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8 April 2015

Change through Preservation

Within every advanced society, we find that it is always in a state of entropy as our focus constantly drifts and changes. As researchers continuously develop new findings, as engineers develop prototypes for machines to simplify systems and even as the younger generation continues to introduce new music styles and traditions, we continue to find ourselves conserving the past and its workings. Now in most cases when thinking about preservation, most individuals will simply read back the literal definition and will not be able to apply it any abstract ideas or concepts. With increased critical thinking and an in depth analysis of culture, science, and language, we can see the concept of preservation being applied as each area must borrow and exchange information and values in order to continue to develop. Ideals, concepts, morals, and culture cannot simply be created from nothing itself, they must be influenced by others and will continue to be shared and spread within our communities.

Enlightenment through advanced study or research has continually been the catalyst for development within all areas of time. We can note events such as the enlightenment period in which 17th and 18th century intellectuals began to enact change by questioning the continued influence of the Catholic Church and its limiting traditions in terms of dissenting opinions and skepticism. They were able to accomplish this task by instead supporting a new call for reason and individualism rather than the lack of critical thinking that was available at the time. Now with this in mind, we can note that these enlightened thinkers did not want to necessarily overthrow the Church and its traditions, as they were a part of this community as well, but they wanted to change the amount of influence that tradition could have on our own behaviors and individuality. In order to enact this change, they needed to revert back to their roots; the innate human desire for knowledge and curiosity. By focusing on this common attribute and feeling that every individual has in common, these philosophers sought to preserve these ideals and the pportunities that could stem from them. The importance of individuality and critical thinking/curiosity is presented within Galileo Galilei’s “Letter to the Grand Duchess” as he addresses his concerns about the current state of affairs and how limiting tradition can be towards advancement and individuality. This is exemplified within his statement as he debates the Bible’s infallibility, “With regard to this argument, I think in the first place that it is very pious to say and prudent to affirm that the holy Bible can never speak untruth—whenever it’s true meaning is understood. But I believe nobody will deny that it is often very abstruse, and may say things which are quite different from what its bare words signify.” Here he argues that the Bible, although resonating well with many followers around the world, is once again a book written by man and opens itself up to interpretation as the reader sees fit. This seems to be the case as many chapters of the Bible can have conflicting elements and rely upon the reader for interpretation as themes may overlap or be exaggerated by the reader. Galileo also states the necessity of change as gentle vessel as he states “From this I do not mean to infer that we need not have an extraordinary esteem for the passages of Holy Scripture. On the contrary, having arrived at any certainties in physics, we ought to utilize these as the most appropriate aids in the true exposition of the Bible and in the investigation of those meanings which are necessarily contained therein, for these must be concordant with demonstrated truths” (Galileo, 4). Here he demonstrates that further integration of our natural urges and behaviors is not meant to demolish or destroy tradition or cultures, but is meant to simply provide greater individual freedoms and expand our working knowledge of the world as our societies demand.

Personal exploration and development remains a key indicator of quality of life and also and can in turn through criticism and skepticism, better communities through forceful change. Take for example Egypt’s revolution in 2011. Here within Egypt as of 2011, citizens were facing turmoil within their own country as they protest against poverty, corruption, and unemployment under the rule of President Hosni Mubarak. The issues were highlighted when peaceful protestors were met with aggressive force and censorship (Aljazeera) the citizens of Egypt have displayed our universal desire for free speech and how our communities and how individualism can either make or break a society. This concept of individual interpretation is emphasized well within John Berger’s “Ways of Seeing” as he states “The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe” (Berger, 8). This translates to reality as the protestors understand through simply being a human , their urges for free speech and protections to live in a just and caring society are not overzealous, but ideals that must be conserved and spread throughout generations. This is also presented within Berger’s statement “We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are” (Berger, 8). Berger’s statement highlights the concept that we must continuously integrate ourselves into our surroundings as participation can be inspired through the vision and drive of others. By viewing powerful activists and valued figures within the community, we are now directly affected by their cause and will protect the community as they are now single part of a greater whole. This can be seen when viewing images of the protests, you are able to see young and impassioned faces among the forefront. This is due to their desire to preserve their culture and nation for the future generation, their children, and their grandchildren as well.

As societies continue to develop and expand their reach, we continue to see more calls for nostalgia and cultural expression. Take for example the area of Los Angeles, a bustling city filled with diverse arrays of people and cultures. The development of this city had displaced many people from their lands and has used many of the available resources to minimum levels. Here, some individuals face challenges in remembering and establishing further value to their culture and ways of life as they must adapt and continue to change traditions as the times advance onwards. Author Joan Didion explains this within her novel, “Notes from a Native Daughter” as she details the cultural loss that occurred during this time and how she has had trouble relating and integrating within a new way of life. As stated by Didion, “It is hard to find California now, unsettling to wonder how much of it was merely imagined or improvised; melancholy to realize how much of anyone’s memory is no true memory at all but only the traces of someone else’s memory, stories handed down on the family network” (Didion, 177). Didion exemplifies the damage that some changes can bring if the past is not fully preserved. Here, she states that since she was placed into a foreign area with nothing recognizable to herself, she is unable to find traces of her own culture and feels her memories are simply translated and not alive. Through this statement “This is a story my generation knows; I doubt that the next will know it, the children of the aerospace engineers. Who would tell it to them? Their grandmothers live in Scarsdale, and they have never met a great-aunt” (Didion, 185). Within this statement, Didion displays the human tendency of self-preservation. As we become displaced and move into new places and areas, we will always seek the familiar and its touch. This is through innate instinct in order to protect our societies and continue to help us grow and expand.

Change through preservation has been enacted well within many communities and has real applications to myriad concepts and ideas. Take for example the issue of increasing population and infrastructure in Los Angeles. With more and more advancements being made, we are seeing less interaction between members of society and are becoming homogeneous in culture and lifestyle. Large cities such as New York are praised for their melting pot living communities where people of all cultures can experience all parts of the world through a single city. This change through preservation was seen through the construction of the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) in 1929 and its restoration in the 1990s. This is highlighted through Pico Iyer’s “Where Worlds Collide” as he describes the vast array of cultures which are conglomerated within LAX. As Iyer states “It is a commonplace nowadays to say that cities look more and more like airports, crosscultural spaces that are a gathering of tribes and races and variegated tongues; and it has always been true that airports are in many ways like miniature cities, whole, self-sufficient communities, with their own chapels and museums and gymnasiums” (Iyer, 51). Through this, he explains how the many different cultures are left to positively interact within such a small subsection of land where you have myriad ideals and beliefs left to present themselves through conservation. “They see Koreans piling into the Taeguk Airport Shuttle and the Seoul Shuttle, which will take them to Koreatown without their ever feeling they've left home; they see newcomers from the Middle East disappearing under the Arabic script of the Sahara Shuttle. They see fast-talking, finger-snapping, palm-slapping jive artists straight from their TV screens shouting incomprehensible slogans about deals, destinations, and drugs. Over there is a block-long white limo, a Lincoln Continental, and, over there, a black Chevy Blazer with Mexican stickers all over its windows, being towed. They have arrived in the Land of Opportunity, and the opportunities are swirling dizzily, promiscuously, around them” (Iyer, 50). As we see these different cultures and ideas coming to place, we understand that by establishing the LAX, we are preserving the ideal of multiculturalism within our cities. With this in mind, as we continue to expand and develop new and more efficient technologies, there will still be the same airport there for everyone to simply enjoy and communicate on a personal level, an opportunity which is priceless.

Language remains a unifying bond as we continue to be an integral part of our lives and behaviors. Now, in order to understand how language can continuously change year after year, century after century and still retain key features and idiosyncrasies, we must abandon the literal definition and become abstract in our study. In order to do this, we must analyzed all forms of communication such as nonverbal, cultural, and expected behaviors. As we continue to advance our technologies and devices, we are simply becoming more adept in the art of storytelling. This element of writing is evident within all sources of writing as it communicates on a deeper level with the reader as they progress into the writing. The reason this writing style has not been phased out is because it is in use by all individuals as they have innate desires and curiosities for descriptive stories. Michel de Certeau emphasizes this point through his “Spatial Stories” in which he describes the necessity of the storytelling aspect as well its efficiencies. Through Certeau’s assertion “Every story is a travel story—a spatial practice. For this reason, spatial practices concern everyday tactics, are part of them, from the alphabet of spatial indication ‘left’, ‘right’ and ‘guess who I met at the bakery’” (Certeau, 116). Here, we understand the defining element of any article, story, news report, or film heavily depends on spatial elements for proper analysis as we envision these occurrences in our mind’s eye and thus need as many details as possible. This behavioral cue, (attention increases during descriptive parts) are present throughout all languages and modes of communication as it serves the greatest utility. We desire these elements not simply for increased amounts of information, but for enjoyment and as we can use this to travel anywhere in the world and experience all things, satisfying our innate urge for curiosity.

It is through the introduction of new styles, behaviors, and trends in which we truly preserve language and expand its application. It is not simply a mode of communication, but a relationship between participants in which they have the ability to adapt and learn new terminology, activities and can ultimately influence their communities with nothing but their voices. Within George Lipsitz’s essay, “It’s All Wrong, but It’s All Right”, he states the necessity for language to continuously change and provide new meaning and context to our daily lives. Within this statement “Popular culture provides opportunities for escaping the parochialisms and prejudices of our personal worlds, for expanding our experience and understanding by seeing the world through the eyes of others.” (Lipsitz, 403). As Lipsitz explains, our culture is defined by the vocabulary we use and how our words are interpreted. The use of metaphors remains an integral aspect of all writing styles as it relies heavily upon interpretation in which the reader as well as the writer may experience differently. It is this exact point which makes this style of writing as popular as it provides an atmosphere for detailed debate and analysis.

Within our current studies, there has been a direct focus on conservation. Conservation of ideals, knowledge, cultures, and also language even though they continue to still change. This balancing act can only occur as there is no absolute creation meaning that all ideas or concepts must be derived from another idea or concept. This ensures that we will be able to preserve certain aspects of our society, while enacting lasting change at the same time. This occurs within areas which emphasize individualism and critical thinking such as the enlightenment thinkers as they did not attempt to completely remove the Catholic Church’s influence, but instead focused upon voicing the necessity of individualism and urging others to reach their own conclusions. This ideology can be is the foundation of science and all principles as it is necessary to participate in order to ensure a diverse array of perspectives and to lead by example. We have also stated that the innate urges for self-identification and the attraction to the familiar is what gives us a sense of security and home as we see more cities developing platforms encouraging multiculturalism and community interaction which benefits everyone.

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