History repeats itself unless we learn from it and do things differently next time. And if that’s not ringing any bells, think about the old cliche, “Insanity means doing the same thing and expecting a different result.”

I was thinking about this as I drove around the incredibly busy streets of San Francisco. Every time I almost hit someone, I’d notice there was a big dent in their car just where I would have hit them. I started thinking about the typical response when something challenging happens in our lives....”Why does this keep happening to me?” But people rarely dig deeply enough to find out the answer. My advice is, dig a little deeper. Why does it keep happening to you? What are you doing that brings about this result? Focus on your behavior rather than everyone else’s. And then figure out what you can do differently to avoid the unwanted responses and obtain more desirable results.

Yes, the other car hit you from behind, but what were you doing at that moment, or just before? What circumstances brought it on? And what part were you playing in the situation? When my kids come running to me with
complaints about what their sibling did, my first question is often, “Well, what happened just before?” Because that’s where the power lies. That’s something we can control. And understanding the interplay between our actions and the resulting consequences is how we stop history from repeating itself.

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/ellie-newman/history-repeats-itsel_1_b_12523298.html

"Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it." Really?

- Over a year ago
  by NICHOLAS CLAIRMONT

'Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it.'

The quote is most likely due to writer and philosopher George Santayana, and in its original form it read, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Santayana was known for aphorisms, and for being a professor in philosophy at Harvard which he abandoned. Prior to that, Santayana attended Boston Latin School and Harvard College, where he studied under the philosophers William James and Josiah Royce.
According to Santayana's philosophy, history repeats. The phrasing itself certainly is catchy. It's a big one, not only because it is so common, but also because if it is true and if history, driven by human nature, is ugly (hint: it is), then this saying ought to guide our public and private policy.

George Santayana (Sketch artist: Samuel Johnson Woolf)

The sentiment that history repeats aspires to common sense and is hard to disagree with. In the history of the United States and Europe, wars have ended with confiscatory terms of government
surrender inevitably breeding more wars. Revolutions, like those in France and Russia, that gave an individual absolute power—Napoleon and Stalin, respectively—inevitably end up as failed empires brutal dictatorships. Even individuals are subject to this advice. Couples who do not learn from their fights break up. People who don’t learn from their mistakes don’t mature.

In the 21st century, specific events in Syria have proven a repeated lessons about civil wars, like the Vietnam war, that when great powers intervene to fight proxy battles, conflict becomes protracted. Incidentally, when Abraham Lincoln governed during the American Civil War, he recognized it was essential to keep out foreign powers like Britain and France.

So it is the ruling of The Proverbial Skeptic that history repeats and the saying is true, but…

But, it doesn’t really have any power. Why? History shows that both those who do not learn history and those who do learn history are doomed to repeat it. If it’s also true that those who do learn history are doomed to repeat it, then the saying doesn’t really add anything at all.

So is that the case?

After repeated 19th century wars between Germany and France, France still demanded that confiscatory terms of surrender be imposed on Germany after the 20th century's First World War. Then the Second World War happened.

After failing to invest in education and infrastructure in Afghanistan after arming the Mojahadin against the invading Soviet Union in the 80’s, America neglected to make the same investments after later Middle Eastern military campaigns. Then rose The Taliban and Al Qaeda.

After Stalin’s brutal regime of secret police and leader worship, Cuban revolutionaries allowed their charismatic revolutionary leader to seize absolute power. A Castro still holds a seat of dictatorial power in Cuba.

It may be common sense that all of the good things and all of the bad things about people, and the way that we organize ourselves, are simply going to breed patterns as we continue to make history as a species. It may be that we are simply given to a certain irrationality which leads us down paths, some disastrous, again and again.

Santayana also said of human nature, "Only the dead have seen the end of war." Santayana, who famously disagreed with his contemporaries like William James, died in Rome in 1952. After leaving the United States, he became generally critical of American society, though such criticism was separate from his system of philosophy.

Consider what humorist and writer Mark Twain famously said on the matter: "History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme."

History Repeats Itself: Myth or Fact?

April 26, 2016 By Martial BRONZE, Wyckoff, New Jersey

History. Does history repeat itself or is it a myth? Historical records prove that history repeats itself. Throughout time, we have learned from our mistakes. We have learned what works and what does not work. For example, inventions have changed for the better, because inventors learned from their past errors. It can be argued that history repeats itself since it is authenticated in historical records, manifested in the predictions of historians, and validated in the decisions people make in their everyday life.

To start, historical records authenticate the fact that history repeats itself. The current rise in violence in Rwanda is reminiscent of the genocide that took place a dozen years ago (Ruxin). Prior to this rise of violence in Rwanda, there was a previous genocide there. Once again, that demonstrates that history repeats itself. Connections between two events such as WWI and WWII can be found in historical records (Rauch). The connection between WWI and WWII is a great example of history repeating itself. Unfortunately, those countries involved in WWII didn’t learn a lesson from WWI to prevent a subsequent war. The disaster in Darfur is deepening, “At a time when the violence there is spiraling out of control (again) and aid workers trying to alleviate suffering are now being attacked (again)...” (Ruxin). The fact that history repeats itself is authenticated in the above quote by Ruxin. The use of the word “(again)” means that it happened previously, because “(again)” means recurring. Critics, however, do not accept the academic work of Ruxin and his colleagues as proof that history repeats itself. They debunk this by stating that the word repeat is inappropriately defined. However, historians such as Ruxin, an esteemed author for the New York Times, have authenticated the fact that history repeats itself in their many books and articles. Lastly, historical records show the genocide in Rwanda, the repetition of WWII shortly after WWI, and the deepening disaster in Darfur are all examples of history repeating itself.

To further illustrate, throughout time, historians have predicted the outcome of current events. According to Josh Ruxin from Columbia University, history repeats itself. Josh Ruxin is an author and historian who contends that history repeats itself. Historians like Josh Ruxin have made their predictions of current events from those of past events. The correctness of the predictions demonstrates that history repeats itself. When people claim that history repeats itself, generally speaking, they are thinking of cause and effect relationships, not exact replications (Pegoda). Pegoda is another historian and author, who has claimed that when people consider the idea that history repeats itself, they perceive it as a cause and effect relationship rather than an exact replication. In this sense, historians predict what will happen next. Pegoda writes, “BUT, if individuals consider “repeat” as both a metaphor and in terms of its connotation, society can understand what people mean by “history repeats itself,” and it actually emerges as a useful conceptual tool.” Historians, such as Pegoda, use the term “history repeats itself” as a conceptual tool to explain how present events are based on past events. Other experts analyze historical events not as predictors, but as conceptual tools to enhance our understanding of current events. Nevertheless, historians have frequently made correct predictions of current events based on past events. They use historical events to explain what is happening at the present time. As shown, the concept that history repeats itself is manifested in the predictions of historians such as Ruxin and Pegoda.

Additionally, “History repeats itself” is validated in the decisions that people make in their everyday lives. According to Pegoda, “As historians, humanity can and should use the real meanings behind
notions that history repeats to help students enjoy and embrace the study of our world. “People make decisions everyday based on events that took place in the past. They use these past events to make future decisions. Rauch claims “Historians repeat themselves.” Another author and historian, Rauch, agrees that events in history repeat themselves because people make decisions based on past events over and over again. From Rwanda’s post genocide experience the people in Darfur are rebuilding their lives. Ruxin asserts “… the nation and its people are struggling to move forward, under a standard of rough, pragmatic, close-enough justice.” Once again, after another genocide, nations struggle to rebuild their cities and their lives. In Darfur, people endeavor to make decisions and build a standard of living after suffering massive destruction. Those who do not believe that history repeats itself claim that the genocide in Rwanda and the genocide in Darfur are two independent events and the individuals involved are not connected. But, the people of current day Darfur, who have suffered the same genocide as those in Rwanda, are attempting to rebuild their lives despite the enormous destruction brought on by the genocide. Therefore, through incidents in Rwanda and Darfur, the historians, Pegoda, Rauch, and Ruxin, demonstrate that decisions people make in their everyday lives validate that history repeats itself.

To say that history repeats itself is a myth, is an injustice to human events. Historical records have verified that history repeats itself. Throughout the history of mankind, this repetition of historical events has been illustrated in the forecasts of historians and confirmed by the choices individuals have made in their daily lives. If more attention was paid to past historical events, perhaps people would not repeat the same mistakes that led to such atrocious results as the repetition of wars throughout history. As Ruxin points out in his article about the crisis and genocide in Darfur today, “… this broadening of violence, the rising stench of history repeating itself is in the air.”

http://www.teenink.com/opinion/social_issues_civics/article/889501/History-Repeats-Itself-Myth-or-Fact/

**History Does Not Repeat Itself**

Posted by Allan G. Johnson on Friday, February 6, 2015

There is an abandoned coal mine beneath the town of Centralia, Pennsylvania, where a fire has been burning for more than fifty years. Sometimes it breaks through the surface and creates an event by setting fire to something before going back to its long slow burn underground. Before the town was abandoned to the fire, the event might have been recorded in local history.

If you didn’t already know, or if it never occurred to you that a fire could burn underground, you might go for quite a while without knowing it was there. Maybe your whole life (or more, since they say it could burn for another 200 years). And if you made a study of these events, without knowing about the mine, you might come up with a theory—the work of an arsonist, perhaps, looking for revenge or trying to scare people off the land.

What we take for history is often something like that fire, at least the part that we can see, events popping into view one after another for us to explain in terms of what people say and do. And we are largely oblivious to the rest, even the possibility of what is going on down below.

When what happens has bad consequences—pain, suffering, death, destruction, loss—we typically look for someone to blame and, if their intentions were good, we file it away in history as a mistake. And if it has happened before, especially more than once, someone invariably reminds us of the philosopher, George Santayana’s famous warning that those who fail to study and learn from history are bound to repeat it.
Every time I hear those words, I think, how obvious, that we are supposed to learn from our mistakes, and yet it seems almost a matter of routine that we do not.

One day, for example, I was listening to the car radio when the news came on with the story that since three months of bombing the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria wasn’t having the desired effect, the United States had decided that the thing to do now was to bomb them even more.

I have lived long enough and read enough history to know that we have been here before, more than once, and with what result.

During World War II, for example, the Allies carried out a massive bombing campaign over Germany, figuring that unrelenting suffering and terror would beat them into submission. After the war, researchers were surprised to discover that it had just the opposite effect by stiffening the German people’s resolve to hold out as long as possible. The finding was no secret, especially in military and political circles, so there was no need to dig in some dark corner of history to know of it.

And yet, some thirty years later, the United States figured it could force the Viet Minh and North Vietnamese to give up by bombing the hell out of them, which, yes, made them all the more determined to hang on, which they did long enough to make the Americans give it up and go home.

And now, it seems, here we go again, and not for the first time since Vietnam. If a little violence doesn’t work, use more, and if that is not enough, give them Shock and Awe. Taken far enough, as a last resort, you would probably have to kill them all, which is what Vietnam-era Defense Secretary Robert McNamara concluded it would have taken for the Americans to win, and which is, in effect, the strategy of nuclear war.

In the inevitable post-mortem analysis known as history, we are told that mistakes were caused by some unforeseeable combination of miscalculation and bungling, faulty intelligence or a lie; or presidential ambition or fear of appearing weak; or what so-and-so said or failed to say at this meeting or that, or the weight of public opinion, or what the admirals and generals thought would be the best combination of weapons and tactics, or what the enemy decided to do that left the government in that peculiar position known as ‘having no choice.’ Or something else entirely, depending on who is writing the history.

Either way, the people who make these mistakes usually come out as neither stupid nor crazy, because, with few exceptions, they are not. And they do study history, and even those who don’t, have highly-paid advisors who do. So, it doesn’t make much sense that they would follow in the footsteps of those who went before and keep making the same terrible mistakes. Why—with our big brains and all that history to learn from—why can’t we get it right?

I have come to believe that the answer hinges on a failure to appreciate the difference between doing the right thing and doing the wrong thing right.

Governments can decide, for example, that a particular application of violence did not produce the desired result because it was done incorrectly, that mistakes were made in the execution, which is what we must study history so as not to repeat. But all of that rests on an underlying cultural belief in violence itself as a legitimate and effective instrument of control, not to mention a measure of manhood and national power.

This is the fire in the mine that provides the fuel for what happens up above, whatever the details are in how it is done. The cause is not simply a series of ‘mistakes’ that can be isolated and analyzed in time and space, but also the culture and structure of society itself that was there long before particular mistakes were made and continues long after they have been dissected and understood as anything but what is bound to happen when you keep trying to do the wrong thing.

We keep going from one ‘mistake’ and ‘failure’ to another because we do not connect what happens on the surface with what is underground, because we do not see the present as a continuation of the past, the manifestation of a taken-for-granted worldview that is ‘happening’ all along, whether or not we recognize it in the choices we make and the events of the day that result. Even the observation that ‘this has happened before’ is misleading in the way it
fragments and isolates ‘this’ particular happening from another, relegating each to its own unique place in the string of events we call history.

This is how deep continuing structures make something like recurring wars a path of least resistance, as something normal and predictable no matter how terrible and fruitless they may be. It is what propels the juggernaut of unlimited population and economic growth on a finite planet, and it fuels the capitalist greed and excess that cause panics and crashes in which millions of people lose their jobs and homes. The most recent financial collapse was no mere repetition of history, even though such things have ‘happened’ many times before. It was the predictable and recurring result of how our economic system is organized on its deepest level and continues to operate.

Beneath the surface of daily events, the next collapse, the next war, the next calamity, is happening right now, shaping what we assume to be reality, what it makes sense to do, gathering force, momentum, and direction, for that moment when it will break through into our awareness and our lives and command our attention, if only for a while.

History does not repeat. It continues. And no amount of study of its events will protect us from it until we go down into the mine and put out the fire.

https://agjohnson.wordpress.com/2015/02/06/history-does-not-repeat-itself/

Assignment:

Talk to the text→ What is your thinking? Do we learn from our mistakes, or are we doomed to repeat them? Respond with at least a page about your opinion on this topic.