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The very title of this essay contains contentious terms for many contemporary philosophers. Throughout its long history, philosophy has displayed a variety of schools, doctrines, methods. The lack of consensus has been a main feature of the history of philosophy since the very beginning. In the past the differences between philosophy and other sciences as regards its subject and its method(s) were not seen as something deep. In spite of some efforts towards something like a “unified view” of reality, in the twentieth century philosophy the prevailing view was that philosophy and the special sciences differ fundamentally as regards their methods. Philosophers use not just one method but a variety of different methods according to the subject and the more specific philosophical tradition within which they work: the phenomenological, the hermeneutical, the dialectical, the analytical tradition, to name just some of the more widely known. It is quite astonishing that the two more recent and most famous Encyclopedias of Philosophy in the English speaking world do not have any entry on “method” or “philosophic method”. But we do find in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* an article on “Scientific Method”¹. This entry

¹ "Scientific method" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: Questions to sociobiology, vol. 8, Edward Craig (general editor), London: Routledge, 1998: 576-580. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* presents also no entry on philosophical Method(s), perhaps because the Editor thinks that the entry “analysis” is enough to cover the whole subject. See the informative article: Beaney, Michael, "Analysis", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2008/entries/analysis/>>.

is written under the presupposition that the scientific method has nothing to do with philosophy, at least since Modern Science began. As a matter of fact, it is not easy to find, in the last decades, philosophers writing on their own philosophical method(s) or on philosophical methodology. Timothy Williamson's book, *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (2007), is a remarkable exception but not the only one. Hector-Neri Castañeda (1980), wrote one of the more detailed sketches of a philosophical methodology for his specific philosophical programme. Rescher wrote widely on methodological questions. Rescher (1973) will be referred in section two of this paper. Rescher (2001) is one of the best introductory texts on philosophical methodology. We could not comment adequately the details of Rescher (2001) and Castañeda (1980). So we decided to concentrate our analysis on two recent books that take a very critical stance towards much of what is done in the last decades, even within the so called "analytical" tradition and urge a bolder and more theoretical approach to philosophy. Whether one agrees with them or not one has surely a lot to gain from a discussion with texts that point us why and how to do much better in philosophy.

The essay is divided into three sections. Section 1 points out, briefly, some provocative contentions made by Williamson (2007) regarding the method and the nature of philosophy. Section 2 will present briefly the way Lorenz Puntel (2008) understands his "idealized four-stage philosophical method" from the standpoint of the structural-systematic philosophy². Section 3 concludes that

² We can not do justice within the limits of this article to the highly complex and ambitious conception of a programme for a theoretical philosophy systematically elaborated by Lorenz Puntel in *Struktur und Sein. Ein Theorierahmen für eine systematische Philosophie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). English translation: *Structure and Being. A Theoretical Framework for a Systematic Philosophy*, translated by and in collaboration with Alan White (University Park, PA, USA: Penn State University Press, 2008). Portuguese translation: *Estrutura e Ser. Um quadro referencial teórico para uma filosofia sistemática*, translated by Nélio Schneider (S. Leopoldo, Brasil: Editora Unisinos, 2008). A first glimpse of the project can be obtained in the following texts, available online (<http://www.structureandbeing.com/>): (1) the contents of *Structure and Being* and the introduction, by L. B. Puntel; (2) the first draft of an introduction to *Structure and Being* called *Toward a Philosophical Theory of Everything. An Introduction and Contributions to the Structural-Systematic Research Program in Philosophy*, by Alan White.

philosophers have much to gain if they give more attention to the considerations presented by Williamson and Puntel on the method(s) of doing philosophy.

1. Williamson on method

Williamson (2007: IX) starts from the diagnosis that contemporary philosophy lacks a self-image that does it justice:

Of the self-images inherited from the twentieth century, the most prominent – naturalism, the linguistic turn, postmodern irony, and so on – seemed obviously inadequate to most of the most interesting work in contemporary philosophy: as descriptions, false when bold, uninformative when cautious. Less prominent alternatives too seemed implausible or ill developed.

An adequate self-image is important for philosophy because without it is likelier to do its job worse than it could. Williamson tells us that he considered to use the phrase “philosophical method” in the title but avoided it fearing that some readers could hope too much and above all what he didn’t want to deliver: “a recipe for doing philosophy”. Whatever the precise terminology one prefers what is clear is that Williamson (2007) addresses many important issues about philosophical methodology. The word “method” as used by Williamson (2007: 3) carries no implication of a “mechanically applicable algorithm guaranteed to yield a result within a finite time”. On the other hand, Williamson rightly emphasizes that if one keeps in mind this loose sense of methodology it would be “disingenuous for a philosopher to claim to have none”. Williamson sees the book as "a defense of armchair philosophy" (2007: 7) or rather of the kind of armchair knowledge that we can hope to achieve in philosophy. The phrase “armchair” knowledge was for a long time a very negative label. Williamson (2007) intends not only to recover the positive aspects but also to

underline that many other sciences use also that “armchair” methodology. That’s why he rejects the very idea that philosophy has a method which is different in kind from the sciences: “... the common assumption of philosophical exceptionalism is false. Even the distinction between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* turns out to obscure underlying similarities” (Williamson 2007: 3). He goes on arguing that “the differences in subject matter between philosophy and the other sciences are also less deep than is often supposed.[...] In general, the methodology of much past and present philosophy consists in just the unusually systematic and unrelenting application of ways of thinking required over a vast range of non-philosophic inquiry” (2007: 3). Stressing the continuity with the sciences and other domains of inquiry, Williamson does not want to deny any specificity to the methods of philosophy. Philosophers use methods of various kinds. What seems important to Williamson is to reflect on the nature of philosophy itself so that we can evaluate the image a philosophical community has of its discipline. The kind of armchair knowledge philosophy can provide involves no special faculty of intuition. In a very critical tone to some widely accepted theses in the mainstream analytical philosophy, Williamson reminds us that the possibility of such knowledge is not to be explained by reinterpreting philosophical questions as questions about words or concepts³. Although there are philosophical questions about words and concepts, most philosophical questions are not about words or concepts. This does not imply that our linguistic or conceptual competence is useless or irrelevant to philosophy but only that it cannot be seen as the only basis for our philosophical knowledge. Nevertheless, Williamson admits that the linguistic turn has made possible and more widely available an enhanced ability to determine whether arguments are valid. Modern logic has provided philosophers with instruments of unprecedented power and precision “enabling them to formulate hypotheses with more clarity and determine their

³ Williamson (2007: 10-22) presents a brief but extremely critical appraisal of the linguistic turn and the conceptual turn in the twentieth century philosophy. In the last chapter, “Knowledge maximization”, Williamson explicitly names the tradition where he belongs in respect to the pivotal role assigned to knowing: “a tradition that runs from Cook Wilson to Pritchard and others, and then to J. L. Austin and later to John McDowell” (Williamson 2007: 270, n 11).

consequences with more reliability than ever before" (Williamson 2007:45). He considers it positive that the philosopher takes advantage of all progresses made in logic and semantics. What he resists strongly is the thesis that all philosophical problems are problems of language. Many of them are but surely not all.

In another front, Williamson argues that "the current philosophical mainstream has failed to articulate an adequate philosophical methodology, in part because it has fallen into the classic epistemological error of psychologizing the data. (2007: 4–5). He goes on describing the use of intuition as evidence in philosophy and the methodology of reflective equilibrium as a way of stabilizing our beliefs⁴ Claiming that such a picture is wrong invites us to get "rid of internalist preconceptions" (5).

One of the central topics Williamson (2007) considers is the use of thought experiments by philosophers. Williamson argues (Chapter 6), (1) that such methodology is very much the same whether it is used by the philosopher or by the natural scientist; (2) that the use of thought experiments involving such hypothetical cases as the famous ones of Gettier and Block involves nothing more than our ordinary ability to evaluate counterfactuals. This is one of the most interesting and controversial chapters of Williamson (2007) but we cannot enter the details of this discussion⁵. It is enough to point out that, according to

⁴ Williamson (2007: 244-6) discusses the notion of reflective equilibrium with specific mention of Nelson Goodman and John Rawls. Leaving aside the question of interpretation of this methodology that is not necessarily a bad way of confusing philosophy and psychology, the indication of Rawls (1951) as an example of a process "at least superficially analogous to the attainment of reflective equilibrium in philosophy" (244) is misleading from our point of view. As far as I can see the position defended by Rawls in that essay is in many ways similar to one of the central theses of Williamson (2007), that the difference between the methodology of philosophy and the sciences is not so deep as it is often supposed. Rawls speaks in that essay of the role of the inductive logic.

⁵ For a critical discussion of Williamson (2007) see the Book symposium on that book on *Analysis* 2009 69: it contains the following articles: a brief presentation of the book *The Philosophy of Philosophy* by Timothy Williamson, "Summary", *Analysis* 2009 69: 99-100; Jackson, Frank, "Thought Experiments and Possibilities", *Analysis* 2009 69: 100-109; Kornblith, Hilary, "Timothy Williamson's The Philosophy of Philosophy", *Analysis* 2009 69: 109-116; Moore, A.W., "Not to be

Williamson (2007) these thought experiments are best interpreted as investigations of what's metaphysically possible, not of what's conceptually possible. Here the well known views of Williamson on metaphysical modalities come to the fore with the concomitant denial of the very notion of a conceptual necessity and the appeal to the Kripkean arguments about the atomic number of gold and the fact of water being H₂O. The epistemology of metaphysical modality provides a case study of the methodology envisaged in Williamson (2007). Metaphysical possibility and necessity are seen as equivalent to special cases of counterfactual conditionals.

Williamson (2007: 278-292) in an afterword entitled "Must Do Better", summarizes some key points of his evaluation of the current self-image of philosophy. Beginning with a thought experiment that invites us to participate in a philosophy conference somewhere in "Presocratic Greece". Theme of the conference: "what are things made of?" Keynote speakers were celebrities like Thales, Anaximenes, Heraclitus. Attending to the conference there were not only the followers of the those Presocratic philosophers but also the critics and "paleo-pragmatists" inviting everyone to "forget futile pseudo-inquiries, and to do something useful instead" (278). But as Williamson notes, no matter how successful they were at the time, at least in "one important respect they wrong. With however much confusion, Thales and the rest were asking one of the best questions ever to have been asked, a question that has painfully led to much modern science"(278). The moral of the well known narrative according to the positivist interpretation misses some key elements, important to the methodology of philosophy. Williamson (2007:279) presents the methodological point as follows:

The case of the Presocratics shows that one cannot always tell in advance which questions will be fruitful to pursue. Even if a community starts with

Taken at Face Value", *Analysis* 2009 69: 116-125; Williamson, Timothy, "Replies to Kornblith, Jackson and Moore", *Analysis* 2009 69: 125-135.

no remotely adequate idea of how to go about answering a question, it does not follow that the question is meaningless or not worth addressing. That goes for the questions we now classify as philosophical as much as it does for those we classify as empirical or natural-scientific.

This will be viewed by many as going too far in the acceptance of a plurality of views and methodological approaches to philosophical questions. But may be Williamson is right and if we really want to do “much better” than we have done we should not narrow the range of our philosophical options. This does not imply that there is no methodological constraint in philosophy. According to Williamson(2007: 286) there can be real progress in philosophy only with adequate method – disciplined by logic, semantics or some other form of philosophical discipline - and hard work:

Much contemporary analytical philosophy seems to be written in the tacit hope of discursively muddling though, uncontrolled by any methodological constraints. That may be enough for easy questions, if there are any in philosophy; it is manifestly inadequate for resolving the hard questions with which most philosophers like to engage. All too often it produces only eddies in academic fashion, without any advance in our understanding of the subject matter. Although we can make progress in philosophy, we cannot expect to do so when we are not working at the highest available level of intellectual discipline. That level is not achieved by effortless superiority. It requires a conscious collective effort.

Williamson (2007: 286) clearly rejects the crude stereotypes according to which analytic philosophers use arguments while “continental” philosophers do not; the first write clearly and the others do not. But Williamson reminds us that in the analytical tradition many philosophers use arguments only to the extent that most “continental” philosophers do; and as regards clear writing Williamson is very critical of much work done in the analytical tradition that he considers “obscure even when it is written in everyday words, short sentences and a relaxed, open-air spirit, because the structure of its claims is fudged where it really matters” (286).

Williamson (2007) is a passionate apology for more rigor and precision in philosophy with attention to the details. The methodology of Puntel (2008) we

shall present in the next section is animated by same concern of rigor and precision although from a different theoretical framework.

2. Puntel's idealized method

Puntel(2008: 41) clearly rejects the very idea that there is (or should be, ideally) only one method for philosophy. The four-stage method is "idealized" because the complexity of theory construction requires a multifarious work with many different tasks and procedures. The technicality required will not be always apparent and the recourse to the full range of procedures would be possible only on the limit case of the development of a complete philosophical theory. That is why Puntel can say that in *Structure and Being* the method is not followed in such complete and comprehensive detail. It does not intend to deliver that kind of complete philosophical theory but *only* (this only can sound ironical given the complexity and the quality of the systematic work presented but is to be taken literally) "*a theoretical framework for a systematic philosophy*"[italics added, AMM].

Puntel(2008: 42) presents the four stages as follows:

Stage 1: Inventory: Identification of structures and their preliminary collection, seeking maximal coherence or structuration, into informal theories

Stage 2: Interrelation of (informal) theories initially and informally articulated at the first stage into holistic networks and (in particular cases) axiomatized theories

Stage 3: Interrelation of component (informal and/or axiomatized) theories into increasingly comprehensive theories (holistic networks)

Stage 4: Evaluation of the comprehensive system or network with respect to its theoretical adequacy and truth.

As Puntel remarks, these four stages can equally well be regarded as four different methods although from the point of view of the construction of a complete systematic philosophy, in Puntel sense, they can be viewed as one

complex method. The basic idea behind this complex four-stage method is not very different from the central intuition behind Castañeda's(1980) methodology. There is a whole range of complex and diverse data to be "integrated" (in very different manners and at very different levels) in a theoretical interpretation of these data (or part of them, under different points of view); these "theories" can be simpler or more complex and interconnected as the systematic work advances). Interestingly enough, although from different presuppositions, Castañeda (1980:14) distinguishes also four main types of activity in his methodology: proto-philosophical, sym-philosophical, dia-philosophical and meta-philosophical. But as Puntel remarks his method, especially the first stages, owe much more to the inspiration he got from the coherence methodology developed by Rescher (1973). In the presentation of the first methodical stage, Puntel (2008: 42-44) quotes some texts from Rescher (1973, 1992-4) to characterize this first stage. For those who are not familiar with Rescher (1973) and Puntel(2008) it could be worth remembering what Rescher(1973: 168) says about his conception of "truth as a system":

The conception that all truths form one comprehensive and cohesive system in which everything has its logically appropriate place, and in which the interrelationships among truths are made duly manifest, is one of the many fundamental ideas contributed to the intellectual heritage of the West by the ancient Greeks.

There is one important difference between Rescher (1973) and Puntel (2008). Rescher (1993), following Kant's regulative epistemological approach, presupposes, like many other philosophers, that there is a gap between thinking, mind, etc on one hand, and the "world" or "what there is" on the other. Puntel (2008: 17) clearly denies any such presupposition:

In opposition to the Kantian tradition and to all similar philosophical positions, this book establishes the thesis that the putative gap is one that is not only bridgeable, but indeed must be presupposed as 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 segments of actuality with which they are concerned, and ultimately, thought through to the end, actuality or being as a whole, are *expressible*. In this book, “expressibility” is used as a technical term to designate the entire palette of our “accesses” to actuality or to being, or the modes of articulating (conceiving, understanding, explaining, etc) actuality or being as a whole.

The quoted text not only clarifies one central presupposition of Puntel (2008) but also formulates the central expressibility thesis without which it is not possible to understand adequately the proposed four-stage method. As Puntel notes, in the philosophical common practice, only stage one and stage four are considered and even then at a most rudimentary level, most of the times, so that the procedures are not even apparent: “The second and third steps or stages are usually wholly ignored.[...] More ambitious philosophical presentations ignore only the second step.”⁶

2.1 *The first stage of the method – inventory*

The first stage – inventory – is a modified form of some basic features of the coherence methodology developed by Rescher (1973). Puntel (2008: XIX) recognizes the influence and inspiration he got from Rescher (1973) but he quotes Rescher (1992-4: I: 159) to present the main steps of the coherence methodology needed at this first methodological stage:

1. To gather in all of the data (in the present technical sense of this term).
2. To lay out all the available conflict-resolving options that represent the alternative possibilities that are cognitively at hand.
3. To choose among these alternatives by using the guidance of plausibility considerations, invoking (in our present context) the various parameters of systematicity—regularity, uniformity, simplicity, and the rest—to serve as indices of plausibility.

⁶ Puntel (2008: 42)

The technical sense of *Datum/Data* mentioned in (1) is simply “truth candidate”. It’s anything that can be the starting point of a scientific or philosophic undertaking. That was Rescher (1973) typical definition of Datum in a move with similarities with the one that led Popper to transform the “truths” of science in conjectures. There is no point in going into the details of this “machinery” conducing, if all goes well or well enough to what Rescher calls repeatedly the “inference to the best systematization”. Rescher (2001: 15f) describes in a more loosely way what he understands as the Data that constitute the real starting point of a philosophical inquiry:

Common-sense beliefs, common knowledge, and what have been “the ordinary convictions of the plain man” since time immemorial;

The facts (or purported facts) afforded by the science of the day; the views of well-informed “experts” and “authorities”;

The lessons we derive from our dealings with the world in everyday life;

The received opinions that constitute the worldview of the day; views that accord with the “spirit of the times” and the ambient convictions of one’s cultural context;

Tradition, inherited lore, and ancestral wisdom (including religious tradition);

The “teachings of history” as best we can discern them.

All these Data deserve consideration but not acceptance. They do not constitute a body of knowledge. Taken altogether, they are inconsistent; they are not truths but mere plausibilities (truth candidates). The above mentioned steps of the coherence methodology are accepted by Puntel (2008) in order to get the initial and minimal configuration of theories. He parts company with Rescher in many different ways especially as regards the questions concerning the semantic and ontological status of the theoretical framework of a systematic philosophy. Above all the semantic dimension is missed by Rescher. One thing important to notice, is that for Puntel (2008) it makes sense to speak of truth only in the

context of/ or referred to a “theoretical framework”. So it is of the utmost importance to specify, from the very beginning, to which possible theoretical framework a particular collection (segment) of data could/should belong even if we know that the first results will be, eventually, subject to a more or less radical revision. This follows from the fact that we are talking of the first methodological stage. On the other hand, it should be remembered that most of the (theoretical) philosophical work will not go beyond this demanding first stage.

2. 2 *The second stage of the method: the constitution of theories.*

As a result of the work done in stage one should obtain what Puntel (2008: 44) calls “*structural sentences*”: the first attempt to formulate laws, universal sentences, etc. The aim of the second stage is precisely to give the first set(s) of “*structural sentences*” a “*genuine theoretical form*”. Puntel (2008: 45) admits that there is no general agreement on how to understand a theory. Without going into details and presupposing a very general characterization of his structural-systematic theory Puntel points out that, from this perspective, the most important theory forms are the *axiomatic* and the *network* form. After presenting briefly different forms of axiomatization Puntel (2008: 49) claims that (1) the axiomatic method (especially in the Euclidean style) is, logically, the most exact of all, yielding the most demanding theory form; (2) and “one must assume that there is *at least in the cases of many, if not indeed in the cases of most subject matters*, a web (network) of relations that therefore cannot be understood and articulated in a linear-hierarchical manner”. The important conclusion to be drawn is that for philosophy as a comprehensive doctrine only the coherentist methodology is suitable⁷. However, it should be underlined that

⁷ Puntel (2008: 461-484), in the last chapter, deals extensively with the metaphilosophical questions of this method.

Puntel(2008: 50) maintains that the results reached in these first stages can be subjected to the critic “on the basis of all currently available theoretical mechanisms”. All elements, whatever their status in the theoretical construction at a given moment, are subject, in principle, to critic and revision. This is a corollary of the anti-foundationalist stance of this theoretical framework. It is a general claim of no immunity to critic and analysis. It does not imply that if the theories (or fragments of) do not reach that level of formal systematization then they should be discarded. That would be blindness to reality and a misunderstanding of the very nature of philosophy. Although Puntel (2008: 50) stresses the formal elements in the construction a theoretical structural-systematic philosophy, he clearly recognizes that “philosophy is fundamentally a content discipline or science, not a formal one”. The sketch of these methodological stages has a regulative function. One must bear in mind that the realization of such programmes is very demanding and avoid the dangers of premature and empty formalization.

2.3 Third stage of the method: systematization of theories

This stage presupposes that the theoretical enterprise begins with singular theories explaining very specific domains. The question of systematization of these different theories becomes pressing only when the need is felt for articulation of different theories in a broader framework or when the project of a network of theories is envisaged. Generally speaking, the network model used at the second stage could be also used here, but at a higher level of complexity. Here the coherence methodology is again very useful. But if Puntel (2008: 50) admits that “in philosophy it is neither requisite (nor realistically practicable) to accomplish what the second stage requires” what is the point of presenting this third stage? Puntel would reply that we are talking, from the very beginning, of an *idealized* four-stage method to which he attributes an important regulative

function. Even if one does not go all the way it can change the way one sees the work (to be) done in philosophy. It would not be reasonable to present here the details of this “*system-constituting method*” explained in more detail in chapters 5 and 6 of *Structure and Being*.

2.4. *Fourth stage of the Method: evaluation of the comprehensive system*

As a non foundationalist project the theoretical framework outlined in Puntel (2008) only raises the real questions of theoretical adequacy and truth status at the end of the process of development and presentation of a theory. This procedure is best understood as “an additional form of inference to the best systematization”⁸. The question is very complex and difficult to answer. As we have already underlined Puntel (2008) presents just *a* theoretical framework for *a* systematic philosophy, not the only and definitive framework or even less the “ultimate” comprehensive philosophical system. This is admitted to be beyond the reach of every human being. That’s why it is presupposed, from the very beginning, that there are many possible (different) theoretical frameworks and comprehensive philosophical systems. What is under evaluation is one singular theoretical configuration that has, *ex hypothesi*, attained a sufficient degree of explanatory power. The evaluation to be made at this stage of the method can adequately be described as an instance of inference to the best systematization (available at the time of that evaluation). The way one understands “theory” can make all the difference here as at the first stage of the method. The consequences of an option for an interpretation according to the “statement view” or in the sense of the “no-statement view” are analysed in detail in chapter 2 of Puntel (2008).

A very important to be solved in any systematic philosophy is that of “grounding”. Puntel (2008) uses this term instead of the more common “justification” to avoid problems associated with that terminology and point

⁸ Puntel (2008: 51)

out the specificity of its several uses within the scope of the theoretical framework presented in *Structure and Being*. One of the first things to avoid is to confuse “objective grounding” (including proof) with justification. The reason why this happens so frequently is that the issues related to the theoretical frameworks are not considered. Or if it assumed (or presupposed) that the theoretical framework within which one operates is the only one available, then proof and justification can easily be confused. As Puntel (2008: 53) says:

Objective groundings are explications of inner-theoretic or innersystematic interconnections that satisfy specific requirements established by the theories or systems—better, the theoretical frameworks—within which they develop.

After a brief critical review of some arguments regarding the problem of grounding – most of them in a non systematic way⁹ - Puntel (2008: 64-71) presents briefly his own systematic concept of grounding, an *idealization* like the one of method but involving just three stages, namely, an incipiently systematic, an innersystematic, and a comprehensively or meta-systematic stage. Naturally, the philosophical practice differs greatly from such idealized processes but he philosopher who thinks systematically, in the sense envisaged by Puntel (2008), and must ground the theoretical activity at each stage according to the resources available.

Puntel (2008) is not the presentation of Puntel’s comprehensive philosophical system as such, but rather the outline of the framework within which such a

⁹ Puntel (2008: 55-64) discusses the positions of Hans Albert, Leonard Nelson, Richard Ketchum that could be read as decisive arguments against the possibility of a concept of systematic justification and grounding in philosophy. Puntel rejects the attempt made by Karl-Otto Apel to avoid the Münchhausen trilemma because he fails to take into consideration that “every utterance, every assertion, etc., always already emerges within a determinate theoretical framework. If and insofar as every utterance is public and thus intersubjective, and if and insofar as the other participants in the relevant discourse presuppose and accept exactly the same theoretical framework, then the denial of any or all of the presuppositions of such a discourse indeed constitutes a performative self-contradiction. But Apel overlooks the fact that this is only a relative, not an absolute self-contradiction: the self-contradiction is relative to the presupposed theoretical framework”. (Puntel 2008:56). Then Puntel uses Almeder (1994) to counter Ketchum’s arguments and define his position concluding that Almeder’s attempt clearly shows that the concept of justification “must be newly determined” (Puntel 2008:62).

system can possibly be build. His approach is much broader than issues currently considered metaphysical, since his goal is a comprehensive vision of everything there is. The centrality of “being” in this project may appear to many contemporary philosophers an impossible and untimely task. The project aims to show how being can show itself and be conceived in terms of the theoretical framework proposed. It is carried out by drawing on analytic means of formal logic and truth semantics and, at the same time, redefining the central intuitions of speculative philosophy throughout history. Puntel (2008) represents a challenging attempt to overcome the contemporary fragmentation of philosophical discourse. This does not imply that one cannot raise critical objections against the method and the details of the argument. What seems beyond any doubt is that Puntel (2008) brings his position in a sufficiently clear and well articulated way. This is not the place to make a global evaluation of the project. Suffice to say that even if one does not accept all arguments as equally convincing one must bear in mind that this framework has a network structure. Viewed against all that is developed in the different chapters of *Structure and Being* one must admit the argument for a systematic structural philosophy is compelling. Anyway, it could invite some to cooperate or emulate this project following the same of similar methodology. The thesis of a plurality of theoretical frameworks should invite a positive reaction. For those more critical of the project it could be, nevertheless, an excellent opportunity to rethink the assumptions of currently well established positions.

3. Conclusion

In the short term we must use the available methods. Williamson (2007) and Puntel(2008) view philosophy as a clearly theoretical and systematic the enterprise. The mastery of a methodological discipline, combined with the thesis of the plurality of theoretical frameworks, seems very important for the future of the discipline. There will continue to be disagreement between

philosophers as always has been since the Presocratics. But, even those who see philosophy in a different way, as a non theoretical discipline, could learn something from the efforts made by Williamson (2007) and Puntel (2008) to do better in philosophy. Those who insist that philosophy is best seen as non propositional knowledge should remember the lessons one can learn from Plato regarding this issue. Every apology of such a comprehension of philosophy that dispenses the resources of propositional knowledge and its constraints is ill conceived. Puntel (2008) has built a compelling case against the more widely known varieties of foundationalist theoretical frameworks. Against this background many anti-theory positions in philosophy lose their plausibility and attractiveness.

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Philosophical method (or philosophical methodology) is the study of how to do philosophy. A common view among philosophers is that philosophy is distinguished by the ways that philosophers follow in addressing philosophical questions. There is not just one method that philosophers use to answer philosophical questions. YouTube Encyclopedic. 1/3. Systematic philosophy attempts to provide a framework in reason that can explain all questions and problems related to human life. Examples of systematic philosophers include Plato,[1] Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, and Hegel. In many ways, any attempts to formulate a philosophical method that provides the ultimate constituents of reality, a metaphysics, can be considered systematic philosophy. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy presents also no entry on philosophical Method(s), perhaps because the Editor thinks that the entry "analysis" is enough to cover the whole subject. In general, the methodology of much past and present philosophy consists in just the unusually systematic and unrelenting application of ways of thinking required over a vast range of non-philosophic inquiry" (2007: 3). Stressing the continuity with the sciences and other domains of inquiry, Williamson does not want to deny any specificity to the methods of philosophy. The methods employed in philosophical reasonings and enquiries include the basic presuppositions of scientific approach in general; but over and above these methods, philosophical processes endeavour to discover ways of considering and knowing the facts implied in the phenomena of experience. Before entering into a detailed discussion of the proper methods of philosophy, we will do well to remember the principles laid down by the philosopher Descartes. In his Discourse on Method, Descartes gives an outline of the procedure he followed in philosophical Philosophy as Methodology. The general concept of methodology. The world presents us with a picture of an infinite diversity of properties, connections and events. This kaleidoscope of impressions must be permeated by an organising principle, a certain method, that is to say, by certain regulative techniques and means of the practical and theoretical mastering of reality. From being a method and analysis of forms of knowledge in themselves, regardless of reality and the objective laws of its development, it became a method of the fullest and most meaningful investigation of this development, an instrument not only of theoretical cognition but also of revolutionary transformation of reality. The present-day system of methods in science is as diversified as science itself.