

### **Time and again, the absence of humanitarian sciences from “Science” mediation initiatives can be observed.**

As part of its media watch brief, the Arkéotopia team chose to attend two film screenings at the 4th [“Pariscience” Science Film Festival](#): **A special screening of “Les Voies de la Science”** (=Paths of Science) showcasing two *L2i films*—*The Two Infinities* by J-J Beineix (Cargo Films/ CNRS images) and *Imagine your Future* (Belleville Productions/ CEA) as well as **the screening of *Cherche toujours*** (=Always Search) by E. Chaillou and M. Théry (Arte France–les Films d’Ici).

Why these two screenings?

In the case of *Paths of Science*, we were seeking, as part of our aim to defend and promote archaeology both in France and abroad, to ensure that humanitarian science in general and archaeology in particular would be showcased during scientific discussions on the theme of “have you got what it takes to be in sciences?”. In view of the fact that the target audience present was one of high school students it seemed all the more crucial that humanitarian sciences be linked to scientific aspirations.

As for *Always Search*, we wished to watch a documentary whose stated goal was the portrayal of one of the forces that drives scientific research forward, namely constant questioning and curiosity, despite this being filmed in a laboratory unconnected to humanitarian sciences.



Unfortunately, the outcome of the “Paths of Science” debate was as had been feared. Nonetheless, we would like to praise the initiative of the AST (*Association for Science and Television*) to diversify the panel by inviting a journalist (B. Leclercq, assistant editor at *Pour la Science/ For Science*) and an educationalist (B. Prot, teacher at the Paris Higher Institute of Teaching) to join six other panellists from the fields of physics, chemistry and biology. Intervening to highlight the absence

of representatives from the field of humanitarian sciences, Jean-Olivier Gransard-Desmond (Arkéotopia's President and Archeology PhD) was at first somewhat criticised. However, his comments were soon accepted as relevant in view of the debate's objective of educating and informing the hundred or so high school students attending. In fact, the ties and interdependence of different scientific fields had already been raised in a talk on ethnopharmacology presented by J. Ouzzani (researcher at the Institute of Natural Substances Chemistry). Following Mrs Leclerq's lecture and at her request, Jean-Olivier Gransard-Desmond rounded off the panel of researchers and the information being presented to the public by talking about his archaeological career.

**Whenever it comes to communicating about the sciences and the profession of scientist, the absence of humanitarian sciences is a recurring problem the principal responsibility for which lies with those concerned, in our case, the archaeologists themselves.**

If Vincent Lamy (Executive Director at AST) later complained to me about the difficulty in getting archaeologists to be involved in similar events, he is unfortunately far from being an isolated case.

We fully intend to change this state of affairs in the coming years but this will obviously depend on researchers as well as public and private archaeological entities committing to participating in or being represented at science education events that are not necessarily linked solely or directly to archaeology.

The evening screening was the occasion to discover a little gem of a documentary *Always Search*. Exploring the world of pure research in a lively and humorous manner, É. Chaillou and M. Théry succeeded in portraying the inquisitiveness, the curiosity and the thirst for knowledge that inspires the researcher. They also managed to capture the doubts that can beset his work and the worries that come with the responsibility of being a member of the scientific community (requirement to publish, risks of plagiarism, requirement to achieve results).

This was followed by a debate in the auditorium of the National Museum of Natural Science, filled to capacity for the event. **One noteworthy question related to the difficulty of justifying pure research in an era focalised on immediate results.**

This gave Arkéotopia the opportunity to point out the interdependence between pure research and applied research as highlighted by a passage of the film. Using this example, S. Douady (Head of Research at CNRS' "Complex Matters and Systems" laboratory UMR CNRS Paris-Diderot) referred to one of his studies on fluid recycling being used for the development of a washing machine prototype.

This somewhat caricatural example nevertheless demonstrates the extent to which pure research can be of help to those who know how to understand it. We note, as did S. Douady, **that researchers from the fields of pure research and those from the field of applied research are not necessarily one and the same and it is therefore important they get together as they will invariably have a lot to share.**

Indeed, it would have interesting if the directors had gone a bit further in exploring this connection so as to make politicians better understand that the device of the future may well be the absurdity of the past so long as there are ideas in the middle.

See also the link [www.arte.tv/pariscience](http://www.arte.tv/pariscience)

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This press release has been sent to the team of [Pariscience](#), to the collectif [Sauvons la Recherche](#) (=Saving the Research), to the editorial board of *Archeologia* and *Dossiers de l'archéologie*, to the production team and the research team involved in *Cherche toujours* as well as to the Town hall of seventh district where ArkéoTopia hold its headquarterd.

To know more on ArkéoTopia, read [Association introduction](#) and do not hesitate to write us to [contact@arkeotopia.org](mailto:contact@arkeotopia.org)