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A New Theory on the New,  
or, How and To What End Do We  
Study Old Texts?

**Prelude**

Philosophy's penchant for philosophical history, wherein it, insecure about its future, seeks self-ascertainment, has earned it a somewhat unillustrious present. Institutions are busying themselves with what is but glorified philology and, wisely circumventing any unpredictable hazards, let others hold the coarsely framed stage of contemporaneity. One alternative which, incidentally, offered itself not only to philosophers, was deviation onto neighbouring continents from whence one was more or less automatically directed back to the central field of knowledge: people emigrated into media theory or cultural studies, where they could hope for a warm reception not least because of the generous hospitality gift they brought along from the archives of philosophy. The new fields of knowledge that have opened up through the combination of philosophy and cultural history or even media theory and theology can, using an Aristotelian definition, be characterised as metaphorical since they "bring remotely distant things together". But of what nature is this gain in knowledge? Is the new belittled by being investigated for resemblances with some dusty archival shelf-sitter and, if any such resemblance is detected, by being unmasked as a mere revenant, as something that has only worked on, and changed, its outward appearance? Anthropology, though recently a discipline in the fast lane, still tends toward the lethargic assumption that there are "anthropological constants", which only manifest themselves in different ways over different epochs. And so anthropologists send their fast-winged theorems out into space and across the seven seas, summoning for verification events and figures separated by thousands of years and miles. Such theoretical attitudes seem rather odd in this present age, which is so keen on novelty, which cherishes original invention – the rampant idea like nothing else – and their continuing success is hard to understand. One would assume that the recitation about the old, the historical, about predecessors, has taken on the role of the rhapsody sung to small courtly or rural audiences on balmy evenings; another variant would be the idea that the media-theoretical