



News memo
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Let's talk seriously... but not too much!

To all who appreciate my usual jokes, I can only apologize for today's paper, on the main column of this letter - a more serious one for once!

But well, since we can't be serious all day long, I added below some anecdotes, all authentic.

Heard at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, Athens:
"And where is the gate the lions came in?"

At a TV quiz show, a contestant was asked a question about the Trojan War:
"Oh damn, I forgot, and yet I saw the movie..."

In front of the frescoes of an Egyptian tomb:
"Was it before or after Lascaux ?"

Too much information is too much!
Sometimes, as anyone, I search for some historical informations on the Web. But it's getting more and more difficult to find the right source: too many websites are mentioned - so you must open a hundred to find the "good" one. Too many sites reproduce exactly the same information from one another... thus there is a risk that a mistake which was often repeated turns into a truth... be cautious! And finally, considering the growing number of incoming mails, few people still answer the messages you write... even if they contain an answer to their own request! Thank you all the more for having come and read this!

Quotes:

It's better to know a little of everything than everything on very little (Blaise Pascal)

Alone, you go faster. Together we go further (African proverb)

<http://sites-archeologiques.perso.sfr.fr>

Editorial:

No, ancient civilizations are NOT dead!

A pulverized culture?

Information sources are now so numerous that you find almost everything you're looking for, with a significant drawback: you do not discover any more what you are not looking for. All of us wandered through the pages of a printed encyclopedia, roaming while looking for a specific but different topic. Today, we ask internet, and the accuracy of search engines is such that you don't meet any more with other subjects by accident.

By dint of always choosing what they like, people escape the lure of what they ignore. In 1972, the french television broadcasted "the Accursed Kings", a historical saga that met a huge success. In 2005, the audience of its "remake" was around 25%. A rebroadcast in 2008 gathered less than 7% viewers. Maybe it's not the only reason, but there were only two channels in 1972, six in 2005, and there was DTT in 2008. Thus most people turned towards something else: what they know, what they like. Previously, most people were reading in the train or in the subway. Maybe not really great literature, but idleness is a nice opportunity to learn things. Today, most keep tapping their cellphone's keys.

It is really great that anyone may choose what he likes and to keep constantly in touch with the whole world, but where are the chance encounters that happened some time ago, while looking for something else?

Is our society turning into a world of uneducated specialists?

The old dispute is still open, between the information press, where everyone makes his own mind, and the opinion press, where everyone reads what reinforces his own ideas. Formerly an engineer, a financier, a doctor could not escape the general culture: it was the one he was faced one way or another, at home or at school. Today, they are highly skilled specialists in their field, but they escape more and more all other fields. And how could lower social classes still meet what they do not know?

Yet, our society has never been so diverse in its knowledges, tools, its ethnic roots: what benefit do we take from this? Everyone get specialized - or must we say "radicalized"? No wonder, with so many experts in all fields, that general culture is fading! All the knowledge is now available, and each of us only cultivates his little garden.

Let's break the circle!

Of course, many of us bemoan it. But ourselves, teachers of History or Literature, curators, collectors, do we escape this? Museums are making tremendous efforts to attract new classes of visitors. Teachers do the same for the survival of the teaching of Latin and Greek. Do all humanists, all passionate of ancient civilizations however unite their efforts? Passionate or professionally interested people are everywhere: among archaeologists and museums, of course, education and research, but also among tour operators, tourist offices in France, Italy, Greece, Tunisia ... in local authorities, among numismatists and collectors, gallery owners and experts, ministries, associations, sponsoring foundations, publishers ... and among many anonymous people!

Is it too late to join forces? Well, there are some old quarrels between some "circles" - especially between archaeologists and collectors! - But if most of the archaeological exhibitions meet a significant popular success, if even American movie makers regularly pick in mythology, it shows that the cause of traditional culture is not lost. And if all these people sat around a table, decided to get out of their familiar world to work together, in order to make this world familiar to anyone

My dining room's table is unfortunately too small, but if someone wants to take up, here I come!

René Kauffmann

New this month

Our "[Whazzat thing?](#)" quizz page met with some success. A dozen items are now displayed there, now with all the answers attached (currently in french only). Here are two recent examples of items we added those last weeks. Would anyone need a translation... or wish to translate the answers?



What is this thing?
How is it called?
Diameter: 2 cm



What adjective describes this vase?



What is this thing?
Width: 2.5 cm



What is this thing?
Length: 3.2 cm

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