

## WHAT IS HISTORY FOR?

Throughout time, history has served many purposes. The recounting of past events, actions and intentions has been as useful for political reform as it has for entertainment. From the Napoleonic Wars to Game of Thrones, the former actions of others remains a source of inspiration and comfort to all who wander across its path.

By the nature of its office, history is one of the purest sciences: reliant entirely on the facts at hand. Nevertheless, this alone has failed to stop others interpreting history for their private or factional advantages: from aspiring statesmen to the international confederation of socialist movements.

Ultimately, history is used for three purposes: recounting, entertainment and transformation. Whilst the former pair have their place, it is in pursuit of the latter that history truly serves its purpose to men's and to their state's happiness.

Of course, one faction would argue history exists simply to recount past events. This has become the generally accepted view of history since the downfall of Emperor Napoleon and remains the main instrument in which history is used for today. The Battle of Lepanto, the American economic boom of the 1920s and the civil reforms of the 1960s are simply learnt for the sake of learning them; a test to memorise ambiguous information, with little room for critical evaluation, as an exercise of indoctrination instead of intellectual growth and preservation. In the long term, this approach to history is subjecting our children to the blind authority of assumed superiors — denying our future citizens their praiseworthy competence — by teaching what a faction in society finds useful to its ends rather than the happiness of each individual within the state. And so this recollective approach to history is denying our future citizens the virtues they need to grow and protect their happiness in life.

Alongside recollection, another use of history throughout the ages has been, and remains, entertainment. From *The Iliad* to *The Aeneid*; from Agatha Christie's Poirot to Star Wars, history has been recycled to induce pleasure onto the bodies and souls of smiling audiences. Whether epic, tragedy or comedy, history is being refashioned in these liveries to provide mass entertainment for easily distracted crowds who would otherwise undermine the peace or use the time for introspection and self actualisation. In this way, history has become an oligarchic commodity; property that aims solely for the maximisation of collective profit: be it the the pockets of film or television producers or the pleasure produced in each individual. Nevertheless, even with a glance at the natural order of the world, pleasure is far from an end, and instead a means to an end. Pursing pleasure is like pursuing money: now that you have the means to an end, what end will you use it for? Pleasure and entertainment is only as useful as the purpose it serves. And so, unless a person has a firm vision of what he wants in life — or at the very least, what he wants to get out of participating in media — then the use of history for entertainment does nothing for the growth and preservation of individual virtue, and so hinders the proportionate growth and preservation of his happiness.

With recollection and entertainment considered, the true purpose of history reveals itself: transformation. In Renaissance Italy, the historian Poggio Bracciolini discovered many long lost ancient Greek and Roman histories in monasteries across Christendom. Unlike modern professors,

he avoided simply reclassifying events to suit his personal tastes. Neither did he turn the texts into plays or novels to feed the ever curious minds of Mediaeval Europe. Instead, he used these histories as bricks, as inspiration to grow and protect the happiness, splendour and temperance not only of states like the Republic of Florence, the Duchy of Milan and the Kingdom of France, but also these virtues in the individuals who lived there and then. History, therefore, is far from a static chronicle to lament the honourable deeds of better men. History is a tool to use for personal and political growth and preservation; to find the sweet virtues that earn men their praise and ultimate happiness in life.

History is for growing and protecting an individual's happiness. Far from a static retelling of past events or another trivial pastime per se, history is one of man's most important instruments to self understanding and self actualisation for the many problems that will befall his path to victory in life. Without applying history to one's present life, a man risks denying himself the happiness he craves. So watch a film, read a book and imitate the noble deeds of your worthy ancestors; for by this imitation will you achieve your happiness in life.