

The Texts of the Convivium

ANECDOTES, EFFICACIOUS MEANS OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

Goethe's *Compendium of maxims and reflections* begins with this, which acts as an introduction:

“A collection of anecdotes and maxims is a great treasure for the man of the world, if he knows how to opportunely spread the former in conversation and remember the latter in convenient circumstances”.

Maxims are, by definition, important in regulating our thoughts and therefore actions, our entire daily existence.

Anecdotes embellish the telling of tales, the historical re-evocation. But they are not only used to bring more colour to narration. They also make it more meaningful. They bring the motivations of its characters alive, they almost make it possible for us to relive them in first person.

The fact acquires a meaning to our eyes. The pure fact, the plain material fact would risk remaining as “stupid as a fact”.

Therefore the anecdotes, from a source of amusement or playthings suitable for livening up conversations that were somewhat wearily proceeding in an eighteenth century parlour, have become efficacious means of knowledge.