse tells Deianire (as translated by Race): "And so if you think I counsel what is necessary for success [*ti . . . pros kairon*], you can use [*chrêsthai*] both him and my advice" (*Trach.* 59, Race 205).

In *Philoctetes*, Race contends that the dative possessive form [*kairô*] almost personifies *kairos*; here the chorus says that they are always "on the lookout for Neoptolemus' interests [*epi sô malista kairô*] that is, they have looked to his *needs* and *advantage* above all else" (*Phil.* 151, Race 207). At *Philoctetes* 1279, Neoptolemus claims he will stop talking if what he says is "pointless" [*mê ti pros kairon*]. As Race points out, Philoctetes'

response verifies this meaning: "'Yes, everything you say will be in vain [*matên*]'" (206).

Another instance of *kairos* as advantage in Sophocles appears in *Oedipus the King*, when Oedipus beseeches Teiresias the prophet to find the murderers of Laïus and slay or expel them. Teiresias, upset by Oedipus' unintentional self-punishment, tells Oedipus that his words are "wide of the mark [*pros kairon*]" (324). J.C. Kamerbeek, writing on this passage asserts that in this case, the connotation "advantage" or "profit" dominates (86).

Both Race and K.H. Lee (*Euripides Troades*, 204) interpret *kairon* in Euripides' *The Daughters of Troy* as "advantage" (Race 206, Lee, 204), translating line 744: "Your father's nobility did not come as an *advantage* to you." Here, Race claims that *ouk es kairon* (it is not *kairos*) is "litotes for destruction" (207). This same sense can also be found in *The Bacchanals*, 1287 when Kadmos laments the coming of truth "in circumstances in which there is not benefit [i.e., when it is positively disastrous]" (207).[19]

This sense of advantage, profit, or success in *kairos* is also expressed in the wisdom of the seven sages, particularly in Bias' statement: "By *kairos* you will have

[19]*dustên alêthei, hôs en ou kairô parei.*

a good hold of things [*eulabeian*]" (de Vogel, 115). Certainly the phrase "have a good hold of things" is advantageous, even profitable.

Kairos *Personified*

The advantage/profit dimension of meaning emerges in the portrayals of the mythical figure *Kairos*. The fourth-century B.C.E. sculptor Lysippus created a statue of Kairos

...-footed runner standing on its tip-toes,

right hand and sporting an unusual

in front and bald in the back.

ays Lysippus' creation in his 1586

(fig. 2). Whitney's accompanying

gnificance of the unusual hairstyle

is italicized):

ge lockes before? *that suche as*

firste, when they occasion finde.

le all balde, what telles it more?

ulde houlde, that let me slippe

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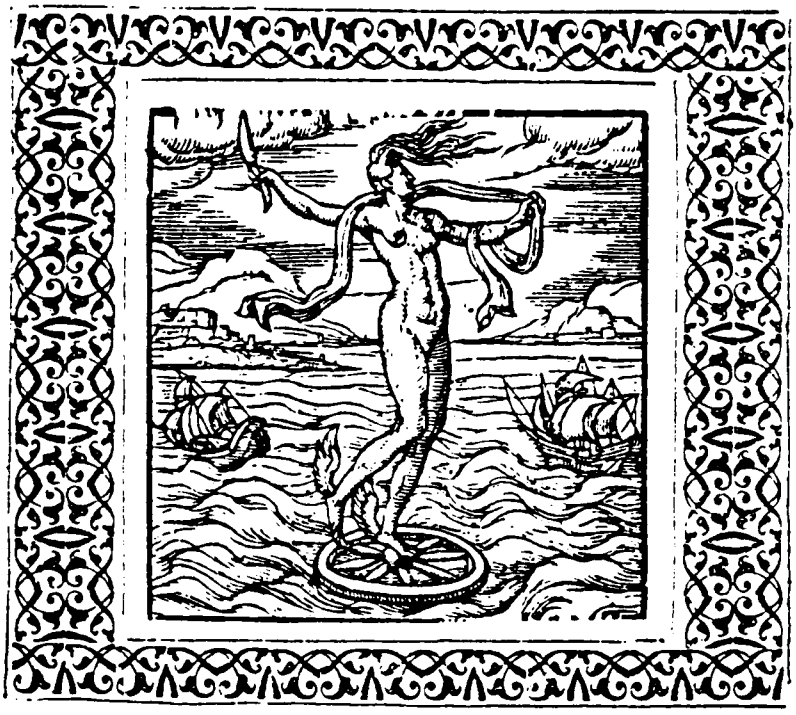


fig. 2: A 1586 depiction of the emblem *Occasion* (Lysippus' *Kairos*)

In other words, one must "seize the occasion," for the opportunity will slip by and may never return. Lysippus, famous for precise detail and "his representation of momentary appearance" (OCD 525) was known as "the sculptor of athletes" (Cook 859). Arthur Cook puzzles over why Lysippus chose, as Himer puts it, to "enroll Kairos among the gods" [*engraphei tois theois ton kairon*] [Himer, ecl 14.I]. Cook states: "my own conviction is that the statue was not, to speak strictly, allegorical at all" (859), concluding that Kairos merely represents Lysippus' attempt

to "portray the Age of Puberty" (859). That Lysippus, sculptor of athletes, even chose to sculpt Kairos is to Cook "a problem which has never been squarely faced" (859).

Contrary to Cook's conviction, I believe there is a direct relationship between *kairos* and athletics, and the connection underlines the components of advantage and intervention in *kairos*. Lysippus' version of Kairos is a runner on his tip-toes, poised and ready. Later he is balanced on a razor's edge or poised on a ball (Cook 860), possibly representing the tenuous moment in which the athlete must achieve peak performance. Athletes must be keenly attuned to timing. Runners know that a race of considerable distance is impossible to finish if they run at top speed the entire time. Therefore, runners must "pace," or hold back, until the time is right to "kick," or explode with speed before they reach the finish line. Timing is all-important. To begin a "kick" too soon is to tire out and lose on the last few yards. Kicking too late makes winning impossible. When athletes are on the same level, equal in strength and speed, they must find other ways to "gain an advantage" over their opponents. The knack for seizing the opportunity and recognizing the right moment to hold back or explode with speed gives the athlete this advantage.

The ancients recognized the importance of *kairos* to athletics. Themistocles is reputed to have said, "those who start too soon are flogged with switches." On the other hand, "those who wait too long receive no crown of victory" (Miller 72). Also, Galen writes in *On Exercise with a Small Ball* that "ball playing trains for the two most important maneuvers which a state entrusts to its generals: to attack at the proper time and to defend the booty already amassed" (Miller 117). It is in the realm of athletics that classical texts show Athena in the position of intervention. In the *Iliad*, Odysseus and Ajax are racing when Odysseus prayed to Athena, "Hear me, goddess, and come a goodly helper to my feet" (XXIII, 770-771). Athena not only "made his limbs light" (772), but as they approach the finish line, she trips Ajax and changes the entire outcome of the race, allowing Odysseus to win. Athena once again emerges, exhibiting a mastery over *kairos* and transforming the situation. This time Athena demonstrates that *kairos* is critical for athletics, and in this realm, the notion of advantage prevails.

Later representations of Kairos in the Hellenistic age show a figure who shares attributes with the goddesses Nike and Nemesis, both of whom preside in the realm of competition. As Cook himself points out, Kairos is shown with scales and a globe, symbols also identified with Nike

and Nemesis. Nike, the goddess of victory, catches the winning athlete in her arms. Not only does Nike symbolize victory for athletic and military contests, she is victory for *all* contests (*OCD* 608-609).

Another telling portrayal of Kairos can be found in a Theban limestone relief where a winged figure with a knife, wheel and balance is shown running above two females: one is dejectedly sitting behind, while the other is flying ahead (fig. 3). J. Strzygowski calls them Kairos, Pronoia and Metanoia (Cook 863). Pronoia, "seeing or perceiving beforehand" (L&S 1257), is flying with Kairos, while Metanoia, perceiving or coming to a conviction afterwards (L&S 918) is left behind.



Fig. 3: "Kairos, Metanoia, and Pronoia"

The suggestion here is that foresight is bound with Kairos; indeed it is inherent in the concept. Kairos' association with goddesses of athletics and contests and the goddess of foresight, combined with the importance of timing and advantage in competition, could certainly explain why Lysippus, sculptor of athletes, decided to "enroll Kairos among the gods."

Later representations of Kairos certainly invoke a notion of advantage. Gems from the Hellenistic age (fig. 4) portray Kairos holding a pair of scales (Cook 861). The pan closer to him is lowered, suggesting the outcome is in his favor. Even more telling is a relief at Turin (fig. 5) that shows Kairos himself depressing the pan with his finger while balancing the scales with a razor (Cook 862). As this image suggests, the favorable outcome is a direct result of Kairos' intervention.



fig. 4: Gems of the Hellenistic Age



fig. 5: Kairos: a relief at Turin

These figures indeed provide compelling evidence that advantage and profit should be recognized as an important dimension of *kairos*.

CHAPTER 5

SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE: CONTEMPORARY APPRAISALS

Kinneavy

James Kinneavy has done much to resurrect the concept of *kairos* in rhetorical studies. Kinneavy promotes his conviction that "rhetoric desperately needs the notion of *kairos*" (83). Still, Kinneavy has only partially exhumed the concept, recognizing just two basic components: "the principle of right timing and the principle of a proper measure" (85). Because of these two distinct aspects of the word, most contemporary definitions of rhetorical *kairos* tend to conflate the notion with that of *prepon*, the appropriate (Sullivan 318). Kinneavy's definition of *kairos* demonstrates the influence of *prepon*: "The appropriateness of the discourse to the particular circumstances of the time, place, speaker, and audience involved" (84). Kinneavy's *kairos* subordinates the temporal to the normative senses of the term; absent is any transformative notion. Kinneavy rightly points out that *kairos* merged with *prepon* in Latin Stoicism (82), but does

not seek to look behind the merging of these terms for a "pre-*prepon*" *kairos*.

Kinneavy does recognize that *kairos* is tightly bound with the rhetorical situation. While attempting to bring the notion of *kairos* into our modern discussions of rhetoric, Kinneavy equates *kairos* with the situational context. Bitzer's conception of the rhetorical situation, however, has been shown to be inadequate. His notion of situation removes responsibility from the rhetor, as Richard Vatz demonstrates. Vatz calls Bitzer's rhetorical situation a "myth" because, as he claims, ". . . meaning is not discovered in situations, but created by rhetors" (157). Certainly choice is involved. As Vatz points out, "Any rhetor is involved in . . . sifting and choosing . . . [yet] the very choice of what facts or events are relevant is a matter of pure arbitration" (157). Still, the rhetorical situation does not dictate these choices, these choices are made as the rhetor strives to *create* and/or transform the rhetorical situation. In Vatz's scheme, the rhetor communicates the situation in "an act of creativity . . . an interpretive act" (157). In other words, Vatz turns Bitzer's rhetorical situation inside out:

> I would not say "rhetoric is situational," but situations are rhetorical; not ". . . exigence strongly invites utterance," but utterance

> strongly invites exigence; not the "situation controls the rhetorical response . . ." but the rhetoric controls the situational response; not ". . . rhetorical discourse . . . does obtain its character-as-rhetorical from the situation which generates it," but situations obtain their character from the rhetoric which surrounds or creates them (159).

Vatz's argument allows us to consider the rhetorical situation in terms of intervention and transformation, while Kinneavy's conception of the rhetorical situation limits his notion of *kairos*. The most widely accepted notions of *kairos*, like Kinneavy's, emphasize accommodation or adaptation. Although this is certainly one dimension of *kairos*, part of my argument is that it is a later dimension that emerges in the work of Aristotle and Plato, where the meaning of *kairos* approaches propriety.

Untersteiner

Mario Untersteiner stresses *kairos* and the rhetorical situation. Untersteiner studies the notion of *kairos* in the complex epistemology of Gorgias. Untersteiner addresses *kairos* as a term distinct from *prepon*, though their meanings somewhat overlap: "a particular aspect of *kairos* is afforded by *prepon*, 'the fitting,' the

'appropriateness of expression to the subject'"(197). Untersteiner describes *kairos* as "the adaptation of the speech to the manifold variety of life, to the psychology of speaker and hearer: variegated, not absolute unity of time" (197). Thus Untersteiner focuses on the dynamic nature of *kairos*, invoking its temporal element and its relation to the rhetorical situation. Though Untersteiner privileges the temporal aspect of *kairos*, he still speaks in terms of "adaptation" rather than transformation and intervention.

J. Poulakos

John Poulakos certainly recognizes the contingencies of the rhetorical situation. It is perhaps John Poulakos who comes closest to recognizing the components of advantage, profit, and the necessity of intervention in *kairos*. Poulakos studies *kairos* in the rhetoric of the Sophists, finding it more illuminating because it was "grounded in human experience, not in philosophical reflection" (35). Claiming that the sophists "were the first to infuse rhetoric with life," Poulakos observes that sophistic rhetoric, "conditioned by the people who create it . . . lends itself to the flexibility of the contingent" (37). Poulakos examines sophistic rhetoric in terms of three "key notions": *kairos, prepon,* and *dunaton* (the

possible) (36). Poulakos defines *kairos* as 'the opportune moment" (36). He clearly separates the temporal and the normative, the "now" from the "suitable," *kairos* from *prepon*. While *kairos* provides the sense of urgency that "compels a rhetor to speak," (39) *prepon* "requires that speech must . . . be guided by the formal structure of the situation" (41). *Kairos* deals with "the when" while *prepon* is concerned with "the what" (41).

For Poulakos, it is critical that *kairos* and *prepon* are kept distinct. The distinction allows *kairos* more possibilities; it can reach beyond accommodation or choice and extend to principles of transformation and intervention. Indeed, Poulakos' treatment of *kairos* implies the presence of intervention and advantage: "During times of stress," he writes, "we feel compelled to intervene and . . . end a crisis, redistribute justice, or restore order" (39). For Poulakos, intervention and transformation of the situation occur in the guise of *kairos*, and as he explains further, the sophist Protagoras was the first to expound on 'the power of the opportune moment' to give speech advantages it otherwise would not have" (40). Though on the surface, his definition of *kairos* as "the opportune moment" seems to exclude notions of intervention, advantage, and profit, Poulakos'

explication of the term *kairos* in sophistic rhetoric certainly recognizes these components.

Sullivan

Dale Sullivan, in his article "*Kairos* and the Rhetoric of Belief" observes that in one sense "the meaning of *kairos* slides off into the meaning of *prepon*" (318). Yet Sullivan resists this "takeover": "Although this explanation of *kairos* is perhaps a suitable summary of its meaning, its meaning among the Pre-Socratics and Sophists is much richer" (318). It is this "richer," more dynamic notion of *kairos*, found particularly in the rhetorics of Gorgias and Isocrates, that is so closely tied with the rhetorical situation. Sullivan calls sophistic rhetoric a "*Kairotic* rhetoric" (323) and contrasts it with the "Philosophical Rhetorics" of Aristotle and Plato. Sullivan uses sophistic rhetoric to prove that in the New Testament *kairos* "regains some of its pre-Aristotelian meaning" (321).

In Sullivan's view, the major distinction between these two types of rhetoric is that Plato and Aristotle "attempt to change rhetoric from a skill (*empeiria*) to an art (*techne*)" (323). Sullivan hits upon a key distinction that connects movement in the two continuums constructed in the introduction. The more an art relies on precepts, or

the more transferable an art becomes, the further one moves from a rhetoric tied to situation, and the artistic element of *kairos* approaches *prepon*, *decorum*.

Kennedy

In Art of Persuasion in Greece, George Kennedy examines the notion of *kairos* in Sophistic and Isocratean rhetoric. Kennedy marks *kairos* as Gorgias' unique contribution to rhetoric and the theory of style, describing it as follows:

> Any given problem involves choice or compromise between two antitheses so that consideration of *kairos*, that is of time, place, and circumstance, alone can solve the dilemma and lead to the choice of relative truth and to action. In rhetoric *kairos* is the principle which governs the choice of the organization, the means of proof, and particularly the style. (66-67)

Kennedy observes that in Aristotle's rhetoric, Gorgian *kairos* becomes a type of rhetorical *ethos*, described as "the character of the audience to which the speaker must suit his language and argument" (92). Kennedy calls this a "psychological approach to rhetoric inherent in Gorgias' theory of *kairos*, or the opportune" (92). This distinction

is important, for *kairos* is still tied to situation in Aristotle's rhetoric. Aristotle's proofs, *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*, serve as heuristics for the rhetor to assess and even shape the rhetorical situation.

Kennedy also points out the relationship of *kairos* to the term *prepon*. He observes that *kairos* is largely restricted to classical rhetoric, while "*prepon* is more persistent and is the only provision for latitude and taste which found a permanent place in traditional rhetoric" (67). Kennedy refers to the two terms together as "the artistic element in rhetorical theory as opposed to prescribed rules" (67); he also points out that Isocrates particularly appreciated this artistic element (67). Because Kennedy speaks of *kairos* in terms of "choice" and "accommodation," allied with "the fitting," he overlooks the principles of intervention, transformation and advantage. While Kennedy points to the death of *kairos* in the Classical period, the scope of his work does not allow him to explore possible reasons for the suppression of the notion.

CONCLUSION

"A man must make his opportunity, as oft as find it."
- Francis Bacon, Advancement of Learning

To conclude, I would like to invoke one more piece of evidence from ancient Greek culture to illustrate a more complete notion of *kairos*. In Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society, Detienne and Vernant tell of a potter's song attributed to Herodotus in which the potter begs Athena to "stretch out her hand towards the kiln so that its contents may be successfully fired and covered with a fine black glaze, bringing a good profit when sold" (Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture & Society). This single fragment invokes a complete sense of *kairos* that recognizes not two, but three dimensions. First the temporal dimension: Athena must be sharply attuned to *kairos* as the right moment, for as Detienne and Vernant observe, her outstretched hand signifies her mastery of timing: the potter must take the pots off the fire at exactly the right moment (209). The potter's song also conveys the normative/measuring dimension; for the pots must receive the proper amount of heat; too much and they will explode, too little and they could lose their form. The underlying reason for such precision, as Detienne and

Vernant point out, is to produce better quality pots than other potters, thus securing an economic advantage and a good profit, the third dimension of *kairos*. Intervention is critical in Athena's artistic process, as she stands in opposition to the destructive daemons believed to make the pots shatter if the fire is not controlled (Detienne and Vernant 209).

The notions of advantage and profit usually imply some sort of "edge" or gain, material or otherwise, signifying the production of something of value. The "transformative" notion of advantage or profit is often deeply embedded in the "temporal" and "normative"[20] notions of *kairos*, as seen in the potter's song: Athena's awareness of timing and proper amount gives the potter an advantage, enabling him or her to produce the finest (most valuable) pots. Still, contemporary appropriations of *kairos* have obscured this advantage/profit dimension.

This example of *kairos* from Greek culture parallels the significance of *kairos* in the art of rhetoric. The physical image of Athena's outstretched hand resembles the concept of *kairos* found in the rhetorics of Gorgias and Isocrates. Like Athena, Gorgias and Isocrates are concerned with the details of the art on which action and

[20]William Race divides *kairos* into these two categories in his study of the term in Greek drama.

production hinge. While Gorgias relies solely on *kairos* as a magical, muse-like source for speaking, Isocrates calls for a mastery of *kairos*. This mastery privileges the specific exigency at hand and aims for an advantage in persuasion. This transformative component of *kairos* suggests qualities overlooked be contemporary scholars. Indeed, the advantage/profit dimension has been ignored in rhetorical study. This oversight has resulted in an oversimplification of what is truly a complex concept.

The history of *kairos* is indeed complex, shifting and changing with each rhetorician or philosopher. Yet its very complexities betray the relationship of the rhetorical situation to different conceptions of the art of rhetoric and ultimately the art of becoming a rhetor. Figure 6 shows the relationship between the different notions of *kairos* and Young's conceptions of art. "Genius" and "craft," the two extremes, are connected to the temporal and normative senses of *kairos*. As Figure 6 shows, these extremes ignore the "knack" and "grammar" dimensions of art, as well as the critical "advantage/profit" element of *kairos*. Looking beyond the genius/rules binary enables us to consider the importance of the rhetorical situation.

Gorgias' art as "glamour" represents a genius theory of rhetoric. Gorgias' concept of *kairos* is entirely temporal, and the art is so contingent upon the immediate

situation, the "moment at hand," that it can scarcely be taught. On the other hand, an art as "craft" represents rules that show little regard for the rhetorical situation. Quintilian, our best representative of art as "craft," presents the most normative notion of *kairos*. In Quintilian's art of rhetoric, the rhetorical situation receives the least consideration. Even Quintilian, however, recognizes the pitfalls of rules that ignore the contingencies of the situation.

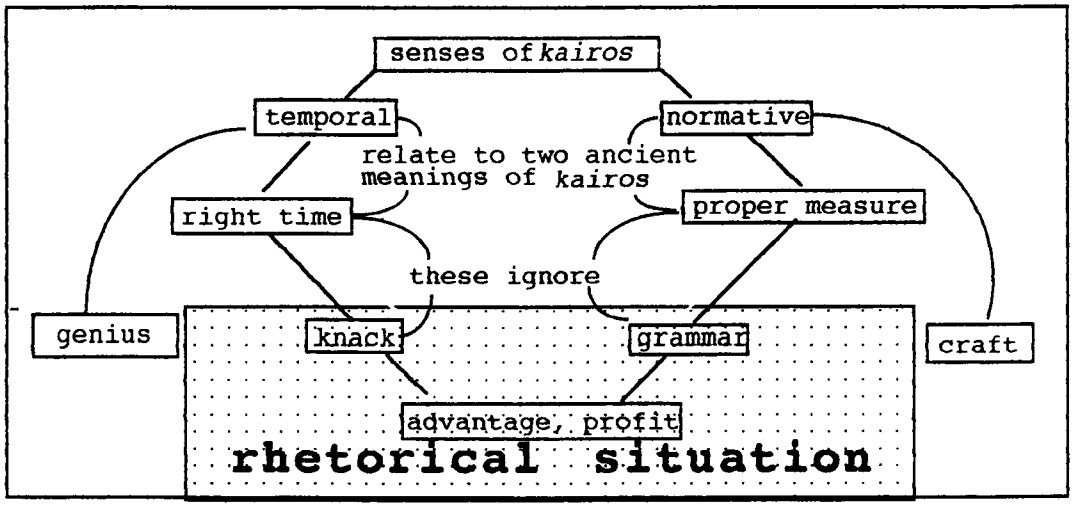


Fig. 6: Contemporary senses of *kairos*, their connections to ancient meanings and conceptions of art

Aristotle's art, an art of "grammar," presents a fluid, scientific account of rhetoric that provides an awareness of the possible approaches to a rhetorical

situation. Aristotle's rhetor, then, knows the art inside and out. As Aristotle writes in Metaphysics, such "master craftsmen are superior in wisdom, not because they can do things, but because they possess a theory and know the causes" (I. I. 12). Aristotle values theoretical knowledge over experience. Not only can Aristotle's rhetor persuade, he/she can explain *why*.

Like Gorgias, Isocrates presents an art that is contingent on the situation, yet he conceives the art of rhetoric as a "knack," an art that is transferable through practical experience and exposure to real rhetors and real situations (habituation). Isocrates' pedagogy, then, encourages rhetors to constantly watch for opportunities to produce situations that would be to their advantage.

Though art as genius might at times secure a persuasive advantage, its elusive nature and complete dependence on situation renders the art unpredictable, non-transferable. On the other hand, art as craft provides only a small margin of advantage, achieved through correctness. Knack and grammar are tied to the rhetorical situation without being completely overtaken by it. At the same time, rhetors with knack and grammar possess in their minds deployable strategies either from past experience (knack) or heuristic procedures (grammar). Thus, knack and grammar are most closely allied with *kairos* as advantage.

The issue of advantage/profit or value in *kairos* betrays what is at stake in using *kairos* to reproduce a situation that protects the advantages of some and in using *kairos* to produce alternative situations, thus shifting the balance of "advantage." Today's composition classroom provides a good example of the reproduction of a situation that serves to protect the advantages of certain groups. As Sharon Crowley writes, "our professional history . . . constitutes a large part of this country's efforts to help relatively privileged members of the culture to achieve higher levels of literacy" (196). As such, some continue to view composition studies in the words of Crowley, "as an isolated, insulated classroom [where] teachers and students work together to achieve a common goal: improving the students' ability to read and write" (190). The scene Crowley describes is reminiscent of Quintilian's rhetoric, practiced within the walls of the academy, and measured--not by the success of the rhetoric--but by the subjective quality of the speaking or writing. But as James Berlin contends, our "discourse codes" make this classroom and other "institutional forms" (i.e. the family, the workplace, the media) to seem "natural and timeless rather than historically situated social constructions" (27). Berlin encourages students to "resist and to negotiate

these codes" (27). Instead of responding to a particular cultural context, they may indeed establish their own.

Certainly the importance of recognizing the advantage/profit dimension of *kairos* extends beyond the composition classroom to the conflicts in our culture by forcing us to reflect on different situations, rhetorical or otherwise, in terms of who profits and who suffers from the practices that structure our society. Bourdieu describes the state of the social world as "no more than a temporary equilibrium, a moment in the dynamics through which the adjustment between distributions and incorporated or institutionalized classifications is constantly broken and restored" (141). Bourdieu's description of society brings to mind the ancient mythological figure, Kairos, balancing himself on a ball or wire and tipping the scales in his favor.

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