Etymology and Definition:

The origin of the word tradition can be traced back to the Latin noun *traditio* (handing over), derived from the verb *tradere* (handover, deliver). The word *traditio* corresponds closely to the Greek word *paradosis*, which also has the same meaning. In ancient times, Latin and Greek theologians used *traditio* and *paradosis*, in the sense of “teaching” or “instruction”, very often to denote the body of teachings preserved and handed down by the church as “the catholic faith.” Thus “transmitting” and “handing over” had been the fundamental meaning of the initial Greek word *Paradosis* and Latin *tradere*.

As the tradition played a critical role in the ancient society, there had been a continuous endeavor to express and pass on the transmitted beliefs and customs in a specific form and expression to others. This process is characterized by a tension between loyalty and creativity; thus by an urge for identification with tradition and the need to make it relevant in response to the prevailing (mostly changing) conditions.

Originally, the word “tradition had a religious meaning. The French “Robert” dictionary defines it as a “religious or moral doctrine or practice that is handed down over the centuries by the word of the mouth or by example”. Later

*Kālidāsa*: All is not good, merely because it is old; not is a poem to worthy for it is new. Wise men accept anything after scrutinizing carefully; an ignorant person has his judgment guided by the opinion of others.
on with the covering of knowledge, morals, the arts and so on, tradition came to mean "a way or pattern or thinking, doing or taking action that is inherited from the past". Thus tradition in addition to being a product of past is also a contemporary reality. The Dictionary of Ethnology gives the following definition of tradition: "that which persists from the past into the present, where it is handed on and remains active and accepted by those receiving it, who hand it down from generation to generation". Webster’s Third New International Unabridged Dictionary, defines tradition as "the process of handing down information, opinions, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example; transmission of knowledge and institutions through successive generations without written instruction".

The Micropaedia of the Encyclopaedia Britannica defines tradition as "the aggregate of customs, beliefs and practices that give continuity to a culture, civilization, or social group and thus shape its views ..." (1986), leaving out any mention of oral transmission. Perhaps older and more conservative definitions contained oral transmission as a necessary part, but newer views have moved away from this perspective.

Nature and Characteristics:
Armstrong has the following observations about the nature of tradition:

(i) A tradition is a series of acts; by human beings or perhaps by some higher animals. He calls them as the 'enactments' of the tradition. These acts are intentional acts, things done on purpose, things which spring from the will. Whenever and wherever a tradition exists in a certain society or social group, then there enactment of that tradition is must. There can be no tradition without enactment.

(ii) The enactment of a tradition involves certain regularities of conduct.

(iii) Enactment of a Tradition are (relatively) free acts: Intentional acts are of various kinds, of which some are unsuitable to enactments of
a tradition, specially whenever the person believes the act to be necessary, in some way, then the act is unsuitable. He says that such a necessity is usually a matter of a means necessary to achieve some desired end or avoid some undesired consequence. Since enactments of a tradition are not enforced hence they are free acts. By 'free acts' he does not mean 'uncaused', but simply 'uncoerced act', an act is uncoerced if there is no special compulsion, from men or from the world, to act in that way.

(iv) Tradition is a social affair: In a tradition there is always something which must be handed on. This needs a society. Tradition is necessarily a social affair.

(v) Tradition involves the causal mechanism of imitation. In the passing on of a tradition from one individual to another, the causal mechanism involved is imitation, that too of a fairly sophisticated sort.

(vi) Tradition can neither be adopted nor does it spread, but simply handed on Armstrong explains that although the result is that the successors in the tradition imitate their predecessors; their predecessors and/or the social group generally are not simply passive but in some way encourage this imitation. Hence a tradition cannot be instituted; at best it can only be encouraged or fostered.

(vii) Tradition always involves a normative element. The predecessors present their traditional conduct to their successors as in some way admirable; so may the public generally.

Though it is very clear that tradition refers to an inherited body of customs and beliefs but it is equally difficult to talk about tradition in terms of boundaries and essences as it embodies a process of continuity as well as discontinuity, which precludes any final word on this subject.
Tradition: The Ontological Roots

Being basically a moral and social concept, tradition also plays a vital role as an ontological and explanatory one. In order to explain the features of various works, actions and practices one has to locate them in the context of a particular tradition. The concept of tradition applies to every sphere of human culture including science, arts, letters, education, law, politics and religion since culture itself depends on teaching and learning which presuppose a tradition i.e. received from the hands, lips or the examples of the others. Tradition, structure, heritage or paradigm is thus integral to the understanding of human condition.

Tradition penetrates every sphere of human life and culture. The process of socialization itself presumes an inherited set of shared understandings. This is not to say that tradition is an unchangeable category that determines or even limits later performances but it can be extended, modified or even rejected in a way that might make it anything but constructive of beliefs and actions of the concerned people.

It is a common practice in hermeneutic tradition to talk of tradition as integral to everything the individual ever does. It seems valid until we consider it as a necessary part of the background to everything any one believes or does. But it is not a necessary presence in all that people believe and do. Tradition is unavoidable as a starting point, not as a final destination.

Essentialists equate tradition with fixed essences to which they ascribe variations. They define traditions in terms of an unchanging core; that appears in different outer garbs from time to time and even from person to person. They might identify a tradition with a group of ideas widely shared by a number of individuals although no particular idea was held by all of them. Or they might identify a tradition with a group of ideas that was passed down from generation to generation, changing a little each time, so that no single idea persists from start to finish.
The bearer of tradition might think of it as a unified whole possessing an essential core, but this is not the case. In fact, a tradition is composed of a variety of parts, each of which can be reflected upon, and so accepted, modified, or rejected, by itself. There is a constant urge among people to improve their heritage by making it more coherent, more accurate, and more relevant to contemporary issues, so rather than accepting a tradition as a whole they often do respond selectively to it; they accept some parts of it, modify other, and reject others. Furthermore, tradition is an outcome of a long historical process that works through others on the people. Individuals pick up their initial beliefs and practices by listening to and watching other people, including their parents, educators, the authors they read, and their peers. They in turn modify and pass this always-changing set of beliefs and practices down to the next generation. Beliefs, practices and hence tradition persists and develops through time as it passes from generation to generation.

The bearer of a tradition might think of it as a unified whole possessing an essential core. In fact, however, it will be composed of a variety of parts, each of which can be reflected upon, and so accepted, modified, or rejected, by itself. Individuals can respond selectively to the different parts of the tradition they acquire as an inheritance. Indeed, because people usually want to improve their heritage by making it more coherent, more accurate, and more relevant to contemporary issues, they often do respond selectively to it; they accept some parts of it, modify others, and reject others. Traditions change as they are transmitted from person to person. Tradition is an influence that works through others on people, rather than a defining presence in all people believe and do. Individuals pick up their initial beliefs and practices by listening to and watching other people, including their parents, educators, the authors they read, and their peers. The learning process requires teachers who initiate and pupils who learn typically each individual will fulfil both of these roles at some point in time. The teachers once will have been pupils who acquired their initial beliefs and practices from earlier teachers, and the pupils later will become teachers who
provide future pupils with initial beliefs and practices. It is because beliefs and practices thus pass from generation to generation that we can talk of teachers initiating pupils into a tradition that persists and develops through time. Although pupils receive their inheritance from teachers during fairly brief moments in time, these moments always represent the culmination of a larger historical process. The teacher who transmits the inheritance is just the most recent link in a long chain of people who began as pupils and ended as teachers, passing an always changing set of beliefs and practices down to each other. A long historical sequence lies behind the comparatively brief moment when a new pupil is initiated into a tradition.

**Tradition: Beliefs and Practices**

Tradition is a set of beliefs which are connected to each other both temporally as well as conceptually. The connection between belief and practice must be consistent and coherent. Both belief and practice must form an intelligible whole. There must be a minimum level of consistency between the beliefs and actions of an individual. Therefore, the tradition could not guide someone how to move until both parts of tradition i.e., beliefs and practice are integrated into a coherent whole. The same argument can be given for the inner consistency of the beliefs and practices in its sustentative content even if it also does so in a number of their other features, including an approach to certain objects, a mode of presentation, or an expression of allegiance. It must be noted that only a coherent set of beliefs and practices could provide a newcomer an initial entry into the world. It is fine that beliefs and practices in a tradition must show a degree of conceptual coherence but this coherence may not be absolute. Tradition is not just a set of random beliefs and actions which individuals normally held. If, for example, historians discovered that various people believed both that God came to earth and that our souls survived death, they could not talk of a tradition composed of these beliefs alone. But if the
historians take these beliefs along with other beliefs such as that Christ, the son of God came to earth and taught his followers to have faith in afterlife, and then they could talk of a Christian tradition that is a set of consistent set of beliefs.

It may be noted here that though the beliefs within a tradition must be related both temporally and conceptually, their substantive content is not important. All beliefs and practices must have their roots in tradition as tradition is inevitable. They must do so whether they are aesthetic or practical, sacred or secular, legendary or factual, pre-modern or scientific, valued because of their lineage or their reasonableness. It is not important whether they are transmitted in oral form or in a written form. Furthermore, such details like whether pupils recognize them on another’s authority or through the vision of how to derive them from first principles are also unimportant. All beliefs and all practices must arise against the background of tradition. Any scientist trained in modern science does not work out appropriate procedures, reasoning, and accepted truths by themselves. Instead, they are initiated into a tradition of science by their teachers, and only after they have been thus initiated do they proceed to advance science through their own work. It cannot be denied that these scientists later can certainly challenge the accepted beliefs but they do so against the background of a tradition into which they already have been initiated.

Any description of a tradition will be incomplete without identifying a set of associated beliefs and habits that intentionally or unintentionally transferred from one generation to the next. Furthermore, if anyone wants to place oneself in a tradition then he or she has to defend a particular description of the temporal and conceptual relationships between the beliefs and practices of those one sees as his predecessors. Our interpretation and understanding, its development and orientation, all are dependent on the experience and insight of our predecessors. Today’s science is the fruit of over centuries of controlled scientific investigation and deduction.
Tradition: The Immanent Principles of Universal Order

Tradition is the handing on of a complex of established means of facilitating our understanding of the immanent principles of universal order, since it has not been given to mankind to understand unaided the meaning of his existence. The term tradition can be understood in terms of the spiritual relationship between a master and a pupil. Intended for the general mass of the faithful, the doctrine split into three elements, dogma for the reason, morals for the mind, and rites and ceremonies for the body. We recognize the privileged centre as possessing an inexhaustibly rich store of possibilities which are mediated to us by means of symbols.

If we visualize tradition in its distorted sense, it means nothing but a dead weight. However, it should not be taken in the sense that a specific tradition did not contain timeless values and truths at the time it originated. But with time, its true meaning may be forgotten, the rituals involved may be mechanically repeated and thus the tradition becomes deadened. But it should not be forgotten that tradition might involve a meaningful truth, an experience, a custom that was valid at a certain time in history, under certain conditions and circumstances. But to continue the same customs under completely different circumstances where the meaning of this tradition has been lost is therefore a process of death, rather than of life. To carry on the tradition with no fresh thought, submitting oneself to senseless blind habits that fails to elucidate through acts or attitudes the divine truth contained in the tradition in question, signifies death. To be alive implies a dynamic thinking process, awareness. Tradition can be an intensely meaningful reality, or it can be a meaningless, dead repetition of the past that no longer has any application in the now.

In real terms, Tradition implies the sustenance of faith in eternal truths and values. When a cosmic power manifests itself in human life, those who experience the inevitable beauty, goodness and rightness of this cosmic power wants to continue its expression. Any true tradition is a sustained experience of
the same dynamic aliveness time and again. Tradition in its true sense implies adherence to eternal values or to certain aspects of these values, depending on which particular tradition we have in mind.

It should be noted here that human responses to tradition are deeply embedded in the personality. All aspects of society are influenced by each individual's attitude to tradition. A person may be aware of the true sense of tradition in the present situation or he or she may be just repeating an act out of habit. Now there is a great deal of difference between these two situations. Politics and religion are very clearly influenced by and also reflect a specific society's attitude to tradition. Tradition can said to be a body of undefined teaching. The contents and limits of this teaching are not available for inspection or study. This is in contrast to the Holy Scriptures, which anyone can read and examine for himself. If a claim is made that a particular teaching is biblical, anyone can verify or refute my claim by checking out the Bible.

**Tradition: The Unwritten Story**

Traditions are "unwritten". One cannot go to a library and read them for oneself. Since it is not possible to have pure experiences, therefore, we must necessarily construe our personal experiences in terms of a prior bundle of theories. It is not possible to arrive at beliefs through experiences unless we already have a prior set of beliefs. The outcome of a set of beliefs out of experiences presupposes a set of beliefs in terms of which we can read out our experiences. Therefore, we can not explain a belief by reference to the pure experiences of the relevant individual. All our experiences can take us to beliefs only because we already have access to sets of belief in the form of the traditions of our community. Through their participation in traditions individuals manage to acquire their beliefs.

It may not be difficult to understand now this relevant point that the inevitable influence of tradition does not mean that there is no human agency. It
is perfectly alright that individuals must begin their journey against the background of tradition. But it is equally true that later they can modify that tradition. Although they are inescapably influenced by it, they are not determined by it. It is equally true that the ability to develop traditions is an essential part of our being in the world. In our day to day life we face novel situations that require us apply tradition in afresh way. Every time we attempt to apply a tradition, we have to reflect on it. We have to try to understand it afresh in the light of the relevant circumstances. Through such reflection, we necessarily open it up to possible innovation. In this way, the human agency certainly plays its important role. Therefore, both social backdrop of a person as well as the human agency plays the significant role. Therefore, the concept of tradition suggests that a social inheritance comes to each individual who, through their agency, then can give a new shape to this inheritance even as they pass it on to the succeeding generations.

**Tradition and Society**

The general understanding of tradition presumes that a society is identified by its traditions, by a core of oral teachings handed down from the past. The continuity of the past with the present decides the very identity of a society. According to Shils, "It would not be a society if it did not have duration. The mechanisms of reproduction give it the duration which permits it to be defined as a society." Shils does not claim that the legacy of the past is immutable. In fact, he stresses that an essential identity persists over time throughout modifications. In a section titled "The Identity of Societies through Time," Shils observes that in spite of Ceaseless change, "each society remains the same society. Its members do not wake up one morning and discover they are no longer living in, let us say British society." This unity over time derives from a shared tradition: "Memory leaves an objective deposit in tradition."
is this chain of memory and of the tradition which assimilates it that enables societies to go on reproducing themselves while also changing.\(^4\)

The renowned sociologist Edward Shils in his book on tradition highlights some central tenets of tradition. He says, "In its barest, most elementary sense, it means simply a traditum; it is anything which is handed down from the past to the present."\(^5\) The word traditum refers to "the transmitted thing", the materials, whatever they are, which are handed down. To distinguish between fashion and tradition, the tradita should be handed down at least three generations.\(^6\) Traditions are constantly undergoing changes, but the changes are not total. Certain essential elements remain constant while other elements change.\(^7\) Traditional and untraditional elements are intertwined.\(^8\) In spite of change and reinterpretation by current tradition bearers, there is frequently a sense of identity and filiation with earlier tradition bearers.\(^9\) He also mentions the important role of folklorists in developing the concept of tradition.\(^10\)

Shils and certain other scholars have refined the concept of tradition, the one "ineluctable" fact, to use a word that Shils favors, is that the past leaves some objectively definable inheritance, a substantive content.\(^11\) He recognizes that traditions usually have ideological content. Furthermore, the views of the past may be modified through self-conscious interpretation. He mentions that the "perceived" past is "plastic" and "capable of being retrospectively reformed by human beings living in the present".\(^12\) He also recognizes that nationalist movements quite often transform the traditions they attempt to revive.\(^13\) But he differentiates real and "fictitious" traditionality.\(^14\) He put forth a counter position to the nationalistic version of tradition, for example, with "actually existing syncretic traditions".\(^15\) He gave a comprehensive description of the received understanding of tradition. But still like his predecessors, tradition in Shils's framework has the qualities of givenness and boundedness. Despite the assertion of Shils that tradition continually changes, it is equally true that in his writings, a real, essential tradition exists apart from interpretations of that tradition. Tradition is not something fixed and rigid. It is a mixture of past and
interpretations of the past in the light of present. Undeniably, traditional action may refer to the past, but to "about" or to refer to is a symbolic rather than natural relationship, and as such it is characterized by discontinuity as well as by continuity.\(^{16}\) It is by now a well recognized fact that cultural revivals change the traditions they attempt to revive. We argue here that the invention of tradition is not restricted to such self-conscious projects. Instead, the continuous reconstruction of tradition is a facet of all social life that is not natural but symbolically constituted.

**Idea of Tradition: Dharmender Goel’s Observations**

(1) Talking of tradition one can be led to hypostatize or reify such abstract elements as meaning, sensibility or ideology. If ever we had an instance of fallacy of misplaced concreteness, it is here in reflecting about tradition which manifests truly only in tangible artifacts, acts, or words. Values, laws, institutions are constructions. Only poems, temple rituals, songs, sculpture, stories exist, but do they belong to mankind in the same sense? The modes of their expression are very divergent.

(2) One thing remarkable about the ciphers that nay tradition employs to posit or sediments it unreal world of meaning is that these ciphers in themselves acquire values and are treated as sacred by the custodians of the tradition, say the invocative hymns of *Yajñā*, the person of the priest, book or the possessions of a great hero and master. In time these ‘tangibles’ alone come to get invested with value rather than the experiential content that ciphers were needed to posit. In time its sheen and texture get final coloration from such incidental accretions. This transfer of emphasis in the objectification of tradition is worthy of analysis.

(3) We have already categorically rejected any linear interpretation of tradition in terms of cultural fragments as made of science, technology,
theme, style, ornament, moral codes etc. Yet, it cannot be understood in isolation of all of them either. The passing mood, the ephemeral sensibility, the social trivia of either the creator or the critic finds no room in tradition. Still more the impersonal desiccated rules forming a closed formalism or cut and dried statement about these also cannot reveal the tradition? No they cannot. It shall be wrong to foreclose a tradition to mean only a finite body of rules, illustrations, specific art-objects. Tradition assimilates and enjoins comprehension of severed fragments that are very intractable. It must be having sense of haunting vision invested with spill over halo.

He concludes that “a TRADITION is what self-conscious thought reaffirms, highlights, and employs to guide one’s strivings for excellence within, of course, one’s very limited powers. Nothing else.”

“Traditions are evolving entities that play an instrumental role in our understanding. Traditions help us to explain a particular action or belief by relating it to past actions or beliefs. It is wrong to understand tradition as some fixed entity that enable us to evaluate particular beliefs and actions against an authentic set of experiences, actions, and beliefs.

There is no tradition that can be completely defined in terms of some particular set of beliefs, experiences, or actions. Historians must define traditions in terms of beliefs that were related to one another in an appropriate manner. Historians can identify a tradition only through a study of the beliefs and actions of the individuals within it. Only the beliefs and actions of individuals can acquaint them with traditions; only inference from the beliefs and actions of individuals can enable them to explore the nature of traditions; and only checks against the beliefs and actions of individuals can provide them with tests of their claims about traditions.

Dharmender Goel thus observes that “The nature of ‘tradition’ could be seen to function in the following three scenarios:
(a) in the interior struggle of identity of an Individual human being who carves himself at least partly by self conscious selection of materials from his historic milieu;

(b) in interpreting and understanding arts and cultural norms, archetypal themes, treatments that display the gradual unfoldment of a sensibility that realizes itself in the former; and

(c) an objective system of a whole society that it perpetually redisCOVERs as it moves ahead, the tradition holding the flux through this bridge that joins what is believed to have happened in the past of the society to what are its nodal current perceptions and the lineaments of its incoming future”.

A number of ideas emanate from the analysis of the concept of tradition. It has both a vertical and a horizontal dimension. It means that the tradition consists of not only continuities, i.e., what is "handed down" through time but also consistencies, i.e., similarities in behavior across space. It is not individual but social or communal. Some aspects of culture are considered traditions, and value judgments are made about them. People learn, perform and actively transmit some traditions while only passively responding to others. Traditions define events, mark major passages in life. They are used to express, reinforce and promote group identity. Traditions are symbolic constructions of the past in the present for the future. From the conservative point of view, 'tradition' is viewed as something that remains relatively constant and is endowed with a timeless authority. The tradition must not change if its integrity is to be maintained. Those who are criticizing the groups for changing their tradition often take the stance that any departure from the tradition is a betrayal. Another standpoint is that tradition is something which should relate to the present rather than the past. It is an organic process with change or evolution as an integral part of its nature as opposed to a fixed entity which, from their perspective, cannot avoid eventual ossification. According to this standpoint, tradition is something that is generated by individuals and their responses to a changing socio-cultural climate, rather than something which pre-exists as a product of
some mythical collective 'folk'. An average mean of these two positions suggests that the traditions handed down by the elders should be respected and the integrity of the cultural heritage should be given due value. At the same time the tradition must keep on moving forward and developing contemporary forms of expression. Only then any tradition can said to be a living entity.

Thus according to George F. McLean, "The cumulative result of the extended process of learning and testing constitutes tradition, e.g. the historical and prophetic books of the Bible are an extended concrete account of the process of the people's discovery of wisdom in interaction with the divine". He further says, "Tradition is, then, not simply every thing that ever happened; it is rather what appears significant. It does not subsist in itself, but must be described properly and by different voices in order to draw out its different aspects. It is not an object in itself, but a rich source from which multiple themes can be drawn according to the motivation and interest of the inquirer".

The beliefs we adopt and the actions we perform are always under the backdrop of our social inheritance. Certainly people adopt their beliefs against a background of traditions. I come to formulate my beliefs in a world where other people already have expressed their beliefs. At this point, strong structuralists suggest that traditions, structures, paradigms, etc. determine the beliefs people might adopt so the actions they might attempt.

**Tradition: The Contingent and Evolving Entity**

Tradition forms the inevitable background to human life. Tradition is the background, the foundation on which all others rest. Although tradition constitutes the inevitable background to all we say and do, but not a constitutive presence in all we say and do. Traditions are contingent and evolving entities that operate through teachers as influences on pupils, where the pupils then can extend and modify them in unlimited ways. The tradition, therefore, explains the set of beliefs and practices people carry on. It does not explain why they went
on to change these initial beliefs and practices in the ways they did. But it can be fairly said that pupils sometimes remain faithful to their inheritance, they sometimes hold to beliefs and practices that correspond to a tradition imparted to them by others. For instance, when pupils learn something from a teacher, one way of explaining the beliefs and actions of the pupils is to say that they learnt them from a teacher. Thus, historians sometimes can explain why people believe or do something simply by saying that they learnt it from teachers who imparted a tradition to them. It is also an important point to note here is that no belief or action can be self-supporting. Individuals always must locate their particular beliefs and actions in a larger set. Pupils must acquire a set of beliefs and actions in an initial process of socialisation before they can modify.

At this point one can reminded of the story of the five blind men and the elephant. Each of the blind men described the elephant accurately in terms of his own limited perceptions. Tradition has been used in scholarship as a tool in various limited contexts, all of which may be valid within their prescribed limits. The concept of tradition is multifaceted. It consists of many separate elements which may never be found together as a whole in nature.

To sum up, it can be fairly said that tradition is the inevitable background to human beliefs and actions.

**Traditionalists versus Modernists**

**Traditionalists:**

There are those who put so much value on tradition that all common sense goes overboard when a tradition is at stake. They believe that only what conforms to tradition, to the past, is of any value. They rigidly reject any change, which is of course a most foolish attitude, because the very tradition they adhere to now came into being at one time through change. Without continuous change, alive unchanging verities cannot be lived. True tradition must therefore always be coupled with change. The healthy balance of the soul of the earth can be
attained and maintained when tradition and change interphase in a harmonious
dance.

Those who follow tradition blindly and meaninglessly create extreme
orthodoxies in religion and politics — and of course within the human soul. Such
orthodoxy imposes on society heaviness and a resistance to change. It springs
from the misunderstood message of the soul to preserve the truths, the beauty,
and the values that were given in the past. But it is forgotten that these truths
came as a result of the soul’s struggle to find divine meaning and because of the
personality’s willingness to overcome the fear of change. Some people think of
the old as all good, all benign, unthreatening and full of values, while anything
new they regard as threatening, disrupting, wrong, and bad. These people are,
of course, the traditionalists.

Modernists:

There are also those who rebel against all tradition; they rebel against its
meaningless, dead manifestation, just as much as against its real, alive
manifestation. This blind attitude is a result of the belief that only new findings
can be of value that all that has existed in the past must be inferior or invalid. It
overlooks the fact that eternal values have always existed and will always exist
and can always break through to consciousness, provided certain prerequisites
are being fulfilled. There are also those who see anything old as outdated,
undesirable and bad, while anything new is totally desirable and good.

These are two extremes and complete reality lies with none of these.
Actually tradition in our world describes merely an aspect of a certain specific
reality. It refers to the reality of valuing eternal truth in its manifold
manifestations, or perhaps in a certain specific manifestation. As this attitude
vibrates through into your dimension of reality, it becomes diminished, modified
and separated from its entire meaning. This is inevitable, since your reality is
limited. In the fourth sphere a unity is split into a duality, whereby much of its
original meaning is lost or distorted. It is always possible for you to recapture the original meaning and thus open up to a further influx of various levels which together will depict a more complete reality. Such openings occur through specific mental attitudes and activities, and are the result of the struggle to see beyond the limited confines of your world.

**Counter Tradition: a Movement Towards Renewals**

The other aspect — counter-tradition — also exists in our world, in our dimension of reality that is always ready to break into your reality and thus to expand your reality. It exists as the constant movement toward renewing and giving new life to the eternal truths and laws. So the old and the new exist in the timeless reality of eternal now — not as old and new time wise, but as concepts or attitudes with a specific meaning and expression behind them.

There are certain repetitions in the spirals, phases re-encountered on deeper levels with new understanding. These aspects appeared as new when you first gained them in the previous curve. Thus the old truth, learned in the previous curve, makes new sense because of the additional material you have learned on the way. What was once an entirely new truth, a revelation, later becomes renewed in repetition — an old truth under new light. But the renewal could take place only because other truths — new and old — have been discovered along the way. They are new in the sense that they have been unknown by the individual; they are old in the sense that they existed before they were known to the individual. Yet there was also great resistance to expansion of thinking, to each innovation, each new approach, method. Each new approach or expansion of seeing — witnessing the world in a new light — has always created a sense of threat. You wish to hold on to the old familiar approach which is known to you, to keep the confines of thinking and perceiving untouched, unexpanded. Here you become a traditionalist. In the distortion of
the personality all principles exist in distortion, just as in the purified part of the personality all principles exist in truth, faithful to their real meaning.

Each new phase is greeted with rebellion against the authority that presents you with what seems to break the tradition you have become accustomed to. Tradition is created wherever human life takes form. It exists on the largest social scale and on the smallest, most temporary scale. The path as you have known it, say until two years ago, had established a certain tradition with which you had begun to feel somewhat comfortable. This tradition had to be broken — renewed — by adding new truths to it — new to you, but not new per se, for these truths have always existed. Only after your accepting and trusting the new truths did they become incorporated into the body of the total work, the path. So a temporary "new" tradition came into being until the next breath of the great pulsating movement the organism was ready for vibrated into matter. When you trust the new/old truth and do not obstruct it, you incorporate it in your life and thus your entire consciousness is widened and expanded; wisdom, freedom and abundance are added on to you. Growth is not possible otherwise. It can only exist when this movement is intact and as unobstructed as possible. Growth must combine the old and the new. It must retain tradition and renew and enliven it.

The path is a movement, a journey that comes to a halt when the movement is obstructed. Stagnation was the fate of many spiritual, religious, psychological truths that have been filtering through into our world of matter. People stopped the movement due to their fear of antagonizing those who obstruct further movement, change and expansion. They lacked the vitality to withstand opposition to further expansion and movement. This is why so many seemingly new organizations, orientations, or schools of thought, arise constantly. The old is either being calcified by the distorted concept of tradition, or totally disrupted by the distortion of seeking change, seeking the new.
Tradition: The Innovation

Even though a tradition may have stability, it never stops changing or evolving. Some innovation must be a part of tradition in order to keep it alive. Innovation is just as essential as stability to the survival of a tradition because it gives new life, interest and variety to the tradition. Through innovation a tradition is made to adjust to a changing environment where survival is dependent on change and adaptation. Tradition may be defined as the dynamic balance of stability and innovation. The learning process has within it the seeds of both stability and innovation. When a tradition is self-taught it contains innovation, because a style is created by the individual according to his memory, skills and talents. But if the context changes where a tradition is taught by someone else to the individual, the tendency will be towards stability, since the teacher will be forced to verbalize and define the boundaries and rules of the style. Both self-teaching and teaching from others play a role in the survival of a tradition. Even in formal instruction there are some elements of self-teaching.

Cultural Heritage and Its Integrity

The most conservative end of the scale, 'tradition' is viewed as something that remains relatively constant and is endowed with a timeless and superior authority. The tradition must remain unchained if its integrity is to be preserved and that any departure from the tradition is either inauthentic or a 'betrayal' – a stance that is most likely to be adopted by those who are not themselves active at group level and who criticize the groups for having 'changed the tradition'. Something which should relate to the present rather than the past, an organic process with change or evolution as an integral part of their perspective, cannot avoid eventual ossification. This standpoint allows for the notion of tradition as something that is generated by individuals and their responses to a changing socio-cultural climate, rather than something which pre-exists as a product of some mythical collective 'folk'. A compromise between these two positions
suggests that the traditions handed down by the elders should be valued and the integrity of the cultural heritage respected, but that at the same time the tradition needs to find ways of moving forward and developing contemporary forms of expression if it is to remain a living thin. Hence tradition is a process, and a living entity in that sense.

The central trait of tradition is that it contains both elements of stability and innovation. A tradition must have stability and unity to a critical point in order to be seen as a tradition. A tradition must have stability in order to become established and survive. This stability may be brought about by a change in the way a tradition is learned.

The new-age person will neither blindly worship tradition, nor blindly rebel against it. He or she will take every specific tradition, as it becomes an issue in his life, and will examine it with intelligence and self-honesty. When you examine life's issues in that way, you will find the most constructive way in which you can continue your traditions and make them new most meaningfully. If you have the right attitude, you will never rebel when an old tradition is discontinued, or when it is replaced by new customs, rituals and celebrations. Ask yourself if the old tradition has been superseded by truths and values that are more meaningful for you today or not. With this attitude you will live in a dynamic now; you will be able to value what deserves to be valued from the past, but you will also be able to let go of the past and thus create a new future, rather than a dead repetition of the past.
Hence as human being we have faith in certain ethical values.
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7 Ibid., p 13-14
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