TOWARD A PHILOSOPHICAL THEORY OF EVERYTHING

Contributions to the Structural-Systematic Philosophy

Alan White

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Preliminaries

Some readers of this sentence, the first in this book, may have been led to do so because they were attracted by the prospect of learning about work toward a philosophical theory of everything. Others may be motivated instead by incredulity: How could there be a *philosophical* theory of everything—or, perhaps, even of anything? These are good questions, and this book aims to give them good answers, beginning with explanations of the subtitle (1.1) and title (1.2), the latter of which, despite its apparent outrageousness, did not prevent readers of these words from getting to this point.

1.1 An initial clarification of this book's subtitle

For sake of brevity, this book's subtitle speaks of the structural-systematic philosophy (SSP). Clarity is served, however, by speaking as well of the structural-systematic research program in philosophy (SSRPP). This program is undertaken but far from completed in *Structure and Being* (Puntel 2008; *SB*) and *Being and God* (Puntel

2011; *BG*).[1] *SB*, particularly, establishes the SSRPP as a *research program* in philosophy by articulating it in sufficient detail to enable other philosophers—including this book's author and, potentially, any of its readers—to contribute to it. As explained below (Chapter 2), *SB* presents the abstract theoretical framework for the SSP—the theory to which the SSRPP is devoted—but it does not come close to concretizing that framework in complete detail. It thus opens the way for other philosophers—again, including this book's author—to contribute to the SSRPP in three distinct ways. First, others can treat in greater detail subject matters, such as ethics and human freedom, that *SB* treats only relatively briefly. Second, others can investigate subject matters, including for example political philosophy and the ontology of time, that *SB* does not treat at all. Third, because *SB* (475–6, 482–3) both explicitly acknowledges that its presentation of the SSP can be improved, and explains how it can be improved, others can offer such improvements.

This book—*TAPTOE*—aims to contribute to the SSP in the first and third of the ways just identified. It supplements *SB* and *BG* by providing (Chapters 1–2) a clear and concise introduction to the SSRPP and by presenting (Chapters 3–6, Chapter 8) alternative accounts and—particularly in the case of human freedom—more extensive accounts than are to be found in *SB* or *BG*. It aims to improve on the concretization of the SSP presented in *SB* by introducing, as an alternative to *SB*'s (4.4) treatment of the aesthetic world, a sketch (Chapter 7) of a theory of beauty.

[1] Neither *SB* nor *BG* uses the phrase "research program in philosophy"; in introducing it, this book makes explicit a thesis implicit in the two other books.

That *SB*'s presentation of the SSP can be improved on and expanded reveals, to be sure, *SB*'s self-acknowledged imperfection and incompleteness, but—far more importantly—it also reveals the viability and strength of the structural-systematic research program in philosophy to which *SB* is devoted.

1.2 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, at best, quixotic. 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 is a good one for rejecting the project of developing just such a theory.

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 situated 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 period, the word has 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 in which cognates of it appear). As is hinted at above and clarified below, in this book "philosophy" designates a strictly *theoretical* endeavor—not one that (for example) aims to change anyone's life or make anyone happy (although of course some books called "philosophical" do aim to do those things, and although this book will have effects on its readers' lives).

In the time of Aristotle (the fourth century BCE)—relatively shortly after the coinage of the term "*philosophia*" in ancient Greece—all theoretical inquiry could be classified as *philosophical* inquiry.[2] 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 seventeenth 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 project undertaken in this book is the question of what then happens to philosophy. In his *Philosophy 1: A Guide Through the Subject*, A. C. Grayling (1999: 2) answers that question as follows:

[2] This broad sense of "philosophy" is retained in, for example, sections 1 and 4(a) in the section on the word in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*). As the *OED*'s section 1 notes, this broad sense explains why academic doctorates are doctorates *of philosophy* (PhDs).

> 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 is not alone. Indeed, the prominent analytic metaphysician Peter van Inwagen goes so far as to say (2008b: 11), 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."

In considering the position taken by 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 theory having a restricted universe of discourse. Why not? Precisely because its articulation presupposes that *the unrestricted universe of discourse* is

divided into *restricted universes of discourse* of two kinds, and 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 (for now) left to philosophy.

What does this show? Three things. First, that if every theoretical discipline must have 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 discourse 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 Graying and van Inwagen do, 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* a universe of discourse that *can* be a subject matter *only* for philosophy. 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, understanding "everything" to mean the *unrestricted* universe of discourse. In the so-called analytic philosophy predominant at present in much of the world, the situation is yet worse, because analytic philosophers tend to adopt the divide-and-conquer strategy that has served particularly the natural sciences so well: they work in the currently recognized areas of specialization in philosophy—ethics, metaphysics, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and so forth—making few if any attempts to determine how all these areas might fit together.[3] As a consequence, the SSP's subject matter—the unrestricted universe of discourse—cannot come into their view.[4]

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

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[3] Soames 2003, *Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century*, describes the analytic philosophy of the thirty years preceding its publication as follows (463):

> Philosophy has become a highly organized discipline, done by specialists primarily for other specialists. The number of philosophers has exploded, the volume of publications has swelled, and the subfields of serious philosophical investigation have multiplied. Not only is the broad field of philosophy today far too vast to be embraced by one mind, something similar is true even of many highly specialized subfields.

Nine years later, Schwartz 2012, *A Brief History of Analytic Philosophy: From Russell to Rawls*, (299–300) comments:

> The only qualm I have about Soames' statement is his claim that "philosophy has become a highly organized discipline." I'm not sure what he means by that, but "highly *dis*organized discipline" would seem like a truer description given the rest of what he says.

[4] "Continental philosophy," throughout the twentieth century the most significant alternative to analytic philosophy, suffers less from problems of fragmentation than from ones of intelligibility. *BG*'s Chapter 2 exposes many such problems in the works of Martin Heidegger, and its Chapter 4, many in the works of Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Marion.

is a philosophical theory of everything. To leave open the possibility that philosophical theories may have restricted universes of discourse (as, currently, most do), the SSRPP 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 mathematical physicist Roger Penrose (t' Hooft et al. 2005: 259):

> 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?

"Our idea of science" is considered just below, but even without such consideration it is fully clear that physics as it is *now* cannot develop theories about all the subject matters 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.

As for "our idea of science": as suggested by the clarification above of what the word "philosophy" means in this book—and as explained in greater detail below (2.5)—ordinary language does not determine how the SSP uses words that it draws from that language.[5] According to the SSP, theoretical inquiry within any current academic discipline can be scientific. Whether any specific such inquiry qualifies as scientific is determined not by the inquiry's subject matter, but instead—again relying on a term clarified below—by the quality of the theoretical framework that inquiry relies on. The SSP, relying as it does on a clearly articulated theoretical framework, classifies itself as a science, and indeed, because of the comprehensiveness of its subject matter, as the universal science (see *SB* 10, 17, 356, 477f, 481ff).

One additional aspect of the Grayling passage quoted above can now be fruitfully considered. Each science—each non-philosophical science, in the terminology of the SSP—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 languages can

[5] As indicated above (1.1), the SSP is the theory to which the SSRPP is devoted.

articulate the subject matters 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 the questions 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 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.

An additional point important to this section begins by noting that there is a phrase at least roughly synonymous with "theory of everything," as that phrase is used to name a theory within the science of physics. The second phrase is "final theory," as used, for example, in Steven Weinberg's *Dreams of a Final Theory* (Weinberg 1992). The SSP, if completed, would be a philosophical theory of everything, but would not in any way be a *final* theory. As explained more fully below and in various places in *SB*, the SSP aims to be *the best currently available* systematic philosophy, hence the best currently available philosophical theory of everything. If it succeeds in being the best currently available systematic philosophy, then it is—by its own self-assessment—better than is any available alternative, but it is *not* closer to some hypothesized *final* systematic philosophy, because it denies the intelligibility of the notion of a final systematic philosophy (see 2.3). In addition, even if it is the best currently available systematic philosophy, the SSP *explicitly acknowledges* that it may someday be supplanted by a superior theory, and it indicates how that supplanting would be accomplished (see *SB*, 644–6).

1.3 Preliminary remarks on methodology

The philosophical theory of everything of which this book is a partial presentation is a linguistic account that is true. At this point, "true" can be understood in the everyday sense in which, roughly, a given sentence is true if it says that such-and-such is the case, and such-and-such is indeed, or in actuality, the case (the sense of "true" specific to the SSP is explained below; see 2.5 and Chapter 3). The development and to some extent the presentation of this theory are guided by a method that is further clarified in 2.2, 2.5, and 2.6 (and *SB* 1.4), but some preliminary methodological remarks are appropriate at this point. The chief reason for this is that *TAPTOE* aims at maximal clarity, and that includes clarity concerning the status of its own sentences.

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 qualify as *foundational* by satisfying both of the following two conditions: (a) being self-evidently or indubitably or in some way non-problematically true, and (b) providing premises from which all true sentences *not* satisfying condition (a) would have to be derived. 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 philosophical theory of everything or (technically) of being. Nodes within the network—individual theses and later subtheories—are stabilized by means of inferential interlinkings of various sorts, including deduction, induction, and—especially—inferences to the best explanation, theorization, or systematization (see *SB* 1.4.2). 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 linked to many (if any) other sentences. 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 SSP'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 "philosophical 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. This holds as well, of course, for the terms "intelligibility" and "coherence"; the terms are drawn from ordinary English, and the meanings of these terms that are specific to the SSP are made increasingly clear as the account progresses.

To put the central point of the two preceding paragraphs more directly and 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?",[6] (ii) "*Is it possible* that this is true?", and (iii) "How 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

[6]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* who are quite competent 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 it and linking it to other sentences, and its adequate *pragmatic* intelligibility—its making adequate sense *to readers*—depends in part, of course, on the readers' own efforts.

sentences increase the intelligibility and coherence of the theory or theories within which it is situated?". Ultimately, assuming that as it develops it adequately satisfies the criteria identified in questions (i)–(iv), the SSP 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 foundationally structured theories (see 2.2, below), 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 this is accomplished, and why its accomplishment involves no problematic circularity, is explained in detail in *SB* (1.5.2.2–1.5.2.3, 6.3.2.1).

1.4 A philosophically consequent stylistic peculiarity

A stylistic feature that *TAPTOE* shares with *SB* and (generally) *BG*, and one that is unusual in philosophical (and other) literature, is that it speaks of itself rather than of its author. Particularly *TAPTOE* and *SB* 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 *SB* 2.3.2.5). Among the consequences of this thesis are that whether *SB* and *BG* author Lorenz B. 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 *SB*, *BG*, 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 authors instead of attributing theses or positions 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 B. Puntel or Alan White may believe or indeed may ever have believed, *SB* 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 B. 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 *SB* and other texts to speak for themselves as well. Hence, the following sentence is true: *SB* often attributes theses and theories to philosophers—for example (84), "Quine presents," "Quine maintains," "Quine

designates"—whereas *TAPTOE* (other than in 1.2) attributes them only to texts (e.g. "Quine 1992 argues").

1.5 The structure of this book

Following the preliminaries covered in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 introduces the abstract theoretical framework of the SSP, in the process explaining what abstract theoretical frameworks are and how they are concretized. Chapter 2 is a concise alternative to Chapters 1–3 of *SB*, and is presupposed by Chapters 3–8. Chapters 3–8 are sufficiently independent of one another that they may be read in any order. Chapter 3 greatly expands the brief account of the SSP's truth theory given in 2.5. Chapter 4 explains the SSP's definition of knowledge. Chapter 5 sketches the SSP's value theory on its most general level. Chapter 6 presents an account of human freedom that supplements the relatively brief passages on that topic included in *SB*. Chapter 7 sketches a theory of beauty that is an alternative to the theory introduced in *SB* 4.4. Chapter 8, finally, presents some aspects of the theory of being presented in *SB* 5.3 and Chapter 3 of *BG*, introducing and then relying on a refined language in order to articulate being more coherently and intelligibly than does either *SB* or *BG*.

2

Theoretical frameworks

2.1 briefly indicates why the SSRPP relies on the term "theoretical framework"; 2.2 further clarifies the SSRPP's methodology, first treated above in 1.3; 2.3 introduces and comments on seven of the SSRPP's central theses concerning theoretical frameworks; 2.4 presents the central components of a family of abstract theoretical frameworks members of which have been dominant throughout the history of philosophy, but that the SSRPP rejects; 2.5 introduces the most central components of the SSRPP's own abstract framework; and 2.6 explains how the SSRPP's framework is concretized.

2.1 "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 SSRPP 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. Although it *is* a thesis

of the SSP that abstract theoretical frameworks for systematic philosophies include linguistic and what are commonly termed conceptual components—because, in colloquial terms, theories are collections of meaningful sentences—an additional thesis is that any presentation of any theory must rely on other components as well. The most important components relied on by the SSRPP are, in addition to the syntactic and especially semantic aspects of its linguistic component, its ontology (which identifies what it recognizes as beings or entities), its methodology, and its truth-theory, which makes fully explicit how its linguistic component relates to its ontological component or, colloquially, how its sentences relate to the world.[1]

One point of central importance that recurs, in various forms, throughout this book is the following: although it is common to consider such things as standpoints, perspectives, and even languages as *limiting* or *restricting* theoretical inquiry, theoretical frameworks—which, as just indicated, include languages—*make subject matters available* to theoretical inquiry.

2.2 The SSP as a network

What the SSRPP terms science has a relatively precisely identifiable point of historical origin in ancient Greece. Its first participant known by name is Thales, and it reached vital points of initial

[1] Its sentences are both *within* the world (better: they are within being, and are entities) and *about* the world (about being and, in most cases, about entities). More precisely, the sentences are themselves entities that express or articulate either entities, or being as such or as a whole. The distinction between being and entities is explained in Chapter 8.

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.[2] 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 the subject matter for the inquiry that continued to be most central to philosophy—the inquiry that Descartes, following Aristotle, 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 of both (1) the success of Euclidean geometry and (2) 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 everything else. Among metaphorical uses of relatively ordinary English that reinforce this analogy, in addition to talk of theses and theories being founded, grounded, and supported, is talk of their having groundworks, bases,

[2] See Wolpert 1993/1998: xii, Ch. 3 or, for a far more detailed account, Russo 2004.

and footings, and of their being undermined. Demands that philosophical theses be "proved" often also reinforce the analogy.[3]

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, and then clarifies the SSP as a comprehensive theory by means of theses drawn from consideration of those 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 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 it.

A somewhat different way of articulating this decisive flaw in the building-with-foundations analogy is the following: the structuration of buildings with foundations presupposes ground (the earth) and

[3] A famous passage from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (Section 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 buidings-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."

gravity, but because the SSP aims to be a theory of *everything*, there is nothing *outside the scope* of the SSP, so nothing analogous to ground for the SSP to rest on and nothing analogous to gravity to either threaten it or hold it together.

A first analogy that avoids this flaw is provided by D-Stix building sets.[4] 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 linkages, that consisting of a single stick inserted into a single connector, does not: the two components are stabilized in that they 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 none of its connections depends on either ground or gravity, but that structure is made more stable if it is reconfigured into a triangle—it then also maintains its shape independently of ground and gravity.

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[4] In the philosophical literature, the standard "coherentist" counterpart to the building-with-foundations analogy is "Neurath's boat," introduced in Neurath 1921 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 introduced above: ships are held up by the sea and held down by gravity.

D-Stix structures are of course constructed, and hence require constructors. There is however an important sense in which the constructor does not determine 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 1.3 and especially 1.4) when theories are assessed, the most appropriate 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 no 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 must 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 stabilized; securing the loose end would increase its stabilization. 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 tightly and multiply interlinked, and hence more central, whereas others are more loosely and less multiply interlinked, and hence more peripheral. Alterations to relatively peripheral components of the SSP could improve the SSP, whereas if superior alternatives to central components were discovered, the theory relying on those components would presumably be an alternative to the SSP.[5]

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

[5] For specific identifications of some peripheral, intermediate, and central components of the SSP, see *Structure and Being*, Section 6.4.

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 *SB*, and in *BG*). According to the SSP being as a whole[6] is, as explained below (Chapter 8), the comprehensive configuration of facts identical to true propositions expressible by true sentences. To be sure, no presentation of the SSP could include all of those sentences (and thereby those propositions and those facts), but that is not because any of those facts are somehow beyond or outside of its scope. It is instead because human finitude precludes the possibility of any human being developing a comprehensive account of everything that is within the SSP's scope, and because the subject matters of the non-philosophical sciences are within its scope only in that those sciences themselves are within its scope.

2.3 Seven central theses concerning theoretical frameworks

Seven of the SSP's central theses concerning theoretical frameworks—theses that, as emphasized in 1.3 and 2.2, are in no way foundational—are the following (with "TF" indicating that the theses concern theoretical frameworks, and the theses themselves italicized):

TF1: *True sentences are situated within theoretical frameworks.* They cannot be situated beyond or outside any theoretical framework whatsoever, because—as indicated above in 2.1—they must

[6] Recent debates about issues in logic raise questions about the possibility of theories encompassing (in the SSP's language) being (or, in *BG*, Being) *as a whole*. These are considered in *Structure and Being*, Section 5.2.2.

(linguistically) express semantic contents (colloquially: meanings), and must somehow qualify as true. In the terminology of the SSP, the language in which a true sentence is articulated, the semantic contents it expresses, and the way in which it qualifies as true are components of a theoretical framework.

TF2: *Being*—which includes all that is—*veridically manifests itself—truly or genuinely reveals itself—within all adequately determined or determinable theoretical frameworks.* Among such frameworks are the tacitly presupposed and only vaguely determined frameworks that human beings rely on in their everyday lives when they are concerned with discovering and presenting truths—as, for example, when someone consults a newspaper in order to *discover* when the sun will rise the following morning, and *presents* the truth thereby discovered by uttering an indicative sentence, perhaps "Sunrise tomorrow is at 4:33."

TF3: *All truths are relative to the theoretical frameworks within which they are situated*, again beginning with the mundane truths that, like "Sunrise tomorrow is at 4:33," are situated within everyday frameworks. That sentence is of course not true within the framework of contemporary astronomy, wherein among the truths that are situated are that the sun is stable relative to the earth, and that the earth both rotates on its own axis and revolves around the sun. The two frameworks can be compared within a metaframework encompassing both; the comparison yields an explanation of why the earth, *although* veridically revealing itself within the framework of astronomy as moving, *also* veridically appears within everyday frameworks as immobile.[7] A consequence of this is that astronomers

[7] This example is reconsidered in 6.3.

can non-problematically, in their everyday lives, speak of the sun as rising and setting, as can non-astronomers who know enough about contemporary astronomy to be heliocentrists.

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, according to thesis 4,

TF4: *Within metaframeworks, apparently conflicting theoretical frameworks can be compared and, when comparison reveals the conflict to be genuine, ordered with respect to their theoretical adequacy.* In the case just considered, comparison shows that the conflict is merely apparent, so neither framework need be rejected. Everyday theoretical frameworks are more adequate with respect to everyday convenience and efficiency, and the SSP accepts those criteria as the ones appropriate for ordering such frameworks, but not as the ones appropriate for ordering scientific frameworks.

The SSP'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 competing theoretical frameworks that are available).[8]

Although theoretical frameworks can be ranked with respect to theoretical adequacy, according to thesis 5,

[8] Determining the degree to which the truth of TF4 is relative to the theoretical framework of the SSP requires considering the relation between the systematic and the metasystematic levels of the SPP; see *SB* 1.5.2.2–1.5.2.3 and Chapter 6.

TF5: *No human theoretician could ever establish that the framework they relied on was the best possible framework for any sufficiently complex subject matter, definitively including the subject matter of systematic philosophy*. Establishing a framework as absolutely optimal would require identifying and comparing all of the infinitely many possible theoretical frameworks (or families of frameworks) for the relevant subject matter, and that, for human beings, is impossible.

From the conjunction of thesis 3—that all truths are relative to theoretical frameworks—and thesis 5—that human beings can identify neither all such frameworks nor any optimal framework—it might appear to follow, but does not in fact follow, that there cannot be or indeed that human beings cannot identify any absolute truths. The reason this does not follow is articulated by thesis 6, according to which

TF6: *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.[9] The reason is that within such a "framework," no definitive truths whatsoever could emerge.

A clear consequence of TF5 is that the SSP cannot include the thesis that its own theoretical framework is the best possible for systematic philosophy. It can and indeed does however include TF7—which, as indicated above, is stabilized in part by examination of alternative frameworks, either in isolation or in comparisons developed within appropriate metaframeworks:

[9] Determination that two distinct formulations, situated in different theoretical frameworks, qualified as versions of the principle of non-contradiction would require reliance on a metaframework considering both.

TF7: *The SSP's theoretical framework is the best that is currently available for systematic philosophy.*

One consequence of TF5 and TF7, in conjunction, is that although the status claimed by the SSP is in one respect highly ambitious, in another it 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.

It is important to emphasize one additional consequence of the SSP's inclusion of these theses concerning theoretical frameworks. It is the following: the SSP is reasonably termed a philosophical theory of everything because its subject matter is the unrestricted universe of discourse. Within the scope of what is best termed its *systematic* level is, in a sense clarified above, everything, but *this* everything does *not* include theoretical frameworks or theories that are *alternatives* to those of the SSP. As suggested above, addressing such theoretical frameworks and theories requires development of and reliance on *metaframeworks*, which are developed on *metasystematic* levels of the SSP. The consideration, in the following section (2.4), of a family of alternative frameworks requires a step to a metaframework within which it becomes evident that the family is of frameworks that *are* different from the SSP's framework. The critique of that family of frameworks is an immanent critique in that it exposes problems

inherent in members of that family. The next section (2.5) shows how the SSP's framework avoids those problems. The argument that the SSP's framework is therefore superior to the rejected frameworks is situated on a metasystematic level, because it requires considering both the SSP's framework and the family of alternative frameworks.

The point made in the preceding paragraph further clarifies the sense in which the SSP, if completed, would be a philosophical theory of everything. Its subject matter, the unrestricted universe of discourse, is comprehensive, but also incomplete in the specific sense that it continues to develop over time. The SSP does not ignore that development; instead, it explicitly acknowledges it. As a result, future theoretical frameworks and theories fall within its scope in that it explicitly anticipates their development. At the same time, however, no concretization of the SSP can anticipate, *specifically*, what theoretical frameworks or theories will develop in the future. This yields one sense in which the SSP remains an *open* system (see *SB* 20, 428): it is *open* to the arising of new theoretical frameworks and new theories, and *capable*, *as they arise*, of examining them. When, within a metaframework, a new theoretical framework or theory shows itself to be superior to the SSP, the SSP will no longer be the best available systematic philosophy.

This point may also be put in the following way: indeed, no concretization of the SSP can include considerations of specific, not-yet-available alternative theoretical frameworks or theories, but what prevents its consideration of them is *not* any restriction of its universe of discourse, but instead, precisely, the fact that they are not yet available. As they become available, they enter the scope of the SSP's metasystematic investigations.

2.4 A family of theoretical frameworks rejected by the SSRPP[10]

The theoretical framework of the SSRPP develops in significant part from the *rejection* of a family of frameworks members of which have been relied on, since the beginning of the scientific enterprise in ancient Greece, by the vast majority of theoreticians and—at least in much of the world—by human beings in their everyday lives. Showing that all members of this family are inadequate prepares the way for showing the superiority of the SSRPP's framework.

All of the rejected frameworks rely on more or less ordinary languages, such as English. Their components include semantic ones whose syntactic counterparts are subject terms (such as "Socrates") and predicates (such as "is a Greek philosopher"). The grammatical or syntactic subject most important to the semantics is the singular term taken to have a semantic referent whose ontological counterpart is a thing (or substance or object), such as SOCRATES. The grammatical predicate is taken, semantically, to designate what is, ontologically, either a property of that substance or thing (such as IS-A-GREEK-PHILOSOPHER), or a relation in which the substance stands to other substances or things (for example, IS-A-TEACHER-OF-PLATO).

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

[10] Throughout *TAPTOE*, the use of small capital letters indicates the articulation of ontological items (that is, entities); articulations of semantic items (concepts or propositions) are indicated by italicized letters, and those of syntactic items (words, phrases, or sentences), by enclosure within quotation marks.

items now common in at least much of the world, and ones that have obvious counterparts elsewhere—such things as tables, rugs, oak trees, and Siamese cats, and it is non-problematic for human beings, in their everyday lives, to think of those items as things having properties and standing in relations to one another. Tables, unlike rugs, generally have legs, and the two often relate such that tables are on rugs but far more rarely such that rugs 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 often satisfy these criteria quite satisfactorily. Systematic philosophy, however, aims *not* at everyday efficiency and convenience, but instead at relatively maximal coherence and intelligibility, and frameworks relying on substance or thing ontologies fail to satisfy those criteria. They fail because substances prove to be *un*intelligible. According to thing ontologies, things 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 statuses of properties and 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 thing? As a table, it has legs and is on the rug, but those attributes characterize it as the table that it is, not as a thing. The only way it could become accessible and hence intelligible as a thing would be by means 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. The concepts *thing*, *substance*, and *object*, as components of thing or substance or object ontologies, are therefore unintelligible,

in that it is impossible to determine or articulate what things or substances or objects *as such* could be.[11]

2.5 The SSP's abstract theoretical framework

The SSP's theoretical framework diverges from members of the family of frameworks just described first in relying not on any ordinary language, but instead on artificial, technical languages that both refine and expand ordinary languages (English, in *TAPTOE*, *SB*, and *BG*, German, in *Struktur und Sein* and *Sein und Gott*). The technical languages refine their ordinary counterparts particularly by disambiguating terms (such as "philosophy," particularly in the phrase "systematic philosophy"), and expand them chiefly by introducing technical terms (such as "theoretical framework" and "being").

Because—for reasons just indicated—the SSP's ontology cannot recognize things or objects or substances in any form, it also 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 any such sentence to be a syntactic placeholder required by English grammar, not a pronoun requiring an antecedent.[12] According to the framework's semantic component, sentences of the form "It's such-and-suching"—termed in *TAPTOE*,

[11] *SB* 3.2.2.3 (pp. 249–61) treats this issue in greater detail; see also 2.5.1, below.
[12] The "it" in such sentences is reconsidered in 8.3.1.

although not in *SB* or *BG*, "sentencings"[13]—can express semantic contents termed "propositionings."[14] Ontologically, every true propositioning is identical to an actual facting, so that, for example, the sentencing "It's Williams-Colleging" is true because—in more ordinary language—Williams College is a facting that is a constituent of the actual world, not of some merely possible world. Factings are understood on the basis of the propositionings most intelligibly expressed by sentencings, that is, broadly, as happenings (many of which are temporally extended, and many of which—including ones in the mathematical domain—are atemporal). The facting (for example) It's Socratesing is an extremely complex one, a configuration including among its constituents the factings It's robustly-individualling, It's philosophizing, and It's being-an-interlocutor-of-It's-Platoing,[15] each of which is itself complex. It's philosophizing is an example of a facting that can be only as a constituent of an It's robustly-individualling, and It's being-an-interlocutor is an example of a facting that is a relating, such that it can be only as relating at least two robust individuals (two members of the family It's robustly-individualling).

Metaframework-level comparison of the SSP's ontology with the thing (or object or substance) ontologies considered in 2.4 reveals

[13] See *SB* 15 and *BG* 184 note e.

[14] To decrease awkwardness, *TAPTOE* occasionally uses "proposition" rather than the technical term "propositioning."

[15] More precisely, It's Socratesing includes among its constituents members of the family of factings It's humaning and It's robustly-individualling. It's Platoing includes a constituent facting so highly similar to a constituent of It's Socratesing that each qualifies as an It's humaning, but in the SSP's ontology, there are no multiply instantiated universals. Hence, there is no universal It's humaning, there are instead specific members of the family. See *SB* 204, 213–14, 264.

that members of the family IT'S ROBUSTLY-INDIVIDUALLING are among the factings whose counterparts in thing ontologies are things, that IT'S PHILOSOPHIZING is an example of a facting whose counterpart in thing ontologies is a property, and IT'S BEING-AN-INTERLOCUTOR, an example of a facting whose counterpart in thing ontologies is a relation. Centrally important among the differences between the SSP's entities and their counterparts in thing ontologies is that the SSP's do not differ with respect to ontological status, precisely because all are factings. Thus, because according to the SSP all entities—all beings—are factings, being veridically appears or reveals itself within the SSP's theoretical framework as the facting that is the comprehensive configuration encompassing all other factings (see Chapter 8, below, and *BG* 3.2), every facting being identical to a propositioning expressible by a sentence or sentencing.

The just-used phrase "sentence or sentencing" requires brief clarification. The SSP rejects the *semantics* ordinarily associated with subject-predicate sentences, but it need not reject sentences having this *syntactic* structure. To the contrary, subject-predicate sentences remain fully acceptable if they are understood to be convenient paraphrases of sentencings—again, sentences of the form, "It's such-and-suching." The reason is that what matters here is only semantics, not syntax. So, for example, a presentation of the SSP could include among its theses the sentence "All humans are mortal," but would understand the sentence not as saying that every substance having the property IS-HUMAN also has the property IS-MORTAL, but instead as being a convenient paraphrase of the sentencing expressing the propositioning *If it's humaning then it's mortalling.*

Because factings are identical with propositionings, the former are clarified by an additional semantic consideration. The semantics most intelligibly and coherently linked to substance ontologies, which are considered and rejected above (2.4), is, in one or another version, *compositional* semantics, according to which the semantic value (colloquially: meaning) of any sentence is a function of the semantic values (meanings) of its subsentential components. The essential subsentential components are subjects and predicates, but because subjects are taken to refer to things (or objects or substances), and because things (and objects and substances) are unintelligible, the SSP rejects the compositional semantics linked to subject-predicate sentences. It accepts instead a version of a *contextual* semantics, that is, one according to which words have semantic values (or meanings) only within the contexts of sentences. Also as indicated above, its semantics is linked to sentencings, which have no semantically significant subsentential components. In terms of semantics, any simple sentencing—any sentencing without operators or connectives, such as "It's morning"—consists solely of a verb.[16]

2.5.1 A further clarification of factings

Thing-based ontologies, if they could be made intelligible, might appear to be well-suited to account for what analytic philosophers

[16] Perhaps worth noting is that in some languages, including Spanish and Italian, grammatically correct sentences need not contain subject terms. For example, counterparts to "It's raining" are the Spanish "*Está lloviendo*" and the Italian "*Sta piovendo*." In ordinary English, the "is raining" of "It's raining" is the verb "rain" in the present continuous tense; this "raining" is not the gerund (as in, for example, "Raining turns to snowing when the temperature drops far enough") and not the present participle (as in "Raining from the sky, the bombs did enormous damage to the city").

often refer to as middle-sized dry goods, and to the so-called bodies of classical physics, such as planets and particles, but they cannot easily accommodate various of the entities that emerge within the theoretical frameworks of contemporary physics, including the likes of fields and collapses of wave functions.[17] Galen Strawson 2006 (28) emphasizes this point:

> The object/process/property/state/event cluster of distinctions is unexceptionable in everyday life [SSP: within everyday theoretical frameworks] but it is hopelessly superficial from the point of view [SSP: within the theoretical frameworks] of science and metaphysics, and one needs to acquire a vivid sense that this is so. One needs a vivid sense of the respect in which (given the spatio-temporal framework) every object is a process; one needs to abandon the idea that there is any sharp or categorial distinction between an object and its propertiedness. [18]

Having seen this problem, Strawson 2006 presents it as insoluble, holding that "We are as inescapably committed to the discursive, subject-predicate form of experience as we are to the spatio-temporal form of experience," and, for this reason, "discursive thought is not adequate to the nature of reality." Strawson 2003 (301) makes a related point:

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[17] Chapter 8 shows that the subject-predicate sentences taken as semantically significant by frameworks with thing ontologies also fail to adequately articulate being.

[18] Significantly earlier, and following a different course of argumentation, Verdenius 1962 (333) draws a similar conclusion: from modern science, "the notion of substance has been eliminated, as a residue of infantile thought" (see also 333n3). Decades later, Ladyman and Ross 2009, *Everything Must Go: Metaphysics Naturalized*, reason similarly.

> We face the fact that some of our most fundamental thought categories simply do not get the world right. When we think obstinately I think we can see a priori that this is so. But we cannot really liberate ourselves from the framework these thought categories dictate.

To Strawson 2006's contention that "every object is a process," the SSP replies that in its theoretical framework there are no objects, there are only factings, all of which are intelligible as processes, given a sufficiently broad understanding of "process."[19] Second, to Strawson 2006's contention that "We are … inescapably committed to the discursive, subject-predicate form of experience," so "discursive thought is not adequate to the nature of reality," the SSP responds that its theoretical framework escapes that commitment, and that it holds that different theoretical frameworks are "adequate to the nature of reality" to varying degrees. Finally, to Strawson 2003's assertion that "some of our most fundamental thought categories simply do not get the world right … [b]ut we cannot really liberate ourselves from the framework these thought categories dictate," the SSP responds that its framework, with its alternative semantics and ontology, is one not dictated by those problematic thought categories. Within the ontology of the SSRPP, no problems are posed by identifying such items as IT'S FIELDING and IT'S WAVE-FUNCTION-COLLAPSING as factings.

[19] All of the SSP's entities are "processes" in that all are engagements in being, or at work being the entities that they are; for explanation, see 8.3.1, below.

2.6 Concretizing the SSP's theoretical framework

In technical terms, propositionings are *semantic structures*, and factings are *ontological structures*. These, along with *formal or logical structures*, are the structural core of the SSRPP's abstract theoretical framework (see *SB* 3.2). Concretizing this abstract theoretical framework requires *reinterpreting* or *reconfiguring* what the SSP calls the grand datum. The grand datum includes the universe—or, in the SSP's term, being—as it is articulated in other theoretical frameworks, including both everyday frameworks and scientific frameworks. Items situated in other frameworks as things or properties or relations are, if incorporated into the SSP, reinterpreted or reconfigured or resituated as factings; what in other frameworks are situated as concepts are, if incorporated into the SSP, resituated as or within propositionings. Worth noting is that although the grand datum includes being as it is articulated in other available frameworks, it is not limited to being as so articulated; work within the SSP's theoretical framework can also thematize aspects of being that have no identifiable counterparts in other available frameworks.

Chapters 1–3 of *SB*—roughly the first half of the book—present the *abstract* theoretical framework of the SSRPP; Chapter 4 sketches concretizations of the framework for universal domains of the contingently actual dimension of being[20] (the natural world, the human world, the aesthetic world, and the world as a whole); Chapter 5 sketches concretizations of the framework for the absolutely

[20] 8.3.5, below, clarifies "contingently actual dimension of being."

necessary dimension of being (being as such and as a whole[21]); Chapter 6, finally, completes the presentation of the SSP's framework by sketching its various requisite kinds of metasystematic theories. All of *SB*'s and *BG*'s chapters also contain passages arguing that other available theories are less intelligible and/or coherent than are the counterparts of those theories contained within the SSP; all such passages are, technically, metasystematic.

[21] Chapter 3 of *BG* more completely concretizes the theory of absolute being whose starting points are presented in section 5.3 of *SB*. An alternative account is provided below, in Chapter 8.