

1

We are *foregrounding the ontological horizon*. “Horizon” is a metaphor for background. Ontology is the “science of being,” which here means, more precisely, the explication of our most fundamental and universal shared situation. Note the redundancy in the use of “fundamental,” “universal,” and “shared.”

So we are bringing the background forward. We are noticing a background or horizon that is usually ignored. In other words, this ontological horizon functions “transparently.” Indeed, it functions *so* transparently that foregrounding it is a significant ontological accomplishment.¹

To “see” or successfully foreground this horizon is also to see the fundamental error in a “Cartesian” approach to ontology. This Cartesian approach is based on a “methodological solipsism.” It incorrectly assumes that a radically isolated ontologist “makes sense.” This is why Kant considered it a “scandal” that the ontological tradition lacked a proof of the external world.

2

Kant’s desire for a *proof* should have alerted him to the fact that he had already taken logical-semantic norms for granted as something valid “outside of” his presumably isolated ego. Methodological solipsism takes the sensory aspect of experience to be “internal” or “private.” This sensory experience is understood to (possibly) represent “things in themselves” or the external world. But, given the “solipsism,” this sensory experience may be private and internal and yet *not* representational. For Kant and those who preceded him in this MS tradition, such as Hume, the isolated ontologist was possibly “lost in a private dream.”

Kant and others assumed that it made sense to do ontology from

¹This is what Hegel does in his famous *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The work of Heidegger is also largely about the ontological horizon.

a standpoint that negated the external world as “given.” What they did not see was that the concept of ontology *implied* an ontological horizon or ontological “forum.” Ontology, as a “rational tradition” in Popper’s sense, *presumes the possibility of rational (scientific) discussion*. While one can indeed doubt this possibility, it is performative contradiction to *argue* for it. The radical skeptic who believes that communication is impossible or that logic is not “effective” or “binding” is in no position to make a case for such a belief.

Methodological solipsism misreads the perspectival character of sensory experience as “internal” and (merely probably) representational. Because thinkers like Kant did not *notice* the “external” logical norms that MS depended on, they did not see the absurdity of this approach. The “isolated ontologist” is an oxymoron. What I’m getting at is the “being-with-others” of Heidegger which is far “deeper” than sharing a room with others.

The linguistic-rational person (and so the ontologist) is primarily “tribal software.” As one who thinks, I employ inherited or “downloaded” semantic and inferential norms that I understand implicitly as “transpersonal.” To “make a case” is to presume the intelligibility of one’s language for others as well as the “authority” of logic. This phrase “one’s language” is helpful, because “one” is a term used by Dreyfus in *Being-in-the-world* to personify this “tribal software.” English is not (only) “my” language, or it would not be a language at all. One speaks English. One is rational. This “one” is the tacit (usually “backgrounded”) framework that enables ontology to proceed.

All of this is already in Feuerbach, who got it from Hegel. It appears again in Husserl and Heidegger. The jargon varies, but all of these thinkers foreground the ontological horizon. They point out the ontological forum.

This is necessary because the perspectival character of sensory experience suggested to thinkers that noticed this that *all* of experience was fundamentally private or isolated. These thinkers just did not really “see” the “always already external” character

of their own logic. They used this logic, unwittingly, to argue for its own nullity.

The ontological forum is ontology's necessary object. This "object" is a minimally determined concept of the "world" that makes ontological possible or meaningful. This is the world as a shared situation that we can talk about in a shared language, subject of course to shared rational norms.

The individual ontologist has "download" the "software" (language) which is his or her "essence" as a rational participant in the conversation.