

Of History

“History is philosophy teaching by example” - Thucydides (aphorism)

A learned historian is wise, a learned historian is perspicacious, and a learned historian acts with gravitas, for he knows the far-reaching consequences of a seemingly inconsequential failure. History teaches many traits to aspire towards, and many traits to guard against; the wile displayed at Cannae contrasts the obstinance displayed at Pickett's charge, the compassion displayed during the Christmas Truce contrasts the evil displayed during countless genocides, both near and far, and the foresight displayed by the Napoleonic Code contrasts the myopia of Charlamagne's posthumous preparations, or lack thereof. When one studies these events, and many other parallel events, one makes his, the lessons that others were made to learn by the unforgiving hand of blood and toil. How much easier would one's trials and tribulations have been with the knowledge and wisdom imparted on us by those who came before. History is a great chalice of wisdom that upon a deep drink, transfers the knowledge and insight of thousands of years into the one who drank (metaphor).

The study of history is viewed by many as an abandonment of the present in favour of the past, a leisure which serves only as entertainment, with the sciences being held up as the champion of rationality and the tools of a 21st century-thinking individual. However, one cannot properly be a 21st century individual without command of the previous 47 centuries of recorded humanity. A scientist, so rational and “forward-thinking” so as to disregard the past, is like a tree, so compelled by its own conceit, which grew fifty feet tall but neglected to nurture its infantile roots (metaphor). This is to say unwhole, and destined to collapse under the unsupported weight of its own being. History definitively encloses within its bounds all of human knowledge, all of human actions, and all of human experience, no matter how seemingly unique, and to neglect these things is a folly, a folly which many otherwise learned people face.

Of course temperance must be exhibited in all things, history included. Sir Francis Bacon, whose essay is the basis for the present one, said; “To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules, is the humor of a scholar”, which undoubtedly applies to the study of history. Many use history to exhibit their learnedness, many use history simply for leisure; minds left barren and empty (metaphor), and many use history as the basis of all decisions, even when such *modus operandi* is uncalled for. These are the trappings of history, and one must make all proper precautions to prevent these.

History is an integral part of the development of the mind, a mind fit not only for pure knowledge but also how to use it. All people with the means should therefore strive to make one familiar with the lessons of the past, and to appropriate them to their own life, while avoiding the trappings of study outlined by Bacon. In this way alone, can one, then, be called educated (allusion).

Subject: the study of history as a means to better one's judgement, perception, and wisdom.

Purpose: to convince those uninitiated with history that it is a necessary academic pursuit and should not be shunned in favour of raw knowledge.

Audience: those who find history to be a meaningless endeavour.

Ethos: an amateur historian who is disappointed with the popular opinion of history; as a pointless affectation serving for mere entertainment, overshadowed in importance by the sciences.

Body Paragraphs:

1: Logos: "History teaches many traits to aspire towards..."

Pathos: "How much easier would one's trials and tribulations..."

2: Pathos: "...and to neglect these things is a folly..."

3: Logos: "many use history to..."