

”Reflections in tranquillity” on the “Evolution of Knowledge”: Random remarks on “easy and not so easy” achievements and goals

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In Pliny the Elder’s work is present the description of a plant called Silphium. Very famous and sought after at the time it disappeared long ago. Its memory survives in the recipes of Celio Apicio (4th century CE). Recent literature attributes its disappearance to climate change. Today’s problems are much more serious but Jürgen Renn is optimistic that a new Economy of Knowledge and especially a new History of Science can contribute to the solution of the challenges posed by the Anthropocene era. Actually he speaks of the possibility of an emancipatory role, I imagine both personal and social. Already in the past HoS has successfully changed under the pressure of relevant upheavals. Societies, research centers have been born (some also have died). Disciplinary barriers have been overcome and a global HoS and of Knowledge for many practitioners has been a “way of liberation”. An extraordinary large body of knowledge has been produced at scientific, historical, epistemological level. The impact of digital technologies and the fight for Open Access multiplies the possibilities of the diffusion of knowledge, but an institutional revolution is needed in the educational system, one of the sort that brought forward the German research University two hundred years ago. Can we promote such a change? Can we establish new more appropriate metrics? Jürgen Renn’s book and his life work is certainly an important contribution towards such ambitious goals.

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