

The **ontological horizon** is the background of every ontological conversation. If we are outdoors, the horizon (if visible at all) is in the background, often enough ignored. In the same way, the ontological horizon is the usually unnoticed “background” of ontological discussion. The **ontological horizon** is everything that ontology must take for granted to **be** ontology. In other words, this horizon includes all conditions for the possibility of ontology. Rational discussion tacitly presupposes a shared space and logic in which the nature of that space can be further determined. The logic mentioned includes both a meaningful language and the normative structure necessary for a discussion to be **rational**. This means that I am working here under the assumption that ontology refers to the rational (scientific) determination of **how it is** or **what’s going on** — in the most general and radical sense.

I expressed this same basic idea using a different metaphor. The **ontological forum** emphasizes the “space of assembly” in which ontology, a scientific discussion, proceeds. This **forum** is the minimum concept of the world necessary to make ontology intelligible. Ontology might as well presuppose explicitly what it presupposes tacitly. Ontologists must **already** share a world and language. They use this language to talk about their shared world, which is of course the ontological forum.

But why call the world a forum? The point is to remind ontology that it is its own necessary object. We want as few presuppositions as possible, but we also insist on a rational or scientific explication of **how it is**. But what can ontology (ontologists) be talking about if not this forum itself, this shared space or situation in which meaningful conversation occurs? We might even say that ontology is the self-explication of the ontological forum. Using “ontology” for the entire conversation of ontologists is even appropriate here, given the essentially cooperative (if also adversarial) nature of science. Ontology is the co-articulation of how it is, and any ontological thesis is confused and absurd if it denies any of the conditions for its own possibility.

Can we further specify such confusion and absurdity? Sometimes we deal with logical contradiction, with the equivalent of a round square.

But I think we can and should also exclude **performative** contradiction. For instance, it is performative contradiction to say that communication is impossible, for the saying of it presupposes the possibility of communication.

It is also absurd to insist that everyone is trapped in their own private representation of the world. For how I can claim such a thing about the situation of others while at the very same time insisting that I am trapped in a private bubble? And yet this is what Kant did. In general, indirect realism plays with this absurdity. This goes unnoticed because people live in a direct realist way, and they only **play** with indirect realism. They “believe” it for the purpose and duration of the game.

3

So we might as well assume the conditions that make our project possible. To be a grand heroic ontologist requires a world with others, assumes that autonomous rationality is the right way to establish and modify beliefs. Ontology is the quiet spider at the center of its own web, and it sometimes forgets to notice itself, to account for itself in its account of its web.