Why has the SSP attracted so little attention?

I wish I knew. Before the publication of *Structure and Being*, it came up in correspondence between me and Galen Strawson (then at Redding, if I recall correctly, currently at the University of Texas at Austin). Strawson was sufficiently interested to try to arrange, after it was published, for a review that would appear in the *Times Literary Supplement*. He reported that many potential reviewers turned him down, but ultimately one accepted. I asked him whether that meant that a review would actually appear, and he said that the person who had agreed to write it had never, in the past, failed to come through with any promised review. The person failed to come through with this one; I was never offered any explanation why.

Some years later, Peter van Inwagen of Notre Dame agreed to review both *Structure and Being* and *Being and God* for Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews (NDPR). He never wrote the review. Again, there is no explanation that I am aware of.

If the people who committed themselves to writing reviews for the *TLS* or for *NDPR* had concluded that the books they had agreed to review were bad, why didn’t they write negative reviews? I have no good answer to this question.

There was, of course, the *Choice* review of *TAPTOE* that is quoted on my home page. The passage quoted there describes the book as “a critically important work for all those deeply interested in philosophical issues and their significance for basic human concerns.” But even after it became possible for Gary Gutting to quote from this review, he was unable to find anyone who would agree to review *TAPTOE* for NDPR (he wrote that he thought quoting it would help, but it didn’t, or at least not enough; by now, the book has been out too long to qualify for NDPR).

I have sent several philosophers I thought might be interested in *TAPTOE* either copies of the book or pdfs of relevant chapters (e.g., Chapters 1, 2, and 6 to some who have published on the issue of human freedom, or 1, 2, and 7 to some who have published on aesthetics). I have received no indications that any has read what I sent.

Fair enough. They’re all busy, and my messages were unsolicited. But there are others, albeit fewer of them, who have said that if I gave them copies of the book they would read it. Yet again, I have no evidence that any has.

So, what’s going on? Two plausible explanations occur to me. One is that systematic philosophy is considered to be so dead a duck that it cannot be resuscitated. Both analytic and continental philosophy went through their Hegelian phases, and perhaps some have concluded from what they take to be Hegel’s failure, with systematic philosophy, that every systematic philosophy must fail. That would of course be a *non sequitur*, but I wonder whether it may nevertheless be at work.
The second plausible explanation is that philosophers at present, most of whom are highly specialized, think it not worth their while to delve into areas beyond their specializations. This might explain why those specializing in, for example, issues of human freedom and aesthetics might be unwilling to read TAPTOE’s Chapters 1 and 2, which are presupposed by the chapters on freedom and beauty. Perhaps their response is, more or less, “These are about topics like semantics and ontology—but I don’t do semantics or ontology!”

A distinct development—perhaps better, non-development—perhaps related to the non-responses considered above involves my recently published “Rearticulating Being,” a text I first delivered as the Presidential Address for the Metaphysical Society of America (MSA) in April 2014. Quoting a previous Presidential Address quoted by a previous speaker at that 2014 meeting of the MSA, I distinguished between engaged and flabby pluralisms, and urged all present to participate in an engaged pluralism by either accepting my rearticulation of being as superior to other available articulations, or explaining to me why some other articulation of being was superior to mine. No engaged pluralism was in evidence at that meeting, and I am aware of none, relating to this issue, that has emerged since.

Harry Frankfurt cannot, I think, be the only current philosopher to consider philosophy at present to be “in the doldrums” (Google it; you’ll find various comments and discussions). Is it not reasonable to expect, or at least to hope, that some of those with this view might be open to, or indeed eager for, something new? Something like the SSP?

I was. In the summer of 2003, preparing for a tutorial on analytic theories of truth—far from my home philosophical turf, at the time—I read widely and, as I did, encountered several articles by Lorenz B. Puntel (I had read his book Darstellung, Methode, Struktur decades before when working on my dissertation, but had not followed his subsequent work). The articles seemed clearly to be contributions to a larger project and, intrigued by that project, I began to email him. It was some weeks before I got his first response, because he had been traveling in Eastern Europe and had had no internet connection. Once he did respond, our correspondence became intense (so intense that my then-teenaged daughter took to calling him my internet boyfriend). When I learned, in November or December, that he was working to complete a book on the systematic philosophy he had been developing since the late 1970s, I immediately offered to translate it into English, on the fly (as it were). The reason: I was so intrigued and excited by this project that I dropped all other philosophical work not required by my teaching in order to work with Puntel on the SSP. And I’ve been doing that ever since.

One who appears to have had a similar experience upon encountering this project is Johan Siebers, whose seminar involving, centrally, the SSP’s theory of being, began in October 2015.
Surely—I think and hope—Siebers and I can’t be alone (we’re not quite; I could name a few others, but not many). But how to find others? Well, maybe some others will read this text. And maybe some in Siebers’s seminar will be intrigued by the project. And maybe some will read “Rearticulating Being,” which appeared in print in September 2015, and then want to read more. Then again, maybe not.