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On the nature of tradition: the Japanese notion of *furusato* and a historical quest for a place

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Critique has been able to perform such magical intellectual feats as changing Malinowski's *mythical charters* into Hobsbawm's *invented traditions* without even noticing they are virtually the same thing.

Marshall Sahlins

Cultures are inherently historical phenomena. As history unfolds, always in unpredictable ways, cultures change, transform and adapt themselves. However, there seems to be something that also persists within them. But can cultures change and yet remain the same? What is it that transforms itself, and what is it that persists? Institutions, values, morals, practices, or beliefs, to some degree, do change – anthropologists, archaeologists and historians have shown that they do. So, what is that ‘something’ which endures, which tends to persist, albeit not necessarily for all eternity, in cultures or societies? Whether inside or outside academia, that which persists in a given cultural horizon is usually referred to as *tradition*. Tradition, so the story goes, is that which amidst historical and cultural change remains apparently unchanged; is that which a certain group of people choose to protect, preserve, and pass on to future generations. At least this is what common sense tells us, as seems to be implied in its Latin root *traditio*, 'to hand over to' or 'to transmit'. But is the notion of tradition exhausted by a look into the unchangeable tangible or formal aspects of a given technique, celebration, or practice, that is, by the objectivity of the ‘thing’ being *transmitted*?

Broadly speaking, anthropologists are often sceptical towards tradition. They tend to look at it and at the gesture of reification it allegedly embodies with a great deal of suspicion, usually attributing it some nationalistic, political or ideological function. Such *modus operandi* gets most of its inspiration from Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger's

classic but widely employed idea of the ‘invention of tradition’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Behind it lie two intertwined fundamental assumptions. On the one hand, the analysis of the cultural and social historicity of tradition, which is a valid midstep in understanding and interpreting its meanings, serves a mere epistemological purpose: that of a straight comparison or contrast between its past (“original”) formal or tangible aspects and those of the present. A given tradition is deemed “largely factitious” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 2) if, after an historical inquiry, one can show that it has little continuity with the past.¹ On the other hand, as a methodological tool, it works both as a functionalist and moral device in order to determine whether that which is labelled as ‘tradition’ is not, after all, only a forced social construction, an artificiality created in order to implement some veiled ideological agenda, or set of values – not surprisingly, it is always the case that it is so.

Anthropology became especially permeable to the perspective brought in by the ‘invention of tradition’. In fact, a year before Hobsbawm and Ranger’s work, Roger Keesing and Robert Tonkinson (1982) formulated, within the framework of the anthropology of Melanesia, a reading of tradition parallel to that of the ‘invention of tradition’², which was later employed as theoretical framework to be applied to other contexts where primacy was given to the political and ideological dimensions of tradition (Rogister and Vergati 2004; Weiner and Glaskin 2006; Otto and Pedersen 2006).

Issues concerning the ‘invention of traditions’ are then intertwined, within anthropology, with the ‘invention of culture’ (Wagner 1975), that is, how culture, in its anthropological sense, is gradually “invented” by anthropologists who study and write about other cultures, but also by the very people who are studied, as they start to reflexively think about their own identity as a ‘cultural’ group, or a nation (Babadzan 2000; Friedman 1992). However, the notion of ‘invention’, whether of culture or tradition, only makes sense if seen against the notion of ‘authenticity’ (see e.g. Handler and Linnekin 1984; Linnekin 1991). Writing about the “making of the Maori culture”, Allan

¹ It is important to note that although Hobsbawm and Ranger focus on the idea that an invented tradition’s characteristic is that its “reference to a historic past” draws on a forced or artificial continuity, they also acknowledge that most of the times an invented tradition is constructed from the “elaborate language of symbolic practice and communication” accumulated in the past of any society (1983, 6–7).

² Keesing’s paper started an intense debate on the “politics of tradition” in the region of Melanesia (see Otto and Pedersen 2006, 16–19).

Hanson (1989) tries to remove the negative connotation attributed to the concept of 'invention'. Although the discourses around "Maori culture" do rest on two invented ideas (a narrative about the original settlement of New Zealand and a theory about a pre-European supreme being), Hanson claims that this is not necessarily problematic, since the "invention of culture" is "of the same sort as the normal, everyday process of social life" (Hanson 1989, 899).

Later, the so-called post-modern internal critique of anthropology, propounding an idea of culture as polyphonic, fluid and constituted by tensions, as well as its move towards the moral and political domains (Appadurai 1988; Marcus and Clifford 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986), proved to be a fertile soil on which the critique of tradition could develop. Currently, by browsing an anthropological journal, one can find different works that, even without evoking the 'invention of tradition', take its premises as given in order to perform a theoretical operation of deconstructing the historical dimension of a given community's self-professed idea or practice.

But can the 'invention of tradition' actually offer any suggestive account of what is really going on in specific traditions? Why then do we insist on the invention of traditions if we rarely try to come to terms with *why* they persist? (Connerton 1989, 103–4). In *Two or Three Things that I Know About Culture* (1999), Sahlins answers the 'why' question and writes against the whole theoretical edifice of the 'invention-discourse'. In Sahlins view, the rationale behind the 'invention of tradition' and related approaches perpetuates an outdated malinowskian functionalist view of culture now fuelled by a chronic concern with cultural and political critique that has come to dominate the human sciences (this is as true when Sahlins wrote it as it is now, or perhaps even more). The difference between Malinowski's explicit functionalism and the inadvertent, tacit functionalism of the 'invention of tradition' and its correlates is that the former was taken to be something pertaining to the very nature of society, whereas the latter remains framed in a climate of suspicion and moral or political judgements (1999, 403–4). Its fundamental purpose is to formulate a set of interpretations and explanations that expose and help to unmask the supposed hegemonic character of certain historical and cultural phenomena.

However, Sahlins adds, when we deal with culture, "explanations can be rhetorically sufficient, even though they do not logically motivate the distinctiveness of things they explain" (1999, 406). In other words, at the root of the problem is what Sahlins calls "ontological hybridity". This "hybridity" confuses two phenomena of different

orders: universal and particular. Something universal (i.e., sprouting from the human condition), such as the quest for power in its various forms, or the devising of cultural narratives, is supposed to serve as a sufficient explanation for the particular (i.e., culturally distinct) outlines in which those universal motivations manifest themselves (1999, 407). As a result, different traditions in different historical and cultural contexts, as well as the space of intelligibility they open and the questions they articulate, end up being explained away with reference to the same couple of functions: the ideological, nationalistic or idealised fabrication of community, identity or nation.

With his straightforward and intelligent critique, Sahlins alerts us to the fact that reducing tradition to a mere political or ideological function does by no means entail a progress as far as its understanding is concerned. Functionalist interpretations such as this are indeed an enticing intellectual exercise, or an attractive food for academic thought. However, they cannot really tell us much about the existential and/or culturally specific meanings which work as to sustain traditions. If we take tradition as “the historical axis within creative acts, or the style of historical construction peculiar to a culture” (Glassie 1995, 409), then we can consider it as a “connective, relational concept” that [knits] together times, places and generations” (Mugnaini 2020). It is something akin to a “culturally logical” (Sahlins 1999, 409) mode of coping with the world’s affairs in which “innovations follow logically – though not spontaneously, and in that sense not necessarily – from the people’s own principles of existence” (Sahlins 1993, 19). Which is why reducing a tradition to a given social function (and it is always the same function: enforcing some kind of questionable ideology or set of values) just position us even further away from understanding what it actually *says* to those who keep retrieving meaning from it. The theoretical explanation of the function of tradition ends up neglecting its intrinsic cultural logics and truth-values, relegating them to a subordinate level.

Although building on Sahlins’ core argument, this paper’s goal is not to engage directly with Hobsbawm and Ranger’s work. Rather, the ‘invention of tradition’ is taken here solely as a contrasting background reference in order to accomplish a larger purpose: namely, to rethink anthropologically and philosophically the nature of tradition and its own historical mode of being and coming to be within human worlds. In order to do that we will take three steps. First, a specific anthropological case will be presented: the Japanese notion of *furusato* (‘hometown’, or ‘native place’). This is a very useful example

for two reasons: first, it is generally viewed by scholars of Japanese studies and anthropology with a great deal of scepticism and is usually approached from a theoretical perspective akin to that of the ‘invention of tradition’; secondly, and as a consequence of such perspective, the existential potentiality inhabiting the very notion of *furusato*, i.e., what it conveys and articulates despite its various social usages (functions), has not been adequately considered and interpreted by most authors – something this paper attempts to do in the last section. In a second moment, we approach two epistemological problems underlying current understandings of tradition. We will turn to Paul Ricoeur’s thoughts on the idea of ‘symbol’ and see how the suspicion towards tradition is rooted in an epistemological scepticism towards the truth-value inhering in the symbolic; and then, we will follow Hans-Georg Gadamer’s depiction of tradition and its truth-value, reinterpreting it not as the *thing itself* that is transmitted, but as the horizon of meanings disclosed by it – in other words, the *subject matter* (Ger., *die Sache*) of tradition. Finally, in a third moment, we will address some instances in Japanese cultural history in order to suggest an interpretation of *furusato* that emphasises its existential meaning and *subject matter*: namely, the crucial role of places in granting existential meaning to the self.

In sum, by looking at a culturally specific example and its historicity as ‘tradition’, this paper asks not for the truth *about* tradition, but for the truth *of* tradition.

***Furusato* as an ‘invented tradition’**

The Japanese notion of *furusato* (ふるさと or 故郷, ‘hometown’, ‘native place’) can be thought of as one of the various forms through which the praise of nature, non-urban places and their cultural significance manifested itself in Japanese society in the 20th century; such praise – with its own ironies and contradictions, but also with its insightful lessons – has become an extensively analysed issue in academic circles (Asquith and Kalland 1997; Berque 1997; Callicott and McRae 2017; Ohnuki-Tierney 1993). However, more than a mere reference to an ideal intimacy with nature, *furusato* is perhaps the everyday language concept that best conveys the affective and existential import which rural and non-urban places bear in contemporary Japan.

Consisting of two words, *furu(i)*, ‘old’ or ‘ancient’, and *sato*, ‘village’, *furusato* means, in a literal translation, ‘old village’. In fact, it is this temporal dimension that calls for and enables, almost inevitably, a connection with the past or, more precisely, with that

which reaches us from the past. Considering it in a more philosophical or poetic perspective, however, we can think of it as 'home' or 'origins' (e.g. Morrison 2013). Depending on the more concrete meaning that each person attributes to it, *furusato* can either refer to the place where one grew up and spent one's childhood (usually associated with a rural area and a life closer to nature), or the place where one feels existentially at home, even if, strangely enough, such place turns out to be in a foreign country (Rea 2000).

Indeed, during the summer and end-of-year holidays, thousands of Japanese commute to their own *furusato* in a journey of a larger scale than that observed in European countries and popularly called *satogaeri* 里帰り, 'return to the village'. The journey to one's own *furusato* is not a *going*, but a *returning* home, or to origins (Berque 1997, 178–79). Here, the link between *furusato* and nostalgia is clear. Given the socially shared resonance of this word, weaved into *furusato* is a kind of nostalgia that, as Svetlana Boym (2001, xiv) accurately captures, “goes behind individual psychology”, being akin to a “rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress”. Nevertheless, as we will see in the final section, in the case of Japan the longing or affection for a place is not solely the product of modernity's self-criticism but a recurring theme in Japanese cultural history.

Widespread examples of such nostalgia and affection are seen, for example, in the popular song *Furusato*, from 1914, in the 1983 film of the same name, directed by Seijirō Koyama or in *enka* ballads (Yano 2010, 168–78). It has also been pointed out how the evocation of one's own *furusato* plays a vital role in giving a meaningful axis to people's discourses and sense of self in times of war (Seaton 2007). As for the social domain, be it with more or less pragmatic nuances, the notion of *furusato* also works as a powerful symbol and driving force in assigning a sense of “intergenerational responsibility” and duty in taking care of one's own village (Santos Alexandre 2019), in communitarian initiatives of rural revitalisation, called *furusato-zukuri*³, ‘native place-making’ (Thelen 2015), or even in the creation of a new *furusato* triggered by manga series (Greene 2016). With (apparently) less nostalgic outlines, *furusato* is also the grounding symbolic notion for the *furusato-nōzei* ふるさと納税, a tax program started in 2008 where taxpayers can

³ *Zukuri* is the nominalisation of the verb *tsukuru* (to construct, to make). When used as a suffix it means ‘the constructing of’ or ‘the making of’. Thus, in this case, *furusato-zukuri* is usually translated as ‘native place-making’.

choose a municipality, prefecture or local environmental and social initiatives to which they can donate money (Rausch 2019).

We are thus in the presence of a notion that is able to summon up, even if an idealised form and with several ramifications, a place, its way of life, atmosphere, memories, customs or practices; a place where the past has not only not been forgotten but is weaved into the present to form a future. This does not seem to be the understanding of those who addressed it within the social, who, in general, remain sceptical towards it. It is precisely because we are dealing with a concept that refers to the past and calls forth a certain tone of historical continuity, that we find scholars addressing this phenomenon through the lens of the 'invention of tradition'.

The historical context for such critique is generally the following. From 1868 onwards, Japan was forced to open its borders and began a process of intense absorption of Western knowledge in all its aspects: economic, political, intellectual, and cultural. As a result of this import, the country was transformed in a few decades, and the accelerated industrialisation of its cities and their outskirts threatened to disfigure the rural areas. The response against the country's rapid industrialisation was soon to be heard and manifested itself in various forms. One of them was the praise for rural areas. The changes that Japan was undergoing led the critics to turn their attention to what was left somewhat untouched by modernisation: the villages with their customs and life in communion with nature. A few decades later, it is both through the term *kokyō* 故郷 and the notion of *furusato* itself that the loss of rurality starts to be articulated by means of a more concrete topography, namely, one's home village. In sum, at issue at this period was the looming loss of one's 'home' and the existential emptiness that followed that loss. The contrast between city and rurality and the nostalgia for the latter seem to have motivated, at least at the intellectual level, an intense reworking and reframing of the concept of nature (*shizen* 自然) and of the idea of non-urban places (see Hudson 2021; Thomas 2001) ⁴.

Supported by this historical background, some authors have addressed *furusato* critically, generally characterising it as a means for turning rural villages into reified objects of nostalgia, commodities or artificial idealizations of life in harmony with nature (Ben-Ari 1992; Creighton 1997; Graburn 1995; Ishiii 2007; Ivy 1995, 98–140). As for

⁴ For a more detailed account of how the affection and nostalgia for a place is usually a consequence of progress as “temporal progression but also [as] spatial expansion”, see Svetlana Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001).

the critique that links the praise of rurality and *furusato* with the ‘invention of tradition’, we find it clearly articulated in three chapters in the collection *The Mirror of Modernity: The Invented Traditions of Modern Japan* (Vlastos 1998b). Below, we focus on those three chapters, as they have set the tone and applied the ‘invention of tradition’ critique to Japan’s various discourses on the rural world and *furusato*.

Irwin Scheiner (1998), for example, points out that at stake in the discourse on *furusato* is the creation of an idealised past that functions by gathering Japanese people around a common identity: a feeling of community and cooperation that permeated the old communities but is now threatened by the country’s reckless development. For the author, this "myth of community" is but a small part of a polyvocal discourse concerning the rural world in the previous period (the Tokugawa period, 1603-1868). Scheiner thus proceeds to deconstruct the modern idealisation of the rural world by showing how it was, in fact, a realm of intense agrarian and political uprisings, which do not fit into the nationalistic and modern narrative of an admirable but endangered community life that ought to be saved. The contradictions behind *furusato* begin thus to be exposed.

With a similar purpose, Stephen Vlastos (1998a) goes deeper and highlights the Confucian and neo-Confucian ideology implicit in the praise of rurality: the crucial role of farmers, as the class that sustains society, and villages, which were considered "incubators of national strength" (1998a, 94). Vlastos shows how several narratives embodying this logic began to emerge from the 1880s and 1890s onwards (until Japan’s defeat in World War II): the defence of farmers as those who given their loyalty best embody national interests, thereby representing an important military resource (1998a, 84); the emergence of discourses that take villages as points of anti-capitalist resistance (1998a, 86); and a kind of “agrarian populism”, around 1930, that advocated the rural world’s moral and spiritual superiority.

What happens in anthropology – as a natural consequence of its own disciplinary nature – is a migration of such readings from the purely historical to the sociological sphere. Here, it is not so much a historical account (although it is never entirely absent), but a sociological or anthropological critique that takes the front stage.

The most paradigmatic of such interpretations is done by Jennifer Robertson (1988; 1998). What seems to characterise the *furusato*, as well as the notion of *furusato-zukuri*, is how it articulates a “nostalgia for nostalgia, a state of being provoked by a dissatisfaction with the present on the grounds of a remembered, or imagined, past

plenitude” (Robertson 1988, 495). Robertson analyses how the idea of *furusato* is instrumentalised by the state, the environmentalists, the media and the advertisement industry, each with its own agendas (Robertson 1998, 116–19); shows how the notion of *furusato* also plays a crucial role in the touristification of the rural world, turning villagers themselves into “custodians of the landscape of nostalgia” (Robertson 1998, 121), and then proceeds to show how it is perpetuator of gender roles due to its symbolic association with motherhood, maternal or female (Robertson 1998, 124–27).

An adequate reading of these works, needless to say, should be situated at a period when the ‘invention of tradition’ and similar critical approaches were in full force in the social scientific discourse. It is nevertheless the case that they had a more or less direct influence on subsequent academic analysis on *furusato* or the ‘rural’ in Japanese society (Arlt 2006; McMorran 2008; Morrison 2015; Palmer 2005, 12–15; Respati 2022).⁵ And the fact that such works remain as key reference texts concerning *furusato* is a sign that this is a relatively settled issue, with little to add to it beyond what has already been said: an idea that, anthropologically and sociologically, is instrumentalised in such a way as to deliver to the Japanese something that not only never existed the way it is now celebrated, but is also the vehicle of pernicious, undesirable and outdated ideas or values. Behind the nostalgia and romanticism surrounding *furusato* dwells, after all, little more than a mythicised, idealised and invented tradition. However, while in Hobsbawm and Ranger’s argument there seems to remain a distinction between the merely formal surface of an invented tradition and the truth, existential density or emotional import of other traditions, those who perpetuate this reading seem to have brushed aside those nuances and in keeping with the authority that the ‘invention of tradition’ grants them, apply it as a certified tool in order to uncover the inconsistencies growing within the lives of others.

The problem inhabiting these works, however, is not factual, historiographic or methodological: it is certainly the case that the analyses and critiques are sustained by factual historical and social events and, as such, plausible in their own terms. The question has to do, rather, with their inadequate understanding of the nature of tradition, that is to say, its mode of being and coming to be within the lives and actions of human beings.

⁵ An excellent exception is a compilation of essays dealing with the notion of *furusato* and its existential dimension as ‘home’, exploring, within the different domains of history, art, society and the self, the meaningful potentialities of this important notion for Japanese society and culture (Craig, Fongaro, and Tollini 2020).

Writing in the context of heritage studies in Japanese society, Cristoph Brumann makes a parallel argument (Brumann 2009; see also 2014). Based on Japanese people's perception of the traditional city of Kyoto, Brumann notes, for example, how academic critical and sceptical discourses on heritage cannot account for people's own depiction of Kyoto as articulating a sense of calm and quiet, sometimes even "enforcing a bodily comportment", or how its traditional houses are said to "shape" and "teach" their inhabitants", or seen as "being alive" (Brumann 2009, 288). In short, and as Brumann argues, the 'invention of tradition' and similar critiques usually deconstruct a given's tradition's usage as a national discourse, but rarely acknowledge its "substance", that is, the meaningful, emotional, or even psychological qualities conveyed to those who partake in it.

In what follows, this paper identifies the main epistemological and philosophical reasons that sustain critical discourses on tradition and cause misinterpretations about its nature.

Before suspicion: the *subject matter* of tradition

From a historical perspective, the origin of this critical gaze is not in Hobsbawm and Ranger, but in Friedrich Nietzsche. As Hans-Georg Gadamer notes in *The Problem of Historical Consciousness* (1975a, 9–10), it is Nietzsche who establishes the view that moral, social, and cultural phenomena and institutions inevitably conceal an ideological dimension that is not accessible to us at first glance. In order to access this hidden dimension, the historical and social sciences need a methodological device able to uncover the true meanings hidden behind human phenomena and institutions – this is, after all, the very purpose behind Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals*. But this deeply demystifying and critical gaze can also be found in Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, whom, together with Nietzsche, Paul Ricoeur (1970) called the three "masters of suspicion". Later, 'suspicion as method' would have as its theoretical heirs not only Michel Foucault's 'archaeology' and Jacques Derrida's 'deconstruction', but also Hobsbawm and Ranger's 'invention of tradition'.

What concerns us here regarding the school of suspicion and its masters is to highlight that which Ricoeur identifies as being a common attitude among the three men. For Ricoeur, what characterises them is an interpretative gesture that radicalises the

cartesian doubt. While Descartes doubted the way in which entities were apprehended by the human eye, the masters of suspicion doubt consciousness itself; their purpose is a "reduction of the illusions and lies of consciousness" (Ricoeur 1970, 32) by taking the symbolic dimension of language, culture or history as an obstacle to true reflection and understanding. The fact that the 'symbolic' brings with it a certain opacity or ambiguity of meaning, leads the inquirer to strive to remove the layers causing such opacity in search of a clearer and unequivocal reading. By considering that which has a symbolic nature as an obstacle to the transparency of action, reflection and understanding, language and culture as a whole become targets of a process of demystification and reduction of the illusions caused by the opacity of their meanings. As such, the attitude towards that which belongs to the domain of the symbolic should be one of an unconditional quest for what dwells (hides) behind it.

However, in Ricoeur's view, since language and culture are inherently symbolic, turning the symbolic into a target and object of reflection is a betrayal and distortion of its own intrinsic movement. The sheltering and veiling of meanings inherent in the symbolic nature of language and culture cannot be an obstacle, for it is precisely *that* which engenders and enables reflection and action: "symbols themselves are the dawn of reflection" (Ricoeur 1970, 39). The fundamental movement of thought, action or understanding (i.e., human existence itself) is only set in motion in and through the existence of that which has a symbolic nature. That is, understanding and reflection comes forth in the movement between the formal or tangible plane of that which is symbolic and the horizon of intelligibility unconcealed by it; a movement through which humans are always-already weaving their own existence. In this sense, it is not I who address, through reflection, that which has a symbolic nature, but the reverse: it is the symbol that "addresses itself to me and makes me a subject that is spoken to" (Ricoeur 1970, 31). As he writes in a different essay:

In contrast to philosophies concerned with starting points, a meditation on symbols starts from the fullness of language and of meaning already there; it begins from within language which has already taken place and in which everything in a certain sense has already been said; it wants to be thought, not presuppositionless, but in and with all its presuppositions. Its first problem is not how to get started but, from the midst of speech, to recollect itself. (Ricoeur 1974, 287–88)

However, if thought, reflection, language, and culture always take root in that which is symbolic, to revert this movement and proclaim that the symbolic is, after all, an obstacle to understanding is an unfortunate distortion of the fundamental movement of thought and culture and, thus, of what we are as human beings. In the end, the critical reading of culture based on suspicion and demystification, which informs the various authors mentioned, falls into the blatant error of reducing the core of human existence to an epistemological process: the correspondence between what is said or thought and a supposed raw, true reality out there; the uncovering of the foundations and bedrocks of culture, enabling us, finally, to free ourselves from its heavy fetters.⁶

Adding to this epistemological scepticism towards the symbolic, there is a second issue inhering in academic readings of tradition: that of turning a valid and reasonable means to an end (i.e., the inquiry into the historical and cultural unfolding of a given tradition) into an end in itself. In other words, the historicist attitude of inquiring into the past and seeing its historical reconstruction as an end in itself without considering how the past always lives in and through the present re-interpretations of its *meanings*.

The idea of a relationship with the past, with history or with inherited traditions by means of the paradigm of historical reconstruction dates back to the 18th century historicism. With fundamentally Romantic roots, the historicist programme⁷ rejected the

⁶ In the history of Western philosophy, the treatment of the symbolic dimension of language and culture, although not formulated exactly in terms of the 'symbolic', always tended to collapse into epistemological questions: i.e. the correspondence between 'symbol' and 'reality,' or between 'representation' and 'represented'. Thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz, or Locke, notwithstanding their obvious differences, contributed in one way or another to the devaluation of the 'symbolic'. Because they considered common sense, tradition, language or culture as mirrors, or mediators, that humans interpose between themselves and reality, they were tempted to examine and question their ability to deliver that same reality in a trustworthy form. Carl Hamburg (1956, chap. 1) makes a brief but insightful overview of this issue by retrospectively applying Ernst Cassirer's idea of 'symbolic forms' to philosophers of the Western tradition.

⁷ Despite the different theoretical and methodological perspectives under debate in the early stages of its development, historicism is considered here as a "programme" (Beiser 2007; see also 2011) designed to defend a scientific status for the study of history, allowing it to maintain the same epistemological value as that of the natural sciences, albeit with its own purposes and methods. Common to the various authors that we can associate with the historicist programme is the concern with providing scientific autonomy to the study of history, freeing it from philosophy and from explanatory tenets of a metaphysical or naturalistic character. The debate taking place within the

Enlightenment's ideal of a transcendental principle of human action and emphasised the historically relative character of human values and worlds. Anyone who looks at history using precepts and judgements of his or her own time and takes them to be universal is prone to misunderstanding its own particularities and, thus, to judging the past in terms of the present. For historicists, the study of history should employ specific methods and models of knowledge and should always consider the historical and cultural specificities of each and every human creation, thus rejecting metaphysical, transcendental, or transhistorical principles. Rooted in the historicist programme, the commitment to acknowledge the uniqueness of historical contexts and their influence over individuals lives is turned, as Gadamer (1975b, 287–88) briefly puts it, into the methodological premise that we must always look at the past on its own terms. Judging the past on its own terms means, however, that we do not interpret what is said in it as *false* or *true* (in doing so we would be using *our* terms) but look at it with a detached attitude. Thus, instead of questioning or engaging in a conversation with that which comes from the past – a tradition, a work of art, an idea, a text – about the nexus of questions opened up by it and the *subject matter* (ger., *die Sache*) it articulates, we inquire into it genetically, that is, taking it exclusively as a function and a product of its own historical and/or cultural origins.⁸ The truth is, Gadamer notes (1977, 46), that the need for genetic inquiry “only appears where direct insight into the truth of what is said cannot be reached because our reason sets itself in opposition”.

The premisses developed by historicism are of tremendous value for the development of the humanist tradition in Western thought. The idea that human institutions and values are ephemeral, and historically and culturally contingent is something that every discipline in the humanities preserves to this day. However, they are the only valid premisses and concerns when the purpose is exclusively one of historical reconstruction of a given episode or event (about which the inquirer must, at the outset, avoid making anachronistic judgements). But are they also applicable to the understanding of tradition? Certainly not – to do so would be to misunderstand its nature and mode of being.

historicist "programme" was also at the origin of another debate over the methodological and scientific criteria in the wider domain of the human sciences, the *Geisteswissenschaften*.

⁸ Anders Odenstedt (2017) develops a detailed summary of Gadamer's analysis of the connection between historicism, genetic inquiry and the decline of tradition.

Tradition occupies a profoundly different place in human historicity, for it is not simply a historical event delimited in time, but precisely the opposite: it lives in and through history, in and through collective and individual interpretation. What is meant here by tradition comprises more than the mere mimetic repetition of the tangible and formal aspects of a given celebration, technique, or practice as something contained in itself. *From tradition springs not the 'thing' transmitted, but the horizon of intelligibility disclosed by that which is transmitted*, the questions and concerns it sets in motion and how it works to give them continuity. What constitutes, for instance, the tradition embodied in Greek tragedy or Buddhist practices is not the recovery and preservation of the original meanings of texts and gestures as entities to be replicated, but a nexus of 'questions-and-answers' (the individual-community dilemma in Greek tragedy; the illusory nature of the idea of 'individual' in Buddhism) that those texts and gestures articulate, thematise, and render visible.

In this regard, to understand the nature of tradition is above all to understand its subject matter, questions, contents and how they are meaningful to those who carry and reinterpret it throughout history. What we call tradition comes to bear upon human worlds as something always-already woven into the texture of practical life and which addresses us as meaningful. As Dorothy Noyes (2009, 248) notes, tradition is not a "badge of pride or an inheritance to display, but a job that must be done". Nevertheless, this does not mean that tradition determines us or imposes itself on us. It is not simply "a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves" (Gadamer 1975b, 305). And this is precisely why a tradition endures (when it does) through time: because as it is interpreted, reinterpreted, carried, and articulated by individuals and their communities, it opens up and makes available possibilities of self-understanding and self-orientation in the world. In other words, it provides some dimension of *truth* that only in its 'forms' is made tangible and intelligible. Thus, a tradition persists because (and when) it shows itself to be meaningful, that is, when it keeps providing human beings with a way of bestowing intelligibility to the world and coping with present concerns.

However, the primacy given to historical reconstruction, when taken as an end in itself, ends up shattering the truth that speaks to us in and through tradition and converts that which dwells in what is transmitted into a "dead meaning" (Gadamer 1975b, 167). By giving priority to the genetic inquiry over the *subject matter* articulated by a given

tradition, the meaning of the past and its various manifestations is destroyed: by approaching it solely and exclusively from a historicist perspective, we enclose it in its own time. Thus, a "dead meaning" is a meaning to which a truth-value has been denied and rendered sterile. On the other hand, and by contrast, we can say that a 'living meaning' is a meaning which, given its truth-value, transcends and frees itself from its original context and becomes that which enables the past to come to inhabit the present and the future. The 'living meaning' and the regenerative potential that dwells within it are what guide the relationship between past and present, whether in the unfolding of history itself, in an individual's relationship with history or with his or her own past. Thus, tradition is brought *interpretatively* to the present by bestowing a special tangibility to a given subject matter, which only by means of the very process of its interpretation is rendered intelligible – again, not the truth *about* tradition, but the truth *of* tradition.

A simple but proximate example of how the dimension of truth of a given tradition is not measurable only in relation to its historical reconstruction or genetic inquiry – and that the latter, *if taken as an end in itself*, might even obscure that same dimension of truth – is our relationship with classic texts. Is our understanding of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* grounded on an analysis and elucidation of the Greek historical context in the fourth century BCE? And is the understanding of *Oresteia* exhausted in the reconstruction of the historical-cultural particularities that inform it, or in the literality of its text? The answer is no. It is precisely because we have not limited ourselves to textual, social, or cultural reconstruction, but have always come to dialogue with the very texts or plays, continually reinterpreting the human dilemmas about which they speak, that they have remained significant for over two millennia. In other words, their dimension of truth manifests itself not only as something contained in the texts themselves, but as something that is consummated, albeit always differently, in and through the interpretations and appropriations to which they have been subjected throughout history. Their meaning is a 'living meaning', given the dimension of truth that they uncover and show us; not the truth *about* the texts, their authors, or the historical-social context in which they were written, but the truth that speaks to us *from* the texts.

In discussing the concept of 'classical' in order to rethink how we conceive of tradition and our relationship to history, Gadamer (1975b, 301 emphasis added) alerts us to the nature of that which reaches us from the past:

The classical, however, as Hegel says, is “that which is self-significant and hence also self-interpretative”. But that ultimately means that the classical preserves itself precisely because it is significant in itself and interprets itself; i.e., it speaks in such a way that it is *not a statement about the past* [...] rather, *it says something to the present* as if it were said specifically to it. [It] does not require the overcoming of historical distance, for in its own mediation it overcomes distance by itself.

As it happens with classical texts, this is also the reason why individuals and communities bear certain traditions with them: not necessarily because they have deliberately decided to preserve them (although in some cases they do), but because the horizon of meanings disclosed by them is significant enough for one to keep returning to it. As such, a living tradition is, as Alasdair MacIntyre (1981, 257) describes it, a “historically extended, socially embodied argument” concerning “the goods the pursuit of which gives to that tradition its particular point and purpose”. Whether conceived as a *subject matter* or argument, tradition is primarily about the cultural and discursive background on the basis of which individuals partially retrieve the fundamental coordinates of what constitutes a good life.

Let us close here our long probe into the nature of tradition. By now, the reason behind the present critique of how *furusato* is approached within Japanese studies and anthropology has become clearer. As a matter of fact, due to its existential richness and in its diverse social, popular and personal meanings, the idea of *furusato* seems to persist in the real and practical world, indifferent to and untouched by anthropological and sociological theory: not as an object *about* which one speaks, but as that which *speaks to* those who share its meanings and which, through such speaking, tells them something about their human predicament as inhabitants of this world. What does it say exactly? We shall look at this below.

The topological condition and a quest for place

If one could identify that which the several works on *furusato* show us, even if only indirectly, is that the notion itself is so pervasive throughout the popular sphere that it ends up being reinterpreted and applied in several ways: it has a personal, affective but also marketable dimension, it is/was used as ideological or political tool, and it even

works as a mobilising notion for a tax program. This diversity of usages, however, do not suffice to account for the pervasiveness of the notion itself in Japanese society. Recall Sahlins: staying at the level of ‘function’, *i.e.*, at its different usages by different social interests, is not enough to understand the cultural logics underlying it, the particularity of the phenomenon itself, or *why* it is so widely used. There must be some shared, implicit assumption within the notion of *furusato*. Otherwise, what are we to make of the fact that, at the surface, different functions can be operated by the exact same word? In truth, what varies are the ‘social usages’ of the notion, not the existential question or concern which sustains those usages.

The ubiquity of the notion of *furusato* in contemporary Japan translates into a general idea: by virtue of its recurrent and plural uses and evocations, the notion itself is not really questioned (except in academia); its inherent meaning is shared to the extent that its truth-value is implicitly assumed – this is, after all, the mode of being of tradition. The fact that *furusato* is recurrently referred to and evoked in different outlines and with different purposes is a clear evidence of its crucial place in Japanese society. And all its different forms, uses and manifestations show precisely that what is articulated and conveyed by it is not necessarily disputed. Its meaning is always-already taken as significant to the extent that what reach us at a first glance are only the different forms and outlines in which it shows itself. The shared assumption that the notion of *furusato* is meaningful in itself, however, withstands in a non-thematized form – and with it, its *subject matter*.

The contemporary notion of *furusato* gathers in itself and thematises a variety of discourses, whether individual or collective, that gravitate around rural and non-urban places as well as the nostalgia and affection associated with them. Therefore – and this is a key point for our next step – is it possible to argue that although the contemporary notion of *furusato* begins to emerge at the beginning of the twentieth century (although, as demonstrated below, with some distant echoes in the eighth century), it nevertheless articulates new forms of a place-oriented consciousness that has been recurrently present throughout Japanese history.

Robertson (1988, 498) seems to gloss over a possible continuity behind the notion of *furusato* but ends up making a brief comment in this regard:

There exists a literary genre of affective environmentalism, beginning in the eighth century with the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, including poetry

anthologies and Edo-period (1603-1868) farm manuals, and persisting today in the form of domestic policy platforms, city charters, and *sake* advertisements among others.

Despite recognising some historical continuity of an “affective environmentalism”, Robertson highlights only its function as ideologically charged, modern discourse, overlooking the fact that to fully understand the tradition underlying the *furusato* is to understand it also as an extension and reinterpretation of a *subject matter*, or argument (in MacIntyre’s terms), historically thematised in Japanese culture and, therefore, prior to the modernisation of Japan: namely, the articulation of an existential quest for a place that can bestow meaning back onto the self.

In what follows, it is shown how this ‘quest for place’, or for *being-in-a-place*, is an existential *subject matter* repeating itself throughout the history of Japanese culture and thought, whether articulated as *furusato* or not. The purpose is not to prove the validity of the tradition embodied by *furusato* by identifying its origins, but to propose a possible interpretation of the contemporary notion of *furusato* by reading it in articulation with similar concerns discernible throughout Japanese cultural history.

In opposition to the general, background claim that the nostalgia for a place articulated by the notion of *furusato* is an invention contrived by modernity and its ideological concerns, we can begin by mentioning its usage in classic Japanese culture. The first known written record of the word *furusato* can be found within the first anthology of poetry, the *Man’yōshū* (eighth century), in two of its poems: one, with a contemptuous intent (Book IV, n.723-24), the other alluding to the poet’s home village and to feelings of longing and nostalgia for it (Book X, n.1937-38). In a latter anthology of poetry, the *Kokinshū* (tenth century), the word *furusato* appears more frequently (e.g., in poems n. 42, n. 111, n. 321, n. 325). Here, as it happens today, its use is poetic, that is, it is employed to evoke earlier capitals, without mentioning their names, but essentially to invite a nostalgic recollection of particular places.

But a further point must be made. As suggested above, the tradition here associated with the notion of *furusato* is, in fact, not the tradition ‘of’ *furusato*, but the tradition ‘conveyed, or embodied by’ *furusato*; and as such, it is not necessarily exhausted by the word itself. As a matter of fact, what concerns us here, *viz.*, the pivotal character of places and their existential, moral or poetic dimensions, exceeds the very notion of *furusato*. Not only the *Man’yōshū* opens with poems that describe a ritualistic observation

of the beauty and prosperity of the different places under imperial rule (jp., *kunimi* 国見, ‘land-viewing’), but is also rich in travel verses, through which a kind of poetic mythos of the very act of travelling to specific places is developed (Horton 2015). The poetic potentiality of places, developed in the *Man’yōshū* during the Nara period (710-794 CE), will then be echoed in a rhetorical technique called *utamakura* 歌枕. *Utamakura* refers to the use of famous place names, which due to their geographical and seasonal characteristics operate as to summon up in poems a specific emotional atmosphere (Kamens 1997; Shimizu 1981). To a large extent, what interested the poet and those who received the poem was not the purely tangible dimension of a given place, but its essence and the whole existential atmosphere that was put to work by means of its name.⁹

The religious parallel to this poetic of places can be seen in pilgrimage and the important role it plays in Japanese society since at least the eighth century (Hoshino and Reader 1997, 273). Differing from the Western modes of pilgrimage, which are generally conceived as a single journey towards one major site, Japanese pilgrimages are conceived as circuits through which one visits as many *arigatai basho* ありがたい場所 (‘efficacious places’) as possible, and perhaps include some other places outside the regular circuit. Developed in the classical period, this practice of visiting as many places as possible while traveling has become ingrained in Japanese society and is now “the basic pattern of contemporary Japanese travel” (Hoshino and Reader 1997, 291). Assuming that cultural logics do not develop from the vacuum, it is only reasonable to conclude that the role played by contemporary *furusato* in tourism should not be simply dismissed as a modern invention but is a phenomenon with very similar outlines in other realms of Japanese society and throughout its history.

The Heian period (794-1185CE) can be considered as an era of shaping and consolidation of this quest for place, as well as the summoning up of an affective and even existential relationship with it. This is a period known for highly codified and systematised poetry and poetic culture, through which particular places and the natural world were grasped and made intelligible through associations between, on one side, atmospheric phenomena, flowers, fruits or bird’s and insect’s sounds, and on the other, human moods and emotions (see Shirane 2012, 25–55). It was also during this period that

⁹ Famous examples include: the reference to Naniwa Bay to evoke a landscape of reeds; the city of Akashi to evoke the autumn moon; Yoshino and Shiga for the cherry blossoms; or Mount Tatsuta to evoke the atmosphere of autumn leaves.

– due to the implementation of cultural and urban models imported from China – the capital (present-day Kyoto) gradually dissociated itself from the rural world, leaving the elites mostly confined within their palaces. Thus, although the development of poetry in the Heian period is undoubtedly also a consequence of the import of Chinese cultural models, the intense self-identification with nature that it conveys develops mainly as a direct consequence of a feeling of displacement and loss of contact with the natural and rural worlds (Berque 1997, 82; Shirane 2012, 203). The need to return to this contact with nature is at the origin of what Haruo Shirane (2012, 1–13) has called "secondary nature": the reproduction of nature by way of gardens within palaces, or in various types of paintings, scrolls and screens, furniture, clothing or poetry – a beautiful and harmonious nature that works as a substitute for the “primary nature”.¹⁰

At the end of the Heian period, the discourse on the place of nature in Buddhist thought (*sōmoku* 草木, 'vegetation and trees') – which in fact had already been taking place since the sixth or seventh century in China, reaching Japan by the hands of the monks Saichō (767–822) and Kūkai (774–835) – finds its highest expression in the twelfth century in the poetry of the Buddhist poet and monk Saigyō (1118–1190). In an era largely marked by corruption, constant civil wars and famines, Saigyō substantially transforms the view of nature and mountain villages, ascribing them a soteriological power (Tollini 2020). His poetry's atmosphere articulates the need for a topological, moral and spiritual refuge with the act of wandering through mountains and its hidden villages (*yamazato* 山里), which worked as existential shelters (e.g., Allen 1995; LaFleur 1989).

As urban areas grow and direct contact with non-urban areas decreases, the ‘mountain’ theme develops into the broader idea of ‘landscape’. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the contact with European civilisations (such as the Portuguese and the Dutch) gives rise to different aesthetic sensibilities and gradually changes how Japanese artists depict landscapes in painting (Tomō 2003, 33–36, 49–52). In the pre-modern period (seventeenth to nineteenth century), emerges the term *meisho* 名所, ‘famous places’. The *meisho* were mostly celebrated places that should be visited mainly due to their poetic value (places which had been consecrated in classical poems),

¹⁰ The devising of a “secondary nature” is not only a characteristic of the classical period but also plays an influential role on the understanding of time and space throughout Japanese history at least until the pre-modern period (Shirane 2012, 4, 9).

historical relevance (where ancient battles had taken place) or religious meaning (where important temples or shrines were located).

In the late nineteenth century, and in opposition to the country's abrupt and unrestrained industrialisation and transformation, the search for purity and spirituality in a supposed original nature developed nationalistic overtones as it was articulated with the ideas of 'nation' and 'national character'. Shiga Shigetaka's classic work *Nihon Fūkeiron* (*Essay on Japanese Landscapes*, 1894) embodies an ideological discourse in which Japanese landscapes (especially non-urban), in addition to their unique geological features, are praised for their aura of purity and elegance – being thus superior to Western landscapes (Berque 1997, 172–75; Gavin 2010).

Shiga Shigetaka's case seem to lead almost directly to the nostalgia associated with *furusato* and its different manifestations in contemporary Japanese society. If we now add the pervasiveness of *furusato* in contemporary society, as presented at the beginning, to this brief historical survey, a question must be asked: what do all these historical illustrations and *furusato* share that is crucial for this paper's general argument on tradition? They share a more or less defined and identifiable *subject matter*; a specific existential concern, *viz.* a quest for place, which seems to underly its various historical manifestations.

Thus, it goes without saying that the way in which flowers and birds are summoned by classical poetry is still far from the soteriological reading that Saigyō affords to mountains and their villages; that the *utamakura*, the *arigatai basho* or the *meisho* do not overlap and do not manifest themselves with the same outlines as the geological and ideological landscapes of Shiga Shigetaka. The point is that across these examples and the contemporary *furusato*, in its various manifestations, runs a common theme: with different forms and outlines, in different historical and philosophical contexts and employing a different rhetoric, one can see how Japanese society seems to have been historically inclined to weave (at least partial) meaning into their existence by bestowing a vital role to places, affording them powerful poetic, religious, existential or emotional meanings.¹¹ Underlying both past and contemporary examples is a deep and clearly

¹¹ Parallel contemporary examples of this strong connection with places can be found in the notion of *satoyama* ('mountain villages'), which carries an affective meaning close to that of *furusato* but is mostly concerned with the sustainable relationship between humans and the environment (Knight 2010; Takeuchi et al. 2003); and the notion of *machi-zukuri* ('community-making') which designates

marked historical concern in praising, *being-in* or self-identifying with places. Moreover, it is precisely this ontological role of place as a bedrock for existential meaning that sustains the powerful association between rural/non-urban places and meaningful practices and relations in the revitalization of rural areas in contemporary Japan (Manzenreiter, Lutzeler, and Polak-Rotman 2020; Solomon 2019; Traphagan 2020; Thelen 2022).

Indeed, as Robertson aptly described (1988, 497; 1998, 119), the contemporary meaning attached to the idea of *furusato* seems to offer a 'home' to Japanese people who, as a result of a hasty urbanisation in the post-war period, have felt "existentially homeless" – and this is as true when Robertson first wrote it as it is now. However, as we have seen, this quest for an existential home does not arise *ex nihilo* in the modern world in the form of *furusato*. If approached by means of the idea of tradition herein proposed, *furusato* can then be understood as a contemporary manifestation of a concern, issue or *subject matter* that have recurrently emerged throughout the history of Japanese culture and thought.

Furusato, tradition and the ontological role of place: concluding remarks

Japanese historical concern with places articulates, and thus takes as *already given*, that which only in recent decades was more explicitly argued by some authors (Basso 1996; Malpas 2018; Seamon and Mugerauer 1985), namely, the ontological role of place in the constitution of meaning and experience. That is, that place is not merely something “encountered ‘in’ experience, but rather place *is integral to the very structure and possibility of experience*” (Malpas 2018, 31 emphasis in the original). Thus, Jeff Malpas (2018, 34) continues, “one does not first have a subject that apprehends certain features of the world in terms of the idea of place; rather, the structure of subjectivity is given in and through the structure of place”. In other words, places (with its geological, historical and cultural features) are always the very ground on which meaning, both social and personal, is engendered and constituted. With its contemporary echo in the idea of *furusato* and its various ramifications, one can discern a “culturally logical” (Sahlins 1999, 409) orientation to ground the understanding of being in a topological dimension: in a

communitarian initiatives undertaken across all Japan in order to implement small-scale changes in local areas (Sorensen and Funck 2007; Sorensen et al. 2009).

certain sense, being needs a 'place' on the basis of which its self-understanding first takes root and constitutes itself.¹²

In this pre-subjective, existential mapping that the idea of *furusato* contemporarily affords, the past is more than an extinguished memory artificially rekindled by the materiality of places but seems to constitute itself as something that addresses us from the future, and therefore that moves us in its direction. The way in which *furusato* permeates and is summoned up in Japanese society and culture prevents us, therefore, from taking it simply as a peculiar relic of the past, stubbornly preserved in order to accomplish some identitarian, political or essentialist purpose. When approaching the notion of *furusato* outside the perspective in which it is generally portrayed in the social sciences, what emerges is not a mere artificial preservation of something that existed in the past, much less an 'invention', but a continuous gesture of remaking past issues and dialectics and incorporating them into present-day challenges, concerns and hopes. The movement that springs from it is progressive and not regressive; it does not close itself in an idealised reunification with itself and with what it has been but opens up to what is to come; although not totally disconnected from the past, through it spring different forms and possibilities of bestowing intelligibility and dealing practically with human existence. And this is why we cannot uproot and divorce it from the "effort to exist, [...] the desire to be" (Ricoeur 1970, 46) that permeate culture and the lines of thought that are woven into it. It is also the idea of *furusato*, in inhabiting language and culture, that sets that very language and culture in motion – it embodies, in part, such commitment and desire to exist.

This paper's main argument was that the tradition contemporarily embodied in the notion of *furusato* is not restricted to – and therefore cannot be exhausted by – a functionalist or historicist assessment of the concept itself and the visible semblance of

¹² Although outside of this paper's scope, one can argue that this concern with place as a ground for being took a more philosophical, figurative dimension in the thought of two of the main philosophers in modern Japan, Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945) and Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960). Both give clear topological outlines to their philosophies in order to account for a relationship between 'self' and 'world' that is not solipsistic or subjective. The first, grounds that experience in a 'field', *basho* 場所 (literally, 'place'), which first envelops and unites subject and object (see Kopf 2003; Krummer and Shigenori 2012); the second, examines such relationship in terms of that which a given geological and cultural environment, *fūdo* 風土 (translated as *milieu*) affords to the individuals inhabiting it (see Berque 2004; Johnson 2016).

its forms. As argued above, to understand tradition is to comprehend and interpret that which shows itself on the horizon of intelligibility it discloses. Within that horizon, dwell a series of questions or concerns together with a rhetoric of their own through which they are thematised and made manifest. Thus, it is not the notion of *furusato* itself or a specific place that is relevant, but the possibilities of action, thought or existence that it uncovers and sets in motion, as if in a projection into the future. It lives in and through language and culture, in and through the plurality of its meanings: it is a specific place, but also a type of place; it manifests as an individual affective memory but persists as a shared feeling; it leads us to the uniqueness of places but brings us back to the topological constitution of human beings. Giving a contemporary form to a historical, poetical and existential concern with places, the tradition conveyed by *furusato* encapsulates in itself an existential horizon where being is articulated between what came from the past, the needs of the present and the expectations for the future. This is, after all, how tradition – as more than the formal, tangible aspects of a given idea, practice or technique – comes to be within human worlds, how it operates and what it *does*. In fact, what tradition does, as that which, albeit always differently, tends to persist, is to disclose a culturally specific horizon of intelligibility wherein human beings can move and bestow meaning on themselves, others, and the world. Tradition does not determine human activity but ensures meaningful pathways for action.

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