
Sonne und Mond, Kalender und Uhr. Studien zur Darstellung und poetischen Reflexion der Zeitordnung in der römischen Literatur by Anja Wolkenhauer

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When Oswald Spengler called sundials an ‘insignificant tool’ of ancient everyday life in his famous *The Decline of the West*, he linked this with the observation that they had not influenced ‘classical life-feeling’ in the smallest degree. Was he right? Where little grows, one may suspect barren ground; and if one takes previous publications as a basis, they seem to give credence to Spengler. Plainly, a monograph devoted only to the sense or understanding of time in antiquity is vainly sought. It is to Anja Wolkenhauer’s credit that she has closed a gap in research with her study of the representation of, and poetic reflection on, time and its order in Roman literature. So far, only a few publications on this exist and they are shorter and scattered.

In her introduction, chapter 1 [1–20], when summarizing the existing articles on the subject, she recognizes a deficiency in the definition of time which shapes philological research: different temporal phenomena are typically placed next to each other indiscriminately [8]. Wolkenhauer, however, distinguishes time itself (*tempus*), the order of time which emanates from the people (*observatio, ratio, compositio temporum*), and the measurement of time, which does not concern the order as a whole but only its increase. The introduction concludes with an outline of the book and a delimitation of the topic: the period to be examined is about 200–50 BC and includes all the texts of classical Latin literature which show the order of time or use it as a structural element.

The aim of the second chapter [21–66] is to outline the *tempus Romanum* as a specifically Roman concept which is closely connected

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to the measurement of time and temporal order. Wolkenhauer shows that the metaphor of the cosmic clock, as it is handed down from Plato's *Timaeus*, can be transferred to the Roman idea of time only partially. The chapter closes with a presentation and examination of the mythical inventors and teachers of the temporal order: Atlas, Prometheus, Palamedes, Romulus, and Numa.

In the third chapter [67–150], which concerns the determination of what was attributed to the concept of time in Rome, the study focuses on a central issue, the order of day and night, which was increasingly dominated by clocks. The centerpiece is Wolkenhauer's analysis of the history of clocks as it is described by Pliny in *Nat. hist.* 7.212–215, which Wolkenhauer calls a 'literarischer Glücksfall' ('literary fortune') because comparable texts on the history of calendars have been lost [18]. She shows how the Forum in Rome became the center for the measurement of time. According to Pliny, the tradition designated the sundial of L. Papirius Cursor, which was not put in the Forum, as the first known to Rome; but Wolkenhauer argues cogently that this dial was merely a votive gift and not used as a timer [82].

In reference to Vitruvius, she explains that the reason for integrating gnomonics into the body of architecture was to ennoble it. Thus, she understands book 9 and also 10 (on mechanics) not as irritating appendages but as the culminating parts of the presentation and as a demanding field within the art of architecture [96]. In a section on the image of clocks, Wolkenhauer discusses three metaphors in more detail: the sundial as an instrument of force, as a cosmic clock, and as a symbol of human finitude [123–148].

After its very beginnings, when the sundial was cursed and compared to a despotic and violent ruler [124], it became more and more important in everyday life so that by the Augustan period people approached time-measuring devices in a clearly positive way. In later centuries, it even had a literary apotheosis: for Cassiodorus [*Var.* 1.46, 1–2], the clock was a metaphor for good order because without clocks there is no reasonable division of days and so the order of life would become confused [148].

The most extensive chapter of the book is the fourth, which focuses on the order of the year using the calendar [151–270]. Since a rich secondary literature on Roman calendar reform has appeared, Wolkenhauer limits herself to the still little-explored area of the

presentation and mediation of this reform in its course and afterwards in Roman literature. Wolkenhauer sees the Julian calendar reform not only as a solution to old inherited problems but also as a trigger for further consideration or as encouragement to use the temporal order for political purposes. Augustus' small calendar correction is re-examined from this perspective. For her, the obelisk on the Campus Martius, which was installed as a gnomon, is a fundamental element of the calendar correction in that it linked the order of time with the person of Augustus. Though Caesar's reform was more important, Augustus succeeded by means of the Sun-pointer in making visible daily his intimate connection with the reform of the calendar as a designer not only of a public space but also of time [248].

A fifth chapter [271–328] deals with eutopic and dystopic schemes of temporal orders. 'Eutopic' stands for 'utopian', whereas 'dystopic' marks the detachment of time from its natural rules, for instance, by the expansion or the reversal of temporal processes.

The final chapter [329–336] reviews the core ideas of the study. Wolkenhauer also asks whether an ancient critique of temporal order can be discerned. Her answer is that the culture of critical scepticism exhibited a quiet tone, an isolated appeal that is only perceived in Ovid and Pliny since all the other Roman authors did not question the *tempus Romanorum* but were interested only in its organization [336]. The book ends with a bibliography [337–363] and an index of the ancient literature used [364–373]. Latin or Greek texts are in most cases not only cited but provided with the author's own congenial translations.

Anja Wolkenhauer has presented a stimulating, challenging, and very well written monograph which illuminates urgently an aspect of antiquity rarely handled. The joy of playing with language and stylistic devices is evident in many details. I will note only that on page 38, the title of the book recurs as a contraction from the beginning and end of two sentences strung together.

Only in a few instances are inaccuracies to be found or are the arguments presented unconvincing to this reviewer—for example, when she writes that the sundial shows a half circular motion of the Sun, which, however, applies only for the equinoxes [27], or that the ninth book of Vitruvius' *De architectura* was integrated not only to enoble architecture but is also to be understood as the culmination

of the presentation. For a climax, I would have expected more profound account from that author, whereas the book is certainly one of the weaker of Vitruvius' work. That he, as an obvious layman in gnomonics, saw the need to integrate it in his work, which was not undertaken by anyone before him, strengthens the argument that his appreciation of gnomonics is based on non-architectural grounds.

With some other topics, there could have been deeper foundations. For instance, when Wolkenhauer discusses temporality in the Roman world in connection with Martial [4.8], who gives the schedule for a workday, she does not mention the Sulpicii Archive of legal documents discovered in Murecine (outside the city of Pompeii) which show the same temporal framework as those found in literary texts [109–114]. Also, when she mentions the relationship between the sundial and death, I missed references to Petronius [*Cena Trim.* 4.71], Posidippus [*Epig.* 52], or the sundials which have been found in cemeteries. Those considerations, however, push the limits of the book because, as Wolkenhauer has indeed pointed out, her work is a literary reflection and not an all-encompassing picture of the ancient temporal order, which would have been a different monograph. My objections should not, therefore, detract from the content in any way. I have missed only a glossary and a decent price.