

## “A forum is presupposed.”

*A forum is presupposed.* This “place of assembly” is the (life)world. It is where we have always already found ourselves, what we are always already talking about.

Ontology implicitly presupposes the conditions for its own possibility. The project of ontology is only intelligible in the context of a world and a language which are both shared. As a scientific project, ontology also presupposes some ideal notion, however blurry, of rationality or critical thinking.

Any possible ontological thesis depends for its relevance and intelligibility on the conditions for the possibility of ontology, on ontology’s “enabling assumptions.” The ontologist is therefore entitled to place ontology itself at the center of what exists. Ontology “as such” is not and cannot be on the outside peeping in.

Because the world as forum is presupposed, genuine (philosophical) skepticism is constrained. While the details of the world as forum are endlessly debatable, it is a performative contradiction to deny the forum itself. *Any ontological thesis that denies what makes an ontological thesis possible in the first place is a piece of confusion.*

Yet such claims are common, probably because of an inherited assumption that what is “given” (always safely assumed) is not the forum (the world) but only some private representation that may or may not refer to something beyond itself. This idea of an “inside without a (certain) outside” or, equivalently, of a self intelligible apart from a world, is surprisingly resilient, despite its absurdity.

Direct realism is repeatedly misunderstood by those tangled in this assumption. An almost paranormal science of ghosts in machines emerges. The implied dualism needs some obscure mental stuff out of which representations are made. The real world is lost, for the indirect realist tells us that our representations hide it from us. Because we have eyes, we can’t trust our eyes, even when they tell us, with the help of a mirror, that we have eyes.