

**Editorial**

## Must we choose between yesterday and tomorrow?

In times of economic difficulties, the budget becomes an important criterion, but the choice is not only financial: it is often the decider between social and cultural options. We already mentioned here the confusion of students and the divided opinions about the usefulness of the options of the Latin and Greek courses, while unemployment is still growing.

On another matter; if you and I are excited whenever unsuspected discoveries are revealed on a building site, others are much less so. When soundings revealed a Gallo-Roman farm in a future industrial zone (near Artenay), the local authorities were appalled. Preventive archeological excavations become more and more expensive, and some companies seek an alternative site and the jobs disappear. In the region of Aude in the south of France, excavators recently destroyed a medieval site while erecting a wind turbine. But the most significant debate took place in Bourges last year. A catastrophe at city hall: remains of Gallo-Roman baths were discovered during the renovation of the House of Culture. A difficult choice had to be taken between budget, culture and... culture.

Lastly, on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Louvre museum launched a public subscription for the restoration of the "Victory of Samothrace" memorial and the grand staircase where the statue is displayed, and where 7 million visitors pass each year. Among the 4 million euros required, 3 were donated by institutional sponsors. For collecting the missing million, the subscription is open until the end of December (see column 3). Shall we, citizens, have to choose someday between funding Culture or Telethon? Our times are sometimes complicated!

In Greece, during the awful fires that devastated the west of the Peloponnese in 2007, the fire-fighting planes worked hard to save the Archaeological site of Olympia. The flames almost reached the museum while all around, houses and fields of olive trees were burning.

A painful choice. Social drama against an irreplaceable ancient heritage. What would you do if you had to choose?

René Kauffmann

## Culture, technology, society...

Another example of life today: is technology an aid to culture? You could believe it. Whilst it used to be necessary in the old days to hunt through libraries to find some documents – today you just need to access the Internet, and almost everything is available within a few seconds. Such examples are countless and show real progress.

If we call Culture that which brings human beings together, what they have in common in their way of life and in their history, we may yet have cause to worry, for everything is not that simple.



The infinite possibilities that are now available are certainly exciting, but at the same time harmful and contradictory. On the one hand, they lead to a dull globalized culture (the roots of a few people are not those of everyone), and on the other, they can lead our youth to lock themselves into what they already know, instead of opening their minds, discovering the world and meeting people; to write to their old friends when it would suffice to raise their heads to meet new ones. When a museum offers audio guides on handheld game consoles, - it's great. If young visitors keep playing on them without looking at the artworks, how awful!

A young South African tourist may well affirm he's discovering France, its language and its art, and yet pass the Pont du Gard while watching a soccer game on his smartphone being played in Johannesburg and listening to the commentary in Afrikaans. The huge variety of information sources allows everyone to listen to what they want to hear, ignoring everything else. Neither culture nor democracy can benefit from this.

It is sometimes necessary to stop and think about the dark side of every innovation. Have some fun searching, or having others search, for the perverse effects of this or that invention. Being aware of these brings you back to fundamental values. First, let us wonder whether the invention is useful or not, and this is not always easy, since the little marketing geniuses do their best to hide it.

With the fascinating "up to date model", the race for performance replaced the arms race in its infernal spiral without real benefit for the majority. If those things go out of style, so much the better. Otherwise, make them delicate and impossible to disassemble. They don't even need to be useful, just sell at the same time, as in the unforgettable "Quota"- a novel by Vercors (1966) - back scratchers and itching powder. But let's move on.



What about cars? Do they bring people together or drive them apart? There is another factor added to the infernal spiral. "The more roads, the more cars we sell", say manufacturers. "The more cars, the more roads we must build", say politicians. They are both going round in circles!

One of the most beautiful examples is the lift, a quite harmless device at first sight. And yet, if town centres are henceforth the prerogative of an upper class it is certainly that which is responsible. In the past, there were shopkeepers on the ground floor, upper-class people on the first and second floor, and the upper floors, less easily accessible, housed the rest of society, thus all could mingle.

Exchanging, sharing, embracing different worlds; that's what provided a common culture, a human group over thousands of years. A stumbling block appears for education and culture these days: trying to promote them is also seeking to open the eyes of those who are tempted not to look.


## Archaeology and nostalgia ...



Scientists strive to make us recognize what has passed. Sometimes pushed by a small wave of nostalgia, they also try to revive it, and archaeologist Stephen G. Miller, who excavated the site of Nemea, did not hide his pleasure in attending the Nemean games held in 2012, after 23 centuries of silence. Today, the site is threatened with closure due to a lack of funds to pay the attendants...

### Watch this nice video!

In France too, historical reconstitution became an attractive show, a popular entertainment in many cities, but also a passion shared by many lovers of history, often gathered in associations. Want to know more?

 [Click here](#)

**The preventive excavations** mentioned in the editorial are performed in France by Inrap (National Institute for Preventive Archaeological Research). Do you want to know more about its activities and latest findings?


[Inrap's](#) website with its interactive map of works in progress, is worth a visit!

## Let all of us be sponsors!

The Louvre's public subscription for the restoration of the Victory of Samothrace is open.



End of October, 41% of the million expected had been received.

 [For further information, click here](#)



## Did you notice on our website?

During this summer, we translated into French all the website of two Greek museums, the **Museum of Ancient Greek technology** and the **Museum of Ancient Greek music instruments and toys**, now online ([www.kotsanas.com](http://www.kotsanas.com)). The new books describing their collection (French version) should be available soon.

On the same theme, we added on our website a report "Les inventions des Grecs de l'Antiquité", approaching the subject in a slightly different manner, in the context of the time.

 [Download the file](#)




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