

## Call for Papers *Journal of the Philosophy of History*

### Tradition in the philosophy of history

The concept of tradition has been a key theme in the work of several influential philosophers. To Hans-Georg Gadamer, tradition is the background against which all understanding takes place, the very means for understanding anew. Similarly, to Alasdair MacIntyre, it is only within the context of a 'living tradition' that claims about truth and rationality can hope to be justified. Robert Brandom advocates *de traditione* interpretations of philosophical texts. Rather than identify what authors intended to say (*de dicto*), or whether what they say is correct (*de re*), readers of philosophical texts should approach their task as intellectual historiography, inferring the meaning of philosophical texts from the traditions of reasoning in which they participate. For Gadamer, MacIntyre and Brandom, tradition is a philosophical commitment to remain open to what came before. Applied to the study of history, it is a commitment that to Mark Bevir obliges historians to presume that past beliefs were sincerely, consciously and rationally held. Individual viewpoints belong to 'webs of beliefs' by reference to which agents reasoned against the backdrop of their inherited traditions.

The concept of tradition brings attention to what constitutes the background of our inquiries. For example, in the philosophy of history, the question arises why the Netherlands has made a disproportionately large contribution to the field. The question implies that there is a Dutch tradition of philosophy of history, but it is unclear to what extent that *national tradition* is at the same time a particularized *intellectual tradition*. Familiar compounds such as 'Italian Hegelianism', 'British idealism', 'Chinese Marxism' or 'American pragmatism' are also complex fusions of national and intellectual traditions. Hegelians, idealists, Marxists and pragmatists exist in possibly every country, but the use of a national qualifier denotes a particular variety of place-bound intellectual tradition. More straightforward, seemingly, are the examples of 'French theory', 'Russian theory' or 'Estonian theory', but even then, it may be asked to what extent they are truly French, Russian or Estonian. This use of a national qualifier has been widespread. It organizes investigation within recognizable boundaries, ones that demarcate linguistic and cultural differences, and allows properties distinct to them to be seen in their own light and comparatively. Think, for example, of the pervasiveness of the German historicist tradition in accounts of the development of academic history worldwide, or the books stacked alongside each other on the 'British idea of progress' as compared with the 'French idea of progress'.

With these examples as a guide, this special issue invites critical examination of the concept of tradition in the philosophy of history. It aims to shed new light on the role that tradition plays in shaping agendas in the philosophy of history, on what traditions hold promise for future research, and on the conceptual integrity of tradition in the broadest sense. The focus may be on national traditions and the validity of defining traditions in terms of the nation. Alternatively, the focus may be on intellectual traditions and their composition and function. Above all, the special issue welcomes proposals that aim to bring new insight into the *relations between different conceptions of tradition*, including but not limited to the relation between national and intellectual traditions in the philosophy of history.

Prospective contributors should write a 700-word proposal that explicitly addresses the concept of tradition and its relation to the philosophy of history. The proposal should outline two questions that will guide the study, provide a list of key texts, and it should indicate the line of argument the writer intends to follow.

Proposals should be sent to the guest editor, Tyson Retz (tyson.retz@uis.no), by 1 August 2025.