altogether. To be sure, it is unlikely in the extreme that there will soon be a restoration of the ambitious single-author systematizations that have characterized philosophical productivity in the past. Nevertheless, the development of systems is nowadays once more a living venture in philosophy. But it has become multilateral and diffuse—no longer the product of single minds. Present-day philosophy systematizers can no longer manage on their own—any more than contemporary experimental scientists can. The systems to which they aspire may be akin to those of the earlier tradition, but the means of their construction must be configured differently. For those aspiring systematizers of the present era have to depend on effort—or even mere chance—to provide them with collaborators among their colleagues. In this regard, we simply “can’t go home again”.8

And the implications of this reality for philosophical hermeneutics are profound and ramified. Texts have to be construed against the background of their originating conditions. And the context in which present-day philosophical texts have to be studied and interpreted is something quite different from what is was in days of yore. A Leitmotiv of ongoingly connected relevancy links philosophical discussions across the ages. But as with the rivers of Heracleitus, new waters are ever streaming in.

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3 Not that a sizable percentage of people-at-large takes any interest in philosophy. In this context the democratization of the field is something quite different from its popularization.

4 “Philosophy needs no protection, no attention, no sympathy, no interest in the part of the masses. Its perfect uselessness protects it.” (The Revolt of the Masses [La rebelión de las masas], tr. by Anthony Kerrigan [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989], p. 73. This classic work originally appeared in Madrid in 1929.)

5 The General Editor of a first-rate survey of American humanistic scholarship wrote in the foreword to the volume on philosophy: “Not many of the names mentioned in these pages are recognizable as those of great intellectual leaders, and many are unknown even to an old academic hand like myself who has a fair speaking ac-
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quaintance with the various humanistic disciplines in America.” (Richard Schlatter in Roderick Chisholm et. al., *Philosophy: Princeton Studies of Humanistic Scholarship in America* (op. cit.), p. x.)

6 In the long run, the technology of the internet will doubtless intensify this tendency.

7 In philosophy, unlike physics or chemistry, the multi-author paper is effectively unknown.

8 This chapter is a somewhat revised version of a German article entitled “Philosophie am Ende des Jahrhunderts,” *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, vol. 5 (1995), pp. 775-87.