

1. God is the projected linguistic-rational disembodied human essence. Feuerbach. The attributes of God are the attributes of (human ?) reason.
2. God is a piece of science-fiction, just like Hal-9000.
3. Sci-fi shows us how our linguistic-rational essence transcends our contingent human biology. Klingons are essentially human. Photosynthetic neo-humans with green skin are still essentially human.
4. Any rational being is essentially human. The OS in *Her*. Hal-9000. The god-like character Q in *Star Trek*.
5. Robert Brandom work, following Kant and Hegel, articulates the **normative** structure of the ontological forum or space of reasons —what it means to be a *linguistic* ego, a *rational* being.
6. Participants in this rational-scientific-ontological forum discuss, for instance, what it is to be an *empirical* object.
7. Consciousness is best understood as the streaming of the world from the perspective of or “for” an empirical ego at the “center” of that stream.
8. This streaming is **perspectival** in the sense that the perceptual presence of empirical objects is largely a function of the empirical relationship of such objects with the sense organs of that “central” empirical-linguistic ego.
9. For instance, the visual presence of an object varies with the distance of that object from the eye that sees it.

10. The perceptual presence of that object is also a function of the physiological state of the perceiving empirical-linguistic ego. The ingestion of santonin can cause xanthopsia, turn the visual presence of objects yellow when they aren't usually yellow.
11. Perception is also *conceptually organized*, so the perceptual presence of an entity is also a function of the perceiving empirical-linguistic ego's education and previous experience.
12. What one person sees as a strange machine is seen as a familiar tool by another.
13. Because the same entity can appear in different ways to different perceivers, some thinkers have postulated a "real" object that lives behind the scenes.
14. In this framework, perceivers have "consciousness" which is filled with brain-created surrogates for or representations of the "real" object.
15. The "real" object is understood to be made of "matter" or even to be completely inaccessible.
16. This framework is known as indirect realism. Representationalism is another appropriate label.
17. Representationalism is more or less explicitly dualist.
18. Kant — in an ambiguous way — seemed to think that the "real" thing or "thing in itself" was completely inaccessible. He felt the need to postulate this elusive real thing because he had accepted the framework of representationalism.

19. Yet Kant was in many ways a sophisticated phenomenalist.
20. We can rescue Kant's "thing in itself" by interpreting it as the logical-intentional "substance" of an empirical thing.
21. This is where sci-fi comes to our aid.
22. Voltaire wrote a short sci-fi story about a rational being from a planet orbiting the star Sirius. This Sirian had ≈ 1000 sense organs and a lifespan of millions of years.
23. This Sirian engages in conversation with a group of human philosophers. He is clearly part of the ontological forum or space of reasons. So he is "essentially human."
24. In less anthropocentric language, both he and the humans he talks with are rational beings.
25. The humans and Sirians are clearly satisfied that all participants in this conversation are able to intend or refer to the same entities.
26. The Sirian is given human-like vision and human-like hearing.
27. The humans of course don't have access to the hundreds of non-human senses that the Sirian has.
28. Voltaire doesn't explore all the forms of perceptual presence that the humans must have had for the Sirian.
29. But we can use a human analogy to imagine the situation: Consider a person born blind being verbally directed by a person with sight to an apple.

30. Even the blind person can grant that this apple is an empirical object, despite what that blind person takes to be their relatively circumscribed perceptual access to that apple.
31. The sighted person has a “visual channel” in their perceptual-phenomenal field that the blind person lacks.
32. Both can nevertheless discuss the same apple. In other words, they can both be satisfied that they are intending the same apple, even if they can’t prove it.
33. Indeed, it’s not clear how the presence of an object could be proved in a deductive sense.
34. I think I perceive an umbrella, an empirical object that others might see. But I may decide that I hallucinated the umbrella.
35. The umbrella was phenomenally present — part of my first-person streaming of the world — but I recategorize it as only-for-me, perhaps because no one else saw it.
36. I may remind my friend of a conversation. My friend doesn’t remember it, so I decide that I was only remembering a dream as if it were “real.”
37. Let’s extend Voltaire and consider Plutonions whose 17 sense organs are nothing like our own. They communicate with us using technology we don’t understand.
38. They make English text appear on our monitors. We type our answers and they seem to understand.

39. Their bodies are shape-shifting blobs of slimy smoke. We can't make out a head or any sense organs.
40. They explain to us that they believe we have only a very limited perceptual access to their bodies.
41. We ask them to explain what our human bodies are like to them. We can't make sense of their initial attempts. Finally they share the Plutonion math they use to pinpoint of some analogue of our location.
42. It's all very confusing, and yet — at least as the conversation proceeds — we become confident that they intend the same planet Earth that we do. More and more entities become discussable. They also give reasons for their beliefs. They ask for the reasons for our beliefs.
43. In this fiction, I assumed that they had very different sense organs than humans. The humans and the Plutonions would have to figure that out over time.
44. Let us consider now the philosophers who insisted that the “real” thing (behind its merely representational perceptual presence) was colorless silent extended Matter.
45. It's worth noting that these human philosophers had tactile extension in mind.
46. Visual extension varies as a function of the distance from the eye to the object, which is of course one of the reasons that a “real” object “behind” perceptual presence was postulated in the first place.

47. Let us also consider that Plutonions don't give indications of intuiting something like (tactile) space directly. As far as we can tell, perceptual presence for Plutonions is not spatially organized, though the math they shared seems to indicate that they've been able to learn the inferential structure of such space for humans.
48. The philosophers among the Plutonions explain that some of their philosophers prioritized a cluster of 7 senses in an analogous definition of the "real" object behind a much richer total perceptual presence to all 77 of their senses.
49. Just as human philosophers declared color, sound, smell, thirst, and so on to be secondary qualities in "consciousness" , so did some Plutonion philosophers declare 70 manners of perceptual access to be merely "subjective" and not "in" or "of" the "real" object.
50. So the Plutonions had their own indirect realists, but this indirect realism became unpopular once Plutonions began to explore the galaxy and observe other kinds of rational beings.
51. A Plutonion philosopher named Zygon suggested that what the indirect realists called "consciousness" was just the perspectival streaming presence of the world.
52. Zygon claimed that the 7-sense primary quality substrate stuff was Pluto-centric.
53. The Plutonions had a monotheist phase. Their deity was named Habbah. Habbah did not have a

- body, but Habbah was not only able to think and communicate but even omniscient and benevolent.
54. Zygon suggested that Habbah was a projection of the Plutonion essence. The rationality of Plutonions allowed them to conceptually transcend their own biology.
 55. Zygon was ignored in his time.
 56. Plutonion technology eventually allowed individual Plutonions to edit their own DNA (or rather what humans would call their DNA.)
 57. So many Plutonions took advantage of this that Plutonions were no longer what human biologists would call a species.
 58. What connected Plutonions was no longer their body but rather their culture. Rational beings born on Neptune were even a welcome minority on Pluto.
 59. As Plutonions learn to discuss entities with Neptunians and the other rational beings that they met by exploring the galaxy, Zygon's work was remembered.
 60. They discovered that Neptunian philosophers had also chosen a few primary qualities to indicate the "real" object, but these Neptunian primary qualities were apparently nothing like Plutonion primary qualities.
 61. According to Zygon, the "substance" of an empirical entity was "logical."

62. No form of perceptual access to the object was privileged. The object wasn't "really" a tactile spatial gunk moving in the void. Nor was it a cluster of Plutonian or Neptunian intuitions.
63. The real object was simply its being conceptually grasped *as* that particular object, no matter its varying perceptual presence for this or that kind of rational being.
64. Zygon thought that there were an unbounded number of possible rational beings for whom entities could be perceptually present in an unbounded number of ways.
65. All that united these differing rational beings was of course their rationality itself, their ability to discuss the *same* objects, even though they appeared so differently to different kinds of beings.
66. This ontological forum was just the enabling framework for the rational discussion that all these different beings were able to have through their shared rationality. This forum was that shared rationality.
67. More exactly, they were able to understand the generalized concept of an empirical object as potentially perceptually present to members of the ontological forum.
68. Rational beings all share in a tentative distinction of what is only-for-them from what is also-for-others.
69. Some of the humans got the sense that the Neptunions on Pluto could read their unspoken thoughts and "see" what they were only imagining.

70. This suggested that “hallucinations” were empirical objects, at least in certain contexts.
71. More exactly, it suggested that the division of the total phenomenal stream into private and public was revisable. While human daydreams are private relative to other humans, they seemed to be as accessible as shoes and hats to the Neptunions. Of course the humans found this unsettling.