RIVER AND CIRCLE OF TIME
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Although we all are immersed in time, measure time, and live according to time – in both our daily and annual rhythms, we actually do not know what time really is. We are able to identify situations when we have run out of time; we can say that something – for instance a museum exhibit – has been marked by the ravages of time, meaning that it is old and worn, or that time has been kind to something or someone, meaning it has let someone, to put it colloquially, “age well.” All these expressions capturing the phenomenon of time in words conceal attempts (sometimes funny, but always marked with a certain dose of helplessness) to become accustomed to the absolute abstraction of time. We can measure it in a variety of ways; we are able to show its effects (or rather the fact that other objects, like us, also exist in time). Finally, we try to embrace it as a kind of creature having an ability to act as if it was a human or animal being (e.g. time that “eats” when passing by). But by no means does it bring us closer to learning the essence of time. Explanations formulated by both philosophers and modern scientists, for example, Immanuel Kant and Edmund Husserl on the one hand and Albert Einstein, the creator of the theory of relativity, on the other hand, make the pursuit even more complicated, in turn. All attempts to provide an answer concerning the essence of this element are highly unsatisfactory and inconclusive. Therefore, one should rather not expect that, in the near future counted in months or years, time – as an abstraction – would reveal to us its whole nature.

Even if we are not particularly interested in theoretical attempts to solve the riddle of time, we are subject to time, and we try to control it somehow, to give it a certain order at both a microscale, involving time measured by clocks, and a macroscale, covering years or even entire eras. Aside from language practices related to time, we can also speak about many ways of presenting its passage or imposing a certain order on it. In the course of their existence, all civilisations have developed methods to give time a distinct structure repeated in regular cycles, always being guided by observations of the course of celestial bodies in the firmament, and to try to transfer results of these observations to the sphere of human activity. It is a commonplace to state that the importance of some kind of phenomenon was already recognised by ancient Greeks, Romans or other nations, and it is generally regarded as an absolute cliché, a schoolboy’s attempt to escape the trap of beginning of an essay. Meanwhile, in the case of time, this statement is very well founded. Yet virtually all cultures of the ancient world should be added to the Greeks and the Romans here: Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Palestine, India, China, and Japan (see an advertising handbill with a Japanese calendar dated back to 1912: http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/4890297/4890858), as well as civilisations of both Americas. The earliest attempts to measure time, inaccurate and based solely on approximate measurements of the apparent movement of the Sun and the Moon in the sky, opened a great evolution of the measure of time in calendar years and smaller units such as days and hours. As an element of culture, time has in fact its own history, immersed in time and analysed by researchers of the past.
The cyclical nature of the calendar played an important culture-forming role. It enabled people to set dates of holidays important to each culture; and their repeatability, based on the adopted measure of time, stabilised the rhythm of community life and meant that it had common points of reference. In the case of Jewish culture, such a point of reference is, for instance, Passover, celebrated on the 14th day of Nisan to commemorate the exodus of Israelites from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. In the case of Christians, it is Easter, correlated with the Jewish Passover and sometimes even called the Christian Passover. It depended on both the date of celebration of Passover by Jews and some astronomical phenomena such as the vernal equinox and the occurrence of the first full moon after that date.¹

The fact that the calendar constituted only a mathematical approximation of the actual length of the solar year, which is, in addition, of a different length than the lunar year (the latter is ca. 11 days shorter), meant that numerous attempts were made to improve calendars and to determine ways of setting dates of holidays. Along with geographical discoveries and the development of detailed historical research, a growing concern began to arise among scientists in modern Europe, related to dating important events of the past, including events of fundamental significance for Christianity such as the birth and death of Jesus. Historical criticism and determination of the date of Easter were, to some extent, like the obverse (theoretical) and reverse (practical) of one thing related to the Christian tradition. Few people were involved in disputes about the Biblical chronology or speculation over the nature of the star of Bethlehem in the light of ancient sources, but all were affected, to a certain degree, by the rhythm of holidays and the translatability of dates of different systems of time measure.

Malopolska, or more specifically scholars of Malopolska, also participated in those academic struggles with time. The town of Olkusz was the birthplace of Marcin Biem (ca. 1470–1540), an astronomer and astrologer and a professor of the Academy of Krakow, who formulated a proposal for a correction of the Julian calendar, which is now preserved in the form of a manuscript in Krakow (Jagiellonian Library, MS 1853). A great controversy flared up in Krakow at the end of the 16th century between John Latosz, another astrologer, and the Jesuits working there. Latosz was the only scholar in Krakow to dare to question astronomical foundations of the calendar reformed in 1582, named after Pope Gregory XIII. Admittedly, this physician and astrologer from Krakow was wrong in his proposal, which is known to us only from references of his authorship and allegations directed against him.

and his mistake resulted from not very precise calculations. The dispute over the system of time-reckoning sparked by Latosz arose in the public space of the capital city of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of that time. Thanks to him, Krakow witnessed a heated exchange of leaflets issued by Krakow publishers. The faithful who attended the St. Barbara’s church, administered by the Jesuits at that time, could listen to monks’ tirades addressed to the astrologer. And once, in the Tenement House under the Tin Roof (Kamienica pod Blachą) in the Main Market Square, the curious onlookers expected a dispute between Latosz and the Jesuits, but Latosz did not arrive in the end. Finally, Jan Brożek, who came from Kurzelów in the region of Kielce and was active at the Academy of Krakow in the first half of the 17th century. In the 1640s he wrote two brochures aimed at convincing the Uniates to acknowledge the Gregorian calendar (Apologias of the Universal Roman calendar). In his opinion, this could lead to even a greater unity between the two Christian denominations. The reformed calendar was never actually accepted by the Eastern Christians on a large scale. One of few examples of a certain influence of the debate on changes in religious attitudes was the case of Kasjan Sakowicz. Born into an Eastern Orthodox family, at a certain point he converted to the Greek Catholic rite, and in the 1640s, due to controversies related to the calendar, among other things, he entered the Roman Catholic Augustinian order and started to live in a convent of St. Catherine situated near the Wawel Hill. The struggles with time of scientists from Krakow – here limited to mentioning only several figures – constitute a subject as broad as a river (of time). However, regardless of whether this intellectual wrestling was about the improvement of the calendar or about convincing someone to use it, all parties involved faced the same problem. They knew what the difficulty with accurate measuring of time was about, they knew that it was possible to find a solution to this problem, but they were still unable to answer the question what time is in a clear and convincing way.²

Marcin Łaszcz, one of Jesuits who argued with Jan Latosz, gave three reasons for the fact that “the nature of time is difficult” in a print published in the Łazarz Printing House in Krakow in 1603, entitled The annual mirror divided into three parts (published under a pseudonym of Szczęsny Zebrowski in fear of severe criticism of Latosz):

“Three reasons for such a difficulty can be mentioned. The first one is the fact that the more each thing is subtle in its nature, the more difficult it is to comprehend. Such is the nature of things following one another, all essence of which depends solely on the succession.

The second reason is the difficulty. Time passes with the turn of skies. And the skies are extremely high above (as you will learn below), in a distance difficult for the eye to perceive. They are strangely rapid in the run; to reach their speed is

not possible for the legs of a surveyor. Moreover, those celestial wheels are perfectly round; and our ell measures are straight and unsuitable for the measurement of round things. Such measure belongs only to the very Author of times, as Job testifies: Times are not concealed before the Almighty, and those who know Him, they do not know His days.

The third reason and the most important one in my opinion. That God Almighty has wanted people not to abandon exercise, not to despise the wisdom, not to have reasons for idleness nor to dispute over the nature and essence of divinity, what a confident man could try if nothing in things by God created was left for him for further understanding."

Although time as an abstract category and an attempt to give it structure in the form of a theory of calendar was neither an easy nor an accessible subject of deliberations, practical solutions were needed in order to find orientation in time, to manage it, and to make plans for the future – namely to do exactly what many of us try to do today when entering new items and deadlines in our calendars and wishing that a day had at least one hour more, and a year was made of rubber and could be stretched according to the needs.

One does not need to be an astronomer to be able to use a calendar and does not have to be a clockmaker to be able to use a clock. Technical knowledge, also the one developed in Malopolska and preserved in its collections to this day, is very valuable. However, struggles with time have also a second “practical” side as evidenced by numerous monuments of broadly understood material culture. With their help, it is possible to show the value of time for our ancestors, how they understood it, as well as the manner in which they tried to tame time by closing it in the form of a box, case, manuscript or print.

In a book titled *The order of time,* published a few years ago, Max Engammarre, a Genevan historian of the Reformation, explained convincingly how the idea of punctuality was “invented” in the days of John Calvin. Its source should be sought, of course, in the regime of monastic time and precise division of a day into hours, to which were assigned specific prayers, as well as the reading of Scripture and other texts of a devotional nature, separating individual tasks handled by monks from one another. However, during the Reformation, this regime was further strengthened. It was due to both the development of trade and the need for the timely fulfilment of tasks, as well as to the severity of the Creator in the assessment of human activities on the Earth, being part of Calvin’s doctrine. Acting precisely in time, without wasting time on excessive relaxation, devoting oneself to work, sharing time accurately, and assigning some importance to all its portions – all these elements lay at the heart of the phenomenon the consequences of which we can observe to

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3 Sz. Żebrowski [= M. Łaszcz SJ], *Zwierciadło roczne na trzy części rozdzielone* [The Annual Speculum Divided into Three Parts], Krakow: Łazarz Andrysowicz’s Printing House, 1603, pp. 5–6.

The clock mechanism required good knowledge of the laws of geometry and mechanics, due to which it could be sufficiently precise. Furthermore, it required knowledge of metallurgy, needed to make the elements hidden in the turret of the late Renaissance (which was to decorate a table, for example, in a house of a merchant from Krakow or in a city palace of one of magnates) durable enough. Finally, craftsmanship going far beyond simple imitation was needed. Each element, from the general block of the turret, its balustrades, to the cupola with a lion trapped below it and a fox located on its top, had to be well thought out. Just like the very structure of the timer, which consists of two dials: one measuring hours according to the 24-hour system of the day division (concentric circles with hours from 1 to 12 and from 13 to 24) and a smaller one indicating minutes with a scale covering quarters. An additional attraction, the element by which an anonymous master from northern Germany, where the clock was created, revealed his artistry, is a window through which it is possible to look into the “interior of time.” Although we will probably not find there an answer to the question about the essence of time, the possibility of peeping at the ratchets of the mechanism, even stopped for a long time, is all the same a fascinating opportunity to observe its technical precision and mastery – the characteristics which are very easy to forget in the time of mass market products and clocks measuring time to the rhythm of vibrations of quartz crystals.
Tile table clock


Another beautiful example of a modern timer is a table clock from the Wawel collection, with a horizontal arrangement of its dial, unusual by modern standards. Also in the case of this object which dates back to the first half of the 17th century and is a work of Simon Ginter, a craftsman from Gdansk, we can look inside its mechanism without dismantling its whole intricately made case. In contrast to the “church turret,” this clock brings something more than just a mechanism for measuring hours in the circadian rhythm. The Baroque lion’s legs and moustachioed atlantes in helmets with crests support the mechanism which shows how far time, measured in hours and minutes is dependent on and immersed in astronomical and astrological time. As the multi-piece dial hides in itself not only an hourly scale, but also a mechanism showing phases of the Moon, presented here as a chubby face in a starry sky, and a calendar taking the form of a circle with the signs of the Zodiac assigned to individual months. Although the former owner of this mechanism probably had a paper calendar in his collection, suitable for making short notes in a monthly table (modern Gdansk was famous for the production of such prints prepared by local astronomers), the practical function did not have to be the main role of such an object. Glancing at the dial and checking the time and date could indeed happen, but it was mostly about adding splendour to himself, as well as to the residence. It was a symbolic capital investment in a material object that could strengthen the position of its owner in the eyes of his business partners, and also could prove the owner’s wealth and, to a certain degree, his erudition and knowledge, or at least appreciation, of complex astronomical and astrological issues. In spite of a rather rigorous attitude of Lutheranism to astrology, Gdansk was an example of a city where the followers of Luther approached the issue of the “star science” and astrological symbolism quite liberally. Apart from other monuments of Gdansk, this particular clock may be an evidence of this approach. Decorated with scenes inspired by Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, the mechanism from Gdansk reminds us, at different levels, of a simple fact of transience and transformation of one form of the reality into another. Although it is far from expressing the typical Baroque vanititative dread marked by the fear of death, it constitutes a tangible presentation of this quality of time with regard to which we can be certain that it is aimed at describing changes – in the sky or in the earthly life.

Mechanisms less complex in terms of astronomical background, but equally artful include a *tiled clock of Jan Jakub Lichty from the collection of the District Museum in Gdansk*.

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Tarnów, produced in Krakow in the mid-18th century: [http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/26903/1127661](http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/26903/1127661) or a malachite clock with a hunting theme from the collection of the Museum of the Biecz Land, made several decades later: [http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/26969/1120292](http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/26969/1120292), and a French clock from the Wawel Royal Castle collection, created around the year 1800, depicting Apollo and the globe: [http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/4869610/4890236](http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/4869610/4890236). They constitute great examples of the rich material culture, the purpose of which is to provide its users with tools to measure time and, through this, to plan tasks and activities in a better way as well as to add splendour to their home space, meet their aesthetic needs, and create their image in the eyes of their visitors. Today we do not know who the owner of the clock from Biecz was and whether he was actually interested in hunting in the forests of Małopolska and purchased the timer for just this purpose. Neither do we know whether the person who imported the clock with Apollo regarded himself as such a great connoisseur and lover of art that he decorated his private space with an image of the Greek god, the protector of the Muses. The richness of timer models preserved to this day indicates the fact that the abstract dimension of time, measured with hours and larger units, could be personalised in this way by subsequent purchasers of clocks.

This process of combining the practice of measuring time with the aesthetisation of space and with making it beautiful (which is more or less specifically understood) can also be observed in case of social classes other than the noble class. A wall clock preserved in the Orava Ethnographic Park [http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/26909/1131040](http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/26909/1131040), far more modest and coming from a completely different era than the mechanisms presented above, shows that also peasants had the desire to decorate their homes and also derive practical benefits from the fact of owning a clock. Clocks from Orava, distributed at fairs, were very common in the region. They prove that the clockmaker profession and its achievements have not been reserved exclusively to those who had a better material status and for whom a clock was just another element of decor of their house, mansion or palace, apart from other trinkets, works of art or book collections. In the modern era, along with the revolution initiated by the development of print and the emergence of printed calendars, the so-called “shepherd’s calendars” or “peas-
Incidentally, another exhibit, this time from the collection of the Wawel Royal Castle, is a different, slightly earlier example of relations between time and economy. **A carriage clock of the 18th century made in the factory of Sebastian Baumann and Friedrich Christian Langpaur in Friedberg in Hesse** ([http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/4869610/4890275](http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/4869610/4890275)).

This carefully constructed artefact, decorated with mythological scenes on the back lid of the clock case, intertwines two dimensions of reality, space and time, symbolised by the road that had to be covered by a carriage carrying people or goods from one town to another, the number of hours (or days) that the coachman or a messenger needed to accomplish this task, and the deadline which had to be observed so as not to disappoint clients and earn their trust in the future. If today we are concerned by stories of the lives of couriers being ruled by GPS receivers and precise systems of work time accounting (to use just one of a number of possible examples), let us think about coachmen living two hundred and several dozen years earlier as their distant ancestors – they also struggled with kilometres separating them from their destination, as well as with passing minutes and hours of marching in order to deliver people and correspondence to the right place, while facing boldly the capricious Fortune, whose image was placed on the silver-plated lid of the clock.

However, there are objects that were to and still can remind us about the fact that time cannot be reduced only to mathematically expressed relations between our circadian and annual rhythms of life and the cycle of astronomical phenomena such as sunrises and sunsets, consecutive full moons, equinoxes, and solstices, as well as seasons associated with them. In terms of these objects, the reduction of time to economic mechanisms, for which the main determinant is punctuality, promptness, fulfilment of tasks on time, and operational efficiency, also seems to be an excessive or even petty simplification, an offering of time made to Biblical Mammon.

Let us return to earlier ages for a while. At the end of the 17th century, **a clock of a rather unusual form** ([http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/4869610/4890217](http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/4869610/4890217)) was produced in the manufactory of Lorenzo Wolbrecht in Torun. On the one hand, it resembles
1. WERSJA PODSTAWOWA ZNAKU
SYSTEM IDENTYFIKACJI WIZUALNEJ PROJEKTU “WIRTUALNE MUZEA MAŁOPOLSKI” ZAKŁADA WYSTĘPOWANIE 1 PODSTAWOWEJ FORMY ZNAKU W POSTACI LOGOTYPU. JEJ ROZSZERZENIE STANOWIĄ: LOGO, UZUPEŁNIAJĄCE WARIANTY LOGOTYPU I DODATKOWE WERSJE KOLORYSTYCZNE.

ZNAK OPARTY ZOSTAŁ O STYLIZOWANE LITERY “WMM” NAWIĄZUJĄCE SWOIM KSZTAŁTEM DO KORONY OBECNEJ W IDENTYFIKACJI WIZUALNEJ WOJEWÓDZTWA MAŁOPOLSKIEGO. LITERY WPISANE SĄ W OTWARTĄ FORMĘ OPARTĄ O KOŁO MAJĄCĄ BUDZIĆ SKOJARZENIA ZE ZNAKIEM @.

DO ZAPROJEKTOWANIA LOGOTYPU WYKORZYSTANO KRÓJ PISMA FF DIN ROUND PODKREŚLAJĄCY ZWIĄZEK PROJEKTU Z NOWOCZESNĄ TECHNOLOGIĄ.

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We are not certain whether such an intention was behind Wolbrecht’s design, but the fact that clocks of this kind can be found in church buildings and presentations of a religious nature may indicate an attempt to throw bridges between the earthly time and reality and the divine order which rules over human and due to which human has been immersed in time and subjected to its passing. In this case, the placing of the clock in an intricately made goldsmith structure may evoke not only astonishment at the degree of complexity of different aspects of measuring time, but also associations with all the references appearing in the Bible where God is presented as the ruler of time, the one who may stop it (as in the case of the war fought by Joshua), extend it (as in the case of the life time of Enoch, the prophet), and finally – as the one who is ultimately in charge of history, which is nothing else but a sum of millions and billions of minutes and hours. In the era of the Baroque, such a “monstrance of time” could constitute another memento, a reminder of the transience of the earthly world and what should be of importance for a believer. This type of a visual reminder – taking into account the clock! – can also be found in a painting of the 18th century, created in Stary Sącz and kept in the collection of the Nowy Sącz District Museum (http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/26897/1130710). This rather naive work, being far from the artistry of Baroque masters, depicts two planes of the Christian understanding of time. On the one hand, a synthesis of the Christian philosophy of history presented in the form of the history of salvation: the scene located in the upper left corner shows the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise after they ate fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the key moment for the entire vision of the human condition that we find on pages of the Bible – snatching away from them paradisical happiness and plunging them into the earthly toil, marked also by the passage of time. In the upper right corner we see the scene of crucifixion with Mary and St. John the Apostle near the cross. What was synthetically shown in many depictions of the scene at Golgotha in the form of the blood of the aforementioned tile clock from Gdansk due to a complicated dial which was not only used to measure time in the circadian rhythm, but was a tool to observe its passing according to the course of the calendar, changes of phases of the Moon, the Sun’s entry into the consecutive signs of the Zodiac and changes of seasons. On the other hand, its vertical form may evoke associations with turret clocks, which were also mentioned above. However, this clock has some metaphysical or even theological surplus due to its form, which makes this Baroque timer resemble a monstrance used in churches. A dial of a considerable size, supported by a Nereid and topped with a pseudo-church tower may resemble, especially from a distance, a reliquary or a decorated container used in the Liturgy to store the consecrate Host, due to a bright round shape located in the centre of the object.
Jesus (theological “new Adam”) washing the skull of Adam, the first man, found at the foot of the cross, was presented by an anonymous painter in the form of a scene evoking associations with medieval “Paupers' Bibles” (*Biblia pauperum*) which were addressed to the illiterate members of laity. Two of the three key events of the Christian philosophy of history have been included here: the fall of the first parents and the salvation. A natural closure of this historic cycle, expected by the Christians, should be the second coming of Jesus and the Last Judgement. It is also characteristic that both the beginning of human history and the date of Jesus’s death have aroused bitter controversies among modern chronologists and have constituted a permanent bone of contention when attempting to determine the age of the world and the exact dates of the biography of Jesus, not to mention numerous controversies related to dating other events. The artist from Stary Sącz seems to be much more interested in another issue, namely the salvation of an individual human soul. At the bottom of the painting we find a kind of vanitative puzzle that constitutes a warning for all those who devote themselves too much to the cultivation of material objects and goods of this world and forget about what awaits them in heaven and the promise of what is contained in the two scenes from the history of salvation situated above. The face of a young woman, adorned with coifed hair and a rich earring in one ear, is contrasted with a bare skull with a snake coming out of the eye socket, supporting a fruit which constitutes yet another reminder of the fall of Adam and Eve. Above this ambiguous head, there is a clock dial with hands indicating fifteen minutes to twelve, and the inscriptions located around the dial and the face: “Remember that you have to die” (*Memento mori*), “There comes the time; human should pray” (*Venita hora, homo ora*), “Today it’s me, tomorrow it will be you” (*Hodie mihi, cras tibi*) do not leave any serious illusions about the information contained in the image – the time given on the Earth, no matter how precisely measured, is subordinated to the higher reality, and we should remember about it in every second of our life.

This higher reality preserved in religious works and tradition passed in different ways was to be reminded also by a series of holidays entered in the “civilian” calendar of seasons, farm works, trade activities, fairs, and various meetings. Just as today we do not ponder a lot over the issue of where the “mobility” of certain festivals in the Christian or Jewish calendars comes from, so this knowledge was not commonly needed in earlier periods. However, it had its complicated structure, and the theory of calendar, the method of determining consecutive months and dates of holidays is called the computus. From the very beginning of Christianity and the appearance of the first controversies surrounding the date of celebrating Easter, we can speak about an inseparable and close connection between the Jewish and Christian calendar – even if the followers of both religions have treated each other with reluctance, they have been dependent on each other on many levels. The latter have not celebrated the Resurrection before or during the Jewish Passover; the former, living in Europe dominated by Christians, had to per force respect, to a certain extent, the religious calendar – whether that of Catholics, Orthodox Christians or Protestants. Religious and astronomical reflection on these issues is evidenced by numerous treatises dedicated to the theory of calendar, which were written by both Christian and Jewish scholars. They focused mainly on the calendar typical of a particular religion, but
always included an illustrative representation of the calendar of the opposite side, due to which it was possible to convert dates and coordinate different systems of measuring time. Although it was not motivated by reasons of religious peace, it was at least justified by the desire and necessity for undisturbed economic exchange. This reflection is evidenced by numerous manuscripts and computus prints preserved in libraries in Krakow, including manuscripts of the so-called Jewish computus (computus judaicus or computus judaeorum) which can be found in the Jagiellonian Library or a manuscript Divrei David, a treaty of a Jewish astrologer and astronomer David ben Jacob which dates back to the late 17th century and is kept in the Historical Museum of the City of Krakow: http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/26855/1125508. Users of the Malopolska’s Virtual Museums website have access to one of the most spectacular parts of this manuscript, namely paper mechanisms called rotulae, which consisted of overlapping paper circles mounted on a common axis. Due to their rotation it was possible to convert dates from one calendar to another, make astronomical calculations taking the form of an algorithm, determine astrological forecasts, and establish dates of holidays such as Chanukah, or the Festival of Lights, with which a nine-branch candlestick – also present in the collection of the Malopolska’s Virtual Museums – is associated http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/26855/1115544, as well as of other rites for which interpretation can be found in the Torah (the Biblical Pentateuch, see a Torah scroll – http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/26963/1123196) and complementary writings making up the Jewish tradition. The Krakow manuscript Divrei David is one of many material documents of this kind in modern Europe, including in modern, multicultural Malopolska, as regards theoretical reflection on the issue of time. On a broader level, it reminds us once again about the circular, cyclical nature of time, according to which our ancestors’ lives carried on regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation, and according to which it still carries on today, though at a much more dizzying pace.

Our ancestors may seem to us very distant – they thought differently, dressed differently, perceived the world differently, and believed in different things. For us, the past is a “foreign country” to which we set off on all kinds of expeditions, supported by works of researchers, as well as virtual or physical visits to museums. This foreign country consists of both intricate products of ancient master work and theoretical reflection, created in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, as well as purely practical items, not having the allure of a unique object, but still likely to give us
visual pleasure with their shape – like, for example, a modernist radio set 7-39 from the Polish plants of Philips (http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/26867/1115691) or an over two hundred years old mechanical wrist watch, simple in its form, though coming from the Hausmann company – important for Malopolska as it constitutes one of the mementos of John Paul II: http://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/obiekty/-/a/26816/1122672.

The thing which can undoubtedly connect us with our ancestors is time – although measured with the use of different devices and mechanisms, packed according to changing tastes and aesthetics, it was and still is a stream in which we and they are both immersed; and when faced with its fleeing, we and they can both only stand and marvel. As they fought for snatching a few more moments, months, and years from time so as to be able to enjoy the earthly life a bit longer and to finish implementing plans, so we wish to save time or – in bold dreams – to defeat it, always insatiable for time and always moaning about its shortage. The Malopolska’s Virtual Museums project is undoubtedly such a challenge to time that ravages all things. It allows us to cover the distance and watch all kinds of objects on the screen of a home computer. It also allows us to defeat time and visit the world of objects created and used by people who are no longer among the living, and who – like us – were immersed in the great and overpowering river of time.

The text draws from the results of research project carried out within the National Science Centre-funded program for postdoctoral fellowships (decision no. DEC-2013/08/S/HS3/00192, Chronology and Calendars in the Intellectual Culture of Central and Eastern Europe, 1400–1700).
Bibliography


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