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## History is bunk

I started this post quite a while ago and never finished it, in part because I discovered that the more I found out about it the more I disliked his subject, Henry T Ford. (And also because I don't finish a lot of project posts...) But a comment in part of Marc's useful and interesting introduction to the historical method series convinced me to pull it again. (And thanks to him for stimulating me to make the effort...) The modern critical investigation has led many to question the validity of history as a whole, as seen in the famous statement History is bunked by Henry Ford. Good... I would agree with the proposal, but unfortunately, Ford's quote is not a good example of it. History is bunk. Guaranteed to bring out any good history in a rash, and positive proof of the myopic, narrow-minded ignorance of industrialist Henry Ford, yes? Not really, no. He said these three words in a cited source (if you break them out of context), which I will return shortly. But it's not exactly what he originally said in a printed interview in the Chicago Tribune in 1916. And what he really said then, and what he thought about history, is much more interesting than you'd expect. The reporter asked Ford why he opposed the construction of the American armed forces and used the example of British naval resistance to Napoleon's army more than a century earlier. I don't know whether or not Napoleon tried to get there (in England) and I don't care. I don't know much about history, and I wouldn't give a penny to all the history in the world. It doesn't mean anything to me. History is more or less bunk. It's a tradition. We don't want tradition. We want to live in the present, and the only history that deserves a history is the history we make today. Ford's attitude then involved an emphatic rejection of the use of the past to inform and justify present actions (a vision that most modern academic historians would agree with). And secondly, he had a real dislike of narrow political concentration of academic history at the time (with which many modern academic historians might sympathize, too). Some time after the interview, Ford sued the Tribune for libel (for another story he printed about), and he was subsequently humiliated in court for his lack of learning book formal history (he only had the most basic school education, after all). After that, he said something that is not quoted everywhere: I'm going to start a museum and give people a true picture of the country's development. This is the only history worth observing, which you can keep in itself. We're going to build a museum that's going to show history and will not be bunked. [This decision led to the creation of the Henry Ford Ford Museum Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan.] And here's another less famous quote to finish: As a young man, I was very interested in how people lived in previous times; they arrived from place to place, lit up their homes, cooked their meals and so on. So I went to the history books. Well, I could find out all about kings and presidents; but I couldn't learn anything from their daily lives. So I decided that history was secret. (1935) There is a lot to detest about Henry Ford - his racism and antisemitism just for starters. (He was a philanthropist, but a conservative, a very patriarchal one.) But his attitude to history was not at all what is so often assumed on the basis of those famous words, misquoted. .... The time machine of Henry Ford, Henry Ford, Henry Ford, a short biography of Wikipedia This entry was posted in Historiography. Permalink mark. Hi people, I read Brave new world, and this phrase History is bunk kept my attention, can it mean History is nonsense? Thanks in advance. Hi Meph. yes, that's a - is definition 3 in the dictionary. After telling the dictionary, it's a pretty dated bit of vocabulary Thanks a lot for your answer, but I don't get the meaning of your phrase now... is a bit dated by ....? Dated? does it have to do with time? Thank! Dated used in this way means something like fashion. It's the opposite of up-to-date. We use dated to describe things that are no longer in use. (Previous thread: Dated.) My experience is different from Ervie's. I still hear that's the bunk used to discredit arguments and ideas. Last edited: Aug 10, 2011 Dated is more or less a synonym of outdated. And like Cagey, I don't consider the bed to be particularly dated. I mean, it might not be in all the latest rap songs, but it's not egad or peachy eager either. I agree with Cagey that it is still used in the US, but I would say that not so much by younger people. Bunk out of date? Boy, I feel old now! Hi people, I read Brave new world, and this phrase History is bunk kept my attention, can it mean History is nonsense? Thanks in advance. It is a significant quote: History is bunked was taken from a quote by Henry Ford, who, as you will know, in the book is the messianic figure of the World State: Our Ford is told instead of our dated Lord? I'm already 18 years ago? I think the only time I've ever heard or heard the word bunk bed used in this regard is when Henry Ford is quoted. Last edited: Aug 10, 2011 How interesting! The meaning changes every time and in every place! Thank you all! Oops, sorry folks - I should've said dated in the Sea (or maybe even never used much in the UK) You must sign in or register to respond here. © 1996-2015, Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates. 7 Secrets for ESL Learners - FREE Download Quote: Long Quote: History Is More less bunk. It's a tradition. We don't want tradition. We want to live in the present, and the only history that deserves to be history is the history we make today. Henry Ford expressed the same idea on different occasions and in different ways. The quote presented above comes from an interview with Charles N. Wheeler in the Chicago Tribune on May 25, 1916. Another way in which he sometimes expressed this was simply, History is bunked. Henry Ford (1863-1947) American founder of Ford Motor Company more or less (expression): approximately; to a certain extent short bunk (noun) for bunkum: nonsense; something stupid; something meaningless or meaningless; something widely accepted by people, but that is, in fact, a contributor nonsense: Josef Essberger The following quote: The causes of events are always more important than the events themselves. What can help us to stotho our analytical skills, develop our emotional intelligence, learn solid principles and develop our own leadership style? In a word: History. In recent years, I have enjoyed meeting with a number of historians up and down in the UK. I sat with them in their offices, met with them at conferences, and even in their local pubs, to learn more about their teaching and research interests and requirements. These meetings were something of a throw back to me, as half my bachelor's degree was in History. Last week I met with a historian whose research covers eugenics in the context of 19th-century American slavery. During our meeting, in which we waxed lyrically along the lines of This is why History is so important!, he suggested that we should present a lecture on the importance of history to future students, or at least write a blog to articulate the value of history as a discipline in a world that sees the connection between academic study and the working world in an increasingly linear way. So this is my piece in favor of history. History is the Rap of Evil? Cuts in public funds for the arts and humanities on both sides of the Atlantic have received much attention in recent years, not least since the beginning of Donald Trump's presidency. But one could argue that History has long had its detractors. Henry Ford famously declared the next century ago, History is more or less bunk. It's a tradition. We don't want tradition. We want to live in the present, and the only history that deserves to be history is the history we make today. This Ford said this history should be no surprise; he was, in today's terms, a futuristic innovator who gave cars to people at a time when they would not have imagined the possibility of such. But do not shackle us inherently to tradition or in the past and Ford's comments do not give a compelling case to cast History as an intellectual discipline. History plays an important role in our daily lives. I remember Clayton Christensen makes the point simple but important that data is created only about the past and that it represents the agenda of its creator. So while it might not be a good idea for us to live life looking exclusively through the rearview mirror or, after ford alluded to it, to remain married to tradition, we probably should recognize that History (or data) is used all the time to create narratives and thus set agendas in our homes, businesses, institutions and companies. So what do we lack if we lack the skills to effectively assess and analyse the narratives that host the assumptions on which the key agendas are based? The first ever history lecture I attended university saw a teacher standing in front of a theater reading delirium to us about how there is no such thing as the truth - there is. As for History, he's absolutely right. Everyone has some kind of agenda in researching and writing history and everyone is gathering evidence to support that agenda. If the study of history was about learning and regurgitating facts (other people's arguments), then students would save a lot of money by simply buying books and memorizing them. (N.B. This point is well made in a scene from the 1997 film Good Will Hunting). An attitudinal challenge that disciplines would be the history faces is the linear thinking about the relationship between academic study and the world of work. I remember someone asking me if the world needed more historians when I was a student. A successful venture capital I met with, however, had a completely different view. For him, the value of the first degree is to teach you to think; You have plenty of time to specialize later. If the effectiveness of a degree in teaching a person to think is the yardstick by which it should be measured, then the scores of history very. And, returning to the point about post-graduate careers, there are successful people in several different fields who have studied arts & humanities subjects at university, [There is] always a well-known solution to every human problem - neat, plausible, and wrong. - H. L. Mencken Thinking Brain The study of history can benefit both thinking and emotional parts of the brain. By reading and studying history we can develop and refine analytical and critical thinking skills, learn to ask the right questions, understand and interpret the information presented to us, recognize what is not presented to us, what is not said, and then look for the information we need to respond effectively to the perennial question : Why? Their associated agendas and propaganda are being pushed upon us on a daily basis. We are equipped to discern between the information he has presented to us and interpret it? I have been in many situations in life and work where I used the skills I developed while studying For example, during the seven years I served on the board of directors of a housing association, I am confident to say that the analytical skills I have developed within the history component of my bachelor's studies have been more useful to me in this capacity than the knowledge and skills gained in my MA degree in housing. We live in an increasingly complex world; things happen in one country or market that have an unforeseen impact to date on another. This emphasizes the importance of analytical and critical thinking skills. But the complex is not the same as complicated. James Rickards gives a useful illustration of this distinction in his book The New Case for Gold. [If] you take the back of a Swiss watch, what do you see? There are tools, wheels, bows, jewelry, and other components. It's a complicated system, sure. However, an expert watchmaker can open the watch, take out a gear and clean or replace it to repair the watch. Complexity, on the other hand, is less deterministic and much more unpredictable. Now imagine that you remove your back from the same clock and instead of tools find liquid metal soup. change speed now? This is an imaginary example of complexity in which the movement of the clock has gone through a phase transition from a solid to a liquid. This, in some respects, is representative of the world we live in today, whether it is business, markets or geopolitics. (N.B. Stanley McChrystal's book Team of Games: New Rules of Engagement For a Complex World includes a whole chapter on how the world moved from complicated to complex). Emotional brain Emotional parts of the brain can also benefit from the study of history. As we read about others and their situation, situations and struggles, we are invited to empathize with them. Would you feel if you had taken out of the house, beaten, possibly even mutilated for scientific experimentation purposes, transported to the other side of the world, sold and then forced to work as a slave because of the color of your skin? What would be your answer? would you feel if you faced a seemingly impossible dilemma as the leader of a powerful country? What decision would you make? Why is that? What assumptions and principles would you base your decision on? The study of history works in different areas of the brain. It can support the development of self-awareness, empathy and help us improve our interactions and relationships with others. From studying counter-reform in early modern Europe, we have learned trying to win hearts and minds is a more effective strategy in influencing human behavior than coercion and brute force, regardless of social power. We have learned to form racial stereotypes and spread them by studying Harlem, which was thousands of miles away from early modern Europe and hundreds of Later. We have also learned these stereotypes can be destroyed as people from different races, cultures and backgrounds unite and learn about their similar tastes in music, art and culture, the common interests they share, and the things that do them the same. And from Nelson Mandela I learned the difference that a man inspired by a higher purpose than serving his own interests can make in the world. History and leadership Like history, a leader's success is largely determined by his ability to consistently make good decisions, which are based on sound judgments. Through history we can learn timeless principles and thus develop our own philosophy, our own approach and our own style of leadership. In this sense it is empowerment. With the large amount of data that is available and presented to us from a wide range of sources, it is essential that leaders are equipped with the skills and principles to both interpret, discern and decide on a course of action. In a sense, knowledge shrinks as wisdom increases, for details are swallowed into principles. - Alfred North Whitehead We can also learn a lot about, and from, well-known leaders who went forward, especially those who were either leioised by hagiography or demonized by one-dimensional mendacious portraits. Two of my favorite biographies illustrating messiness, nuance and sometimes contradiction within leaders as people are Richard Bushman's biography of Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling, and Walter Isaacson's biography of Steve Jobs. Both excellent biographies are written with integrity and care to illustrate the nuanced, protein nature of these people. Learning from the successes and failures of others is another way in which we can learn solid principles and develop our own leadership style. Bringing everything together almost anyone can benefit from studying History. There is a wealth of information available outside of universities on how to effectively read and study History, not to mention the raft of excellent books that have been written on the lives of significant men, women, and events in the history of the world. There are also a number of primary source materials that can also be accessed and used in the realization of our family history (genealogy). I like the dreams of the future more than the history of the past. - Thomas Jefferson When it comes to the measure of our own life, there is truth in Henry Ford's critique of history; all that matters in the end is what we achieve every day. So let's use the skills that History can help us develop, and what history can teach us, to make today and tomorrow better than our many yesterday. Thanks for reading! I'd be interested in your thoughts. If you have found any what I shared usefully, or know someone who can find it useful, then please pass it on. Please find other articles via this link. #History #leadership #criticalthinking #emotionalintelligence #softskills #personaldevelopment #personaldevelopment

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