On "Tradition"

Hypothesis: Whitehead's concept "society" can be usefully employed to clarify what is meant theologically by "tradition."

According to Whitehead, one can speak of a "society," or of a nexus of actual entities as enjoying "social order," if, and only if, "(i) there is a common element of form illustrated in the definiteness of each of its included actual entities, and (ii) this common element of form arises in each member of the nexus by reason of the conditions imposed upon it by its prehensions of some other members of the nexus, and (iii) these prehensions impose that condition [*sic*] of reproduction by reason of their inclusion of positive feeling involving that common form. Such a nexus is called a 'society,' and the common form is the 'defining characteristic' of that society" (*Adventures of Ideas*: 261).

Mutatis mutandis, one can speak of a "tradition," or of a sequence of historical emergents as exhibiting "traditional order," if, and only if, (i) there is a common element of form illustrated in the definiteness of each of its included emergents; (ii) this common element of form arises in each emergent within the sequence by reason of the conditions imposed upon it by its appropriation of some other emergents in the sequence; and (iii) this appropriation imposes these conditions of reproduction by reason of its inclusion of positive valuations involving that common form. Such a sequence of historical emergents is called a "tradition," and the common form is the "defining characteristic" of that tradition.

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