

Why human history is
not understood in a
vacuum flashcard



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penetrated my psyche until I enrolled in History 140 at the University of the Sunshine Coast. If you were to rip up a piece of paper into heaps of different pieces and then use a vacuum with a clear frame to clean them up, what would it look like? The pieces of paper would be flying around rapidly within the vacuum; they would all be caught together but still separate at the same time. Through a vacuum, human history is seen as a ton of information all thrown together. Each piece of paper represents people, places or times. They are all together in the sense that they are all moving long within the walls of the vacuum.

However they are isolated, as the suction power of the vacuum keeps them in constant motion. It is impossible to group them all together, to make an attempt to see a collective piece of paper. This is precisely why human history cannot be understood through a vacuum.

The walls must be removed, the constant suction power rotating date after date, place and after place, and person after person must be turned off. The pieces of paper must be allowed to fall and lay as they may, in one collective group, telling one coherent story.

So, if human history is not understood within the walls of the vacuum, how can it be understood? What can the pieces of paper exist within so that a clearer picture is painted? Pontings usage of a vacuum as the way human history cannot be understood is superbly representative and accurate. I have pondered for hours, hoping to come up with as fitting of a description for the way in which human history can be understood. I thought of every household

cleaning object I have ever come in contact with, considering such a clever way to carry on with this essay.

Continuously, inadequate descriptions come to mind and I begin to think of any object, anything at all, that can express with its nature the thoughts in my mind. Finally, I realize I am not going to think of a concrete object as an answer. I constantly imagine something in the sky. The sky representing all of human history and whatever that something is is flying throughout its entirety. The way human history can be understood is to acknowledge a specific process within the sector of humanity, whether it be tangible or not, and let it fly like a bird through every place, every time and every people in the history of humankind.

This is an enormously broad statement, but the visual image is crucial. Perhaps imagining a literal bird is too limiting. Imagine that somehow a process, an idea such as agriculture sprouted wings and flew through the entire history of mankind, all of the times, places and people that ever had anything to do with it. Its collective story from the Journey through humanity comes back and is presented as a whole. Although specific years, vital places and essential people are part of the composition, the story is still unified as one.

The impact of that process is traced and its chronicle is presented.

The above description of how to understand human history is difficult to wrap a mind around because of its complexity. I will use the specific example of agriculture to demonstrate my meaning. The following quote represents the immense impact that agriculture has had on the world, " The Farming
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Revolution produced an entirely new mode of subsistence, which remains the basis of the world economy to this day' (Wright 2005, p.

45-46). Agriculture was a " watershed in human history, a shift away from a way of life that had prevailed for two millions years" (Ponting 1991, p. 3).

What some historian's term the agricultural revolution was an evolution of agriculturally based places over a period of 8, 000 years (Brown 2007).

The year 8000 BCE was characterized with mostly wild food as the means of nourishment. By 2, 000 years ago, the vast majority used farming as the means of living. This fissure of 8, 000 years represents a startlingly hasty rate of change (Brown 2007). There were key areas, namely the tropical areas of Africa and south-east Asia, the Andes, Mesoamerica, China and south-west Asia (Ponting 2000, p.

51).

The reason for the change was, some theories suggest, a response to demand. " The Earth may have been reaching its human carrying capacity under the techniques of the hunting and gathering life" (Brown 2007, p. 76). The dilemma of how to feed a growing amount of people was resolved in a large degree with agriculture. However just as it brought on solution, it opened the door for even more growth in population.

More intensive means of cultivation and more land to cultivate were two of the many products of agricultural beginnings (Ponting 1991, p. 394).

A benefit of agriculture is having more food per land unit, and this brought on the requirement for individuals to store and preserve food. They had to
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learn how to defend their villages, since an agricultural based society is not physically able to move along quickly like hunter gatherers (Brown 2007).

One of the primitive agricultural sites is that of Jericho, prospering about 7500 BCE.

The enormous wall constructed around their settlement is suggested to have been a means of adversary determent or flood control. The wall represented more than just protection.

The dimensions were around 2.7 metres deep and 3.

2 metres high. That wall was additionally bordered with a stone construction 3.05 metre high. This reveals well structured shared labour of the people within Jericho (Brown 2007). This is just one societies' single example of what agriculture pushed them to do, defence wise and communally.

Domestication of plants and animals is also a direct corollary of agriculture. It was previously mentioned that agriculture in different areas appeared all within a certain time frame. This process was due to the warming climate.

Cynthia Stokes Brown says of the plant and animal inhabitants of the warming climates, " The plants and animals that survived the most frequently were those that displayed traits of flexibility and non-specialization" (2007, p.

77). Domestication can also be seen as when the agriculturalists began to manoeuvre the animal and plant species so powerfully that the result was the early stages of changing the genetic composition of prey species

(Christian 2008, p. 25). Although the information I have presented on <https://assignbuster.com/why-human-history-is-not-understood-in-a-vacuum-flashcard/>

agriculture is brief and certainly not extensive, enough has been stated to depict my message.

Agriculture, something that happened over numerous times, places, and people is a process that can be raced. The tracing of that process and illuminating its affects is what understanding human history is all about. Agriculture is not simply something that evolved as a means to feed the growing population. Imagine, as I requested previously, that agriculture sprouted wings and began to fly through human history.

As it moves along through the vast arena, it sparks off different processes such as preservation, protection and domestication. These processes are only three of the many that agriculture is partially responsible for spawning.