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17. THE DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

The determination of significance is a subjective intellectual process. No view of history is absolute. Every consideration, no matter the perspective or predilection, assigns a personal value to each element of the historical process. Cultural patrimony is often aligned with the consensus view of historical events and tends to focus on commonly recognised heroes, battles, and pre-determined historical themes. Most assessments of significance are subjective and based on idealised versions of history. It is generally understood today that history provides the means for collective

memory in which people are able to orient themselves to their past. Frequently, this is a nostalgic process. Modern society brings together in ever increasing density people of disparate cultural histories and identities. Such people are made to live and work together in random groups that require mutual suppression of personal cultural identities. Yet, the search for personal identity as distinct from shared identity is ever present in society. Identity verifies or validates an individual's association with a past or previous cultural milieu. Because human behaviour is either

learned or modified by social conditions, the apprehension of cultural expression is often the motive for assimilated or invented heritage. This phenomenon forces heritage to become a lowest common denominator in order to reach the widest and most unsuspecting audience possible. By extension, such a bland rendition of cultural heritage becomes by necessity a corruption of the original historic event or set of facts that it so earnestly seeks to represent.