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Sommario/riassunto	<p>Every generation faces the same challenge, to engage with the past and to cope with the present, while building its future. However, the questions and problems inherent in human life remain the same. It is a given that our society can only progress if we work toward handling ever newly rising demands in appropriate ways based on what we know and understand in practical and theoretical terms; but the drumming toward the future cannot be a one-way street. Instead, we have to operate with a Janus-faced strategy, with one eye kept toward tomorrow, and the other eye toward yesterday. Culture is, however we want to define it, always a composite of many different elements. Here I argue that if one takes out the past as the foundation of culture, one endangers the further development of culture at large and becomes victim of an overarching and controlling master narrative. This article does not insist on the past being the absolute conditio sine qua non in all our activities, but it suggests that the metaphorical ship of our cultural existence will not operate successfully without an anchor, the past. I will illustrate this claim with reference to some examples from medieval literature, philosophy, and religion as they potentially impact our present in multiple fashions.</p>