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**Toward a Philosophical Theory of Everything**  
**An Introduction to the Structural-Systematic Research Program in**  
**Philosophy**

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## **0. Preliminaries**

### **0.1 The structure of this book**

According to its subtitle, this book provides an introduction and further contributions to the structural-systematic research project in philosophy (henceforth, often, the SSRPP). That research project, which is devoted to the development of the structural-systematic philosophy (the SPP), is first undertaken in *Struktur und Sein* (Puntel 2006), *Structure and Being* (Puntel 2006/2008b) and *Estrutura e Ser* (Puntel 2006/2008a), and expanded in *Sein und Gott* (Puntel 2010) and *Being and God* (Puntel 2010/2011), so this book is also an introduction to those volumes.

Following the preliminaries covered in this chapter (0), Chapter 1 is a concise introduction designed to provide enough information that those who have read it will be able to understand sections throughout *Structure and Being* (or *Struktur und Sein* or *Estrutura e Ser*) without having read preceding sections in those books. Chapter 2 provides a section-by-section summary of *Structure and Being* that aims both to clarify its trajectory and to aid readers in locating passages of relevance to their specific interests. Chapter 3 provides such a summary of *Being and God*. Chapter 4 treats several topics already treated in *Structure and Being*, in some cases bringing together closely related matters that are treated in *Structure in Being* in disparate places, in some cases suggesting emendations, and in some, providing additional detail. Chapter 5 brings into the framework of the structural-systematic philosophy some subject matters not treated in *Structure and Being*.

### **0.2 An initial clarification of this book's title**

For two central reasons, the project indicated by the title of this book—*Toward a Philosophical Theory of Everything*—can easily appear, early in the twenty-first century, to be nonsensical. The first reason is that the term “theory of everything” is commonly associated not

with philosophy but with physics. The second reason is that even those who consider philosophy to be a discipline that produces theories (of whatever quality) appear virtually universally to deny that it should or even could undertake the task of producing a theory that is, in any reasonable and defensible sense, *of everything*. The purpose of this section is to show that neither of these reasons for deeming philosophical theorization of everything nonsensical is a good one.

This section treats first the question of the subject matter (or matters) that do or should qualify as philosophical, because treating that question contributes to clarifying how philosophical theories of everything differ from theories developed in contemporary physics. The section relies on various terms and distinctions that are sufficiently clear for its purposes but whose adequate explanations are provided only in later sections.

“Philosophy” is a word whose history spans nearly two and a half millennia. Within that time span, the word been used in various different and often contradictory ways, so it is not surprising that it (and with it “philosophical,” etc.) has come to have various distinct meanings both in ordinary and in academic English (and in other languages having cognates of it). As is suggested above and clarified below, in the structural-systematic research program for philosophy—to which this book is an introduction—“philosophy” designates a strictly *theoretical* endeavor, hence not one that (for example) aims to change anyone’s life or make anyone happy.

In the time of Aristotle (the fourth century BC)—relatively shortly after the coinage of the term “φιλοσοφία” in ancient Greece—all theoretical inquiry could be classified as *philosophical* inquiry. For this reason, there were at that time no restrictions on the subject matter potentially available to philosophical theorization. In a technical term clarified below, the universe of philosophical discourse was unrestricted. This largely continued to be the case

until around the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when what came to be classified as non-philosophical modes of theorization—non-philosophical sciences— began to develop; their development required *restricting* their universes of discourse. Of central importance to the structural-systematic research program in philosophy is the question of what then happens to philosophy. In his *Philosophy: A Guide Through the Subject*, A. C. Grayling answers that question as follows:

one can see philosophy as having given birth in the seventeenth century to natural science, in the eighteenth century to psychology, and in the nineteenth to sociology and linguistics; while in the twentieth century it has played a large part in the development of computer science, cognitive science, and research into artificial intelligence. No doubt this oversimplifies the role of philosophical reflection, but it does not much exaggerate it, because in effect philosophy consists in inquiry into anything not yet well enough understood to constitute a self-standing branch of knowledge. When the right questions and the right methods for answering them have been identified, the field of inquiry in question becomes an independent pursuit. (Grayling 1999: 2)

Grayling is not alone. Indeed, the prominent analytic metaphysician Peter van Inwagen goes so far as to say, of the view expressed by Grayling, that “most people who have thought about the matter would take this”—that is, the restriction of philosophy to subject matters that are not (yet) claimed by sciences—“to be one of the defining characteristics of philosophy” (1993: 10).

In response to Grayling and van Inwagen, it is important to ask the following question: according to what theory or theoretician is philosophical inquiry not scientific? Or, more specifically, within the theorization of what universe of discourse could the sentence “Philosophical inquiry is not scientific” emerge? Unquestionably, that sentence, as it is (implicitly) understood by Grayling and van Inwagen, cannot emerge within any theoretical

framework having a restricted universe of discourse. Why not? Precisely because its articulation presupposes the division of *the unrestricted universe of discourse* into *restricted universes of discourse* of two kinds, and says that those are the only kinds of universes of discourse that there are: there are the restricted ones that are well-enough understood to be studied by distinct sciences, and there are the restricted ones that are not, and are therefore left to philosophy.

What does this show? Three things. First, that if every theoretical discipline has a *restricted* universe of discourse, then *no* discipline can develop theories about *the unrestricted universe of discourse*. Second, that one cannot present a theory about how all the restricted universes of discourses of the various restricted inquiries relate to one another and to philosophy's universe (or perhaps universes) of discourse *unless* one thematizes the unrestricted universe of discourse (and that is precisely what both Grayling and van Inwagen do in the passages quoted above, albeit—again—only implicitly). Third, that if the subject matter for philosophy is indeed that which has not been claimed by any non-philosophical science then, *if the unrestricted universe of discourse is or can or must be a subject matter for theoretical inquiry*, it is a subject matter that non-philosophical sciences, which are individuated by their restricted universes of discourse, *must* leave to philosophy.

As may be evident from the preceding paragraph, the task of developing a philosophical theory of everything begins to come into view if the development of the non-philosophical sciences is taken not to *restrict* philosophy's universe of discourse but instead to *clarify* that universe of discourse. Prior to modernity, because philosophy could thematize *anything*—including any *restricted* universe of discourse—it was often far from obvious that philosophy could or should thematize *everything*—the *unrestricted* universe of discourse. Indeed, thematization of the unrestricted universe of discourse itself—technically, of being as such and

as a whole—was replaced or disguised, again and again, by thematization of “God,” understood (in one way or another) as the highest being and as thus constituting a *restricted* universe of discourse (this “again and again,” and the enormous confusions it has caused, are a central focus of *Being and God* (Puntel 2010/2011)).

Because the unrestricted universe of discourse includes everything (in at least some significant sense of “everything”), a philosophical theory whose subject matter is the unrestricted universe of discourse is a philosophical theory of everything. To leave open the possibility that philosophical theories may have restricted universes of discourse (as, currently, they do), this book designates the philosophy whose subject matter is the unrestricted universe of discourse *systematic* philosophy.

Given the preceding account, it is easy to explain—indeed, it may well already be obvious—why no theory presented by contemporary physics could be a “theory of everything” of the sort that a philosophical theory of everything would be: contemporary physics has as its subject matter a *restricted* universe of discourse. This point is clearly articulated by the prominent mathematician/physicist Roger Penrose:

The terminology ‘theory of everything’ has always worried me. There is a certain physicist's arrogance about it that suggests that knowing all the physical laws would tell us everything about the world, at least in principle. Does a physical theory of ‘everything’ include a theory of consciousness? Does it include a theory of morality, or of human behaviour, or of aesthetics? Even if our idea of science could be expanded to incorporate these things, would we still think of it as ‘physics,’ or would it even be reducible to physics? (Penrose 2005)

Ignoring here as both insufficiently clear and purely speculative the question of how “our idea of science” might someday be expanded,<sup>1</sup> it is fully clear that physics in its *current* form cannot develop theories about various subject matters, including those Penrose lists. The *philosophical* theory of everything to which this book aims to contribute, on the other hand, must include theories of consciousness, of morality, of some aspects of human behaviour, and of aesthetics—as well as, in a sense and a manner explained below, everything else. It is important to emphasize at the outset, however, that although this philosophical theory of everything is *holistic* in the sense of being comprehensive, it is not *imperialistic* in that it in no way aims to *replace* any of the non-philosophical sciences. The relation of systematic philosophy as—to use a different but also fully appropriate designation (see 1.2.1, below)—*universal* science to the various *specific* sciences is a topic of central importance to systematic philosophy; it, too, is therefore treated below.

One additional aspect of the Grayling passage quoted above merits brief consideration here. Each non-philosophical science is, according to Grayling, “a self-standing branch of knowledge,” an “independent pursuit.” What might be meant here by “self-standing” or “independent,” and what by “knowledge”? Presumably, a science is a branch of *knowledge* only if, one way or another, it presents linguistic accounts—theories—that are true, in some sense of “true.” But how is it that there can be linguistic accounts that are true—how is it that language can articulate the subject matter of the relevant theories? And what is the appropriate sense of “true”? The non-philosophical sciences presuppose—generally implicitly—one or another answer to each of these questions (and to many more), but cannot raise these questions, precisely because they cannot be raised within the restricted universes of discourse of those sciences. As a consequence, those sciences are *not* self-standing or independent at least in that

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<sup>1</sup> On this issue, see Puntel 2006/2008b, 6.3.2.2, esp. pp. 479–480.

they “stand” or depend on what they presuppose but cannot investigate. What they presuppose but cannot investigate can and must, however, be investigated by systematic philosophy.

### **0.3 Preliminary remarks on methodology**

The philosophical theory of everything of which this book is a partial presentation is a linguistic account that aims to be true both in a general and easily intelligible sense of “true” and in a precise sense specified by one of its own subtheories (see 1.4.2.1 and 4.2, below). The development and to some extent the presentation of this theory are guided by a method that is the focus of Section 1.5, but some preliminary methodological remarks are appropriate at this point. The chief reason for this is that this book aims at maximal clarity, and that includes clarity concerning the status of its own sentences. A second reason is that if the SSP is indeed of everything, in the relevant sense, then it must also be a theory of itself, so its method must be included within its subject matter.

To be clarified at this point, in a general manner, are the criteria that the sentences presented in this account must satisfy if they are to qualify as true. Negatively, the account’s method does *not* require—and indeed does not allow—for it to begin with or to include any sentences that would be *foundational* in the sense of satisfying the following two criteria: (a) being self-evidently or indubitably or in any way unquestionably true, and (b) providing a basis that would be required for the establishing of subsequent sentences as true. Positively, the method requires instead, from the outset, (1) that its sentences be adequately intelligible (loosely, that they not be nonsensical or meaningless), (2) that they not be defective in ways that would preclude the possibility of their being true (thus, most clearly, that they not be self-contradictory), and (3) that they be mutually consistent (that they not contradict one another). As additional sentences are added, the method comes to require that, in addition to satisfying the three criteria just identified,

these sentences also serve in some cases to increase the intelligibility of previously introduced sentences or groups of sentences (arguments, subtheories, and so forth) and, in all cases, ultimately to increase the intelligibility, coherence, and comprehensiveness, with respect to its subject matter, of the account as a whole.

Differently put, this account is structured as a holistic network of sentences collectively constituting a partial presentation of a theory of everything, or of being (what is, the world, the universe, the unrestricted universe of discourse). Nodes within the network—individual theses and later subtheories—are stabilized by means of inferential interlinkings of various sorts, some of which are explicitly identified below (1.5). Obviously, the sentences in this account must be presented sequentially; for this reason, sentences articulated as the account begins cannot, when initially presented, be tightly inferentially interlinked. To the extent that the account is successful, linkages both multiply and strengthen as the account proceeds. Thus, for example, the intelligibility and coherence (within the book as a whole) of this section’s description of its method should increase as the density of the presented network increases, as should that of the the account’s reliance on the network-structure. The increasing density of the network is also accompanied by increasing refinement. The reason for this is that clarity and intelligibility are often served by, and in many cases indeed require, initial reliance on formulations that prove, in light of subsequently introduced terms, theses, and arguments, to be less than fully adequate. Thus, for example, when such technical terms as “theory of everything,” “unrestricted universe of discourse,” and “being as such and as a whole” are initially introduced they are of necessity relatively vague; their vagueness decreases as the account develops.

To put the central point of the two preceding paragraphs colloquially: the reader should be guided implicitly, upon encountering a given sentence or group of sentences in this book, *not* (in the overwhelming majority of cases) by such questions as “Is this true?,” “Has this been

proved?”, or “Do I agree?”, but instead by the questions, (i) “Does this make sense?”,<sup>2</sup> (ii) “*Is it possible that this is true?*”, and (iii) “Does this fit together with what has come before?” As the account develops, it becomes increasingly appropriate for the reader to keep in mind the additional question, (iv) “In what ways and to what degrees does this sentence or group of sentences increase the intelligibility and coherence of the theory or theories within which it is situated?” Ultimately, of course, the account as a whole must be assessed for its theoretical adequacy and indeed for its truth—but because of its network-structure, it can be assessed *only* ultimately, and *not*, as is the case with foundationalistically structured theories, starting from the beginning and continuing with every additional step. Just how the theory is best assessed is a question addressed by the theory itself; how the theory can do this, and avoid any crippling

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<sup>2</sup> The relevant question is *not* the *pragmatic* (subject- or reader-related) question, “Does this make sense *to me?*”, but instead the *semantic* (language- or meaning-related) question, “Does this make sense *in the language in which it is expressed?*” To clarify: the sequence “is or tomato anxiously,” presented simply as such, makes no sense *in ordinary English* (although it could make sense in some other language, for example in a code, or even in ordinary English if presented *not* simply as such, but instead, say, as a response to the instruction, “Produce a list consisting of a verb, a conjunction, a noun, and an adverb”). In contrast, the sentence “The structural-systematic philosophy is a theory of being as such and as a whole” might well at least initially make relatively little sense *to many readers* conversant in English, but it cannot be identified as *nonsensical* in English. Its attaining adequate *semantic* intelligibility *within this book* requires the introduction of other sentences explaining and stabilizing it, and its adequate *pragmatic* intelligibility—its making adequate sense *to readers*—of course depends in part on the readers’ own efforts.

circularity in doing it, are explained below (1.5.4; see also *Structure and Being* 1.5.2.2–1.5.2.3, 6.3.2.1).

#### **0.4 A philosophically consequent stylistic peculiarity**

A stylistic feature that *TAPTOE* shares with *Structure and Being* and (generally) *Being and God*, and one that is unusual in philosophical (and other) literature, is that it speaks of itself rather than of its author. Particularly *TAPTOE* and *Structure and Being* rely minimally (if at all) on formulations like “I hold that” or “As the author notes in Chapter 1.” There are two basic reasons for this. The first is that, according to one of the SSP’s central theses, the theoretician is not centrally relevant to theorization or to theories (see xx, below; *Structure and Being*, 2.1–2.3). Among the consequences of this thesis are that whether *Structure and Being* and *Being and God* author Lorenz Puntel or *TAPTOE* author Alan White or any other theoretician believes or argues or contends something or other is not of central philosophical importance, and that what *is* of central philosophical importance is the status of that something or other as a component of a theory presented in *Structure and Being*, *Being and God*, or *TAPTOE* (or elsewhere).

The second reason for avoiding speaking of the author of this book is a reason for avoiding speaking of authors at all. This reason is that authors often change their minds. It thus makes no sense, for example, to write without qualification about Hilary Putnam’s beliefs about philosophical issues, because theses contained in his later works often explicitly contradict ones contained in his earlier works. The kinds of qualifications required are present in the following sentence: “In ‘Time and Physical Geometry’ (1967/1979), Putnam presupposes metaphysical realism, but in ‘Sense, Nonsense, and the Senses’ (1994) he rejects metaphysical realism.” Sentences containing such qualifications can be important in philosophical accounts, but it is not important that they attribute beliefs or positions to theoreticians instead of

attributing theses to texts. *TAPTOE* does the latter, relying on formulations like “Putnam 1967/1979 presupposes metaphysical realism, but Putnam 1994 rejects metaphysical realism.”

To put this second point somewhat differently: no matter what Lorenz Puntel or Alan White may believe or indeed may ever have believed, *Structure and Being* and *TAPTOE* will continue to present the theories that they present as long as copies of them exist, and it is those theories—and not Lorenz Puntel or Alan White—that are the proper focus of philosophical attention. In order accurately to reflect this centrally important fact, *TAPTOE* speaks for itself, and allows *Structure and Being* and other texts to speak for themselves as well. Hence, the following sentence is true: *Structure and Being* often attributes theses and theories to philosophers (e.g., “Quine presents,” “Quine maintains,” “Quine designates” (112/84)), whereas *TAPTOE* (other than in Section 0.2) directly attributes them only to works (e.g., “Quine 1992a argues”).

## **1 An Introduction to the Structural-Systematic Research Program in Philosophy**

### **1.1 Abstract theoretical frameworks and their concretizations**

As is noted in 0.3 and is in any case obvious, *TAPTOE* is a collection of sentences. To be a collection of sentences, it must rely on some language or languages. The language Chapter 0 relies on is largely indistinguishable from ordinary English, although one way in which it diverges from that language already is its use of such technical terms as “unrestricted universe of discourse” and “structural-systematic philosophy.” As the account proceeds, it becomes increasingly apparent and increasingly important that it relies not on ordinary English, but instead on its own artificial language—a technical, scientific language—which both refines and expands ordinary English. How scientific languages of the sort relied on here differ from ordinary languages is considered in detail in various places both below and in *Structure and Being*.

Its language is one of several components on which *TAPTOE*, as a presentation of a theory, relies. To name the collection of all these components it uses the term “abstract theoretical framework.” Two relatively well-known philosophical terms with significations at least similar to that of “theoretical framework” are “linguistic framework” and “conceptual scheme.” The SSP avoids those terms because they could be taken to imply, misleadingly, that the components of the relevant frameworks or schemes are, respectively, exclusively linguistic or exclusively conceptual, and although it is a thesis of the SSP that abstract theoretical frameworks for systematic philosophies include linguistic and what are commonly termed conceptual components, an additional thesis of the SSP is that any presentation of any theory requires other components as well. The most important additional components the SSP relies on are its method, its ontology (its theory of what kind(s) of beings or entities compose the world or the universe or what is), and its truth-theory (which makes fully explicit how its linguistic component interrelates with its ontological component or, colloquially, how its sentences interrelate with the world).

The components identified in the preceding paragraph are constituents of the *abstract* theoretical framework of the SSRPP in that they specify (1) what qualify, universally, as beings about which theories can be developed, (2) the language in which those theories can be formulated, (3) the methodology guiding the development and presentation of the theories, and (4) the status of the theories as true. Abstract theoretical frameworks for systematic philosophies are *concretized* when theories about beings within specific universal domains, and about being as such and as a whole, are developed and presented.

Seven of the SSRPP’s central theses concerning theoretical frameworks—theses that, as emphasized in 0.3, are in no way foundational, and that are presented at this point only as intelligible and plausible—are the following:

TF1: *Truths emerge only within theoretical frameworks*, albeit often within frameworks that are tacitly presupposed and only vaguely determined, as is the case with the frameworks human beings rely on in their everyday lives when they are concerned with discovering and presenting truths—as, for example, when someone looks at a clock in order to discover what time it is, and presents the truth thereby discovered by uttering an indicative sentence, perhaps “We’ve got plenty of time,” or perhaps, “We’re late!”

TF2: *All truths are relative to the theoretical frameworks within which they emerge*, beginning with the mundane truths that, like “We’re late!,” emerge within everyday frameworks.

TF3: *Being—reality or actuality, the world, the universe, what is—veridically manifests itself—truly or genuinely reveals itself—within all adequately determined or determinable theoretical frameworks*. Thus, for example, within the most common everyday frameworks, the sun reveals itself, veridically, as moving across the sky, and the Earth as motionless. Within the framework of contemporary astronomy, of course, the sun reveals itself, veridically, as stable relative to the Earth, and the Earth, as both rotating on its own axis and revolving around the sun. Superior to both of these frameworks, with respect to intelligibility and coherence and thus to the demands of theorization,<sup>3</sup> is a

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<sup>3</sup> That the theoretical frameworks of everyday life are inadequate for the development of scientific theories is not of course a good reason for simply abandoning them; for the purposes of everyday life, which differ extensively from those of theorization, those frameworks are often optimal. An

metaframework encompassing both, because within that framework it can be made clear why the Earth, although veridically revealing itself within the framework of astronomy as in motion, also veridically appears within everyday frameworks as immobile.

TF4: As is suggested by the example of Earth and sun, *the fact that being veridically manifests or reveals itself within all theoretical frameworks does not lead to any crippling relativism, because within metaframeworks, theoretical frameworks can be compared and ordered with respect to their theoretical adequacy*. The SSRPP's criteria for comparing and ordering theoretical frameworks for systematic philosophies are relatively maximal coherence and intelligibility, such that the relativity is both internal (the superior account is more coherent and intelligible than is any other available concretization of its own framework) and external (the superior account is more coherent and intelligible than are concretizations of alternative theoretical frameworks that are available).<sup>4</sup>

TF5: Although theoretical frameworks can be ranked with respect to theoretical adequacy, *no human theoretician could ever establish that the framework she*

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example: asking when the sun will set this evening is clearly more concise and convenient than asking when the Earth's rotation will make the sun disappear beyond the horizon. See 1.3, below.

<sup>4</sup> Determining the degree to which the truth of TF4 is relative to the theoretical framework of the SSP requires considering the relation between the purely systematic level and the metasystematic levels of the SPP; see *TAPTOE* 2.1, 2.2.2, and 2.2.6, and *Structure and Being* 1.5.2.2–1.5.2.3 and 6.

*or he relied on was the best possible framework for any sufficiently complex subject matter, including that of systematic philosophy.* Establishing a framework as absolutely optimal would require identifying and comparing all of the infinitely many possible (families of) theoretical frameworks for the framework's subject matter, and that, for human beings, is impossible.

TF6: From the theses that all truths are relative to theoretical frameworks (TF2) and that human beings can identify neither all such frameworks nor any optimal framework (TF5), it does not follow that there cannot be or indeed that human beings cannot identify any absolute truths, given the additional thesis that *absolute truths are truths that have identifiable versions in all theoretical frameworks.* The most obvious such truth is the principle of non-contradiction, for no framework lacking a version of it as a component could qualify as a *theoretical* framework.<sup>5</sup> The reason is that within such a “framework,” no definitive truths whatsoever could emerge.

TF7: A clear consequence of TF5 is that the SSRPP cannot include the thesis that its own theoretical framework is the best possible for systematic philosophy, much less anything like absolutely valid. It can and indeed does however include the thesis—stabilized in part by examination of alternative frameworks, either in isolation or in comparisons developed within appropriate metaframeworks—that *the SSRPP's theoretical framework is the best that is currently available for systematic philosophy.*

One consequence of TF7 is that the status claimed by the SSRPP is in one respect highly

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<sup>5</sup> This is baldly stated; for necessary qualifications, see *Structure and Being* 3.3.4.3.

ambitious, but in another is notably modest. It claims, ambitiously, to provide the best theoretical framework currently available for systematic philosophy, but it also anticipates, modestly, the future development of frameworks that will be better. It thereby claims for systematic philosophy a theoretical status in no way inferior to that of any of the natural sciences: those sciences, too, operate within the best theoretical frameworks that are currently available, but nothing precludes, and there are overwhelming reasons to anticipate, future developments of superior frameworks.

## **1.2 The SSP as a philosophical theory of everything**

### **1.2.1 Systematic philosophy as the universal science**

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, in “the dominant sense in ordinary use,” the word “science” is “synonymous with ‘Natural and Physical Science’, and thus restricted to those branches of study that relate to the phenomena of the material universe and their laws, sometimes with implied exclusion of pure mathematics” (“science,” 5.b). Like many dominant senses in ordinary language, this one is clear, if at all, only superficially. What does the phrase “Natural *and* Physical Science” mean (and, in passing, why are three of its words capitalized)? Does it mean that only sciences that are *both* natural and physical qualify as sciences “in the dominant sense”? Are there then sciences that are natural but not physical, or vice versa? Moreover, how do the natural and the physical relate to the material, given that “the material universe” is what “Natural and Physical Science” is said to study? Finally, what is the status of pure mathematics, said to be only sometimes, and then only implicitly, excluded from science?

As emphasized above, the SSRPP does not rely on ordinary language, and clarifies its terms and theses contextually in the sense that initial clarifications are often replaced by more precise ones as additional terms and theses become available. At this early point, it suffices to

characterize sciences, within the theoretical framework of the SSRPP, as methodical and sustained attempts to produce accounts presented as true—hence, in a word, theories. It is thus not the case, according to the SSP, that some subject matters can be investigated scientifically and others cannot. It is instead the case that every subject matter can be treated scientifically, and that the adequacy with which a given subject matter is treated scientifically depends on the adequacy of the best available theoretical framework for that subject matter. Systematic philosophy can thus treat its subject matter—so far designated in various general ways (being, unrestricted universe of discourse, etc.)—scientifically; systematic philosophy thus qualifies as a science, and indeed, because of the comprehensiveness of its subject matter, as the universal science.

### **1.2.2 Foundation and stabilization**

What the SSRPP terms *science* has a relatively precisely identifiable point of historical origin in ancient Greece, with a process whose first participant known by name is Thales and that reached vital points of initial culmination with Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, which shows how theories can be developed on the basis of axioms and deductions, and Euclid's *Elements* and Archimedes's mechanics, which present theories of just that sort (see Wolpert 1993: xii, Ch. 3). As physics began to emerge as a distinct science, the need for axiomatization decreased in importance as increasing emphasis was placed both on quantification—reflected in Galileo's dictum that the book of the world is written in the language of mathematics—and on experimentation. Because however what remained (or what is revealed) as the subject matter for what Descartes termed first philosophy is not quantifiable and not available for experimentation, the axiomatic method so successfully applied in geometry continued for far longer to appear to be the only one available for it.

Presumably in significant part because both of the success of Euclidean geometry and of philosophy's lack of identified alternatives to the axiomatic theory-form, throughout modern philosophy, philosophical theories have had, as their most prominent analogical counterparts, buildings having foundations. Conceived of in light of this analogy, components of the theories are supported (or grounded) by resting on previously supported components, down to the foundation that, in the analogy, supports the entire superstructure. Among metaphorical uses of language that reinforce this analogy, in addition to talk of theses and theories being founded, grounded, and supported, is talk of their having groundworks, bases, and footings, and of their being undermined; demands that philosophical theses be "proved" often also reinforces the analogy.<sup>6</sup>

*TAPTOE* avoids foundational language by using variants of the term "stabilization." In order better to stabilize that usage, this section identifies some of the flaws in the buildings-with-foundations analogy, introduces two analogies that avoid some of those flaws, then clarifies the SSP as a comprehensive theory by means of theses drawn from consideration of the two analogies.

One central flaw in the building-with-foundations analogy arises from what can reasonably be termed its pre-Copernican status: a building resting on a foundation is a terrestrial

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<sup>6</sup> A famous passage from Wittgenstein's *Investigations* (§115) reads as follows:

*A picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.

The buildings-with-foundations analogy ("picture" or not) has held philosophy captive, in part because it is repeatedly implied by the English terms and phrases introduced in the main text; but, as this section shows, it is possible to "get outside it."

edifice whose structural integrity can require but is also threatened by gravity, and is preserved not only (in some but not in the simplest cases) by its inner structuration but also (in all cases, ultimately) by the Earth. The Earth is presupposed simply to be stable, so even in uses of the analogy that recognize—as, for example, does Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (A5/B9)—that foundations must be laid on solid ground presuppose that whatever underlies that ground supports those foundations.

A somewhat different way of articulating the decisive flaw in the building-with-foundations analogy is the following: support for buildings with foundations presupposes ground and gravity, but there is nothing analogous to ground for theories to rest on and nothing analogous to gravity that either threatens them or holds them together. A first analogy that avoids this flaw is provided by D-Stix building sets.<sup>7</sup> These sets include colored wooden sticks of various lengths and flexible plastic connectors, each of which has several slots into which the sticks can be securely inserted. The stability of heaps of such sticks and connectors, like that of buildings with foundations, presupposes ground and gravity, but even the simplest of

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<sup>7</sup> In the philosophical literature, the standard “coherentist” counterpart to the building-with-foundations is “Neurath’s boat,” introduced in Neurath 1920 and made philosophically prominent in Quine 1960 (3ff). According to the latter,

We are like sailors who on the open sea must reconstruct their ship but are never able to start afresh from the bottom. Where a beam is taken away a new one must at once be put there, and for this the rest of the ship is used as support. In this way, by using the old beams and driftwood the ship can be shaped entirely anew, but only by gradual reconstruction.

Among the flaws of this analogy is that it remains pre-Copernican, in the sense suggested above.

linkages, that consisting of a single stick inserted into a single connector, does not: the two components are mutually stabilizing in that, for example, the two remain connected when tossed into the air.

As components are added to the simplest D-Stix structure, stabilizations of various sorts become possible. Adding two more sticks and two more connectors in any manner whatsoever yields a structure that is stable in that the configuration does not depend on ground or gravity, but that structure is made more stable if it is reconfigured into a triangle—it then maintains its shape.

D-Stix structures are of course constructed, and hence require constructors. There is however an important sense in which the role played by the constructor is not determinative with respect to structural stabilization. The sense is revealed by an example: the most stable structure that can be made with six sticks of the same length and four connectors is a tetrahedron, and this fact is independent of any constructor. This is relevant to theorization because (as initially indicated above in 0.3 and especially 0.4) when theories are assessed, the assessment is of the theories, and not of the theoreticians who formulate them.

The D-Stix analogy can also clarify the distinction between consistency and coherence. Any heap of D-Stix pieces is consistent in the sense that there will be no piece whose inclusion precludes the inclusion in the heap of any other piece, and that consistency remains unchanged if the pieces are heaped differently. As merely heaped, however, the configuration of the pieces is incoherent in the sense that none of the pieces are interlinked. As pieces are interconnected, the coherence of the configuration of pieces—the coherence of the structure—increases.

D-Stix structures, considered as analogues to theories, avoid some of the most important flaws of the building-with-foundations analogue, but one important way in which they are disanalogous to philosophical theories is that their components can be definitively

determined: they include only sticks and connectives. A second analogy or analogue, which improves on the D-stix analogy in this respect, is that of the space station. Components of space stations, like those of D-Stix structures, are not stabilized by being grounded or supported; the reason for this in the case of space stations is the at least frequent and possibly permanent absence of significant gravitational fields that those components would have to resist. The components are therefore stabilized, like those of D-stix structures, by being interconnected. The components and their interconnections can be of various sorts and of various strengths; a wire that dangled loosely would be minimally connected, whereas a wire well-secured at both ends could be, broadly speaking, as fully or tightly stabilized as a wire can be. Wires or girders (for example) connected to many other wires or girders would generally be more integral to the structure than would those with fewer connections, in that their disconnection or removal would destabilize the station itself to greater degrees. Correspondingly, theses within the network-structure of the SSP vary in status in that some are more central, some more peripheral.

In addition, a space station, like a systematic philosophy, could qualify as the best available at some time, but not as absolutely the best; the possibility of superior alternatives could not be excluded.

Although the space-station analogy is appropriate to the SSP in ways that the building-with-foundations analogy is not, it is potentially misleading in one important way: space stations are situated within space—there is much that is outside them— whereas the SSP is coextensive not only with the physical universe, but with being as such and as a whole (this coextensivity is considered in various places below, in *Structure and Being*, and in *Being and God*). Being as such and as a whole is—anticipatorially!— the comprehensive configuration of facts identical to propositions expressible by sentences. To be sure, no collection of sciences

developed by human beings could include all of those sentences (and thereby those propositions and those facts), but that is not because there are any facts that are somehow beyond or outside of the scope of human theorization. It is instead because human finitude precludes the possibility of fully articulating everything that is within that scope—which is, literally, everything.

### **1.2.3 The SSP as a systematic philosophy**

The SSP is a philosophical theory of everything in that—in a more precise formulation whose terms are clarified in the following subsections—it is a *theory* of the *universal structures* of the *unrestricted universe of discourse*. Because these structures are universal, they structure the restricted universes of discourse of the non-philosophical sciences, but only universally, not specifically. Thus, for example, according to the SSP the entities thematized by theories in physics are all ontological structures *TAPTOE* calls *factings* (see 1.4.1, below), but determining specifically what those factings are—determining them as photons, quarks, black holes, and so forth—is a task for physics, not for systematic philosophy. Consequently (as indicated above), the SSP is a theory of everything that is holistic but not imperialistic: it leaves to the other sciences their own investigations, but provides for them a universal framework within which those investigations can be situated with currently maximal intelligibility and coherence.

The relation of the SSP to the other sciences is treated in various places in *Structure and Being* and in *TAPTOE*. The task of the following subsections is, as is indicated above, clarification of the terms of the formulation introduced in the preceding paragraph specifying the sense in which the SSP is a philosophical theory of everything.

#### **1.2.3.1 Theory**

##### **1.2.3.1.1 Theoreticity as arena of engagement**

The theory articulated in this book is presented by means of a linguistic account that aims primarily and could indeed aim exclusively to be true. At this point, further specification of “theory” cannot be provided, because such specification requires terms and concepts that have not yet been introduced. What can be provided at this point is an initial characterization of how linguistic accounts that aim to be true differ from linguistic accounts of two other kinds, i.e., aesthetic and practical ones.

Linguistic accounts of the three kinds just introduced are all *presentations*; in *TAPTOE*’s terminology, their presentations are made within distinct arenas of engagement (in the language of *Structure and Being*, “dimensions of presentation”). The distinction among the arenas is stabilized, in one important way, by the identification of truth (as intelligibility), goodness, and beauty as fundamental characteristics of being as such and as a whole and therefore of every being (every entity) (see *Structure and Being* 5.2.4, *Being and God* 3.3). The three arenas of human engagement are theoreticity, practicality, and aestheticity (see 3.1.1, below). Engagements within the arena of theoreticity are with beings as intelligible, within the arena of practicality, with beings as good, within the arena of aestheticity, with beings as beautiful.

#### **1.2.3.1.2 The SSP’s theoretical language**

Active engagement within the arena of theoreticity aims to discover and present truths, and although there are many ways human beings can *discover* truths, there is only one way they can *directly and explicitly present* them, and that is by means of language. For this reason, language is central to active engagement within the arena of theoreticity in a way that it is not central to engagement within the arenas of practicality or aestheticity. Identifying language as the means of the direct and explicit presentation of truths and thus of theories is therefore an important step with respect to clarifying the theoretical enterprise, but it is one that is far from

adequate, in significant part because there are various languages potentially available to theoreticians.

As noted above, this book relies at the outset primarily on a language in many specific cases indistinguishable from ordinary English, but one that is in fact an artificial language developed as a refinement and expansion of ordinary English. Among the chief reasons for its reliance on an artificial language are the vagueness and ambiguity of most of the terms and the insufficiency of the vocabulary and semantics of ordinary English. In relying on an alternative language, the book proceeds in a manner comparable to that of (for example) theories in physics, which refine the significations of such terms as “force,” “mass,” and “acceleration” by precisely interrelating the concepts with which they associate those terms, and which expand the vocabulary of ordinary English when they first introduce such terms as “quantum gravity,” “meson,” and “superstring.”

#### **1.2.3.1.3 The theoretical operator**

Theories can be presented only by means of indicative sentences, so the status of those sentences must be made adequately clear. Grammatically indicative sentences are of course at least often easily distinguished from (among others) ones that are grammatically interrogative or imperative; “The cat is on the mat” is grammatically indicative, “What time is it?”, grammatically interrogative, and “Close the door!”, grammatically imperative. Nonetheless, the grammatical form of any given sentence does not determine the semantic status of any specific appearance—any utterance or inscription (in any technical term: any tokening)—of the sentence. Thus for example, any one of “I’m having the salmon,” “Bring me the salmon,” and “Could I have the salmon?” could be uttered (tokened), in a restaurant, to request a specific dish, but only the first would be an appropriate response to a tablemate’s question, “What looks good to you?” Moreover, although as tokened to the waiter, these sentences express semantic contents,

as tokened in this paragraph, they do not; introduced simply as examples, they make no requests, ask no questions, and provide no information about anyone's dinner plans.

The fact that sentences require semantic determination—such as, with the examples in the preceding paragraph, determination by the context of appearance (to a waitperson or tablemate in a restaurant, or within a theoretical account concerning sentences)—is both rarely recognized and of central importance to the SSP, so identifying the ways (in addition to the contextual) that such determination can be provided is a task undertaken below (x.x; see also *Structure and Being* 2.5.2.2, *Being and God* 3.1.3.2.2). What is centrally important at this point, however, is a related but importantly distinct task: this is the task of clarifying the status of sentences that are determined—no matter how—as theoretical.

Clarifying the status of theoretical sentences requires distinguishing them from non-theoretical sentences. The SSP clarifies this distinction by introducing sentence operators. Each operator, when prefixed to a sentence, makes explicit the semantic status of that sentence. The most general version of the theoretical operator is “It is the case that.” The identification of this operator is of immense but far from immediately apparent importance for theorization and thus for philosophy.

The importance of the identification of the theoretical operator is clarified by comparison to epistemic operators including the operator “(Subject) *S* knows that,” “*S* believes that,” and “*S* can doubt that.” Clarifying the relation between the theoretical operator on the one hand and epistemic operators on the other is centrally important to the SSP because throughout modernity, one virtually universal assumption has been that the most important question concerning theoretical contents concerns knowledge, and hence that if operators are introduced, epistemic operators will be the most important ones. Thus, for example, the first of Descartes's *Meditations* (in *Meditations on First*

*Philosophy*) is chiefly devoted to identifying all types of beliefs that the meditating subject can doubt, and the second to clarifying the proposition *I think, I am* as the only one, according to that Meditation, expressible by a sentence governed by the operator “I cannot (ultimately) doubt that.” Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* is yet more explicit, identifying as the sole purely theoretical question that is an “interest of my reason” the question, “What can I know?” (A805/B833).

The vitally important factor distinguishing the theoretical operator from all epistemic operators is that, unlike the epistemic operators, the theoretical operator introduces no relativity to subject(s), whether as speaking, as knowing, as believing, as doubting, or in any other capacity, and likewise no relativity to situation, culture, historical epoch, or anything of that sort. Instead, it makes explicit that the sentences it governs simply articulates what is the case. The theoretical task may of course be undertaken of determining whether or not the sentence is true, but that question is a question about what *the status of what the sentence says*, not about what any subject may or may not think, believe, doubt, or know, etc.

Identification of the theoretical operator thus shows that theoretical sentences and hence theories are utterly independent of any attitude any subject may have toward them. This explains why Section 1.2.2, above, speaks of foundation and stabilization without introducing the term “justification,” a central focus of contemporary epistemology. The explanation is that the epistemic question of justification is the question whether some subject is justified in holding some belief, and identification of the role of the theoretical operator shows that neither subjects nor beliefs are central to theorization.

Because of the central importance of this point, an additional remark is in order. If the assumption is made, as in Descartes’s *Meditations*, that to be scientific, first philosophy—the philosophy presupposed (generally tacitly) by all other sciences—must be based on one or more

*beliefs* that one way or another *cannot be doubted*, then a serious problem appears to be introduced by the famous evil-demon hypothesis: if it is even thinkable that the first philosopher's beliefs could somehow have been foisted upon the first philosopher by an evil demon—or by aliens probing the philosopher's brain, which is preserved in vat, or in any other manner—then it can appear that few if any beliefs could prove satisfactory (i.e., indubitable). If however first philosophy, understood as systematic philosophy, is a matter not of foundational beliefs but instead of interconnected theses and theories, then the evil-demon hypothesis appears (if at all) in the form of the thesis, “It is possible that all beliefs of every human theoretician are the products of a deceptive evil demon.” This thesis is then (as explained below) a candidate for inclusion in a systematic-philosophical theory, and the question is how (if at all) it contributes to the coherence and intelligibility of that theory. Understood as the thesis, “There is some possible world wherein entities otherwise indistinguishable from human systematic philosophers are systematically deceived by an evil demon,” it is wholly innocuous (at least according to the SSP). The thesis would be non-innocuous only in the form “It is the case that all human beliefs are the products of a deceptive evil demon.” Stabilizing that thesis within a theory claiming to be the best available for systematic philosophy would be, to say the least, a tall order.

### **1.2.3.2 Structures**

Clarification of structures, as central to the SSP, can begin with the modification of a familiar ordinary-language sense of the term. That sense, as presented in the *OED*, is the following: a structure is “the coexistence in a whole of distinct parts having a definite manner of arrangement.” The SSP's modification of this definition involves “wholes” and “parts.” Once the appropriate modification has been made, the status of the “definite manner of arrangement”—for now, in the case of ontological structures (beings)—can be clarified.

The terms “whole” and “parts,” as used in the *OED*’s formulation, might be taken to suggest that there is an ontological difference between whole and parts, such that only wholes would qualify as structures. Within the SSP, however, not only configurations (the *OED*’s “wholes of parts having a definite manner of arrangement”) qualify as structures, but so too do all constituents or components of structures or configurations, thus, all the “parts” (and indeed all aspects of the “definite manner of arrangement,” of which more below).<sup>8</sup> According to the SSP, then, to be is to be an ontological structure. And even the simplest of ontological structures qualify as structures because, first, they are configured or structured at least by the relation of self-identity: each is precisely what it is. Second, the simplest structures are structured by their relations of involvement in the complex structures of which they are constituents—ultimately, indeed, all are constituents of the comprehensive ontological structure, being as a whole.

Beings as ontological structures are, then, configurations of beings/structures—of constituent factings having, as the *OED* puts it, “a definite manner of arrangement.” The “manner of arrangement” of a given complex being is a matter of relatings among beings, but the relatings themselves are nothing other than beings/structures.

In addition to ontological structures, the SSP’s abstract theoretical framework includes semantic structures, whose components are propositions and the sentences that can express them. The SSP’s truth-theory explains the integration of semantic and ontological structures:

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<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, the vocabulary and logic of wholes and parts—in the standard technical term, mereology—proves inadequate with respect to articulating the relation between some configurations of beings and their components, including human beings; see *Structure and Being* 357–358.

sentences can express propositions (semantic structures) that, if true, are identical to facts (ontological structures).

### **1.2.3.3 Unrestricted universe of discourse**

As Section 1.2.1 indicates, all sciences save systematic philosophy have *restricted* universes of discourse, that is, they treat specific dimensions or domains of investigation, specific subject matters. Restrictions of their universes of discourse are among the factors that distinguish geometry from biology, physics from number theory, and so forth. From this it follows that no currently available science other than philosophy can investigate the unrestricted universe of discourse; this thesis is presumably relatively noncontroversial. More controversial is the thesis that the unrestricted universe of discourse is coextensive with being as such and as a whole, with all that is—and is therefore an alternative designation for being, both as such and as a whole. This thesis is controversial in part because a thesis or even dogma widespread within modern and contemporary philosophy holds that every language is necessarily restricted or limited, and thus that the universe articulable by any language is necessarily restricted or limited to what that language can articulate. This thesis, along with the similar and related thesis that theories are importantly relative to the theoreticians who develop and/or assimilate them, is considered and rejected in *Structure and Being* 2.2–2.3, which are summarized in *TAPTOE* 2.2.2.

### **1.2.3.4 Universal structures**

According to *Structure and Being* (33), the term “universal structures” is the component of its preliminary characterization of the SSP—its quasi-definition of the SSP—that is most difficult to clarify. In elaborating on the term as it appears in the quasi-definition, *Structure and Being* introduces the example of the university, with its levels of structuration (*Struktur und Sein* uses as its example the structuration of the Federal Republic of Germany). *TAPTOE* proceeds

differently, by identifying some of the most important of those structures that qualify as universal in the relevant sense.

First, if the SSP, as a linguistic presentation, can thematize the unrestricted universe of discourse, then its language must be universal in the sense of being potentially able to express or articulate the entire unrestricted universe of discourse, or being as such and as a whole; language therefore belongs among the universal structures of the universe of discourse, and hence must be thematized by the SSP. Because the accomplishment of theoreticity is knowledge, knowledge too, must be potentially coextensive with being as such and as a whole and, as universal in this sense, must be thematized by the SSP. Additional universal structures considered within the development of the abstract theoretical framework of the SSP are of course its theoretical framework itself, and with it the fundamental formal (logical and mathematical), semantic, and ontological structures, whose universality is clarified below in 1.4.2.

If the theoretician, linguistically and cognitively, has access to being as such and as a whole, and thus is mentally or cognitively coextensive with being as such and as a whole, then theoreticians, as human beings, also belong among the universal structures of being as such and as a whole. As indicated above, investigation of human beings reveals that they relate to being as such and as a whole not only theoretically, but also practically and aesthetically, so these domains are also among the universal structures of the unrestricted universe of discourse, and hence subject matters for the SSP. Being as such and as a whole, as the unrestricted universe of discourse, is itself structured, and so too must be a topic of investigation; the two domains or dimensions into which it is structured are the absolutely necessary dimension of being and the contingent dimension of being. The relevant structures of the absolutely necessary

dimension of being are *absolutely* universal, whereas those of the contingent dimension of being are only *relatively* universal, in that their universality is relative to that dimension.

An additional question concerns the relation of these universal structures to the specific structures investigated by other sciences. The position of the SSP is that the borders between its investigations and those of the other relevant sciences are not fixed, both because the borders' locations change with time, as philosophy and the non-philosophical sciences develop, and because not all topics, even at a given time, can be definitively located on one or the other side of various disciplinary borders. That there are some topics that are not clearly within the domain solely of philosophy or of a specific non-philosophical science is in no way unusual or problematic; the situation is comparable to that presented by topics not clearly falling exclusively within the domains (for example) of either physics or chemistry, or chemistry and biology, but instead treated by theories in both of the relevant fields.

### **1.2.3.5 Structure and being**

As clarified below (1.4), the *abstract* theoretical framework of the SSP includes structures of three kinds: formal structures, semantic structures, and ontological structures. As also clarified below (1.3–1.4), the ontological structures of the SSP's abstract theoretical framework are *facts*, whereas the ontological structures (or elements) of everyday frameworks relying on ordinary English and of most philosophical frameworks are *things* (or *objects* or *substances*) that have properties and stand in relations to one another. One consequence of this is that when the SSP's abstract theoretical framework is concretized in the course of articulations of specific subject matters, the only beings or entities it will encounter will be facts, not things. It is vital to emphasize, however, that this process is indeed one of *encountering*, not one of constituting or creating (in whatever sense) or anything of the sort.

This state of affairs is clarified by two theses introduced above concerning theoretical frameworks: TF3, now restatable as *the unrestricted universe of discourse veridically manifests itself within all adequately determined or determinable theoretical frameworks*, and TF4, according to which *within metaframeworks, theoretical frameworks can be compared and ordered with respect to their theoretical adequacy*. Hence: the unrestricted universe of discourse—being—is *itself* articulated, is *intrinsically* articulated such that it is intelligible *both* as consisting of things *and* as consisting of facts. Neither “thing” nor “fact” is an external designation somehow imposed on being. To the contrary, the *discovery* of problems of intelligibility and coherence that arise within theoretical frameworks relying on thing- or substance ontologies can lead to the search for *more adequate* articulations of being, ones whose articulations *as theories* will reveal *being’s own* articulation more coherently and adequately. There is thus *no externality* between the dimension of structure and the dimension of being—the designations named in the title *Structure and Being*.

### **1.3 The inadequacy for systematic philosophy of abstract theoretical frameworks relying on substance ontologies**

Since the beginning of the scientific enterprise in ancient Greece, the vast majority of theoretical frameworks relied on by theoreticians and—at least in the West—by human beings in their everyday lives have included include semantic components whose syntactic counterparts are subjects terms and predicates. The grammatical or syntactical subject most important to the semantics is the singular term taken to refer to an ontological item termed a substance (or object or thing, such as SOCRATES). The grammatical predicate is taken to designate an ontological item that is either a property of that substance or thing (such as BEING MORTAL), or a relation in which the substance stands to other substances or things (for example, BEING THE HUSBAND OF...).

That frameworks of this sort have dominated is not surprising, given their everyday efficiency and convenience. In their everyday lives, human beings find themselves surrounded by—to choose items now common in at least much of the world, and ones that have obvious counterparts elsewhere—such THINGS, TABLES, OAK TREES, SIAMESE CATS, and so forth, and it is non-problematic for them to think of those items as having properties and standing in relations. Tables, unlike carpets, generally have legs, and the two often relate such that tables are on carpets but far more rarely such that carpets are on tables.

Everyday efficiency and convenience are wholly reasonable criteria for rating everyday theoretical frameworks, and frameworks relying (generally tacitly) on substance or thing ontologies generally satisfy these criteria quite satisfactorily. Systematic philosophy, however, aims not at everyday efficiency and convenience, but instead at the maximal attainable coherence and intelligibility, and frameworks relying on substance or thing ontologies fail to satisfy those criteria. They fail because substances prove to be unintelligible. According to substance ontologies, substances have properties and stand in relations, but to have properties and stand in relations they must have an ontological status that is different from the status of properties or relations. One way to articulate that status would be to answer the question, what *is* a specific table, considered not as a table but instead as a substance? As a table, it has legs and is on the carpet, but those attributes characterize it as the table that it is, not as a substance. It might appear that it would become increasingly accessible, as a substance—indeed, it could in principle *only* become accessible, as a substance—by way of abstraction from the properties and relations that it has as a table, but the greater the abstraction, the less is left. Indeed, if the abstraction is complete, if no table-attributes remain, then there is no content whatsoever; tables and chimpanzees, stripped of their attributes, can be different in no way whatsoever, either from

each other or from any other putative substance. The concept of substance is therefore unintelligible, in that it is impossible to determine or articulate what any substance is.<sup>9</sup>

## **1.4 The abstract theoretical framework of the SSRPP**

### **1.4.1 Syntax, semantics, and ontology**

For reasons presented summarily in 1.3, the ontology of the SSP cannot recognize substances (or objects, things, substrata) in any form, and therefore cannot accept subject and predicate terms as having semantic or ontological counterparts. Instead of relating its semantics and ontology to subject-predicate sentences, then, it relates them to the syntactic form of such ordinary-language sentences as “It’s raining” and “It’s morning,” taking the “it” in such sentences to be merely a syntactic placeholder required by English grammar.<sup>10</sup> *TAPTOE* terms such sentences “sentencings.” The semantic contents expressible by sentencings are propositionings;<sup>11</sup> ontologically, every true propositioning is identical to a facting within

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<sup>9</sup> *Structure and Being* 3.2.2.3 (pp. 249–261) articulates the inadequacy of philosophical frameworks relying on substance ontologies in greater detail, directly linking it to semantics on the one hand and first-order predicate logic on the other; see also *Being and God* 3.1.2.

<sup>10</sup> Italian and Spanish are among the languages that require no such placeholders; Spanish counterparts of “It’s raining” include both the single word “*Llueve*” (the third-person singular form of the verb *llover*, to rain), and “*Está lloviendo*,” “*está*” being the third-person singular form of *estar*, one of two verbs whose English counterpart is “to be,” and “*lloviendo*” being the present participle of “*llover*.”

<sup>11</sup> An initial clarification of propositions, hence propositionings: ignoring semantics (colloquially, “meaning”), there is no significant relation between the sentences “It’s raining” and “*Llueve*.” Within everyday theoretical frameworks, however, it is generally accepted that

either the necessary dimension of being or the contingent dimension of being, thus, to a genuine constituent of what is. The world (the universe, being as such and as a whole) thus appears veridically within this theoretical framework as the comprehensive facting, which is the configuration of all other factings.

The facting (for example) IT'S SOCRATESING is an extremely complex one, a configuration including among its component factings IT'S HUMANING, IT'S PHILOSOPHIZING, IT'S FATHERING, etc., each of which is itself complex. Within the SSP's concretization of its abstract theoretical framework, additional complex factings constituting IT'S SOCRATESING include IT'S MINDING, because the SSP accords full-fledged ontological status to the domain of the mental.

It is important to emphasize, to avoid possibly significant misunderstandings and/or irrelevant objections, that the SSP's rejection of the semantics ordinarily associated with subject-predicate sentences does not have the consequence that presentations of the SSP cannot

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the two sentences can mean the same thing and thus, if propositions are understood as meanings of sentences, to express the same proposition, the former expressing it in English, the latter, in Spanish. For reasons explained in *Structure and Being* (204–206), according to the semantics of the SSP, tokenings (instances—utterances or inscriptions) of these two sentence types—or indeed even distinct tokenings of either one of the types—express not the *same* proposition, but instead (at best) distinct propositions that resemble one another to such a degree that if either is true so too must be the other. The point important in the current context is that recognizing propositions as the informational contents expressed by indicative sentences makes possible the explanation of the tight semantic relation between, in the example, “It’s raining” and “*Llueve.*”

include, and indeed rely primarily on, sentences with this syntactic form. If they were to attempt to do so, they would become extraordinarily cumbersome and indeed scarcely intelligible. What matters in this respect is however not syntax but only semantics: presentations of the SSP could include among their theses the sentence “All humans are mortal,” but would understand the sentence not as doing anything like saying that every SUBSTANCE having the property BEING-HUMAN also has the property BEING-MORTAL, but instead as being a convenient abbreviation or paraphrase of the sentencing expressing the propositioning *If it’s humaning then it’s mortalling*, or *Every facting that includes an It’s humaning also includes an It’s mortalling*.

#### **1.4.2 The SSRPP’s methodology**

Relying on theses introduced in 1.2.1.3 concerning the SSP’s structuration as a network and on *Structure and Being*’s presentation of its method (*Structure and Being* 1.4, summarized in *TAPTOE* 2.2.1), this subsection sketches the method for developing subtheories of the SSP that are not developed in *Structure and Being* or *Being and God*, taking as an example the theory of human freedom.

The first step toward developing subtheories of the SSP that are not presented in *Structure and Being* or *Being and God* involves assembling data, which are truth candidates provided by available theories, including, most importantly, the SSP as presented in *Structure and Being*, and not excluding the quasi-theories that develop within everyday theoretical frameworks. Given *Structure and Being*’s rejection both of theories denying that humans are free and of those according to which human freedom is compatible with determinism (see *Structure and Being* 304, 304n37, 344–345), deterministic theories, including compatibilist

theories, need not be considered at this initial stage.<sup>12</sup> The immensity of the literature even on so-called libertarian theories makes surveying it in its entirety a daunting task, but *Structure and Being* identifies the full execution of that task as a regulative idea for its methodology, not as a requirement (see *Structure and Being* 50 and 2.4.3.3).

Once a collection of truth candidates deemed adequately extensive had been assembled, the next task would be that of identifying maximally consistent subsets of them (*Structure and Being* 43–44). The one of those subsets whose elements appeared to be incorporable into the theory that would be most coherent and intelligible relative to the SSP's theoretical framework would be selected, its elements reconfigured so as to be incorporable into that framework—for example, all entities involved would be transformed into factings—and the theory formulated, in all likelihood with reliance on additional terms and theses contributing to the theory's stabilization. Depending on the degrees of coherence and intelligibility that theory attained, it would either be presented as a component of the SSP or held in abeyance while alternative theories were developed using others of the available subsets of truth candidates. Once the best of the theories—again, the one providing maximal coherence and intelligibility within the SSP's framework, and thus maximally stabilized relative to that framework—had been identified, it would be presented as a provisional component of the SSP.

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<sup>12</sup> Such theories could be considered on metasystematic levels. There, of central importance would be the SSP's argument stabilizing the thesis that there can be no adequate physicalistic or materialistic explanation of human being (for that argument, see *Structure and Being* 4.3.1.2.3.2, pp. 287–290, or the brief summary in *TAPTOE* 2.2.4).