

MENĒ SUNDIALS

ROY SEBAG



What is Time? This question has always fascinated me. When I say the word “Time,” I am not referring to the mere movement of a clock but to the profoundly richer human experiences of duration, simultaneity, successiveness, and change. When understood in its deepest sense, we can see that “Time” comprises the past, the present, and the future simultaneously—it is an emulsified whole whose essence can never be divided yet whose ever-unfolding whither and whence must never be confounded. If we pause to reflect on this central aspect of the human experience, we find ourselves in a state of perplexity. The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus famously said: “All is Flux, Nothing is Stationary.” In this understanding, the nature of all things is characterized by endless change as this omnipresent force propels every real thing perpetually forward in its ceaseless flow. I believe that as humans, we developed the concept of “Time” to name that force which saturates all things—allowing us to make sense of this Flux by measuring and defining it. In the absence of “Time,” humanity would be left the passive object of a nameless, all-encompassing chaos rather than the active, intellectually curious creatures that we are capable of being.



CLOCK TIME VS. HUMAN TIME

Today, the vast majority of people have come to accept “Clock Time” as Time itself—an abstract and masterable thing that we merely observe the passage of, nothing more than an abstract number projected on a circular or digital dial denoting relative change.

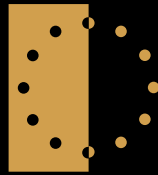
For example, in his Theory of Special Relativity, Albert Einstein tells us that the clock is the only thing we should care about as it relates to measuring Time because Time has no actual basis in reality. In this sense, clocks keep Time, and thus a mechanical or digital watch defines Time. This reasoning, often known as “clocktime” has come to be a deeply entrenched aspect of conventional understandings of Time because it provides mathematicians, physicists, and other academicians with seemingly omnipotent powers of predictability. The unfortunate reality is that “clocktime” masks the ineffable mysteries and profound complexity of Time—qualities which filled the imaginations of our ancestors with reverence and awe but which are all but disregarded today.

We at Menē seek to recapture something of the reverence and awe of the ancients, restoring a sense of the profound to this awesome force that “Clock Time” makes mundane. In order to do this, we have long meditated on this central question: Is Time really nothing more than the movement of a clock? Is Time’s march caused by and reflected only within the numbers pointed to by the hands spinning around a dial as the motor ticks on—offering us nothing more than a way of watching relative change in motion between two markers?

The late 19th century French philosopher and Nobel laureate Henri Bergson, responded to this question with a vociferous “No!” as self-evidently obvious if we merely pause to meditate on the notion of Time. According to Bergson, clocks in and of themselves

serve no purpose—nobody would fabricate them and nobody would buy them unless they allowed us to unravel and demarcate our lived experience of Time, in the form of events we experience individually and collectively. Bergson granted that yes, clocks were bought “to know what Time it is,” but for Bergson “knowing what Time it is” presupposes an inherent need to correspond between the clock and an event that is actually happening. In other words, something in our lives is taking place which is sufficiently meaningful for us to want to pay attention to the clock in the first place. Yes, the clock may tick exactly sixty times in a “minute,” but those ticks have no significance unless they correspond to the richness of lived experience. One minute is never like another, to quote Heraclitus again “no man ever steps into the same river twice.” In the space of a minute, a couple may say “I do,” a baby may breathe its first breath, and fortunes may be made or lost, but (and fortunately for us), not all minutes are as intensely charged, and no two will ever be identical no matter how charged they may be. That certain correspondences between events could be significant for us, while most others were not, explained our basic sense of simultaneity and the widespread use of clocks.

In the Bergsonian sense, clocks, in and of themselves, could never explain either simultaneity or Time. He argued that if a sense of Time more basic than that revealed by matching an event against a clock-hand did not exist, then clocks would serve no purpose. In his words: “They would be bits of machinery with which we would amuse ourselves by comparing them with one another.” Anything different, anything novel, anything important, anything outside of the clock itself must necessarily be included in our understanding of Human Time. Only such an understanding could explain why we attributed such power to clocks—why we bought them, why we used them, and why we invented them in the first place.



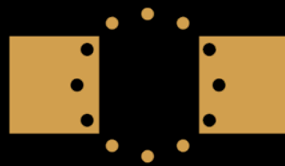
THE NATURE AND PARADOX OF HUMAN TIME

The nature of Human Time has been a compelling subject of philosophical inquiry since ancient Times. In the Torah and the Bible, for example, Qoheleth, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, writes that: “[God] has put a sense of past and future into their minds.” Here, we see that humanity has long understood Time to be something to be flowing, with Time that has already passed occupying the past and Time that is yet to come representing a potentiality in the future. Augustine of Hippo, writing in the third century of the Common Era, ponders in harmony with Qoheleth, asking:

What is Time? Who can explain this easily and briefly? Who can comprehend this in thought so as to articulate the answer in words? Yet what do we speak of, in our familiar everyday conversation, more than of Time? We surely know what we mean when we speak of it. We also know what we mean when we hear someone else talking about it. What then is Time? Provided that no one asks me, I know. If I want to explain it to an inquirer, I do not know.

Here, Augustine encapsulates one of the great mysteries of Time, the dichotomy between its innate—indeed

fundamental—knowability, and its simultaneous, utter unknowability—“Provided no one asks me, I know” and “If I want to explain it to an inquirer, I do not know.” The irreconcilability of Augustine’s dichotomy obviates a natural mystery sitting at the heart of Time itself that we as humans can sense but can never truly articulate. By meditating on the simultaneity of knowing and not knowing, Augustine nevertheless illuminates a number of Time’s key features, namely that each individual understands oneself as existing within successive temporality; one understands the present, that which is immediately available by means of one’s sense perceptions; the future, that which one anticipates in light of the perpetually imminent flight of the present moment; and one understands the past, that which is available to one through the mechanics of memory. Augustine’s insights into the nature of Time demonstrate a tripartite configuration, where the individual is situated in the present moment, endowed with a sense of Time which has passed and a sense of Time which is to come, but lacking the power to return to the past, know the future, or in any way pause the present moment as Time flows from the past into the future.



HUMAN TIME - THE INSPIRATION

It was this enriched appreciation of Human Time and of the individual duration inherent in each of us that guided the development of the new Menē Timepiece category. With the introduction of this new category, we are inviting our customers to a renewal of the reverence and awe that our ancestors attributed to Time, reveling in an enriched appreciation which is efficient yet personal, which is predictable yet magical, and which is precise yet natural.

The first collection of Timepieces which we are unveiling are wearable Sundials, crafted from pure 24 karat gold and platinum, true to the Menē tradition.

The mechanical clock is a relatively new invention, ascending in dominance only within the last few hundred years. In the thousands of years of human

history preceding the ascendance of the mechanical Clock, people measured Time by referencing the motion of the Earth relative to the Sun. The physical phenomena of the sun-light shining onto a fixed point on earth naturally creates a shadow which moves along in a circular motion throughout the day as the sun rises and sets. By comparing the relative motion of the shadow throughout the day, one can easily measure, predict, and communicate the past, present, and future. This is an almost magical way for us to keep Human Time, measuring our human experiences without the need for anything mechanical or digital, obfuscated or abstract. The roundness of the modern clock face is a vestige of the ancient sundial. The motor that turns the hands of the modern clock is nothing more than a less energy efficient abstraction from the interplay of light and shadows that the sun offers naturally.

MENĒ 24K SUNDIALS

Following an extensive period of research and development, our design team, led by Sunjoo Moon and Diana Picasso, is proud to introduce three beautiful Sundials. These 24 karat gold and platinum Sundials can be worn as pendants on your neck or as a ring on your hand. Each Sundial is capable of telling the Time so long as the Sun is shining. All you have to do is hold the Sundial such that the Sun's rays of light illuminate the Sundial, which will in turn concentrate either a shadow or light to a number that corresponds to the Time of the day.

These Sundials require no energy and no calibration or tuning. They respond to the motion of the Sun relative to the Earth—a most beautiful technology, one which is energy efficient and permanent owing to its construction from solid 24 karat gold or platinum.

I invite you to experience our Sundials and rediscover the richness of human experience, restoring the significance of individual events as opposed to the soulless minutes and seconds of the clock. As a company, we at Menē are proud to be creating products which strike this nerve. The Menē Timepiece collection, beginning with our Sundials, help attune our modern minds to more ancient wavelengths—offering a way for us to commune with the mysteries of Time and revere the magic of nature in the midst of our hectic lives.

