HISTORY AS ANALYSIS AND GUIDANCE
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History as the story, past and present, of mankind is one of
the oldest branches of intellectual life. It was not well
developed as a branch of learning under the early civilizations
on the Nile nor on the Euphrates but it came into prominence in
Ionia, western Asia Minor, twenty-six centuries ago.

The criteria and method of historiography have been matters
of comment from the earliest days of the formulation of any sci-
entific concept of history.

Any elaboration of the history of historiography is no part of
this theme. Emphasis upon historical principles and method may be
limited to the statement that the library or documentary method of
history and other subjects compares very favorably in importance
with the laboratory method of the natural sciences. The use of this
method is by no means confined to professional historians and his-
tory study.

A striking matter, indeed, is the extent to which history and
the historical method are used in the varied and numerous fields of
education and learning. The investigator can find hundreds of
illustrations. In alphabetical order, he will find that instruction in
agriculture involves the history of plants and their usage, and the field
of anthropology is predominantly historical both in method and in
aim, as is also archaeology. The relationship of architecture as a
fine art to history is widely recognized, as in fact is the entire
group of fine arts, not excluding interior decoration and many com-
mercial types of applied arts. The concept of history is unavoidable
in the great subject of astronomy, where the subject of time is given
its largest dimensions. In subjects like banking, finance and money,
a large number of people may be employed with little or no con-
ception of their evolution or development, but students and teachers

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of these matters cannot escape the necessity of understanding past experiences in such subjects.

In botany, as in agriculture, there is much emphasis upon the historical item of time, more particularly in the matter of trees, whether as types or as individuals. It is well known that probably the oldest living historical entity is some tree whose age may not be astronomical but is many times the age of any human individual who might be the subject of biographical history.

Scholarship in any field of learning is closely related to history and historical method. This is true of the most typical laboratory subject, chemistry. The story of the discovery and utilization of the elements is fundamental in introductory chemistry. The elimination of chemical records and reports would multiply costs of all operations pure or applied. A specialist in some special field of chemistry such as ceramics may be both archaeologist and historian in the collection of historic types and specimens.

Data, other than statistical, in economics, such as commerce, industry, labor and marketing, lie in the realms of history, remote and contemporary. They are not known by laboratory method but by the library or archival methods.

It is practically impossible to divorce geography from history. The physical aspects of geography are historic in evolution, and the economic, social and human features of geography may well be claimed as contemporary history.

Probably the most historical of all fields of learning is geology save where it is limited to analysis, as in metallurgy, soil analysis, and so forth. The trained geologist understands and keenly senses the historic past of seas, rivers, mountains, plateaus, deltas, deserts and other well known features of the planet. He can and will, on request and due payment, write you the history of a given river. Good geologists are good historians though in a narrow field of history.

In both the study and practice of law, some of the most intensive archival research is commonly used by teachers or by attorneys and judges.

In linguistics, the close study of any language uses the historical method. The great Oxford dictionary illustrates the extensive historical research in connection with any important English word. The same method is followed in critical literature study.

Mathematics, though less encumbered with historical data than
other subjects, is full of names as well as of figures. The study of
the history of diseases and of curatives is found in medicine and in
dentistry. Philosophy without its history would lose much of its
interest as a study. In the western world, Socrates, Plato and
Aristotle are words almost synonymous with philosophical outlook
and activity. Some of the more recent collegiate manuals or text-
books in physics have a lengthy history of physics as the introduc-
tion to the basic course.

Students of political science or government have long criticised
the merits of history while themselves making use of the historical
method. Studies of the supreme law of a land, such as the Consti-
tution of the United States, commonly refer from the present back
to origins and developing interpretations.

Psychology, once the ally of history, has increasingly become a
laboratory study, but findings in the laboratory are speeded into
print in order that they may become history. And sociology, while
much given to cross-section studies, frequently moves historically in
such matters as the family, penology, population and other subjects.

Among the greatest users of history and of the critical historical
method are scholarly students of theology and ecclesiasticism. Work
done by them in church history sometimes leads the way and often,
in its results, astonishes the more general historian.

In technology one finds histories of technology and individual
processes, as well as historical introductions to any one of them, such
as the telephone. In transportation one finds the same use of his-
torical methodology in the study of boats, carts, locomotives, auto-
mobiles and airplanes.

Finally, here, in zoology historical evolution is used in physi-
ology, anatomy, pathology and other aspects of the general field.

Widespread is the use of history and the historical method by
students and scholars. Cross sections are usually inadequate as the
sole content of the intellect, which demands and usually acquires
perspective as well. It is probably a sound idea that subjects or
pursuits without perspective are likely to have less than adequate
intellectual value.