

HISTORICAL TRADITION

PROCESSUAL NATURE OF SOCIETY

Society only exists through time. It is constituted with temporality.

In the present there are vestiges of the past that show the connection between past-present. Society has a continuous existence.

This connection with the past is the base of tradition.

The past never disappears completely, there are causal mechanisms that reinforce it and join past and present and future:

CONNECTIONS PAST-PRESENT THROUGH...

- **Material mechanism:** survival of objects, organizations... which are inherited. They say us how the things were.
- **Ideal mechanism:** through the memory, experiences and the communication one remembers (or it is preserved) the past (collective memory in museums, libraries, archives ;...). Beliefs, symbols, values, norms, rules, etc. are inherited.

There is a narrow relationship between ideal and material mechanisms.

The past exists in the present:

- **Objectively:** through objects that are conserved.
- **Subjectively:** through ideas or culture coming from the past, values transmitted by people of other generations.

Through the **invented tradition**, sometimes we receive a non-real but invented past, sometimes constructed deliberately to **legitimize** political actions, for example.

This type of invented tradition can be used, according to Hobsbawm:

- To symbolize and to express social cohesion of communities or nations
- To legitimize status, institutions, authority
- To socialize in values, norms, rules of conduct

Although they do not correspond with the reality, they can cause important effects on the reality. Remember the **Thomas's Theory**:

**"If people define as real certain situations,
these are real in their consequences".**

There is continuity between last-present-future. And, somehow, exists a causal connection between past-present, although we cannot promise there is only a single cause or factor to explain this evolution.

CONCEPT OF TRADITION

The tradition would represent the set of things that we inherited of the past, which they remain of some form in the present (of ideal, material, objective or subjective form) and that maintains intimate links with the present.

This inheritance can be:

- Macro: historical inheritance
- Meso: inheritance of the Micro group
- Micro: personal inheritance

"Traditions do not reproduce nor are re-elaborated of independent form. Only human beings who live, know and wish can represent the traditions and modify them".

The traditions are created and re-created by human beings.

THE ORIGIN AND THE CHANGE OF THE TRADITION

The traditions change

They can disappear, reappear, etc. according to the circumstances in which take place. For example: ethnic and nationalistic traditions in the East of Europe and the Soviet Union, after the suppression of communist regimes, etc.

Birth (authentic or not):

- **From down:** spontaneous, involuntary,... (Population).
- **From above:** through the imposition of individuals with power or influence

Changes in the traditions:

- **Quantitative:** number of followers or people agree with them
- **Qualitative:** contents of the tradition, ideas, values, symbols...

Why the changes take place:

- **Creativity**, originality, eagerness of innovation and improvement, imagination, human intuition (psychological aspects)
- **Questioning of the traditions**, for example, by infection or discovery of new things about the past, or when something is false, or useless
- **Competition or fight of visions** on the world within a same society (confronted societies or cultures)

FUNCTIONS OF THE TRADITION, SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL NECESSITIES THAT SATISFY

1. It transmits **the wisdom of the past**: beliefs, norms, values, objects... (Patterns, models of social organizations, societies of reference...)
2. **Legitimize** institutions, organizations, codes that we share...
3. **Reinforce symbols** of the collective identity, fortifies and invigorates loyalties to groups, nations... (Ritual, ceremonies, clothes...: University)
4. They are useful as **valve of escape** as opposed to the dissatisfactions of the present. They represent the pride by the past (for example, in societies in crises, dominated and invaded; "we were important in the past, we wrote de history")

DISFUNCTIONALS OR NONBENEFICIAL ASPECTS FOR THE SOCIETIES OR THEIR MEMBERS

1. To avoid or to **restrict the creativity** or innovation: social stability
2. **Stability**, a total confidence in the previous forms of life
3. Sometimes traditions contain **destructive ideologies**, harmful ones, tragedies, discriminations... that destroy more than constructs
4. Habits or customs which are **non useful**

IN THE IDEOLOGICAL LAND

- If the change is fomented: society oriented to the present, anti-traditionalistic future or (**progressive**)
- The traditionalistic point of view (a **regressive society**)

Exercises:

- Write about an important tradition in your country. How is the connection between past and present?
- Could you apply the Thomas' Theorem to any tradition?. Write an example.