

History is more prevalent than ever before. Do you think that's a strange thing to say? Well, just think of how many thousands of history documentaries that have been done, or the amount of space all of this present history books would consume.

Still, a lot of this history is concentrated on "significant" people and their concepts. It's somewhat easy to discover about kings and queens and epidemics and wars. However, finding what the past felt like for ordinary people is very difficult.

It is such a pity because ordinary people's lives can offer us with patterns for our own current ones. In our devastating, fast-paced, impersonal world, we might get one or two things to learn from the slower-paced societies of the previous year. Therefore, let's explore what we can learn from history on subjects such as family, love, money, time and so on.

Chapter 1 - The current Romantic understanding of a soul mate is unrealistic in reality.

Looking for love nowadays can be really. After using days searching through profiles on dating sites, we use numerous evenings on embarrassing and futile dates. And, eventually, we go back right where we started: alone.

However, why is it really difficult to see that special person?

Well, maybe we might be excessively narrow-minded when it comes to finding love. We expect one person to fulfill all of our emotional needs. However, these emotional needs are complicated and different – and frequently really too much for a single person to meet.

Therefore, we might need to take a clue from the ancient Greeks, who had a very better outlook to love.

They assumed that love had six distinguishable kinds:

- Eros, the fiery, passionate still risky love;

- Philia, the platonic love between comrades and friends;
- Ludus, the playfulness that is seen between new lovers and children;
- Pragma, the profound understanding that develops over time between partners;
- Agape, the selfless, charitable love for our fellow human beings;
- and Philautia, the love of the self, which can either be a positive acceptance or a harmful self-obsession.

Instead of depending on one partner to fulfill all these needs, the ancient Greeks understood that each duty could be satisfied by different people. This enabled them to extend their emotional needs across a broad range of relationships, allowing it simpler for them to discover love.

However, how did we go from this ancient Greek model to our current, rather messy, condition? Unluckily, over the centuries, the six Greek kinds of love progressively fused together.

This fusion started during the medieval literature of Arabia, which spread the passion of eros between two lovers, and the linking of their souls. The concept reached medieval Europe, where it was joined with the selflessness of agape and turned into *cortezia*, or courtly love. Chivalric culture expected knights to do noble, selfless actions all because of passionate love.

During the sixteenth century, the Dutch made these passions fundamental to marriage, which was formally only a deal of a coalition, and, in the process, added them with the *philia* and *pragma* that developed between spouses.

Lastly, twentieth-century capitalism came with the narcissism of *philautia*, as love became connected to consumerism.

Therefore, if we wish to get true love, it's time we untied over two thousand years of history and searched for different people to fill our numerous emotional needs.

Chapter 2 - The difficulties encountered by the contemporary family have historical origins.

Are you aware that the term “husband” initially came from a blend of “house” and “bound”? Initially, it signified to a man whose duty was centered around the home, more like a “housewife,” the woman he would share domestic responsibilities with.

Still, over time, alterations in social conventions took the husband away from his initial spot.

These days, men are not likely to be seen working in the house. Currently, in the United States, housewives are more than househusbands by approximately 40:1. This matter is really prevalent that a lot of people see it as “natural.”

However, the division of housework based on gender is really a very current occurrence, and not as natural as some might believe. Up until the Industrial Revolution – which enforced a lot of men into factory workmen and women would usually both work in the home, and share in the housework.

Definitely, modern ideals of gender equality have started to change the balance in current decades. However, we still have a long way to go before we get to the levels of equality seen in previous eras.

Also, sexism isn't just the thing afflicting the domestic sphere. Another big issue is that contemporary family members don't talk to each other enough, particularly at the dinner table. Why? The causes of that can be seen in history.

First and foremost, there's segregation. Segregated eating grew across cultures. For instance, in France during the nineteenth-century, a culture emerged where women would first give food to the men at the table, before leaving to eat their own dinners on their own, either standing or putting it on their laps.

There is also eating in silence, which developed from early Christian notions of piety. Monks, as well as other devotees, would dodge pointless discussion and use meal times listening to spiritual readings instead of discussing among themselves.

Lastly, there is emotional repression that evolved from the eighteenth-century belief that discussion should be intellectual instead of unimportant, and feature rational conversation instead of passionate and emotional argument.

These historical determinants have lately discovered another ally in technology. Nowadays, couples use most of their time watching television together – about 55 minutes daily– than they do directly discussion.

Chapter 3 - Humans are naturally empathetic, and we can make use of this to expand our horizons.

All of us have done something selfish. Perhaps you grabbed the last pizza during a company meeting or “forgot” to contribute to your friend’s Kickstarter. Selfishness can be an intrinsic human character—really natural, as a matter of fact, that some have claimed that it’s our defining character.

Thomas Hobbes, the philosopher claims in his book Leviathan that people are naturally selfish and ruthless, and that life is a competition of person against person. Hobbes’s negative outlook of life proved extremely prevalent and has affected a lot of Western thinking.

However, to mention that all of us are selfish is more than a simplification; it’s basically not true.

As a matter of fact, scientific proof proposes that empathy occurs naturally to people. Jean Piaget the Swiss psychologist revealed to some children a model landscape during the 1940s. After, he grabbed a doll and, as he moved the doll around the landscape, questioned the kids what the doll could see. Little children were just able to report on the opinion from their own perspective; however, beginning at about age four, they could visualize the doll’s viewpoint. Meaning, they could be empathetic.

It’s now believed that empathy may have developed among our forefathers to assist them form communities; therefore increasing their odds of survival. Certainly, other social animals like dolphins and elephants also show empathetic deeds.

Just as empathy expanded our evolutionary horizons, it can do exactly the same for us as people. There are three historical templates that enable empathy, they are social action, discussion, and experience.

Consider the author George Orwell, who formerly dressed up as a tramp and stay on the street attempting to know what beggar life was like. He wanted to feel injustice directly, instead of speculating from a distance such as his contemporaries.

Meanwhile, C.P. Ellis the former Ku Klux Klan leader turned into a civil rights campaigner after frequently discussing with Ann Atwater, an African-American, and knowing about her life.

Or consider Thomas Clarkson, the Anglican deacon. He spread awareness of the terrors of slavery during nineteenth-century Britain by relating it to, among other things, the then-common practice of naval impressment, where men were kidnapped and then enforced to work in the Royal Navy. By relating slavery to something the public knew, Clarkson drove Britain toward its ultimate choice to stop it completely.

Therefore, by accepting and engaging our empathy, we can both transform our own viewpoints and have a positive impact on the lives of other people as well.

Chapter 4 - In spite of the present confusing variety of career decisions, we can still discover purpose in our work.

Have you ever gathered a piece of Ikea furniture or even a Lego set? At times, it can be annoying; however, there's also something extremely fulfilling about creating something from beginning to end on your own. Also, before the Industrial Revolution, nearly all things were made by different craftspeople. A cobbler did the entire shoe; a tailor, the entire shirt.

Everything transformed, but with the division of labor. During the eighteenth century, Adam Smith, the economist claimed that the best method to increase output was by separating difficult work into stages. He created the model of the pin factory, where the different stages of production –like polishing or smelting – were distributed among workers, increasing output from 1 pin each day to nearly 5,000.

Although this model truly increased productivity; also, it consumed people's commitment to their work. If you never get to see the completed product, how can you feel good about your duty?

History provides four purpose-providing templates that might assist us to become less withdrawn from our work.

The first one is to work toward significant goals. Viktor Frankl Psychotherapist lived through both world wars and endured various Nazi concentration camps. He discovered that other camp survivors usually had a goal aside survival itself, like a scientist who was ambitious to complete writing his series of books.

Also, we can get motivation in our desire to assist other people. During the early twentieth century, Albert Schweitzer a polymath left his musical and academic careers and re-educated as a doctor. Afterward, he was given the Nobel Peace Prize for his charitable work in Africa. By pursuing his sense of duty, his work and life were filled with purpose.

Also, getting respect and credit fills work with purpose. Since the time Henry Ford claimed that his workers wouldn't mind the monotonous production-line work so far their pays were high enough, companies have chosen to pay employees more money and less respect. But, Innocent the UK drinks company is often voted as one of the best places to work, not as a result of the wage; however, because of the way it treats its workers. Innocent workers get bonuses like weekend excursions and free Friday afternoon drinks.

Also, we could get engagement by using our complete skill set. The majority of recent employers specialize in a restricted range of tasks. However, during the Italian Renaissance, is a generalist –such as Leonardo da Vinci – was seen as the ultimate achievement. If you do a lot of things, you may see a lot of sources of purpose.

Chapter 5 - Present-day people are obsessed with time and enslaved to the rhythm of the clock; however, it wasn't usually like this before.

It's hard to think of a world without time. A universe where you couldn't plan a meeting, let alone be certain of your age. Time looks like a natural aspect of things; however, it wasn't accurately

measured until the ancient world required an approach to assist monitor agricultural cycles. Since that time, there have been three key improvements, each of which assisted create our current relationship to time.

First, there was the creation of the mechanical clock, back then in thirteenth-century Europe. At first, it was used to inform monks when to pray, clocks were shortly put in town centers, and shops started to plan their hours of work around them. One was made in Cologne, Germany in 1370, and in four years it was dictating the beginning and end of workers' days and a one-hour lunch break. Seems familiar?

Although public time was beneficial initially, it became a kind of social control during the Industrial Revolution. Certainly, according to Lewis Mumford, the historian, the clock determined the age even more than the steam engine.

One illustration is Josiah Wedgwood, the namesake of the popular Wedgwood pottery producer. He presented the system of clocking into work during the late eighteenth century and disciplining late workers accordingly. This expanded into monitoring and maximizing productivity, and disciplining those who couldn't meet up

This increasing obsession with time finally led to the world we know now, where everything goes at an ever-faster pace, maybe transport, technology or food. Our language as well imitates the commercial idea of time: time is a good now, something that can be "borrowed" or "wasted."

Therefore, how can we reimagine this relationship? Time management approaches will not be effective because they handle the symptoms instead of the causes; however, history provides other means to act.

For example, we could attempt limiting our short-term thinking. Society now is excessively worried about the immediate future. However, here's another method: Viking warriors assumed that their behaviors would be judged by descendants and ancestors similar; therefore they behaved with great thought and without haste.

Maybe we can just slow down, just like Gustave Flaubert, the novelist who used five years to write Madame Bovary. Or think nineteenth-century French peasants, who used to nearly hibernate through winter, standing up just to eat or light the fire.

Chapter 6 - Money can make the world go round; however, how we approach it is a decision.

Not until the mid-eighteenth century, a consumer was a person who was wasteful, and consumption was another term for tuberculosis, an illness that makes the body to waste away.

What we understand as consumerism evolved with industrialization. During this era, a lot of people were able to accrue wealth and, as a result of this, more goods were made for them to consume it on. This change redefined our view of money, and material possessions turned into status symbols representing riches.

During the end of the nineteenth century, shopping and standard of living had merged together, a fusion that would go on to define contemporary life.

During the late 1800s, Bon Marché, one of the first department stores, launched in Paris. By purchasing wholesale, it was able to make costs low and therefore make luxury goods more available. The building complex held art exhibitions and concerts and presented a restaurant. In that manner, it was both turning into a social hub and making the way for the current shopping mall. Purchasing things were now a leisure hunt.

Nowadays, advertisements have minimized our need for an option between products and brands. We feel the urge for the recent and most costly things basically because we want to remain up-to-date with recent trends, and this pushes us to persistently pursue money.

However, this way of life comes with huge stress. Could simple living give a refreshing substitute?

During nineteenth-century Concord, Massachusetts, a man called Henry David Thoreau became disillusioned with the increasing consumerism around him. He withdrew to a woodland cabin outside town. For like two years, he lived off the land, gathering and growing his own food; however, using the majority of his time at leisure, and writing his experiences in the book *Walden*. Going back to live in town, he took a part-time job, insisting that he made enough money in six weeks to live for a year, letting him follow his hobbies freely.

Thoreau displays to us how minimizing our spending, and concentrating on our desires, can nurture wealth that money can't purchase.

Chapter 7 - Our senses shape our knowledge of the universe; however, we may have above the believed five.

Though Plato the ancient Greek philosopher believed in a lot of senses –like the sense of temperature perception–Aristotle, his student believed in an overarching balance. Aristotle theorized that, because there were five elements (water, earth fire, air, and ether), there have to just be five senses.

However, lately, scientists have been able to prove Plato's idea of temperature perception, now called thermoception. And it doesn't end there. Also, they've found a sense of balance, equilibrioception, and even magnetoreception, an ability – although very weak – to identify magnetic fields, more like homing pigeons.

Definitely, the main sense in this present Western society is a vision; however, this dominance is not in any way natural; it's cultural, and it's come at the cost of our other senses. All of us have heard of the saying that "seeing is believing;" however are you aware that the original saying finished with "but the feeling's the truth"?

In preliterate societies, information was spread with speech and storytelling, making hearing really significant. But, the creation of the printing press, the spread of visual shows of wealth and the centrality of observation to the scientific method all added to make sight the main sense.

However, this made us lack a possibly much wider sensory experience. For example, think of Kaspar Hauser, a boy who abruptly showed up one day in nineteenth-century Nuremberg. Having been brought up away from society – he stated that he'd lived in a dark dungeon – he was unable to talk; however, he had very heightened senses. As he adapted and shared his experiences and story, however, his sensitivities declined, until he was little different from the people that surround him.

Hauser displays to us that our sensory preferences are learned and that, they can be formed through experience. If we concentrated on the breadth of sensory experience, like the aroma and texture of our food, or the sounds and odors of our environments, we might feel a more vibrant life.

Chapter 8 - A great approach to learn about yourself and the world is through traveling, and four travel personas can assist.

During the nineteenth century, Thomas Cook an English preacher planned a journey from Leicester to Loughborough for poor employees to go for a temperance meeting. Five hundred people were present, which motivated him to plan more tours to Europe, the overall goal is to open people up to travel and broaden their worldviews.

Unluckily, his son, a man with less worthy determinations, ultimately took charge. He concentrated on rich customers, costly paths and overindulgence in leisure; therefore, producing the modern travel industry.

However, if we check the past, we will see four historical personas whose case could assist us to retrieve Cook's vision of travel as a force of change, instead of a simple leisure hunt.

Pilgrim is the first. Traditionally a religious traveler, the pilgrim journeys toward a (perhaps symbolic) destination and goes through a possibly hard path, usually on foot. That kind of travel can have a deep impact on both your life and the lives of others as well. Think of Satish Kumar, who walked all the way from India to Moscow in the 1960s, and then on to Paris, London, and Washington. His journey was a protest against nuclear weapons. Though refused any political meetings, he created a connection with the world and its people through their charity and openness to his ideas.

Also, we can imitate the nomad. A lot of people notice a glamorous appeal in the life of a wanderer, going from one place to another and viewing the world. This can be seen in the romanticization of Romani campsites in seventeenth-century literature. But, being nomadic shouldn't be around fetishizing people's lifestyles. Instead, it could comprise traditional activities

like camping, spending a good time with family and friends out in nature and traveling through different locations.

Also, we have the explorer, a figure represented by William Cobbett, who traveled to Victorian England to know about the impacts of industrialization. He set off with a big number of prejudices about employees around the country; however, eventually saw himself challenging these prejudices. By being open-minded and really discovering what was out there, Cobbett discovered that travel basically transformed his worldview.

We could only reimagine what it feels to a tourist. Present-day tourism started with the famous Baedeker guidebooks of the 1800s, which bragged “definitive” lists of must-see sights. Unluckily, this standardized most people's travel experiences. Therefore, rather than traveling like that, we have to explore and experience people and locations on our own conditions, without a list done by another person.

Chapter 9 - Our relationship with nature has evolved so much with time; however, we're still connected to it mentally, if not physically.

Everyone one of us knows that yearning feeling for beautiful scenes or wildlife. However, what is the reason we are really connected to nature?

Nowadays, nature functions as a source of three things: natural resources, beauty, and psychological health.

The Romantic movement, reacting to industrialization and urbanization, painted nature as a terrifying still beautiful thing – a masterpiece to the splendor of God's creation. Forests were usually scared of urbanization. They were seen as strange locations, dark and dense and occupied with lurking evils.

However, this dread of the natural world didn't appear naturally to us. As a matter of, we have an inclination to be attracted to nature, and really get each and health from it, which scientifically

called biophilia. This clarifies why we feel the desire to leave the city, and why we put plants around our houses and offices. This can be seen in a study of patients in Pennsylvania, which discovered that, after gallbladder surgery, people with a window looking out onto nature got better faster than people without one.

But, nature has also been considered as a commercial resource. This is fixed in the religious and philosophical premise that man is greater to every other life. With industrialization, we have gotten to a point where we consume natural resources at a disturbing rate, just because of human comfort.

This detachment from, and critical human dominance of, nature has caused what is called the end of nature. Though at a time nature governed us, man-made climate change has now turned us into governors of the natural world.

However, we still have time for another change. Supposing we changed a carbon-emission heavy flight to the Caribbean with a camping journey in the local forest? Those kinds of ecologically sensitive ideas are the start of an outlook change and could take us back to nature we knew at a time, which we are on the edge of losing for life.

Chapter 10 - Our beliefs are usually inherited; however, we should be eager to defy them.

All of us have some kind of belief. Some people feel that monarchies should be eliminated. Other people believe that it's significant to not eat meat. Still, more people believe that none of these things is of any importance compared to religion. However, where do these whole beliefs derive from?

These are the personal beliefs against which we assess the goodness or harm of a certain act, and they form our relationship with the universe. However, we hardly challenge beliefs' validity.

As a matter of fact, some of our most important beliefs are basically inherited from our parents and background. A perfect illustration of this is religion. A main American study into post-World

War II religious inclinations revealed that 87% of Jews, 82% of Catholics and 90% of Protestants, still follow to the religion they were brought up in

Additionally, nearly one-third of people depart from their religion at a point, only to go back to it later on in life, which reveals how our background has an outcome on us that will probably last forever.

Nationalism is another good illustration. A lot of people believe in the significance or even superiority of their own nation, maybe be in the terms of natural beauty, cultural accomplishments or any number of other things. However, playwright George Bernard Shaw noticed the irrationality of this. Where you're born is completely a situation of coincidence; therefore, the probability that your nation is really superior is very small, and is, as a matter of fact, only a cultural idea you've inherited from those surrounding you

Therefore, it's significant to examine what we are taught and be prepared to change our views. Think of the example of the author Leo Tolstoy, who was born during the 1800s into the Russian aristocracy, and believed that the carefree life of vice that his position required. However, after fighting in the Crimean War and seeing an execution in France, he saw himself challenging the whole system of government and decency.

He ended up dressing as, living among and working with the workers on his estate, and ignoring the social sphere in which he'd been brought up. By challenging the beliefs believed by those that surround him, he totally changed his lifestyle and chased his own moral compass for the remaining of his life.

Chapter 11 - We incorrectly believed that creativity can't be learned; however, it's a significant kind of self-expression accessible to everybody.

Maybe you've experienced the happiness of learning to play your best song on the piano. Or perhaps you've had the fulfillment of baking a nice cake for your entire family. If that is the case, then you know the joy of creating.

The term creativity originates from creare, the Latin word for “to make or produce,” and it is a significant aspect of evolutionary activity.

We can notice this in an experiment conducted in 1914 with a chimpanzee called Sultan – an animal only a few evolutionary stages behind us. With this experiment, a banana was put outside of his cage, only out of reach, making him to rapidly make devices to get the enticing fruit. But, in one illustration, after putting two sticks together to make a rake, he was really pleased with his work that he continued repeating the process and totally forgot about the banana!

And still, all thanks to ideas deep-rooted in the Renaissance, we are told that creativity is not for everybody.

In medieval Europe, it was believed that God alone could produce from nothing. Every human was part of the same flock, and some were basically talented imitators and artisans.

But, in fifteenth-century Italy, the “genius of man” –meaning, his skill to produce, and not only copy, beautiful things – was eventually confirmed. This had been approaching for a while, as people became more and more at ease showing their uniqueness.

Everything eventually reached a crucial stage with the abilities of a certain artist.

Michelangelo created a broad and huge popular body of work, which got him fame during his time that still remains up till now. Still, he symbolizes the idea of “God-given talent” – the idea that a person can have abilities really unique that they could only have been from a higher power. The result of this reasoning is that people nowadays assume that you either have artistic talent or you do not have and that creativity can’t be learned.

Therefore, to rediscover it, we need to attempt to bring a craftsman outlook to our present work, just as William Morris did during nineteenth-century Britain. In reaction to the drop in craftsmanship he witnessed in the Industrial Revolution, he ran a handicraft revival movement. He believed that craftsmanship was significant because it made use of both mind and body and offered people pride in their abilities and work. This is a nearly direct criticism of Adam Smith’s pin-factory approach, which separated these abilities and satisfaction from our work.

Also, a reflection of these needs is the resurgence and popularity of modern DIY, and this is the kind of hands-on creativity we should try to nurture.

Chapter 12 - Nowadays, death is a taboo topic; however, it wasn't in the past – and, to truly live, we have to accept it.

Death used to be part and parcel of our existence.

The memento mori – Latin word for “remember you must die” – was one time a significant representation. Comprising of a skull portrayed on jewelry and in sketches and in churches, this reminded people of their mortality and equality in the face of death.

Medieval cemeteries were once a social space, with tradesmen selling their goods and kids playing, and that kind of outlooks made historian Philippe Ariès assert that people in the Middle Ages were perhaps the most in love with life. Constantly experiencing the threat of death from hunger, disease, and violence provided people the sense that life is a gift to be valued. The parallels of this can be noticed nowadays in the transformation of those who went through near-death experiences – people who, having looked at death in the face, presently live life to the fullest.

But, the majority of the Western culture has not continued that kind of an outlook toward death and has, as a matter of fact, concealed it away from public vision. Just in the past century, it was frequent to die in your house, surrounded by loved ones, young and old. In spite of 70% of people nowadays saying they as well would like to die in their house, more than 50% will die in hospitals, a place where children are usually kept away.

Also, funerals have become more simple. Elaborate processions have been swapped with fast and efficient services, and while stranger participation was once a frequent and nearly expected event, this would be nearly absurd nowadays. Between the years 1960 and 2008, in Britain, cremations increased from 35% to 72%. Cremated bodies are very less likely to be offered any monument, not to mention that they've been totally taken away from view.

That we don't feel really close to death anymore can separate us from life. Horrid as it may look, we might wish to think of violating the taboo and redefining our relationship with death with open discussion and public ritual.

How Should We Live? by Roman Krznaric Book Review

The modern art of living can be difficult to learn. However, by bearing in mind how our forefathers lived, we can rediscover and integrate some useful practices, like challenging ourselves and our beliefs, rethinking romantic models, accepting our inner creativity, getting connected back with nature, just spending money on what we truly need and defying taboos around the death. As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe mentioned, "A person who cannot fall back on three thousand years of history is living from hand to mouth."

Try to challenge the social tide.

Our entire illustrations of better living in these chapters have a thing in common: they need us to defy dominant conventions. If we examine our opinions and are eager to break from convention, we can develop the freedom to form our own individual art of living that serves us best.

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