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STRUCTURE AND BEING

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A SYSTEMATIC PHILOSOPHY

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Introduction

The systematic philosophy presented in this book has arisen from two insights, formulable as two theses, resulting from a long and intensive occupation with the fundamental philosophical conceptions from history and of the present. The first thesis is that in terms of its intention, its self-understanding, and its accomplishments, the theoretical enterprise that for over two thousand years has been designated “philosophy“ is fundamentally a form of knowledge with a comprehensive or universal character. The second thesis is that contemporary philosophy – and quite particularly so-called analytic philosophy – today does scarcely any justice to this universal character of philosophy, in that it exhibits, virtually exclusively, a fragmentary character that is conditioned by various distinct factors.

[1] To designate the comprehensive character of philosophy, modernity introduces the term “system,” which then develops a significant history. For reasons presented at the end of this Introduction, this term is used in this book, if at all, only marginally, and certainly not as the proper designation of the philosophy here developed. That designation is instead “systematic philosophy“ (and, more specifically, “structural systematic philosophy“). To be stressed at the outset, however, is that contemporary philosophy uses the term “systematic“ in two distinct senses – or, more precisely, that the term currently has both a central signification and a secondary one.

In its central philosophical signification, “systematic” designates a conception of philosophy distinguished by two characteristics: by the completeness of its scope, in terms of its subject matter, and by its concern with articulating the interconnections among all its various thematic components. Neither this completeness nor this interconnectedness is, as a rule, taken in an absolute sense. Thus, it is not meant that all the details relevant to a philosophical subject matter or domain are explicitly presented. What is meant is instead that what this book calls the (*unrestricted*) *universe of discourse* is understood and articulated in at least a global manner. [2] According to the secondary signification of "systematic" in contemporary philosophy, the term is the counterpart to "(purely) historical": a "systematic" treatment of a topic, a "systematic" view, etc., is one that is not historically oriented. This secondary signification is *not* of primary importance for this book; here, the chief signification is intended except in cases where either the context or explicit notation indicates the relevance of the secondary signification.

Throughout most of its long history, philosophy has attributed to itself a comprehensive character, even if that character has taken various distinct forms. In the golden age of antiquity, for example, philosophy is more or less identified with scientific knowledge as a whole,[1] in the Middle Ages it is primarily understood as taking the form of a *Summa*, and in modernity it develops, increasingly, as a *system*; this development leads to the duality of Rationalism and Empiricism, which itself then leads to Kant's historical attempt to unite these two tendencies in a new form of philosophical system, albeit a radically limited one. Kant's critical enterprise has, as a consequence that only appears to be paradoxical, the development, on the basis of his philosophy, of the highest and most daring variants of philosophy as comprehensive; these are the philosophical systems that come to be grouped under the designation "German Idealism." It is anything other than a historical accident that the collapse of these systems, particularly Hegel‘s, coincides, in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the impressively self-conscious rise, in the arenas both of theory and of experimentation, of the natural sciences, and with the beginnings both of contemporary mathematical logic and of what later becomes known as analytic philosophy.

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[1] More precisely, the borders between "philosophy" and what is currently termed "empirical science" is, in antiquity, largely undetermined. Aristotle's *Physics* (more precisely: *lectures* on physics, ΦΨΣΙΚΗ ΑΚΡΟΑΣΙΣ) serves as a characteristic example. Throughout the history of philosophy, this work is understood and interpreted as a work of philosophy. On the basis of an understanding of the relationship between philosophy and the empirical or natural sciences that is clarified by modern and contemporary insights, this historical classification can scarcely be maintained.

An additional, later line of separation is to be noted; this is between analytic philosophy on the one hand, and various other tendencies that have developed, some of which persist, with varying degrees of vivacity, into the present. These tendencies include Husserlian phenomenology, the philosophy of life, hermeneutics, Heidegger‘s philosophy of being, etc. [3] The comprehensive character of philosophy – earlier brought into question only rarely and never fundamentally – remains present in these tendencies, albeit only in a somewhat paradoxical manner, i.e., explicitly virtually exclusively as rejected, but implicitly in an astonishing manner: the attempt has been and continues to be made to relativize precisely this comprehensive character in various ways, by means of the development of some kind of "meta-conception" of it. This is exemplarily the case in the hermeneutic philosophy developed especially by Hans-Georg Gadamer: central to all philosophical statements there is, according to Gadamer, the comprehensive context of the history of interpretation, within which one attempts to situate the various philosophies that claim to be comprehensive. Heidegger, above all, presses such a "meta-conception" to the greatest extreme in that he attempts to develop a thinking that has a character yet more radically comprehensive than any and every prior philosophy, and in emphatically explicit opposition to them.[2]

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[2] For a presentation and critique of Heidegger‘s position, see Puntel 1997.

Philosophy cannot simply ignore or abstract from the entire tradition – its tradition – because that would be tantamount to self-denial and thus to self-destruction. But attendance to its own history can be and in fact is concretized in various ways. Philosophy can, for example, occupy itself simply with the history of philosophy: it can identify itself with this occupation. But it can also fall at the opposite extreme; it does so if it turns completely and explicitly *against* the entire history of philosophy – a simple ignoring of the history of philosophy is a particular way of denying that history any positive significance, and indeed, in a certain respect, the most radical way of doing so. The spectrum of possibilities between these two extremes is quite broad. It can be established that the most productive new initiatives in philosophy are those that develop on the basis of well-balanced emphases on systematic philosophy (in both senses) and the history of philosophy.

In opposition to the tendencies just introduced, analytic philosophy develops along significantly more modest lines. Fundamentally (and almost exclusively), it has always been *systematic* in the *secondary* sense; as is shown below, so it continues to be. Whether it has been and/or is systematic in the chief sense is a completely separate question that must [4] also be pursued. The "systematic" (in the sense of "non-historical") character of analytic philosophy, starting from its beginnings, has as one of its consequences the fact that it has neglected and often indeed simply ignored the grand philosophical tradition. Much could be said about this, but a general remark suffices: analytic philosophers are now, quite astonishingly, increasingly concerned not only with the history of analytic philosophy, but with the entire history of philosophy. The tendency is so clear that no specific support is required.

[2] The question whether contemporary philosophy has a systematic character is answered by the second thesis introduced above in the negative. This thesis has a global character and cannot here be defended in detail; nevertheless, some further specifications are possible and also necessary. For this, it is necessary to distinguish between non-analytic (so-called "continental") and analytic philosophy. As far as non-analytic philosophy since the end of the Second World War is concerned, the following may be globally noted: to the extent that this philosophy has a distinctly theoretical character, it is concern essentially with ever new interpretations and reinterpretations of traditional philosophical texts, and not with systematic philosophy in the second of the senses introduced above ("systematic" as non-historically oriented).[3] Works that are systematic in the chief sense of "systematic" and thus in continuity with the continental tradition of philosophy are not to be found.

The contention introduced above that analytic philosophy has only a fragmentary character requires additional clarification and specification. In a lecture presented in 1975, Michael Dummett treats the question posed in his title: "Can Analytic Philosophy Be Systematic, and Ought It to Be?." His answer is illuminating in some respects, albeit not in all. Dummett does not directly pose the question whether analytic philosophy up to and including 1975 is systematic; he does however treat this question indirectly, although even then not comprehensively. He distinguishes between two meanings of "systematic:"

> In one sense, a philosophical investigation is systematic if it is intended to issue in an articulated theory, such as is constituted by any of the great philosophical

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[3] With respect to German philosophy (since 1945), this thesis is formulated and defended in Puntel 1994. To be stressed however is that the situation in German philosophy has changed significantly since 1994.

> ‘systems’ advanced in the past by philosophers like Spinoza or Kant. In the other sense, a philosophical investigation is systematic if it proceeds according to generally agreed methods of enquiry, and its results are generally accepted or rejected according to commonly agreed criteria. These two senses ... are independent of one another. (455) [5]

Dummett contends that if the (non-analytic) philosophy of the past – meaning thereby pre-Fregean philosophy – is systematic, then it is systematic only in the first sense, not in the second. As far as analytic philosophy is concerned, Dummett appears to hold that if it is systematic up to 1975, then it is so only in the second sense. Dummett qualifies this “if” in two ways. With respect to both of his senses of “systematic”, he deems such philosophers as Gilbert Ryle, John Austin, and the later Wittgenstein explicitly to be non-systematic. With respect to other analytic philosophers, above all Rudolf Carnap, W. v. O. Quine, and Nelson Goodman, he maintains that it would be absurd to pose to them the question whether philosophy can be systematic; he appears to consider these thinkers to be systematic philosophers in both of his senses.

Dummett defends the thesis that “at least in the philosophy of language, philosophy ought henceforward to be systematic in both senses” (455). In part for this reason, he deems Frege to be “the fountain-head of analytical philosophy” (440) and to be the central figure in the entire history of this now-dominant philosophical movement. He maintains “that philosophy failed, throughout most of its long history, to achieve a systematic methodology” (456-57). He considers there to be an explanation required for “how it comes about that philosophy, although as ancient as any other subject and a great deal more ancient than most, should have remained for so long ‘in its early stages’” (457).

Such an explanation is not however provided in the essay under consideration. Instead of offering one, he reasons as follows: "The 'early stages' of any discipline are, presumably, to be characterised as those in which its practitioners have not yet attained a clear view of its subject-matter and its goals." He adds that philosophy has "only just very recently struggled out of its early stage into maturity: the turning-point was the work of Frege, but the widespread realisation of the significance of that work has had to wait for half a century after his death, and, at that, is still confined only to the analytical school."

Dummett takes an additional step by contending, "Only with Frege was the proper object of philosophy finally established" (458); to explain this development, he introduces three factors. First: the goal of philosophy is the analysis of the structure of thought, second, this thought is strictly to be distinguished from the *thinking* studied by psychology, and third, the only correct method for analyzing thought is that of the analysis of language. On this basis, Dummett provides his clearest determination of analytic philosophy: [6] "We may characterise analytical philosophy as that which follows Frege in accepting that the philosophy of language is the foundation of the rest of the subject" (441).

Dummett's reflections well reveal the difficulty encountered with any attempt to describe, generally, what specifically characterizes analytic philosophy; the difficulty is yet clearer if one attempts to answer the question whether analytic philosophy is systematic. As accurate as Dummett's remarks are in mutual isolation, viewed as a whole they are quite one-sided, short-sighted, and in part even incorrect. His distinction between his two senses of "systematic", on the one hand as designating an "articulated theory" and on the other as qualifying a philosophical investigation only if "there are agreed methods of investigation and agreed criteria for testing what are claimed as results of such investigation" (455), is both one-sided and artificial. Dummett however discovers a method in the systematic philosophical methodology described in the passage just sited; he deems this method, which involves the analysis of language, the "only proper" one (458). These contentions are however quite problematic, in several respects. A method determined by the sociology of knowledge ("commonly agreed, ... generally accepted standards ..." (455)) cannot raise the claim of being the "only proper" one; factors of the sociology of knowledge are subject to a volatility far too great to qualify them as a firm basis for evaluating a systematic philosophical method. It can, for example, not (or no longer) be said that the method of the analysis of language is currently widely acknowledged. When Dummett says that it is "amazing that, in all its long history, [philosophy] should not yet have established a generally accepted methodology, generally accepted criteria of success, and, therefore, a body of definitively achieved results" (455), then it follows that *his* method, the analysis of language, should not only be generally accepted, but should (or would) also establish a "body of definitively achieved results." Talk in philosophy of "definitive results" is, however, extraordinarily problematic. In any case, Dummett's method has not accomplished this, and it cannot be said that his philosophical methodology is generally accepted. Does it then follow that Dummett's philosophy lacks a "systematic method"? That would be strange, but then it is likewise strange and even incoherent to ascribe to thinkers of the past "articulated theories" (and in this sense *systematicity*) while simultaneously denying that they had systematic philosophical methodologies. And if one attributes to the criterion of "general [7] acceptance and recognition" so central a significance as does

Dummett, then it would be only consequent to apply the criterion not only to systematicity in the sense of a universal methodology, but also to systematicity in the sense of "articulated theory." But then one could no longer contend, as does Dummett, that Spinoza, Kant, and other philosophers develop "articulated theories" and are in this sense "systematic philosophers", but whose "articulated theories" are not generally accepted and recognized.

From this arises the more general question: to which philosophies and/or philosophers could one, on the basis of this criterion, ascribe *systematicity*? Dummett appears not to have been aware of this problem that emerges from his thesis. At the end of his essay, he maintains that many philosophers have suffered from the illusion that they have succeeded in overcoming the scandal caused by the lack of a systematic philosophical methodology, explicitly naming philosophers such as Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, and Husserl. He also maintains that the era of systematic philosophy (in both of his senses) begins with Frege But then he writes (458):

> I have mentioned only a few of many examples of this illusion; for any outsider to philosophy, by far the safest bet would be that I was suffering from a similar illusion in making the claim for Frege. To this I can offer only the banal reply which any prophet has to make to any sceptic: time will tell.

One should perhaps instead say: the philosopher does well by avoiding acting like a prophet. This of course presupposes that the develops a conception of systematic philosophy that does not simply do away with the history of philosophy and that makes possible an open future for philosophy.

The systematic conception presented in this book shares the view that philosophy must ascribe to language a role that is not only important but even indeed fundamental. The view remains however relatively uninformative until the senses of “language”, “analysis of language”, and “philosophy of language“ are clarified. The two great deficiencies in Dummett‘s philosophy of language (which he understands as a “theory of meaning”) are the following: first, he does not consider the question of which language is adequate and therefore requisite for the development of philosophical (or scientific) theories. He contents that the philosophy of language is concerned “with the fundamental outlines of an account of how language functions” (442). But which language? Ordinary (natural) language, or a philosophical language to be developed? [8] The primary matter at hand is not pure “functionality”, important though that is ; of primary importance is instead clarification of the implications of such a language for the treatment of complexes of philosophical problems. Second, Dummett considers the fundamental domain of ontology, if at all, only quite inadequately. Yet among the most important implications of language are its *ontological* implications.

The conception developed in this book avoids or overcomes both deficiencies in that it explicitly projects the concept of a philosophical language and of its basic features, and in that it develops an innovative ontology fundamentally in relation to its semantics, so that one can say the following: the semantics and the ontology of a philosophical language are fundamentally two sides of one and the same coin. As far as the method of systematic philosophy is concerned, it is in no way reduced to the “analysis of language”; instead, the conception develops of a completely thorough philosophical method as consisting of four methodic stages (or, for sake of simplicity, four methods). These are the identification of structures and constitution of minimal or informal theories, the constitution of axiomatic theories, the systematization of theories, and the evaluation of the comprehensive system or network with respect to theoretical adequacy and truth. In philosophical practice, the four methods are virtually never *simultaneously* applied; they therefore represent an ideal case of a philosophical theory, but one that is not an insignificant abstraction, but instead serves the function of being an important regulative idea with respect to the development of philosophical theories. Taking the complexity of a completely developed philosophical method into consideration, it is possible to become clear concerning the current status of philosophical theories that are either under development or presented publicly.

As far as the fragmentary character of analytic philosophy is concerned, Dummett himself makes clear that even Frege‘s “fundamental achievement” – i.e., that he was able to “alter our perspective in philosophy” (441) – develops in the form of a theory only in its outlines. And even the “theory of meaning“ that Dummett locates at the center of philosophy is not available as a fully developed theory. This is only some sort of fragmentary philosophy.

The fragmentary character of contemporary analytic philosophy mentioned at the beginning of this Introduction is however a different sort of fragmentarity, and one that is far more radical and therefore significantly more important. This is now to be shown with respect to the “analytic method” and to analytically “articulated theories.”

The philosophical method known as “generally analytic” can adequately be described only as a fragmentary method, not as a systematic one, because the factors introduced to characterize it [9] are at most necessary, and certainly not sufficient for a systematic characterization of a method. These factors include the following: logical correctness, conceptual clarity, intelligibility, argumentative strength, etc. The listing of such factors is in no way a systematic understanding and articulation of the factors required by a complete or integrally determined method. In this sense, analytic philosophy *on the whole* is, as far as methodology is concerned, fragmentary. Only in isolated cases can one find attempts to more adequately determine a method for philosophy.

The incomparably more important fragmentarity concerns what Dummett terms “articulated theories.” Beyond question, analytic philosophy contains such theories in significant numbers. But as a rule these theories treat quite specific topics; articulated, comprehensive theories are not developed, so the connections between the individual theories remain unthematized. A few examples well illustrate this phenomenon. Works on topics in the domain of the philosophy of mind have directly ontological components and implications, but what ontology is presupposed or utilized by a given theory in the philosophy of mind remains, as a rule, unsaid. If ontological concepts such as “object”, “properties”, etc., are used, it remains wholly unexplained how the corresponding ontology is more precisely to be understood, and there is no consideration of whether that ontology is intelligible, and thus acceptable. Something wholly analogous happens with most works concerning theories of truth. If there is developed or defended a theory of truth that in one way or another has implications or presuppositions with respect to the “world”, to “things”, to “facts”, etc., the corresponding ontology remains utterly unexplained. As a rule, some form of the substance ontology that dates to Aristotle is simply presupposed; according to such ontologies, the “world” is the totality of substances (for which analytic works almost always use the term “objects”) that have properties and stand in relations to one another. If a sentence qualifies as true and if thereby some form of "correspondence" to something in the world is assumed, how is this "something" understood? This remains unsaid. It thereby remains questionable whether, on the whole, any genuinely coherent conception has been presented.

Be that as it may, the by far most important example of the theoretical fragmentarity of analytic philosophy is the lack of a comprehensive theory concerning actuality as a whole – in the terminology of this book, a theory of being. For the most part, a comprehensive conception of actuality (of the world, of the universe) is presupposed; in the overwhelming majority of cases, this is a diffusely materialistic view of the whole; it is however scarcely explained as such, much less subjected to serious theoretical examination. To be sure [10], there are some moves in the direction of the development of comprehensive theories, but those theories themselves are nowhere to be found.[4]

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[4] This is the case, for example, with David Lewis, above all in his (1986). His position is extensively treated and criticized in section 5.2.3.

In this connection, two other contemporary philosophers must be mentioned, ones who are significant exceptions in the domain of analytic philosophy in that both have produced systematic philosophical works. Nicholas Rescher, an extraordinarily productive philosopher, has collected in systematic form the philosophical conception developed in many individual works over the course of many years; the result is the imposing, 3-volume (1992-94). With respect to its goals and to many of its central methodological aspects, Rescher's work is similar to this book. Distinctions consist particularly with respect to three points. First, the interconnection ("systematic interrelatedness", according to his Preface) presented by Rescher in the domain of philosophical topics and theories is only quite general and loose. Second, the generally *pragmatic-idealistic* perspective (in this book's terminology: the pragmatic-idealistic theoretical framework) is far too narrow to be appropriate for the immense task of systematic philosophy. Third, Rescher‘s theory lacks central components of a comprehensive theory of actuality as a whole, quite particularly an ontology and a metaphysics.

The second exception is the German philosopher Franz von Kutschera, who has published an impressive number of treatments of many philosophical disciplines (philosophy of language, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, etc.). His works differ from this one concerning points 1 and 3, introduced above in conjunction with Rescher's position. Above all, the utter absence of a comprehensive theory is all too evident in his (1998). In all brevity: according to von

In sum: the systematic conception presented in this book arises from the insight that the deficiencies in contemporary philosophy just described ought to be overcome, and that [11] they can effectively be overcome. Only if they are can philosophy do justice to its primordial task and fully develop its potential.

[3] In the context of the critical remarks on Dummett's position, some of the central thoughts and theses presented in this book are introduced and preliminarily explained. In what follows, the comprehensive architectonic of the book is briefly presented and preliminarily clarified. The presentation is of course quite general and summary; for more precise orientation with respect to details, the quite detailed Table of Contents is available.

In this book, philosophy is understood uncompromisingly and consequently as theory. For this reason, wholly *excluded* are such conceptions as philosophy as therapy or therapeutics, particularly as therapeutic criticism of language, all forms of philosophy that have practical aims (philosophy as wisdom, as practical reflection, as educational technique, as a way of life, as a way of shaping one's life or orienting oneself with respect to life, as educational, philosophy as practical activity, etc.). A significant

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Kutschera, "the entirety of actuality" is treated in the distinct parts of philosophy, among which he includes neither ontology nor metaphysics. He writes:

> One can ... well say that, at the center of Aristotle's and of later conceptions, there stands a conception of metaphysics that concerns the totality of actuality in its most general and fundamental features – its ontological structures along with its effective interconnections, be they causal or teleological. Within our contemporary understanding, a so-understood metaphysics is not a subdiscipline of philosophy, because its themes appear in all disciplines. Formal ontology is often ascribed nowadays to logic, the problem of universals is treated in the philosophy of mathematics, rational theology in the philosophy of religion, the mind-body problem in the philosophy of mind. The entirety of actuality is thus a topic for philosophy as a whole. (15-16)

That the topics of ontology/metaphysics, in the sense of a comprehensive theory of actuality, appear in all philosophical disciplines does not however in any way mean that these topics are or can be also treated in these disciplines in any manner that is at all appropriate. Instead, they are presupposed by these other disciplines and therefore, if they are not explicitly treated, form a background that is left in the dark.

amount of the book is devoted to the clarification of the dimension of theoreticity in general and of the concept of philosophical theory in particular.

Central to the just-mentioned clarification is the concept of the *theoretical framework*, which is developed in connection with and as a modification of the concept, introduced by Rudolf Carnap, of the linguistic framework. The account proceeds from the fundamental insight that every theoretical questioning, every theoretical sentence, argument, every theory, etc., is intelligible and evaluable only if understood as situated within a theoretical framework. If this presupposition is not made, the everything remains undetermined: the meaning of the sentence, its evaluation, etc. To every theoretical framework belong as constitutive moments, among other things, a language (with its syntax and its semantics), a logic, a conceptuality, and all the components that constitute a theoretical apparatus. Failure to attend to this fundamental fact – or, as is most common, failure even to recognize it – is the source of countless catastrophic mistakes from which philosophy has suffered throughout its history and into the present.

In order here to introduce only a single example: the question raised in modernity and particularly in classical German philosophy concerning the grounding or self-grounding, and indeed the ultimate grounding of philosophy is a question that for the most part has floated in empty space, that is, utterly independently of any theoretical framework. Without the explication of a language, a logic, a conceptuality, fundamental assumptions, etc., the procedure has been one of immediately requesting and indeed demanding that any contention or thesis put forth immediately be grounded. The presuppositions for a meaningful question concerning grounding are not in any way clarified. In opposition to this procedure, this book treats [12] philosophical grounding in a manner that stringently attends to the insight, introduced above, concerning the fundamental importance of the theoretical framework.

As it is put in the subtitle: this book develops a theoretical framework – to be understood as the best currently available theoretical framework – for a systematic philosophy. The basic thesis that provides the fundamental architectonic for the systematic philosophy presented here is made more precise by the additional thesis that a *plurality* of theoretical frameworks is potentially and indeed even actually available. This second thesis brings with it a cluster of serious problems, such as: How are these various theoretical frameworks to be evaluated? Can philosophical sentences be true only in *one* theoretical framework, the "absolute" one? Are all theoretical sentences that do not arise within this absolute theoretical framework false? But is there such an absolute theoretical framework, and if so, is it at all accessible to us human beings? The conception defended in this book understands itself as a systematically well-balanced one: true sentences arise within every theoretical framework, but not all the true sentences are on the same level. The sentences are true only relative to their theoretical frameworks. This relativity is a specific form of a moderate, non-contradictory relativism.

Any philosophical theoretical framework is highly complex; taken as a whole, it consists of numerous particular theoretical frameworks that are to be understood as stages in the process of the development of the complete systematic theoretical framework. At the outset, the philosophical theoretical framework is only quite globally determined, as including quite general elements (concepts, etc.). In the course of the concretization and systematic determination of the theoretical framework, new elements are added in such a way that, step by step, broader, more determinate, more powerful subframeworks emerge *as* more concrete forms of the general theoretical framework. The comprehensive presentation in the book is of this process of the concretization and the more precise determination of the (general) systematic theoretical framework; this matter is explained more precisely and in more detail in Chapter 1.

On the basis of the concept of the theoretical framework, *philosophy* is understood, with the aid of a preliminary quasi-definition, as the *theory of the most general and universal structures of the unrestricted universe of discourse*. This is an ambitious formulation whose worth is determined only by the degree of success achieved in the clarifications of the concepts upon which it relies, and in the demonstration of its relevance for philosophy. A better preliminary evaluation of this quasi-definition is provided by its comparison with an at least similar and well-known formulation of a philosopher who undertakes a strikingly similar philosophical project: Alfred North Whitehead. He calls the systematic philosophy presented in his monumental work *Process and* [13] *Reality* “speculative philosophy“, and characterizes it as follows:

> Speculative philosophy is the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted. By this notion of ‘interpretation’ I mean that everything of which we are conscious, as enjoyed, perceived, willed, or thought, shall have the character of a particular instance of the general scheme. (3)

This “definition” (Whitehead’s term!) contains a number of concepts that are quite problematic because ambiguous; these include “general ideas”, “interpretation”, “experience”, “particular instance of the general scheme”, etc. Nevertheless, the “definition” does provide a generally intuitive insight into the project termed “speculative philosophy." Magnificent though Whitehead's comprehensive presentation of that philosophy is, this book proceeds quite differently: methodically – indeed, strictly methodically – rather than intuitively, patiently and step-by-step rather than "immediately holistically" (in the sense of somehow communicating a great deal at once), introducing strict and detailed distinctions rather than proceeding globally, etc.

The two most important concepts in the quasi-definition presented above are *structure* and (*unrestricted*) *universe of discourse*. Methodically, the latter term or concept is utterly neutral in that it contains no more precise contentual determinations; it designates that "dimension" (this too an intentionally chosen "neutral" term and concept) that represents the subject matter of systematic philosophy (Heidegger speaks, famously, of the "subject matter [*Sache*] of thinking"). The dimension of the universe of discourse is the *comprehensive datum* in the literal sense, i.e., what is *given to philosophy to be conceptualized and/or explained*, i.e., everything with which philosophical theorization can and must be concerned. The term "datum" is thus here a kind of technical term that must be strictly distinguished from the various alternative notions of data to be found in philosophy, including sense data, what is given by the senses, etc. In addition, the topic much discussed at present of the "myth of the given"[5] is only indirectly related to the datum in the sense intended here.

"Datum" here can be understood as *candidate* for a theory or for truth.[6] The dimension of the so-understood datum is not simply empty; the datum, thus the particular data, are contained in many ways in ordinary or natural language. They include all the “somethings” that emerge as articulated theoretically in the universe of ordinary discourse when there is talk [14] of “things”, “the world”, “the universe”, etc. Systematic philosophy must attend to these articulations and attempt to bring all these data into a comprehensive theory. This need and indeed may not involve accepting such data as in any important sense “ready-made” components of the theory; quite to the contrary, they are precisely candidates for inclusion in the theory, items that must first be conceptualized and explained, a process that must involve radical corrections and transformations.

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[5] The term is used by Wilfrid Sellars to designate a philosophical error he strongly criticizes; see his (1956).

[6] Nicholas Rescher used "datum" as a technical term for "truth-candidate"; see his (1973), esp. 53ff.

This state of affairs is visible in the relation between ordinary language and the philosophical language briefly described above. The latter connects to ordinary language and indeed begins from it, but then fundamentally corrects it, semantically if not (necessarily) syntactically. On the basis of the criterion of intelligibility, there develops an innovative semantics that has, as an implication, an innovative ontology.

In the course of the presentation, the dimension termed the universe of discourse is determined step by step in that additional designations are introduced: “world”, “universe”, ultimately “being” (at first in the sense of the objective counterpole to “structure”). Up to the beginning of Chapter 4, these terms are used more or less synonymously, because differentiating among them is not important up to that point. In Chapter 4 and thereafter, however, “world“ is used in a sense that is there delimited and explained. The term and/or concept that emerges in that Chapter 5 as the most adequate counterpole to “structure“ is “being“ (in the sense explained there).

The other main concept in the quasi-definition and in the main title of this book is *structure*. In brief, this concept designates everything a theory explains. The structure(s) of what is conceptualized, explained, etc., i.e., of the data, are developed. The term "structure" designates a central concept despite the fact that the term has become popular. Its use in this book is justified by the fact that here, "structure" is scrupulously introduced, defined, and applied. Because of the centrality of this concept, the systematic philosophy presented here is termed the *structural systematic philosophy*. How the dimension of structure and the dimension of the universe of discourse or of being fit together is presented in detail in Chapter 1; moreover, the entire book is nothing other than the thematization of this fitting together, developed step by step. Three sorts of fundamental structures are introduced and investigated separately and in their interrelations: formal, semantic, and ontological structures. They form the heart of the theoretical framework of the structural systematic philosophy. [15]

[4] At this point, the question presses concerning how the relationship between the structural systematic philosophy and the sciences.[7] Careful clarification of this question, so central precisely at present, is a task undertaken in this book in various places. In order accurately to evaluate the precise sense and significance of this question, one must consider a significant phenomenon in the history of philosophy. As is indicated above, at the beginning of the history of philosophy, in Greece, the word "philosophy" designates a corpus of knowledge that is quite comprehensive, indeed that is, in a certain respect, virtually coextensive with scientific knowledge as a whole. In the

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[7] One conclusion introduced above and more fully explained in Chapter 1 is that philosophy itself qualifies as a genuine science; throughout this section, although not in the remainder of this book, "science" is used to refer to the natural sciences. Contexts make clear which signification is intended.

course of the history of philosophy, increasingly many branches of knowledge have developed, ones that earlier had been, in one way or another, parts of the philosophical corpus, but then have come no longer to be understood as such parts. On the whole, one can speak of the gradual development of the sciences as we know them today as a process of their emancipation from philosophy.

Many authors interpret this process – a historical one in the truest sense of the word – as an utterly negative development for philosophy, maintaining that philosophy is, increasingly, deprived of its subject matter. Some go so far as to contend that by now philosophy no longer has any subject matter of its own. This book maintains the opposing thesis: this process has an eminently positive sense in that it has, following a long course of development, clarified the theoretical undertaking that, from its very beginning, has borne the name "philosophy", making possible the identification of that undertaking's specific status. Viewed as a whole, the history of philosophy is best understood as philosophy's theoretical self-explication. More than ever before, philosophy now has the possibility of avoiding hypertrophies of its status and its tasks, confusions, unclarities, etc. It is a waste of time to speak about or to discuss philosophy, its subject matter, its tasks, etc., purely abstractly or *a priori*; meaningful and persuasive is only the concrete demonstration that philosophy does have its own subject matter, distinct from the subject matters of any of the sciences, and this demonstration can only be provided by the identification of that subject matter. This book provides that identification and with it the demonstration. [16]

The relation between philosophy and the sciences with respect to subject matter comes to expression in the quasi-definition of philosophy introduced above, in the quasidefinitia, “the most general and universal structures of the unrestricted universe of discourse.” To be sure, it must be precisely determined just what distinguishes the most general and universal structures from the particular structures that constitute the subject matters of the sciences and why the sciences, even in conjunction, cannot investigate the *unrestricted* universe of discourse. One of the theses of this book relevant to these determinations is that a specific kind of structures have an indisputably universal character, with the consequence that they are not and cannot be thematized in the sciences. These are, most importantly, the structures that are treated in the theory of being presented in sections 5.2 and 5.3. Another thesis that, understandably, has a highly explosive and quite current character concerns the structures in those domains that, taken globally and without differentiation, are thematized both by philosophy and by the sciences.

The methodological point that serves as criterion for a clarification of the relation between philosophy and the sciences both in general and in the concrete case is the concept, already introduced and fundamentally explained, of the *theoretical framework*. It is utterly nonproductive and therefore senseless to discuss this relationship without making clear just what theoretical frameworks philosophy and the sciences presuppose and use, etc. Whether one should ascribe a specific question to philosophy or to the sciences can be rationally decided only on the basis of what the question asks about, what concepts are present in it or are presupposed and/or implied by it, what possibilities are available or requisite for its clarification, etc. A quite illustrative example is treated extensively in section 4.5.1 [17]: when natural-scientific (physical) cosmology speaks of the “beginning” of the world (or the cosmos), making scientific claims about it, a specific natural-scientific framework is presupposed, one within which the concept “beginning (of the cosmos)” has a wholly determinate signification. The natural-scientific contentions that appear in a model that arises within such a theoretical framework cannot be questioned by philosophy. But the question does arise for philosophy whether, for example, the concept of “beginning” that appears within the physical-cosmological theoretical framework or model is the same as the *philosophical* (in the strong sense of *metaphysical*) sense of “beginning.” As the considerations in that section reveal, the two concepts are quite different, so it is deeply regrettable that both are associated with a single term: the physical-cosmological and the philosophical concepts of “beginning” are fundamentally different concepts, which shows that there is a fundamental difference between the two theoretical frameworks. The task that results for philosophy consists in carefully explaining *its* concept of beginning – the genuinely metaphysical one – and of clearly distinguishing it from the natural-scientific concept.

[5] A few introductory clarifications of the individual chapters are appropriate at this point. The six chapters present the stages of development of the complete theoretical framework of the structural systematic philosophy; differently stated, each articulates a more determinate form of the theoretical framework, in that each adds significant new components.

Under the title “Global Systematics: Determination of the Standpoint of the Structural Systematic Philosophy”, Chapter 1 thematizes the factors or perspectives that distinguish the structural systematic philosophy both from non-theoretical and non-philosophical undertakings and from other philosophical ones. This involves the formulation of the quasi-definition of this philosophy and the detailed explanations of the concepts found in it, as well as extensive treatment of the four-staged philosophical method and finally the complex question of the grounding and self-grounding of the structural philosophical theory (or theories). The most general – precisely, the global – form of the theoretical framework of this philosophy is thereby presented. In essence, these aspects are introductorily considered in [2] and [3], above.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the Systematics of Theoreticity; it thematizes the dimension of theoreticity as the philosophical dimension of presentation. The [18] most important topics here are philosophical language, the domain of knowledge, the concept of theory in the narrower sense, and finally the beginnings of a theory of truth as the concept that attains its fully determined status within the dimension of theoreticity. Shown it is that and how philosophy must develop its own language, a language that is connected to ordinary language but then must diverge decisively from it. Also thematized here is the linguistic criterion for theoreticity, which consists in sentences of a specific form that Wittgenstein has made explicit, in his *Tractatus*, in a different context; these are sentences beginning with the operator, "It is the case that..." The domain of knowledge, or the epistemic dimension, is analyzed as a dimension that must be taken into consideration, but it is also shown that and why the decisive status accorded to it by modern philosophy is to be denied. The standpoint of the knowing subject is in no way the adequate standpoint for the development of theories. The necessity of freeing theories from the standpoint of the subject is one of this book's most important theses. Genuinely theoretical sentences do not have the (explicit or implicit) form, "Subject S believes/knows that *p*", but the form, "It is the case that *p*." Edmund Gettier's famous definition of knowledge is subjected to critical analysis and rejected; a different definition of knowledge is then provided.

The dimension of theory in the narrower sense is thoroughly treated in Chapter 2, in that the most important theory concepts defended at present are examined. On the basis of this examination, a theory concept suitable for philosophical purposes is developed. Finally, at the end of this chapter, the truth concept is clarified on the basis of the insight that it articulates the fully determined status of every theoretical sentence and/or theory, and thus of the entire dimension of theoreticity. Complete clarification of this concept of truth is undertaken only at the end of Chapter 3, because fully unfolding the theory of truth presupposes the three sorts of fundamental structures.

The latter task is undertaken in Chapter 3 under the title "Systematics of Structure: The Fundamental Structures." This chapter presents the core of the structural systematic philosophy. Beginning from its initial, basal mathematical definition, the concept of structure is expanded and made fully applicable philosophically. It is shown that on the basis of this concept, as it is understood and [19] applied in the book, a great simplification of philosophical terminology as a whole and clarifications of philosophical conceptuality and philosophical entities can be attained: terms like "concept", "meaning", "semantic value", "category", "proposition", "state of affairs", "object", "fact", "(logical) rule)", etc., are reduced to and/or clarified as structures.

The fundamental formal structures are the logical and mathematical ones. This book cannot however treat logic or mathematics; its concern is instead with philosophically clarifying the kinds of entities with which logic and mathematics are concerned, and showing their significance for philosophical theories.

In the section on semantic structures, in opposition to the "compositional" semantics depending upon the principle of composition, an alternative semantics is developed that depends upon a strong version of the Fregean context principle: “Only in the context of a sentence do words have meanings.” One of its central theses is that sentences of the subject-predicate form are not acceptable for philosophical purposes because of the ontological consequences they bring with them: they imply an ontology that this book calls “substance ontology“ and that is shown to be unintelligible and therefore unacceptable. Sentences without subjects and predicates, like “It’s raining”, are termed “primary sentences“; they express “primary propositions“ that are more precisely interpreted as “primary semantic structures.” The qualifier “primary“ is not a counterpart to anything like “secondary”, and is not to be understood as synonymous with “simple (or atomistic) sentences and propositions.” For the lack of an alternative term, “primary” is chosen to designate sentences that do not have the subject-predicate form. It is therefore wholly consequent to speak of “simple primary“ and “complex primary sentences and propositions“ (i.e., sentences or propositions that consist of more than one and indeed often of a great many simple primary sentences or propositions).

The ontological structures result directly from the semantic ones in that, as is noted above, semantics and ontology are two sides of the same coin. The fundamental ontological “category” (according to traditional terminology) is the “primary fact“; all “things” (in philosophical terms: all *beings* or entities) are configurations of primary facts. The term “fact“ is taken in a comprehensive sense, corresponding to the way this term is normally used at present (cf. “semantic fact“, “logical fact“, etc.). It therefore does not necessarily connote, as it does in ordinary terminology, the standpoint of empiricism. What is said above concerning the qualifier [20] “primary” holds correspondingly for “primary facts.” The concept of the configuration of primary facts or of complex primary facts (thus also, correspondingly, of configurations of primary sentences/propositions or complex primary sentences/propositions) is a central concept of the structural systematic philosophy.

The development of the theory of truth begun at the end of Chapter 2 is concluded in Chapter 3. “Truth” is more precisely understood as the concept that articulates the interconnections among the three types of fundamental structures. . Formally, it is explained as a composite function that consists of three individual functions. The third function articulates the connection between a true primary propositions (or primary semantic structure) and a primary fact (or primary ontological structure). The connection is simply an identity: the true primary proposition *is* (in the sense of identity) a primary fact. This “identity thesis” traces back to a famous passage from Frege‘s essay “The Thought“, which reads, “What is a fact? A fact is a thought [at present, one would generally say: a proposition] that is true” (1918:343). In this manner, the briefly sketched ontology proves to be completely and thoroughly consistent with contextual semantics. Its briefest characterization may be found in the second sentence of Wittgenstein‘s *Tractatus*: “The world is the totality of facts [Wittgenstein: of subsisting states of affairs], not of things” (*Tractatus* 1.1).[8]

With Chapter 4, under the title “World Systematics“, a fully new phase in the presentation of the structural systematic theoretical framework begins. In Chapters 1-3, all the essential elements of this theoretical framework are presented. Chapter 4 begins the application or the specification of this theoretical framework. From a globally architectonic perspective, one can say that this specification is the explicit thematization of the grand datum, of being. From this point on, the world, the datum, being, must be more precisely determined. This happens in this book in that a fundamental distinction among these concepts is introduced, one between a restricted and an unrestricted dimension. In Chapter 4, the former is term "(actual) world", the latter, "dimension of being." Only in Chapter 5 is it possible to provide [21] more precise determinations of these two dimensions. That chapter presents the restricted dimension as the totality of *contingent entities*, the latter as the *absolute dimension of being*.

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[8] To be sure, Wittgenstein‘s understanding of this sentence differs fundamentally from the interpretation the sentence attains within the contextual semantics and ontology developed here. But the formulation as such, as a succint formula, is appropriate as an indication of this semantics and ontology. Moreover, it is doubtful whether Wittgenstein’s own formulation can be brought into harmony, without misunderstanding, with other passages found at the beginning of the *Tractatus*.

Simply put, the world treated in Chapter 4 is "actuality" as the totality of things and of domains of things with which we are familiar and to which we relate in various ways. These are, globally viewed, (inorganic) nature, the domain of life, the human world – with all that belongs to it in one way or another, including human beings as minded persons, the domain of action (ethics), the social domain, etc. – the world of aesthetics, and finally the world as a whole: the cosmos, religion(s), and world history. From a book that intends to present only the theoretical framework for a systematic philosophy, one should neither expect nor demand that all these domains be treated in detail, because that would be the *comprehensive* presentation of the *fully developed* structural systematic philosophy. The goal of Chapter 4 can be described as follows: in Chapters 1 through 3, the grand dimension of *structure* (or *structurality*) is developed in the form of the complete but still *abstract* theoretical framework for systematic philosophy; Chapter 4 begins to "apply", to concretize, or – to use a Fregean term – to "saturate" this abstract theoretical framework with respect to the central aspects of the grand datum. This can however be done only incompletely, by means of treating some of the central questions from the grand domain of the world from the perspective of this philosophy, i.e., within its theoretical framework. Other aspects, no matter how important they may be within the relevant philosophical domains, are not relevant to the attaining of this goal. One can therefore say that Chapter 4 has the status of being an *example* for the concretization or saturation of the theoretical framework presented in Chapters 1 through 3. For the most part, its account remains general, although in some cases important paradigmatic questions are treated in more detail.

Chapter 5 is devoted to *Comprehensive Systematics*. As a *theory of the interconnection of all structures and all dimensions of being*, it is appropriately characterized as a *theory of being as such and as a whole*. In traditional terms, one would say that this chapter treats (general) metaphysics. But this designation must be used with care because this terminology is burdened with misunderstandings of many sorts. In section 5.1, the status of comprehensive systematics is clarified. That section analyzes the problem that is the root of all aspects of the criticism of the possibility of metaphysics to be found in the history of philosophy and into the present; it is articulated in a new form. [22] This is the problem that Hilary Putnam, with specific reference to Kant, has located at the center of philosophical inquiry: it consists of a putative gap or cut between subject(ivity), thinking, mind, language, theories, etc., on the one hand, and the "system" (actuality, world, universe, being, etc.), on the other. In the Kantian tradition, this gap is taken to be absolutely unbridgeable. Putnam writes: "what it means to have a cut between the observer and the system is ... that a great dream is given up – the dream of a description of physical reality as it is apart from observers, a description which is objective in the sense of being 'from no particular point of view'" (1990:11). This passage describes the cut or gap in the domain of the physical world (of physics), but according to Putnam the problem also concerns – and indeed particularly – philosophy as putatively universal science. Instead of "observer", therefore, it would be better to say "theoretician", and instead of "physical reality", "actuality" or "being" (in the sense of the counterpole to "theoretician"). This book conclusively demonstrates that the putative gap is not only bridgeable, but that it must be presupposed already to have been bridged by every serious and sensible science and philosophy. The central insight grounding this thesis is that science and philosophy, even on a minimal level, can be sensible (or, speaking loosely, can function), only on the basis of the presupposition that the segment of actuality with which they are concerned, and ultimately, thought through to the end, actuality or being as a whole, is *expressible*. In this book, "expressibility" is used as a kind of technical term to designate the entire palette of our "accesses" to actuality or to being, or the modes of "articulation" (conceiving, understanding, explaining, etc.) of actuality or of being as a whole. What sense would it make to produce a scientific or philosophical statement about something if that something or indeed the whole were not "expressible" (in this sense)? That would be complete nonsense.

If however absolutely everything, the entire universe of discourse, is expressible, then every form of a fundamental gap in Putnam's sense must be viewed as bridged in advance, because it must be said that both "poles" or sides of the gap or cut are only secondary or relative levels of a relationship in that each refers to the other, and that the two are united. All the "gaps" that have appeared within the history of philosophy are based on the distinction, to be recognized but not to be interpreted as a dichotomy, between the dimension of structure and the dimension of being [23] (understood as "objective" counterpole). But they are to be understood only as two different poles of one domain, i.e. only as within a primordial relationship that first makes possible and therefore at once suspends the distinction between structure and being. This primordial and comprehensive dimension is termed in this book the *dimension of being*; it is thematized in sections 2 and 3 of Chapter 5.

The expression of this view that literally *encompasses* both described dimensions is the linguistic criterion for theoreticity: : theoretical sentences begin, "It is the case that...." This phrase is thematized in this book as the *theoretical operator*. In a daring but philosophically well-grounded interpretation of the partical "it" in this formulation, the "it" can ultimately be understood as referring to what is here termed the primordial dimension of being. From this it follows that every theoretical sentence is to be understood as a kind of *self-articulation* of this primordial dimension of being. Indeed, the result of the consideration of the gap in Putnam's sense can in part be formulated as follows: every sort of exclusive restriction to one side of such a gap or dichotomy is excluded from the theoretical domain. Quite particularly excluded is any form of relativization of science and philosophy to the subject (or to subjectivity). Also excluded are explicitly formulated or even implicitly presupposed forms of presentation such as "from the transcendental perspective of the subject it is the case that..." Such forms express a restriction to one side of the criticized dichotomy. The alternative is the "absolute" form of presentation, "It is the case that...", which expresses the just-named self-articulation of the primordial dimension of being.

To be sure, the relativization of science and philosophy to factors such as the subject is excluded, but not every form of relativization. As is indicated above, all scientific and philosophical sentences presuppose the theoretical frameworks within which they arise, and within which alone they attain their determinate form or their determinate status. But it is also shown above that there is a plurality of theoretical frameworks; the consequence is that every theoretical (scientific or philosophical) sentence has its status only *relative* to its theoretical framework. But this relativity has nothing to do with the relativity to *one side* of the criticized gap or dichotomy, e.g., to a subject, to a time, to a social situation, or to any such factor. The relativity [24] that holds here is only this: it designates a determinate *degree* of the self-articulation that is manifest in the form of expression, "It is the case that..." How this *degree* of the self-articulation of the entirety of the primordial dimension of being is to be interpreted presents one of the deepest and most difficult problems that the structural systematic philosophy must consider.

In order coherently to develop the conception briefly sketched here, the thematic of philosophical language must be considered anew. To this topic is devoted a significant part of Chapter 5. From the semantics developed in outline in Chapter 3 and from various additional assumptions there results the necessity of developing a concept of philosophical language that is quite unusual. A philosophical language as a *semiotic system with uncountably infinitely many expressions* must be postulated in order to do justice to the basic thesis, formulated above, of universal expressibility. It is obvious that this system of signs does not correspond to the normal conception of language. The postulate develops on a strictly philosophical basis. Moreover, a plurality of such languages must be assumed, because of the plurality of theoretical frameworks. The many logical, semantic, and ontological aspects of this complex problematic are treated thoroughly in Chapter 5.

In sections 5.2 and 5.3, a genuinely *comprehensive systematics* is developed. It consists of the explication of the primordial dimension of being. 5.2 presents the basic features of a theory of being as such and as a whole. Here is clarified for the first time the difficult and highly timely semantic, logical, and mathematical problematic of talk about “the whole” or “(the) totality”; the account is developed in opposition to that presented by Patrick Grim in his *The Incomplete Universe*. There follows the attempt to clarify the currently popular theory of the plurality of possible worlds in their relation to the actual world. Finally, the core of a structural systematic theory of being is presented: under the title “the inner structurality of the dimension of being“, and in harmony with the basic insights of the grand metaphysical tradition, the immanent characteristics of being and beings are presented: the universal intelligibility, universal coherence, universal expressibility, the universal goodness, and the universal beauty of the dimension of being.

5.3, the last section of the chapter, presents the starting points for a theory of absolutely necessary being. This involves the extension and expansion of the theoretical framework applied here by means of the ontologically interpreted *modalities*. The result is that the primordial dimension of being is to be conceived of as [25] two-dimensional, consisting of both an absolutely necessary and of a contingent dimension. The task of more precisely determining how these dimensions relate to each other leads to the thinking of the absolutely necessary dimension as free, minded, absolutely necessary being.

In Chapter 6, the last chapter, *metasystematics* is treated as the *theory of the relatively maximal self-determination of systematic philosophy*. This brings the presentation of the theoretical framework of the structural systematic philosophy to its conclusion. This last topic is of ultimately decisive importance for the understanding and self-understanding of the conception presented in the book. As universal science, philosophy cannot rely upon any metascience that could determine its status. This fact introduces a difficult and fundamental problem. This chapter introduces various considerations that are indispensable to the solution of this problem, particularly the distinctions between immanent and external metasystematics, between external intratheoretical and external extratheoretical metasystematics, between external intratheoretical interphilosophical and external intratheoretical philosophical-non-philosophical metasystematics.

Immanent metasystematics is what can be termed, to use a Kantian expression, the "architectonic" of the structural systematic philosophy. In the complex expression "immanent (or internal) metasystematics", the term "systematics" designates the individual, specific systematics that forms a part of the comprehensive philosophical conception: global systematics, systematics of theoreticity, systematics of structure, world systematics, and comprehensive systematics.

The basic insight or thesis concerning *external metasystematics* results from two fundamental assumptions: the assumption, already mentioned several times, of a plurality of theoretical frameworks, and the assumption that even if there is an ultimate or absolute theoretical framework, it is not one that is attainable by us human beings. This means, among other things, that the structural systematic philosophy is an “open system”, i.e., that it is essentially *incomplete*. One can think here of Gödel‘s famous incompleteness theorem, which is considered in this book in various passages. The situating and/or self-situating or self-determination of the structural systematic philosophy always develops only a level of consideration that already presupposes a more extensive and higher theoretical framework. This higher theoretical framework is however itself always a philosophical theoretical framework.

[6] Is the structural systematic philosophy presented in this book a “philosophical system“? The answer to this question depends upon how one [26] understands the formulation “philosophical system.” In fact, this is a formulation that, historically, is heavily burdened. One thinks of the “philosophical systems” that have been superseded by newer ones particularly in the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries, all of which, despite the nearly insane pretensions of their authors, prove to be untenable and are therefore abandoned. Such systems, still admired by some philosophers and studied and commented upon in a never-ending chain of interpretations and reinterpretations, have done more to damage philosophy than to benefit it. The excessiveness of the claims and the poverty of the results have brought the term “philosophical system” into presumably irremediable discredit. For this reason, this formulation is avoided in this book, or at most used only marginally; the term used instead is “systematic philosophy.” That the conception briefly sketched in this Introduction of a systematic philosophy cannot be compared to the “philosophical systems” of the past should be obvious.

It is impossible to overstress that this book attempts *only* to present the *theoretical* *framework for a systematic philosophy*. Even this task is an extremely challenging one, but the completion of the structural systematic philosophy itself would be immensely more so. It can be seriously undertaken only as a communal undertaking to which many philosophers must contribute. At the same time, however, one should not undervalue the significance of the development of the theoretical framework, because only insight into the necessity of treating philosophical questions not in splendid isolation, but within a systematic framework, can overcome the fragmentariness that is one of the chief defects of contemporary philosophy.

The author is fully aware of the at times great deficiencies of the account presented in this book. He is however convinced of two things: first, it is not sensible to want to continue to perfect a work – that would lead the "incomplete system" into an infinite regress. At some point, one must simply stop, with the consequence that the work, despite its deficiencies, is published. It would be, in other words, wholly inconsequent and also irrational, within the framework of the conception guiding the writing of this book, to think that a work had attained its perfect form. The contingencies in all domains of life and of creativity cannot be avoided by any human being. The author's second conviction is that the deficiencies are correctable and that the corrections can develop within the framework of the discussions the book should engender.

An indication of what can be designated as the likely most important desideratum for this book's presentation of the structural systematic philosophy is appropriate here. There is lacking the detailed working out of the logical and mathematical apparatus that would be required by the concrete and exact presentation of the philosophical theories envisaged in this book. The explanation of this lack lies in the fact that this entire sphere of problems is extraordinarily complex, so that its adequate clarification presupposes an extensive presentation. Moreover, it must be emphasized that such a presentation, as far as its details are concerned, is possible only with respect to a concretely treated topic.

An example illustrates this point: Chapter 2 shows that first-order predicate logic, according to its standard interpretation, is not an appropriate logical instrument for the contextual semantics presented in this book. But there is also the possibility of developing non-standard interpretations of this logic. How appropriate any such non-standard interpretation would be for formalizing contextually interpreted sentences is an important question. Taking into consideration that in its normal interpretation, first-order predicate logic (together with set theory) is currently taken by most philosophers to be the fundamental and universal formal instrument, it is clear how important this question is. Moreover, the question must also be clarified of which mathematical structures are most appropriately viewed as formal structures with ontological statuses. In contemporary analytic ontology, extraordinarily interesting new initiatives are developing on this topic, as is briefly indicated in Chapter 3.

[7] Finally, some specific aspects of the style of presentation of this book require clarification.

The book contains numerous references to other parts, chapters, sections, passages, etc., of the book; this could be irritating. It is, however, unavoidable. The reason lies in the often-mentioned network-character of the conception and consequently also of the presentation. Also, certain passages that are in part repetitious are fundamentally to be interpreted and justified in this manner.

Many topics are treated in this book in quite different ways at different places: some such treatments may appear quite brief, others disproportionally long. An example of the latter is [27] the extensive treatment of the topic of language in Chapter 5 (5.1.4, and especially 5.1.4.3) as a semiotic system with uncountably many expressions. There are two reasons for these inequities in treatments: on the one hand, different topics or subject matters vary greatly in complexity, on the other, some are more central to the SSP, some more peripheral. The topic just mentioned is both highly complex and quite central. It is central because it concerns the central thesis of the universal expressibility of being, which, without recourse to a language with uncountably many expressions, can neither be made intelligible nor grounded.