ATTITUDES OF CONSERVATION AT THE CIVIC AND CULTURAL DISTRICT

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Abstract

The fundamental character of the mythical concept is to be appropriated, a
relation of deformation that links meaning to the concept. This constant hide-and-seek
between the form and the meaning is that which defines myth. The double system of
myth produces the physique of an alibi, which alternates perpetually due to myth being a
value (Absolute ‘truth’ in the reality of life stops this perpetuation). In myth, the meaning
is always there to present the form; the form is always there to outdistance the meaning.

Pierre Nora noted that the equating of history with memory is due to the conquest
of memory by history. In a similar vein, French sociologist Maurice Halbwach
established that history is a construction of selective memory. Collective memories exists
only as long as it exists as part of the living experience of a group or individual, but when
that continuity with the past is ruptured, history comes into play.

This concept of history is what Janadas Devan called “Forgetting to Remember”,
... history will always subjected to the manipulation of nation-states to construct a
selective memory of the past, creating a whole generation who has no empathy or
awareness of past. “The history of Singapore in particular is a series of forgetting ...
precisely because our history forgets, it is peculiarly prone to radical simplifications.
Because the history of post-independent Singapore breaks with the history of pre-
independent Singapore, our past is up for grabs.

The constantly shifting of the past develops a yearning for a fixed given,
manifested in an obsessed fear of losing the past in a kind of collective amnesia. Fear that
is awkwardly expressed in the taste for the fashions of earlier times, and shamelessly
exploited by nostalgia-merchants; memory has thus become a best seller in a consumer
society. Thus, conservation becomes a paradoxical notion. I believe that it is the
unravelling of the paradox of conservation that may serve the liberation and the not the
enslavement of human beings, freeing us from the myths that constrained our previous
perceptions. Perhaps it is wiser to accept undeniably dynamism of our rootlessness and
non-permanence.

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