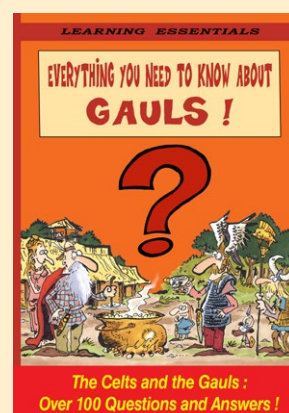
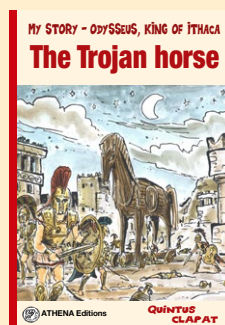
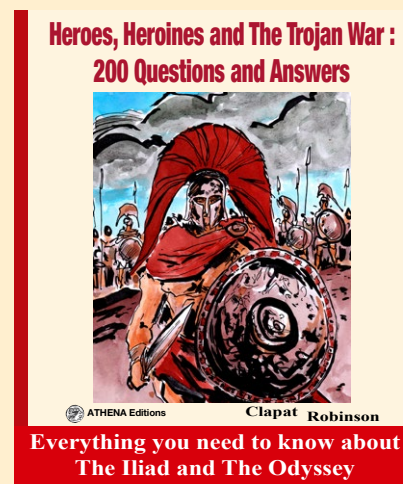
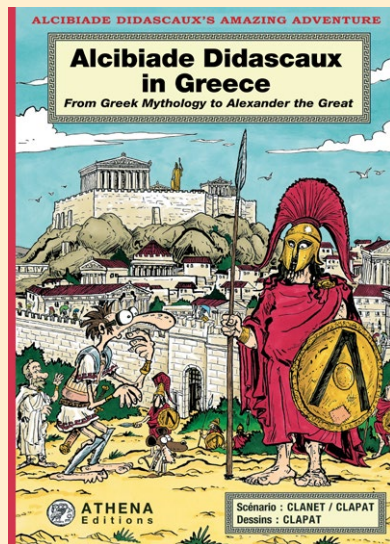


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ATHENA Editions

*Interview : Mr BOUCABEILLE Michel
Publishing manager - Founder of Edition Athena, France*

*Interviewer : Yeji Kim, Euro journal Korea (EKnews)
Intern Journalist*



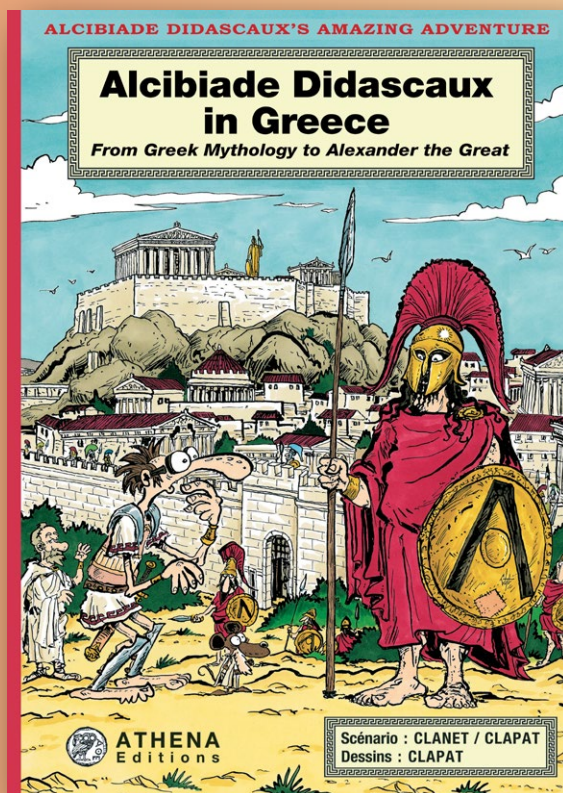
ATHENA Editions - 10, rue du Berry - 31 130 BALMA - FRANCE
www.athena-editions.fr - athena.editions@wanadoo.fr

1 - What was the starting point of the 'Edition Athena' 22 years ago ?

At first, a few years earlier, there was a youngster who wanted to draw cartoons, his father was a Classics teacher, both wished to do something different : cartoons that would enable the reader to learn and have fun at the same time ! That was how our hero Alcibiade Didascaux came to life. His name « Didasko » means « to teach », in ancient Greek...

As he is sent back to the past by his fellow physics teacher, thanks to a tremendous time machine, handsome Alcibiade (Alcibiades was really a prominent political man in ancient Greek history) will live again everything about mythology and Greek history in a very humourous way. What is told isn't just funny, all the historical facts are precisely true, much more than our readers often believe.

« MAKING LEARNING ATTRACTIVE » will be the key-phrase of ATHENA Editions. Remember Athena was the goddess of wisdom and reason in Greek mythology.



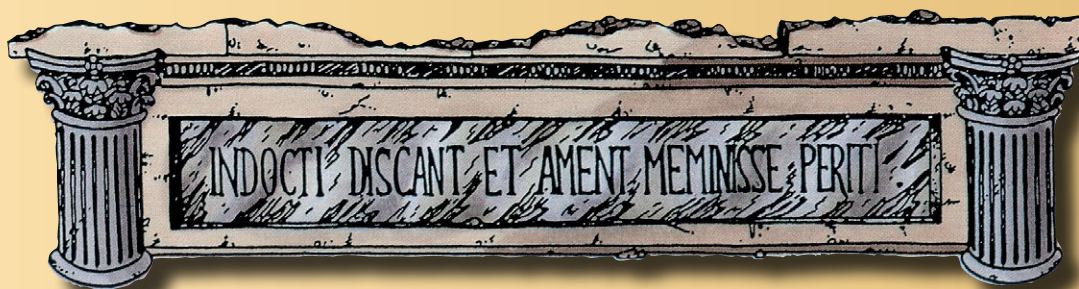
2 - What is the philosophy and virtue that 'Edition Athena' keep pursuing ?

After the success of our first album, which is even now very popular among new readers and is still the best way to become acquainted with our heroes, many more new adventures have been published after this initiatic travel. Our nice hero soon travels with his companion Musculus (latin for mouse), who has a philosophical turn of mind and a rather critical approach to the so-called wisdom of homo sapiens considering some historical events...

Our educational creed can be summed up by two anonymous Latin sayings we have inserted at the beginning and the end of each book.

« Let those who do not know learn and let the others enjoy remembering », and
« He has won all the votes the one/he who made useful things pleasant »

As a matter of fact, our books may be read in different ways and cater for all publics. They are meant for those who discover and for those who partly know too, but benefit by new approach to what they have already learnt.



3 - All books published by Athena are specialized in historical theme. Are there any specific reasons for it ? Why 'History'?

In some books we have inserted the following heading, a quotation from Polybius, the great Greek historian of Rome and philosopher who is one of our favourite references.

« Everybody should be recommended the study and practice of history books because no lesson is of easier access to men than the knowledge of past events. »

When you are interested in history, one day you discover that history is mostly economics...So history is only the result of geopolitics and of the evolution, rise or decay then disappearance of civilisations that succeed one another.

Globalization has always existed even though things didn't go so fast as nowadays. Consequently in our books about the Middle-Ages, we describe what took place at the same time in the Frankish regions, the Islamic world, the Byzantine Empire and ancient China, since each historical event happening in a particular civilisation is bound to have consequences in the rest of the world.

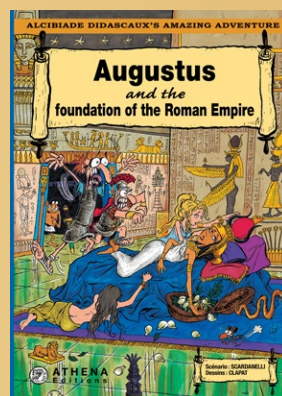
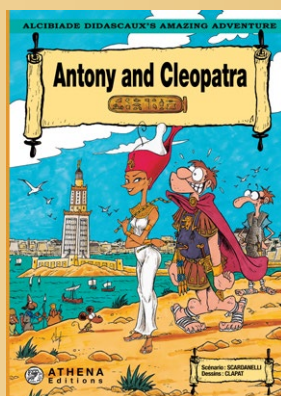
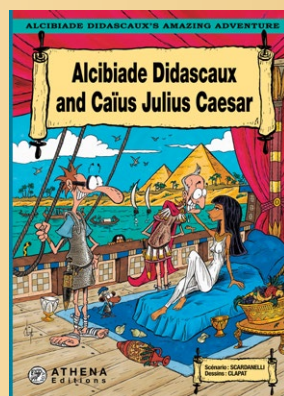
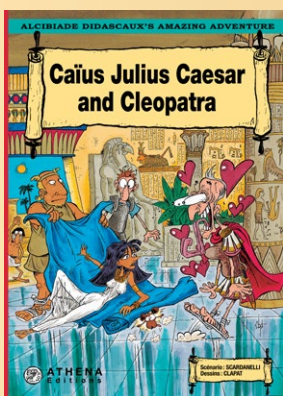
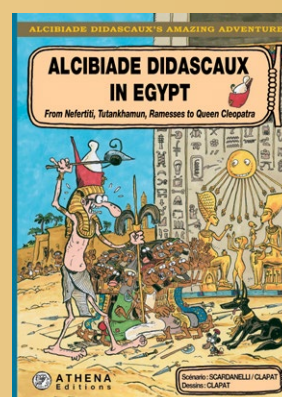
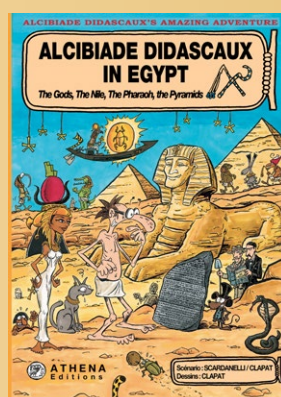
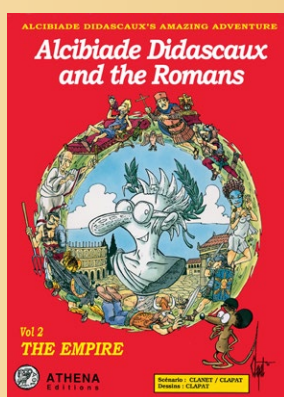
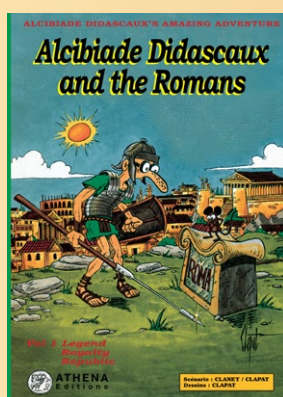
We go as far as the Renaissance period and show how the most important twenty inventions of mankind coming from Asia reached the western world and each time changed world history. Let's remember the printing press with movable blocks was invented in Korea long before Gutenberg's device, and the finest types of paper come from Korea. « Korean collection » is the title of Victor Segalen's collection, thus paying tribute to the paper he uses to print his books.

What we call « Chinese ink » in the West is a gift from the Land of the Morning Calm to its powerful Chinese neighbour, whose teacher it was in some respects...

4 - How much time does it take to publish a book? (The Sum of a time for research, drawing, writing and so on)

On an average we try to publish a new book every year or a year and a half. What we consider most important is the quality of the book, not just newness as a commercial incentive. It is what we may call our ethics, we deeply respect our unknown readers. So our books become « long-sellers », *Alcibiade Didascaux in Greece* still remains one of our best-sellers twenty-two years after the colour version was published following two previous back-and-white issues.

Historical research takes a very long time as we look into the numerous works of ancient or modern experts. But when a book deserves its name, it is likely to interest readers for a very long time, as opposed to largely advertised second-rate works that are completely forgotten after two or three years...



5 - If there's a special story of the reader share us! Any unforgettable responses from a reader of your book?

It is always amazing to learn that reading our books has been a strong incentive to discover a vocation. A girl chose to become a Classics teacher after being presented our set of books for her twentieth birthday...She wrote us a moving letter. Young men state they have become history teachers because we have given them a taste for history...

A few youngsters we have known since they were ten read our new books and now conduct research work at the NCSR (National Centre of Science Research) or give lectures at the Sorbonne, the oldest and most famous university in Paris. Their lives have changed after a few years.

A divorced mother tells us about the effects of shared residence agreements on her son, who first packs up his Didascaux set into his suitcase to make sure he will always have it wherever he stays...A young woman taking the highest grade competitive exam for French teachers was given a page of our books as a didactic starter...A seventeen-year-old student was awarded the first prize at the History General Competition for high school students thanks to Alcibiade... We have received numerous letters that will soon be put on line in our website.

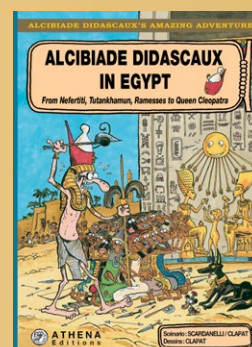
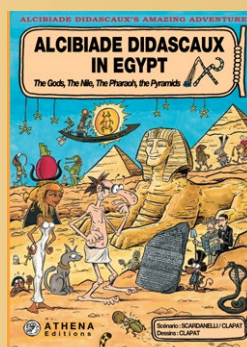
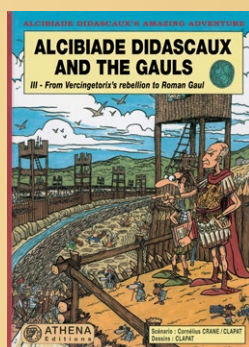
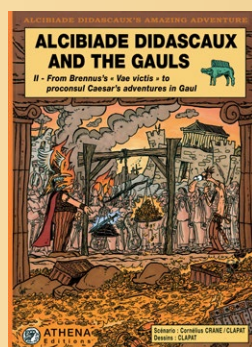
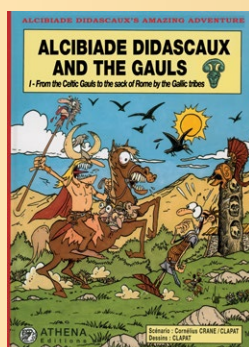


6 - If you have to pick only one book to recommend among all of your books, what will be the one? Why ?

The one about Greek civilisation as we are hellenists at the bottom of our hearts ! We owe everything we have to ancient Greece and the Romans who transmitted all that knowledge to us. When we speak French, we keep using words derived from Greek or Latin. One hundred and twenty Greek roots shape over one hundred and twenty thousand French words... The history of philosophy only represents a few notes at the bottom of Plato's thought, according to a famous thinker.

But our very latest book *Heroes, heroines and the Trojan War - 200 questions and answers / Everything you need to know about the Iliad and the Odyssey* introduces a different kind of drawings that are not humourous and answers all the questions that can be asked about the heroes of both fundamental texts of western civilisation.

Our short novel *The Trojan horse* , the first of a series where ancient heroes relate their adventures, epitomizes what we think good literature for youngsters should be. It should make learning enjoyable. We couldn't agree more with professor Jean Hamberger when he added :« Because the future of the world depends on the teaching men will have given to their children » ! In fact we like the books we make and the one we are happiest about is always the one we are working on. That's just like real life !



7 - When was the happiest/worthwhile moment since you became a book publisher ?

Whenever we get letters from readers telling us how important reading our books has been for them ! After a few years some have become teachers, graduate engineers, researchers, medical doctors and are still faithful readers of Alcibiade and they are thankful for the knowledge we brought them at some time in their lives. They collect and treasure their Alcibiade books and talk about them affectionately. Alcibiade Didascaux is part of their lives and we have numerous anecdotes.

Therefore those spontaneous letters and the meetings we have at the different book-shows have given us an idea. In order to show the wide range of our readers from age 9 to adults, we asked many readers to send « a letter to Alcibiade » ! The letters we get are sometimes very moving and teach us a lot of things. We are amazed by the wide range of our readers depending on how old they are. It's obvious they don't read all the same book in the same way... but they all enjoy it, which is what matters.

For us Humanism is transmitting knowledge to unknown people and giving them the best things that can be produced. Hopefully our readers will do the same for those who will follow them along the path of life.



8 - When was the worst time?

It was when we gradually saw multinational book corporations flooding the market with youth books often devoid of contents. The only aim is then to make money as quickly as possible. New books are published day by day and disappear as quickly as they came out. Sometimes there is no text, which solves the translation problem and comes cheaper.

A book is just something to be sold. To make a book, you need time and not just a marketing idea that will come out with a series ! There is no longer any respect for the reader, therefore the coming generation can no longer read real books as they don't master their language and have a poor vocabulary. I never forget the day when a librarian called us elitists and passeists because we thought good education is the root of civilisation.

As we know, it takes all sorts to make a world !

<About general state of reading industry>

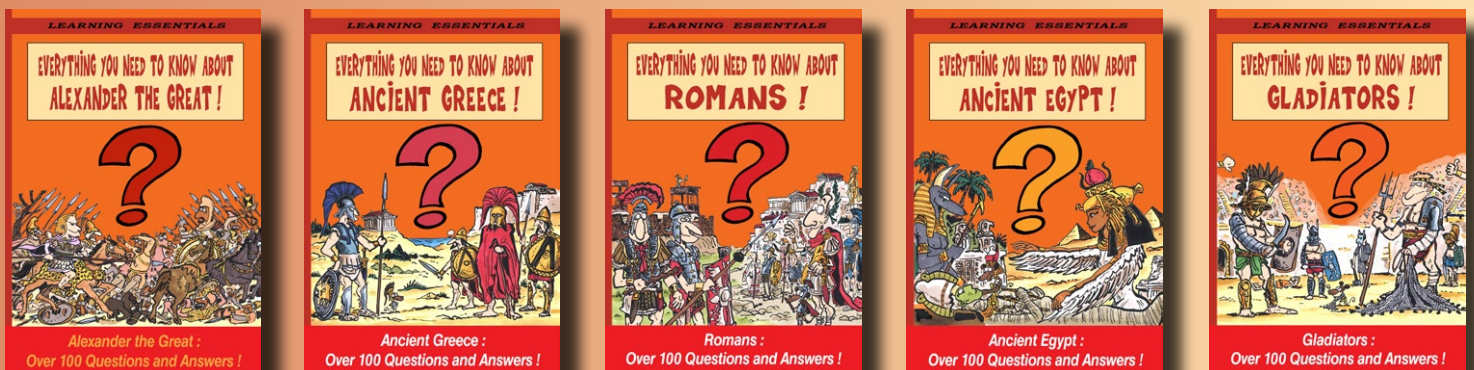


9 - Many people saying about decreasing number of a book reader in general. Do you agree?

For one thing, editing has become « the book-publishing industry » (with a few global book-publishing groups gradually swallowing one another), hence the financial interest which becomes the primeval consideration for appreciating books. Yet small editing companies are spreading and for the first time in world history more books have been published, translated, sold at cheaper prices than ever before and thanks to the internet all books can be found with some clicks of the mouse. Does it mean there are fewer readers ? Maybe there are...I would rather say that today readers buy and read their books differently.

Yet for young readers the problem is the same in all countries : mastering the language, vocabulary and conjugation. When people can't actually read easily and understand what they are reading, there is no enjoyment. To enjoy reading, you have to be able to read, i.e. to understand what you are reading, not just decipher words phonetically. Reading can also be easily replaced by playing...

A society must wonder whether it wants to raise responsible citizens or just consumers. The global corporations that rule the world have only one leitmotif. The same thing happens with movie-making, the art of cooking, town-planning and so on. Nothing seems able to break free from standardization. I would like to ask a question : when robots very soon replace humans to do manual work, will they need to know how to read ?



10 - After the digital age, digital-book (E-book) industry have been rising. As a paper-book publisher, how do you think of this tendency?

E-books use different technical devices and a good book remains a good book no matter what material is used.

The different materials will be complementary and if paper books disappear, it will be mostly for want of readers. A paper book has a cost and needs to be bought by readers, otherwise it can't exist. Authors need royalties to live on.

Typewriters have been totally replaced by computers providing all kinds of new technological devices and nowadays nobody would dream of going back to old-fashioned systems. Yet uneducated people are still uneducated people, even though they stand in front of the cleverest state-of-the-art computer! Technology does not provide instant knowledge. In the years to come, thanks to artificial intelligence, firstly robots then humanoids will be more intelligent than humans deprived of knowledge. What will happen then ? Transhumanism shows where new evolutions might lead mankind.



11 - What is the essential virtue of the reading for you ?

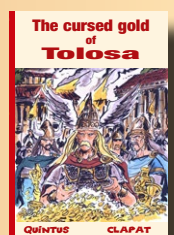
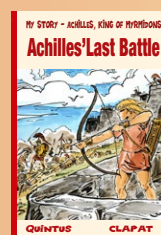
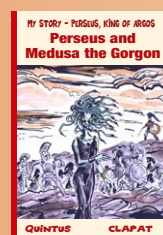
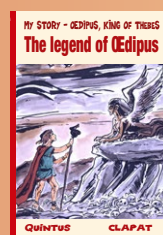
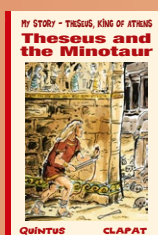
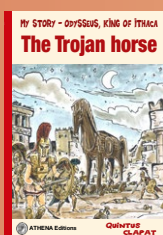
I would quote Thoreau, the American transcendentalist writer whose sentences I took down as I was reading his *Dial* : « First read the best books, otherwise you may never read them ».

« Books are only worth for those that can read and those that can read can also live well. » Thoreau again.

Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* « Reading all the good books is like a conversation with the best-read people in past times who were the authors, and even a subtle conversation in which they reveal only the best of their thoughts. »

Also Goethe's sentence we inserted to introduce the « Ideal library » of our « Athena brochure » : « We do not learn anything as we read, we become something. »

Reading enables us to enter existential time, that is to say time in which chronological frontiers vanish because, during that time, different epochs can coexist. We shouldn't forget every small intellectual alteration, no matter how trifle it seems, changes us to such an extent that within a few years a human being endowed with real spiritual life seems to have utterly changed. He is no more the same because the way he considers the world has evolved. Doesn't Zen Buddhism by essence attempt to understand the meaning of life differently by directly pointing to the heart of humanity ?



12 - What is the most popular book genre in France?

It all depends. If we refer to sales, money-making, profit (in fact the only concern of book-publishing industry), at the top of the list we find overdramatic and sensational detective stories, silly love-stories, the kind that could be turned into poor-quality serials shown on TV, health and fitness books, and mangas for youngsters and sometimes adults who still read them.

Those books were looked down on 30 or 40 years ago, now they have replaced great writers' works, which can't always be found on booksellers' shelves. They can be ordered but seeing a book is a powerful incentive to buy it.

Teenagers used to read books that would exert a strong positive influence on them whereas now they are offered valueless entertainment or reading, unbecoming what they may become as human beings.

Therefore only a few youngsters listening to their parents, good teachers or their own taste can find their way to better reading because paradoxically every book can be found easily. So we have a load of printed rubbish hiding « good books » that should be read. Is it a sign of decay and end of our civilization as some people think ? Let's remember Roman decadence and Roman emperor Maximinus of Thracian descent who couldn't even speak Latin. Would he have been able to read Greek or Latin authors ?

Taking a look at « best-sellers » is sometimes depressing. Even Seneca wrote in his time « The proof of the worst is the crowd ! » What can be said about the amazing success of adult colouring books supposed to combat stress ?

The main question is : should an adult wondering about his life choose to read Confucius or Bobjond or to buy an anti-stress colouring book ? To my mind the answer is obvious ! But you can't get access to those great writers unless you have previously followed a path that leads you to them at the right time in your life. That's why early educational reading is primeval.

13 - Imagine that you'll die tomorrow. And you can leave only 5 sentences for other mankind. That 5 sentences must contain the very essence of your life lessons. What would be your 5 sentences ?

Seneca wrote in his *Moral letters to Lucilius* « Death doesn't count years. You don't know where it is waiting for you. So wait for it everywhere. » Letter 22.

Pindar had already written many years before : « No, there is no fixed end for human beings' death and when the day, son of the sun, rises, do we ever know whether we shall reach its end peacefully, without any alteration of our happiness ? Changing streams carry us away, sometimes bringing felicity and sometimes sorrow.»

That fateful day, when the travel goes on towards other lands, will give its whole meaning to the travel of this life. Hopefully I shall have succeeded in making my life a calm meditation.

My key-word, the measure of all things, will have been the word « Coherence », being coherent with oneself, then being able to catch the *kairos*, an ancient Greek word meaning « the favourable moment, the right or opportune moment, the supreme moment at one particular time».

At the end of his life, Plato wrote in *The Laws* « With God, chance and *kairos* rule human affairs on the whole.» Every day I have wondered « Shall I make my dream come true ? »

On that day, I will probably think of the answer that, according to Herodotus, wise Solon gave Ctesias who was asking him about his happiness : «All life long, what one day brings is completely different from what the other brings. So, Ctesias, man is totally uncertain. »

Five sentences have been primeval in my life.

1)The first one is a rule for life by Latin author Juvenal :

« Make truth the rule for your life »

2)The second one is a maxim of Latin poet Horace's :

« If you cannot keep the present day, you can at least avoid wasting it. »

3)The third one is by Marcus Aurelius, the man that exerted the strongest influence in my life :

« Think of making good use of the present moment with an equal mind, everything else is carried away like a river. »

4)The fourth one is again by Marcus Aurelius :

« What makes the way someone lives perfect is spending every day as though it was the last one. »

5) and the last one by Cicero :

« If you have a library and a garden, you have all you need. »

Let me also add Thoreau's splendid idea expressed in *Walden* :

« To live with no hurry, just face the essential facts of life, discover what it had to teach me, so that on dying I shouldn't realise I had not lived. »

