From a methodological point of view we shall proceed by showing the evolution of the idea of world history through different authors before drawing general conclusions.

Previous to the study of the authors and their writings on the subject, it must be pointed out that in order to consider a work as belonging to universal historiography it must have as its basis a universal conception of time and space in which the actor is mankind. In other words, universal historians, strictly speaking, are those who deal only with the history of mankind from the earliest times and in all parts of the world known to them. As we shall see, this is a process which took place gradually in historiography: universal historiography as such acquired its final shape in the time of Emperor Augustus. However, Polybius, though not concerned with the remote history of the past, created the pattern, but in terms of contemporary history.

It must be noted that universal historiography did not emerge as a direct consequence of a philosophical school, but from the desire to narrate political facts. Therefore the increasing political connections, the wars and the diplomatic relations play an important role in the origins of universal historiography. It is clear that the perception of an expanding space is one of the roots of universal historiography. On this basis, historians have meditated about time, i.e., about the past of the different peoples living in that growing political space, and this reflection on the past is another root of universal historiography. In this space, man acted throughout the ages. As mankind did not operate in an isolated way but rather in a social context, the search for the political principles and constitutions which guided political life became an aim of the universal historian. Thus, appears the close association between political structure and historical narrative.

From the study of universal historiography emerge two approaches: one which is more concerned with ethnic and cultural aspects, initiated by Herodotus in his historical work, and the other which is more interested in politics, Polybius being an example.
Neither Herodotus nor Thucydides, the greatest of the Greek historians, produced universal histories, but historical monographs: the war between the Persians and the Greeks was the subject of the former, the struggle between Athens and Sparta the theme of the latter. We must wait until the 4th century B.C. to trace the immediate origins of universal historiography, which we can associate with the teachings of Isocrates concerning the Panhellenic ideal, and the appearance of Macedonia as the first political power among the Greek states. Then under Alexander the expansion towards the East created a universal empire that disintegrated after a short lapse of time into the different Hellenistic monarchies, progressively conquered by Rome, which established in its turn a universal state that was completed with the conquests of Augustus.1