


# The Metaphoricity of Being and the Question of Sameness: Heidegger and Zwicky

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*ABSTRACT: I draw on Heidegger and Zwicky to challenge the notion that underlying divergent perspectives of an entity there must be something that is 'the same'; instead, sameness is disclosed within particular world-disclosures. I focus on Heidegger's concepts of world and truth as foundation for thinking about different human worlds. I introduce Zwicky's work on gestalts, internal relations, truth as asymptotic limit, and metaphors; the concept of metaphoricity of Being helps us think through how it is that no thing underlies the different perspectives of a phenomenon, and yet that there are limits for disclosures.*

*RÉSUMÉ : Je m'appuie sur Heidegger et Zwicky pour contester la notion selon laquelle sous-jacente aux perspectives divergentes d'une entité, il doit y avoir quelque chose qui est « le même » ; la même est plutôt révélée dans des ouvertures particulières. Je me concentre sur les concepts heideggériens du monde et de la vérité en tant qu'ils fondent la réflexion sur différents mondes humains. Je présente le travail de Zwicky sur le gestalt, les relations internes, la vérité comprise comme limite asymptotique et les métaphores ; le concept de métaphoricité de l'Être nous aide à réfléchir à la question suivante : comment se fait-il que rien ne sous-tend les différentes perspectives d'un phénomène, et qu'il y a pourtant des limites aux ouvertures?*

**Keywords:** Heidegger, Zwicky, metaphor, world, different worlds, objectivity

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## 1. Introduction

It is of utmost importance in our contemporary situation that we devote some time to think through our concept of world and how it affects how we are together. To this end, I bring together Martin Heidegger and Canadian poet-philosopher Jan Zwicky to help us think hermeneutically and ontologically about different worlds; such a project, it should be noted, is somewhat implicitly resisted by Zwicky, who, when she discusses Heidegger, for the most part, does so critically (e.g., Zwicky, 2002). Throughout this article, I build towards the claim that there are *many* worlds, brought about by a divergence of Being itself.

I begin this article by drawing on Heidegger's hermeneutics as a foundation for understanding worlds. Next, I tease out implications of this analysis in order to address questions of sameness: underlying all of the different views of any given thing — the way a thing is perceived, the way it is interpreted — is there some *thing* that is the same, constant, and unifying (e.g., an objectivity: states of affairs independent of context or perspective)? I answer, in a qualified sense, no. I also approach this question from the perspective of the 'subject': are there universal, basic structures that all humans have that enable (what we take to be) different worlds? Again, in a qualified sense, I answer no. Finally, I turn to Zwicky's theorizing of *gestalts* and metaphoricity, and I propose that we should think in terms of a *metaphoricity of Being*, which enables us to arrive at the claim that there are many worlds in one. Instead of sameness, worlds are brought together by what they have in common, which is rooted in difference and divergence.

## 2. Heidegger

### 2.1 *Hermeneutics and Understanding*

Heidegger calls the being of the human *Dasein*. Our being as *Dasein* — 'being-there,' in German — is characterized by care. Care is how we find ourselves in the world: as futural projection from out of our situatedness, surrounded by entities that are already here (Heidegger, 2008, p. 192/237).<sup>1</sup> *Dasein* is essentially care, which means that we always find ourselves in a temporal horizon emergent from our own being (Heidegger, 2008, pp. 327/375, 350/401).

This means that we are also characterized by thrownness and projection. We tend to find ourselves immersed in our surroundings: in our everyday mode of being, we take up entities and use them within a total context from which they derive their sense. For example, I use my phone to send a text message to my mother to make plans for a visit. Thus, I am absorbed in matters at hand that concern me.

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<sup>1</sup> When I cite this work, I will give two page numbers separated by a slash: the first is the original German pagination, and the second is the Macquarrie and Robinson English translation.

In this mode of engagement, I encounter entities as ready-to-hand (Heidegger, 2008, p. 69/98). This means, for instance, that I do not need to wonder at how to use my phone; I encounter it as ready to be used. Also, I do not encounter it as a lone, isolated thing, but instead as an entity within a relational totality of things (Heidegger, 2008, p. 68/97): my phone fits into the context of telecommunication networks, spare parts are sold at retail stores, and it is used to make plans to visit households for events with friends and family. Each ready-to-hand item has an assignment/reference (Heidegger, 2008, p. 68/97) in the sense that each item is assigned to or refers to other items; in this way, too, we can say that every item is characterized by involvements (Heidegger, 2008, p. 84/115), for each item is involved with others.

Part of the structure of the involvement of ready-to-hand items is that each item is used in-order-to accomplish something (e.g., the text message on the phone is sent in-order-to assist in planning a visit). If we follow this referential structure of in-order-to's, we eventually reach a for-the-sake-of-which: *Dasein* (Heidegger, 2008, pp. 84/115–116). *Dasein* is that which lets the ready-to-hand be as it is (Heidegger, 2008, pp. 84–85/117) and thereby engages with the referential totality by always already assigning to itself a project as a possibility. The totality of involvements “wherein” it is engaged is called world (Heidegger, 2008, p. 86/119). Thus, when Heidegger calls *Dasein* being-in-the-world, this does not mean primarily that *Dasein* is in the world spatially but rather that *Dasein* is this letting be of involvements, engaging itself by assigning involved entities to itself in projects.

Because world already exhibits a horizon for possibilities in its totality of involvements, and because things already have a way of fitting together in their relational, referential structure, we always already find ourselves within a horizon of meaning (Heidegger, 2008, pp. 151/192–193).<sup>2</sup> We are able to immerse ourselves within this manifold of meaning because of our ontological structure of understanding (Heidegger, 2008, pp. 151/192–193, 86/118). We always find ourselves in a situation where the meanings of things are never simply of our own making: they were there before us, stretch out beyond us, indicate other *Daseins*, and point towards future possibilities. Therefore, Heidegger says that we are characterized by thrownness (Heidegger, 2008, pp. 135/174, 192/236): we find ourselves within a world where things, there before us, already make sense, and to which we must already accommodate ourselves and respond.

Part of each of us finding ourselves within a world as a responsive being is interpretation. Interpretation, which draws our understanding out (Heidegger, 2008, p. 148/188), partakes in an as-structure: ‘seeing’ “something *as*

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<sup>2</sup> This horizon of meaning along with the fact that worlds are *shared* disclosures with others, which I will touch on shortly, means that Heidegger’s view does not enable a subjectivist relativism. Individuals are always oriented within worlds and what I call ‘groups.’

something” (Heidegger, 2008, p. 149/189, emphasis partly removed). This seeing — including, for example, the concept of identity (seeing *A as A*) — rests upon interpretation. Seeing something *as* something is implicit in any act of understanding (Heidegger, 2008, pp. 149–150/190–191) and allows us to take things up in our projects and possibilities. In taking involvements up within our projects, we are futurally oriented in projection (Heidegger, 2008, pp. 360/411, 151/193): as being-in-the-world, we take up projects by being engaged in our world. We are thrown projective beings (Heidegger, 2008, p. 145/185), interpreting and reinterpreting beings in and through our projects.

In taking up our projects, we, too, are never lone, isolated entities, but are engaged in a world — this relational network of involvements. But, further, we are relational because of our structure of being-with (Heidegger, 2008, pp. 117–118/153–155). In my example, not only am I using my phone to plan a visit with my mother, but the phone also indicates countless others: others who have assembled it from natural materials others have procured; others who have built and maintain telecommunication networks; others who design and market apps and software for general use. I am already in a world co-constituted by others and thus am already structurally related to them even without realizing it. Thus, a world is never a world of things just sitting there but a world of involvements with others.

Yet, let us pause here, for Heidegger must address how it is possible for us to emerge from our immersion in our world such that we could describe, as he has, the ontological structures of *Dasein* and world: how can we emerge from ontic involvements to explicitly thematize ontology?

It is when aspects of our projects do not run smoothly that our immersion in the referential structure of things is interrupted. For example, if my phone freezes when I press send, the phone now obtrudes and becomes conspicuous (Heidegger, 2008, pp. 73–74/102–104). Because this introduces a rupture into my project, I seek ways to address the problem: I close the app; I reset the phone; I take out the battery and put it back in. In this moment of conspicuousness, the phone partially becomes a thing present-at-hand (Heidegger, 2008, p. 73/103): its relational character recedes and its obtrusiveness as a thing emerges. Yet, the relational character clearly does not disappear, for in my problem-solving, I continue to engage with the relational networks of the phone. What emerges here is simultaneously a glimpse of its referential structure: its readiness-to-hand (Heidegger, 2008, p. 71/101). Therefore, I glimpse, even if in passing, the structure of world (Heidegger, 2008, p. 75/105).

This glimpse is enough, as a first fissure, to enable the eventual possibilities of theorizing, philosophy, phenomenological description, and thus Heidegger’s project of distinguishing the ontic from the ontological; this rupture brings interpretation into its own (Heidegger, 2008, pp. 148–149/189).

In order to be able to be immersed within a totality of involvements that precede us and involve others, we must interpret and reinterpret phenomena in light of new phenomena accordingly: *Dasein*’s understanding must involve the

hermeneutic circle (Heidegger, 2008, p. 153/194). In a sense, Heidegger's project involves inquiring into that which enables entities to be entities (Heidegger, 2008, p. 6/25), but to understand an entity we must understand its being. This being presupposes an understanding of the world to which the entity belongs, for an entity as ready-to-hand is involved within a totality of involvements. In turn, an understanding of the world relies on an understanding of *Dasein* as the for-the-sake-of-which. Understanding the being of *Dasein* depends finally on an understanding of Being, which is Heidegger's fundamental ontological problem, and the reason that access to it depends, in *Being and Time*, on Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein*: *Dasein* is the kind of being to which an understanding of Being belongs (Heidegger, 2008, p. 12/32). Therefore, understanding entities depends ultimately on an understanding of Being, and, because of the hermeneutic circle, vice versa (Heidegger, 2008, p. 325/372); there is a non-vicious, necessary circle between grasping the parts, or the aspects, and grasping the whole.

Moving from Heidegger's *Being and Time* to his later works, hermeneutics remain important, as in, for example, his "Language" essay (Heidegger, 2001). Heidegger here draws out an interrelation between world and things: "Things bear world. World grants things" (Heidegger, 2001, p. 199); one's understanding of, and the coming forth of, things is inextricably bound with one's understanding of, and the coming forth of, world. And yet, in line with the hermeneutic circle, neither the world nor the things unidirectionally condition the other; the enabling ground of world and things is in their "between" (Heidegger, 2001, p. 199). This "dif-ference"<sup>3</sup> (Heidegger, 2001, p. 199), as the between of world and thing, appropriates then expropriates world and things (Heidegger, 2001, pp. 200–205); it gathers and releases. Here again, the point is made that meaning precedes us,<sup>4</sup> insofar as its grounds lie in this gathering-releasing event.

This ex- and appropriation calls world and things into their inter-being, which only occurs as a particular configuration. Because world is a relational totality of involvements, and because we can observe other groups of people engaging with entities and each other in ways that imply different horizons of meaning (different totalities of involvements), we can conclude that there are different worlds, both historically and contemporaneously.<sup>5</sup> For example, the Ancient Greek world is not our world, for it was based on a different set and kind of totality of involvements. Likewise, contemporary tribal societies in the Amazon have different worlds for the same reasons. Therefore, each appropriating and expropriating configuration must be particular: world and things, released through the

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<sup>3</sup> Hyphenated as in the original text.

<sup>4</sup> Even as it depends on us.

<sup>5</sup> Consider historical (e.g., Foucault, 1994) and anthropological research. In addition, by 'group,' I mean something like culture.

dif-ference, can be (and are, and will be<sup>6</sup>) gathered differently. That is, beings show themselves in different ways: because world is this meaningful web of relations permeating things as the things they are, which includes and informs our comportment in the midst of beings, significantly different ways of comportment suggest significantly different ways of meaningful immersion. *There are different worlds.*

We may raise an important objection to this thesis of the plurality of worlds: if the dif-ference appropriates before it expropriates, does it appropriate or bring ‘something’ in (i.e., something constant, universal, objective) — that is, must there not be some basic ‘stuff’ that underlies subsequent meaningfulness? Could we not understand the different manifestations of world as indicative of a single real world outside of, and prior to, the dif-ference (prior to disclosure)? Or, to ask the kind of question Quentin Meillassoux might ask, do things not exist prior to their disclosure to humans (Meillassoux, 2016, pp. 7, 26)?<sup>7</sup>

To offer an initial and cursory response, I would say that while a particular thing would be different in a different world, it can only exist *as* a thing (and as a being) with and within world. Although we can change how we look at something or it can change how it appears to us, this only occurs within a given hermeneutic, interpretive understanding. And because things are released into a *totality* of involvements, the thing in a different world becomes understandable differentially from all other things in that world.

## 2.2 Aletheia, Truth, and Many Worlds

To better understand different world-disclosures and to anticipate further objections from a standpoint of objectivity, I turn first to Heidegger on truth before looking more closely at different worlds. Instead of grounding truth in a theory of correspondence, Heidegger proposes a radical regrounding of truth as *aletheia* (Heidegger, 2009). The Greek privative *a-letheia* means un-concealment. The ‘un-’ is important because truth as unconcealment depends on an emergence from concealment: unconcealment must be un-concealed; it must be dis-closed.

*Aletheia* also transforms the conceptualization of truth from truth as correspondence with actualities to truth as occurrence and event. The world is delimited and disclosed by *aletheia*: beings are uncovered and uncoverable in particular ways and possibilities and standards are released to which we can adhere. *Aletheia* is the wresting of the unconcealed from the concealed, which involves a history, an interplay, within the dynamic event of unconcealment, which is the unconcealment of Being. Such a history involves breaks and

<sup>6</sup> Future worlds, too, will not be the same as today’s.

<sup>7</sup> For Meillassoux, the question is oriented around *ancestrality* (i.e., reality that pre-existed human emergence) (Meillassoux, 2016, pp. 9–10, 20–22), but this gloss should work for our purposes (see §3.2).

continuities, in and from different *events* of unconcealment, making possible the delimitation of various historical or contemporaneous epochs. Thus, *Dasein* responds to and in the occurrence of truth.

Truth, in the *aletheic* sense of disclosure and uncovering — which subsequently makes possible truth as correspondence (adherence to beings as they appear) — is a phenomenological, ontological description of the revealing of beings for *Dasein*. As such, where there is *Dasein*, there is *aletheic* release.

Heidegger's concept of *aletheia* allows us to take seriously other worlds. As mentioned, peoples from different groups have different meaningful relations and standards that provide alternate correspondent adherence, alternate shared world-disclosures, and alternate shared horizons of meaning. Therefore, their sense of what is correct is different from us for it is relative to their *aletheic* release. The manifestation of Being is not everywhere 'the same.' Groups interact and unavoidably encounter one another from within particular disclosures of *aletheia*, none of which are the same at any given time. And so we can now better understand the claim that there are other *worlds* on this planet than just our own: *there are many worlds at once*.<sup>8</sup>

This claim should not be misunderstood as referring to meaning or perception only; it is an ontological thesis. To take the position that there is objectivity under divergent beliefs is to be positioned within a particular disclosure of Being that discloses itself both objectively and subjectively.

To further see how this is the case, we must see how we can respond to counterclaims from a position of objectivity. To do so, it is important to note first that while explicating primordial truth (*aletheia*), Heidegger distinguishes between the true and the correct (Heidegger, 2009, p. 138). He suggests that, to take the example of our current technological age, it is not that rational scientific investigation of nature (as pre-understood within what Heidegger calls the "enframing" of the technological horizon; Heidegger, 1977, *passim*) is *incorrect*. The calculability of nature has *yields* — it is productive and efficient — and this way of comportment towards beings has findings that are *correct*. We can, to foreshadow, say that it grasps aspects.<sup>9</sup> But this correctness does not directly touch upon *aletheia*. *Aletheia* precedes the framing that allows 'truth' (as, for example, correspondence or correctness) to be seen as 'true.' The aspects modern science grasps are *correct* (or they *can* be).

However, with that said, it is conceivable that other aspects of that which is under investigation could be discovered (e.g., non-scientifically), be opposed to the first aspects that were correct, and both could equally be correct or true (though not necessarily at the same time; yet, perhaps so, and then we might

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<sup>8</sup> I am inspired by Jacques Rancière who, in a different context, discusses the idea of "two worlds in one" (Rancière, 2004, p. 304).

<sup>9</sup> Aspects will be brought up again in our discussion of Zwicky in §3.1.

have a particular kind of politics<sup>10</sup>). One may, however, wonder whether it actually ‘is’ in all such cases the *same* thing that is under investigation: for Heidegger draws to our attention the fact that how one accesses beings, how one can and does relate oneself to beings, is part of one’s particular horizontal epoch tied to one’s disclosure.

As we have seen, the world is always already constituted by understanding and the hermeneutic circle. This state of affairs offers a poignant challenge to, for example, particular kinds of objectivity. To make this clear, let us take multiple perspectives on the sun as an example. Suppose two people, thrown into different worlds yet on the earth at the same time, look up at the sun. There could be, as evidenced anthropologically and in line with *aletheia* and hermeneutics, radically different understandings of this ‘same’ thing. The urge is to ask: what is ‘it’ that is the ‘same’? What is it that is *objectively* there, outside both understandings or beliefs about it? If both people see the sun, mustn’t there be something there *underneath* the different perspectives?

Note the implication of Heidegger’s thought in relation to this question. Because we always approach beings through a particular comportment, because beings have been disclosed in the clearing of Being (i.e., *Dasein* as ‘there-being,’ as the *place* of the disclosedness of beings *as* beings, i.e., of *aletheia*), and because we are thrown into a historical horizon of possibilities, *we can never approach ‘the thing as such.’* To seek something ‘underlying,’ ‘objective’ — the ‘same’ — be it knowable or not (even if it is not a question of directly *experiencing* it, but rather of *inferring* it, which hearkens to the empiricist-rationalist epistemological tradition up to Immanuel Kant<sup>11</sup> and beyond) is to already have taken a particular stance towards the matter at hand. This is not to say that a being so approached could not reveal itself in accordance with this particular stance (i.e., *we can* — and *have* — interpreted beings in this way); it is rather to say that I am, *in a particular sense*, denying that there is an ‘objective’ world.

The sense in which I am denying the objective world is on its own terms: again, a particular stance *could* reveal things in the world as objective, yet I am denying that we can somehow step outside of our disclosure as such — that there is any

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<sup>10</sup> In a kind of Rancièrian sense, wherein numerous components are at stake, i.e., who can count or be *perceived* as a political actor, what counts as the political space, and the lack of consensus on even the object to be discussed (Rancièrè, 1999, 2001, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Presuming here that Kant’s *noumena* is properly characterized as being in a stable relation with phenomena, i.e., that the same *noumenon/noumena* is/are paired with the same phenomenon/phenomena. But see Nicholas Stang (2014, pp. 124–130) and Lucy Allais (2004, p. 659), who draw on Kant’s humility (2009, pp. B308–B309, A42/B59) to argue that we cannot be certain of this relation. A question thus remains open as to how to interpret Kant’s *noumena* (e.g., see Hensby, 2021).



'outside' into which one could step. The question of objectivity only makes sense as a particular question, underpinned by a particular interpretation, within a particular opening of world. In this sense, beings can reveal themselves as objective, yet they cannot be objective underneath or outside all disclosures as such, for disclosures are that wherein truth and correctness take place.

Things do not appear primordially as present-at-hand; they are always relationally meaningful, not as something added to their being (their 'objective' being), but in how they show up. The phenomenology of things is that they are ready-to-hand: this is their type of being. Objectivity is a modification of and emerges from the ready-to-hand.

Therefore, any such disclosed objectivity must always be particularist, never universal, for it must be relative to its particular disclosure. Although beings we encounter are othernesses, we always encounter them within our world.<sup>12</sup> And so even saying that both people see 'the sun' might be saying too much, for there is nothing that necessitates the sun be individuated as a distinct, particular thing.

However, we can also take up an objection from the standpoint of objectivity on the side of the 'subject': is Heidegger's project not, in *Being and Time*, precisely to find the *a priori* transcendental conditions for there to be something like world? In other words, are ontological structures not objective, universal, *a priori* structures? Furthermore, in speaking of other worlds and presumably other ontologies, am I not collapsing the fundamental distinction between the ontic and the ontological, for surely the differences to which I am referring are *cultural* differences, which would be on the ontic side of the distinction?

Because our world is the horizon of meaning within which we are engaged and wherein we assign ourselves projects, our descriptions or theories must always be rooted within our particular *aletheic* release. When the space for phenomenological description or theorizing opens through the rupture of the ready-to-hand, the interpretation we take upon ourselves in a project emerges from the same totality as that from which the ready-to-hand emerged. Theorizing emerges as a result of the totality becoming conspicuous. In this way, our theorizing remains historically grounded in a particular *aletheic* release. Heidegger's phenomenological method, for instance, engages with the philosophical tradition within his world: therefore, the ontic-ontological distinction itself is emergent from and derives its sense from his world.

Yet, at the same time, as a phenomenology, Heidegger's analysis is an attempt to describe the transcendental possibility for world: what must be in

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<sup>12</sup> This is true even if we discuss not a being but the end of the possibility of beings for *Dasein*: its death (Heidegger, 2008, §§50–53). Jacques Derrida argues that *Dasein* can never encounter its own death, but instead always imagines itself persisting when it imagines its death (Derrida, 1993, p. 76, 2011, pp. 117, 130, 157, 160): thus, even the otherness of death, profound as it and the experience we can have of it may be, shows up within our world.

place to allow for the constitution of world and *Dasein*. He is gesturing to phenomena that are in common across disparate contexts. The fact that Heidegger's descriptions are emergent from his world does not mean that they are restricted to it; what is said or discovered in one world may resonate in another. But it does mean that their sense derives (at first) from his world, and so their interpretation is from a particular way of understanding and making sense of things.

Although Heidegger's phenomenological description (including, for instance, the ontic-ontological distinction and the ontological structures of *Dasein*) is rooted in its particular world, this does not mean that it is not a good, viable interpretation of phenomena. Heidegger's descriptions are how his ontology comes to be interpreted from out of itself and how it comes to interpret other ontologies too (i.e., in terms of transcendental possibilities). These descriptions are a good and powerful way to understand our own and other ontologies, but there are and can be other ways to understand these. The descriptions are not true outside of or for all disclosures (even as they speak about disclosures and truth). While they indeed highlight important aspects of humans, world, and their interrelations and transcendental conditions, they necessarily take these up within a given world. Other worlds could take up similar phenomena and draw different kinds of interpretation — different kinds of constellative possibilities — derived from other sets of thrown-projective possibilities. And so even if ways of comportment notice aspects that must be reckoned with, there are other ways of reckoning with or responding to them.

Thus, I am not collapsing the ontic-ontological distinction per se. Instead, I am suggesting that other disclosures manifest Being in other ways, temporally and historically, and hence that other groups with different shared world-disclosures are called to different kinds of relationality and responsivity with Being, world, and things than we are, relationalities that invite possibilities for more or less attentive, more or less rigorous responses, both in terms of *their* engagement (the 'subject') and in terms of *that with which* they are involved ('objects').

And yet, it may be objected, surely we are not to take as implication that the two people who see the sun inhabit such radically different worlds that those worlds never meet. In response, I would say that there is no such thing as a complete alterity. Certainly, one foot always remains in one's world: we never leave our world nor do we make it bigger through cultural experiences, but we are able to witness a transformative potential of the world wherein its chains of significations may shift. Although we cannot encounter the Other (the 'complete alterity'), we can encounter an other.

But, if this is the case, need we not say that there is an 'it,' something that is the same in the worlds of both people for those worlds to be able to meet? And, surely, something like the sun cannot come to mean, within world-disclosures, just *anything* (i.e., there are, it seems, somehow, limits in place). To help address such concerns, I turn now to Zwicky.

### 3. Zwicky

#### 3.1 Internal Relations, Gestalts, and Metaphors

In this section, I will address the questions raised above by drawing on Zwicky's discussion of internal relations, gestalts, aspects, and metaphors. Zwicky most explicitly situates herself in dialogue with the analytic tradition of philosophy and, in particular, with Ludwig Wittgenstein. I will situate her thought, particularly on metaphors, *within* the theorizing on *aletheic* disclosures I have developed with Heidegger, and I will also propose, drawing on Zwicky, an idea of the metaphoricity of Being.

Zwicky draws on a variety of gestalt figures, including the Necker cube and Jastrow's duck-rabbit, as a way of gesturing to similar questions concerning how we grasp a whole (i.e., for Heidegger, of worldhood/totality), and how we see that something is the case (i.e., seeing something *as* something).<sup>13</sup> When we experience a gestalt, the revealing of aspects always gestures simultaneously to the whole and to the particular (Zwicky, 2008, p. L2).<sup>14</sup> When we see something like the Necker cube (Figure 1) — which projects in two ways, either upwards and to the right, or downwards and to the left — what do we see (i.e., what is its ontological status)?

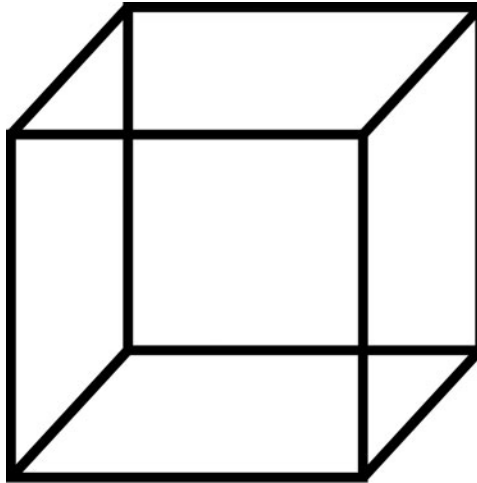


Figure 1. Necker Cube

<sup>13</sup> Zwicky is influenced by Wittgenstein, but also by Gestalt psychologists/theorists, e.g., Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and George W. Hartmann.

<sup>14</sup> Zwicky's *Wisdom & Metaphor* is composed such that the left hand (L) and right hand (R) pages share one page number (e.g., L2 and R2). The left hand pages are her writings and the right hand pages are excerpts from works by others, which she has compiled and arranged.

Zwicky helps us see that it is not only a cube projecting one way, nor is it only a cube projecting the other way, but it is *both* (Zwicky, 2008, p. L80). In other words, we avoid two interpretations that explain the phenomena away: we avoid the reductionist interpretation that says that the Necker cube is *actually* a series of lines that create varying *appearances* (Zwicky, 2008, p. L80), and we avoid the idealist interpretation that says that the cube is purely a mind-dependent, personal, subjective projection (Zwicky, 2008, p. L25). (Both interpretations are close kinds of a species of interpretation: one emphasizing the ‘object,’ the other emphasizing the ‘subject.’ In this article, I mean both of these when I speak of reductive interpretations.) Instead, Zwicky proposes that the cube *is, constitutively, both* of its projections. To overlook this is to commit an error that she calls “aspect-blindness”: that is, we err in seeing “what *is there*” (Zwicky, 2008, p. L25).

Zwicky, drawing on Wittgenstein, calls the fact that the cube is both projections an “internal relation” (Zwicky, 2008, p. R98)<sup>15</sup>: “it could not *be* the one without also *being* the other (whether we see this or not)” (Zwicky, 2008, p. L98). Part of philosophy’s role, for Zwicky, is to uncover internal relations and clear away external ones: for example, if we say that the cube, as box, can be seen as an image for freedom/confinement, then we are treating it as a symbol and imposing connections from without (Zwicky, 2008, pp. L97–L98); a symbol “deflects attention *away* from the particular and thus forecloses on the possibility of ontological attention” (Zwicky, 2008, p. L100). There are various ways that the cube — *that is*, the world, things in our world — could be viewed (and in the case of the world we see a huge variety of them), but nonetheless it is *not* possible, or legitimate in terms of being faithful to the phenomena and their internal relations, to view it in just *any* way (Zwicky, 2008, p. L97).

That the cube is both projections internally is analogous to the structural working of metaphors. For Zwicky, a metaphor is an expression of analogical thought that insists simultaneously on *X is Y* and, implicitly, *X is not Y* (Zwicky, 2008, p. L5). For example, ‘*we are siphoned down empty roads*’ says that the way we travel down empty roads is just like being pulled or drawn on not by our own volition, and yet it is also clear that we are not actually siphoned down such streets (e.g., we have some choice in the matter).

Setting two distinct contexts side by side, a metaphor acts as a “hinge or fulcrum” by which one context is laid over the other (Zwicky, 2008, p. L62, see also pp. L18–L19, L24). In the moment when they are brought together, it is as though a flash of light travels through both of them, bringing each into focus. The metaphor then releases both contexts each to each as separate. A metaphor brings two contexts together like a slide in a microscope and allows what they have in common to show itself, and, in releasing the two, the metaphor re-emphasizes the importance of distinctness (Zwicky, 2008, p. L106).

<sup>15</sup> Wittgenstein (1961, §§4.122, 4.123), cited in Zwicky (2008, p. R98).

Therefore, a metaphor shows how aspects of one context fit with those of another *without* conflating the two (Zwicky, 2008, p. L50); we do not fuse the slide to the microscope — it slides in then out. This movement is essential for metaphors: on the hinge of “what is common” between two contexts, metaphors enable the two contexts to encounter (to swing or slide together) before releasing each to each (Zwicky, 2008, p. L62), i.e., X is Y *and* X is not Y. Thus, we can say that the metaphoric *structure* is also a metaphoric *process*.

Metaphors always begin from the fact of difference: difference is primary. Out of distinctness, a metaphor brings two contexts together to show a similarity, a commonality, before relinquishing its temporary hold on the contexts. Put otherwise, metaphors show commonality — which pre-existed the metaphoric gesture — against the backdrop of difference. Metaphors gesture to two fundamental ontological characteristics: distinctness and connectedness (Zwicky, 2008, p. L59).

Although it is not always noticed, this commonality affects not only one of the two terms in a metaphor, but both (Zwicky, 2008, pp. L76–L77). We do not only see how being pulled down empty streets has commonalities with being siphoned; we also notice how siphoning has commonalities with travelling.

Metaphors never override difference with similarity, nor do they override commonality with difference. Metaphors embrace the “grasp[ing] of wholes that occupy the same space, yet are different” (Zwicky, 2008, p. L93). Their truth is “not one, not two” (Zwicky, 2008, p. L34), for the contexts and things gestured to by them are neither the same nor utterly distinct. Metaphors involve both re-cognizing/refocusing *and* releasing/relinquishing.

A reductionist interpretation, which results from trying to grasp what underlies a gestalt shift and trying to seize on what *is* the “what is common” between different contexts, insists on the priority of “what is common” (Zwicky, 2008, p. L62) between two contexts over what is different, and thus does not preserve the truth of both commonality *and* difference. Moreover, it also insists on taking “what is common” as *a thing* (Zwicky, 2008, p. L62) or “basic metaphysical stuff” (Zwicky, 2008, p. L80) instead of, for instance, a moment in a process (e.g., it would take the cube as merely a series of lines that create varying appearances). This reductive hypostatization is, I claim, the result of insisting on presence above all temporal modes: in reductionism, the live relations of the world are frozen, grasped onto as identity or sameness (Zwicky, 2008, pp. L62, L105).

Zwicky denies that there is a simple grid upon which things fall together (e.g., a metaphoric gesture says both that something is *and* is not the case): metaphoric thinking “short-circuit[s]” (Zwicky, 2008, p. L68), i.e., ‘otherwise-circuits,’ this kind of grid (i.e., metaphors can subvert non-contradiction). “Things are, and are not, as they seem” (Zwicky, 2008, p. L79); we grasp some aspects but there are other aspects, other relations, other ways of seeing, in some sense always already there, whether we see them or not.

For Zwicky, truth is “the asymptotic limit of sensitive attempts to be responsible to our actual experience of the world” — truth involves a continuous and

continuously revised process of trying to respond well to our experience, trying to approach it with better responses, where indications of responsiveness include a resonance or fit (Zwicky, 2008, p. L102). This means that we do not try to approach the world in terms of progress, but in terms of sensitive response. Our attempts to be sensitive need to be a listening and responding to the changeable place where we try to find ourselves at home.

In reorienting the totality, gestalts *can* have the potential to precipitate an *epochal* shift — that is, Zwicky helps with our work on Heidegger.

### 3.2 *A Metaphoricity of Being*

To see how this is the case, we need to link up our previous discussion of Heidegger and sameness with Zwicky. To this end, I would like to introduce the concept of a metaphoricity of Being,<sup>16</sup> which, I claim, points to the active interplay of ontologies in the world (e.g., different wholes occupying the same space; Zwicky, 2008, p. L93). Zwicky says: “however adept we become at performing the gestalt shift, we can never see the two figures simultaneously” (consider the Necker cube: though it is both projections, you can only ever see one at a time): each figure carries the loss of the other (Zwicky, 2008, p. L56). — Different ways of seeing, different ways of life, different ontologies and different contexts are just that: *different*. A transformation — a total reorientation — is needed to come close to glimpsing them in their wholeness. A collapse of “what is common” (Zwicky, 2008, p. L62) into an *object* (a *thing* or ‘*stuff*’), as in reductionism, is to favour the collapse of connection-in-distinctness (Zwicky, 2008, pp. L32, L59) to sameness.

To further clarify these points, and to try to navigate beyond reductionism, let us take for illustration the example of a bush. The bush can be approached and unveil itself in many ways and thus be seen, for example, as a gardener’s, a biologist’s, or a physicist’s bush. It can be approached and unveil itself differently and be seen as *this* particular bush. Or, again, to take a leap, it can be approached and unveil itself as a site of many spirits. These divergent perspectives are contextualized within one another, for some depend on others and some seem independent (i.e., some gesture towards larger or smaller gestalt shifts). And yet, if these are all actual possible ways of encountering the bush, it is a reductionist interpretation that would attempt to pin down “what is common” (Zwicky, 2008, p. L62) as a basic metaphysical ‘thing’ and insist that all perspectives are of the *same* bush. Instead, let us say that ‘the bush’ *is* these many bushes, constitutively and internally related: ‘it’ (which we call ‘the bush’) *is* (at least) *all* of these ‘bushes’; which means that ‘it’ would not *be* (in some sense) if ‘it’ were not also (at least) *all* of these ‘bushes.’ Like the Necker cube, it shows different faces; as with the structure of metaphor (i.e., ‘is’ and

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<sup>16</sup> I have been influenced by Adam Dickinson’s use of “metaphoricity” (Dickinson, 2004).

‘is not’), ‘it’ *is* and *is not* all and each of these. — And yet, what is the *essence* of the bush, what is it that these have in common, indicative of a core sameness? — Here, we find the reductionist strain again.

Our challenge, in part, is grammatical. We think that when we say ‘the cube is both projections’ or “‘it’ *is* and *is not* all and each of these,’ that there must be a unified entity — an ‘it’ — that upholds the noun. But our language speaks from within our world-disclosure and so the single entity is an interpretation within it. While it may try, as Heidegger’s discourse on *Dasein* and world tries, to reach out beyond its world, it does so by way of gesturing beyond its limits from within them. In other words, it is true for our disclosure but it can be disclosed otherwise.

We could say that the bush gives us all of these aspects and that several wholes occupy the *same* space, but even here it is not clear what we mean by ‘same.’ To stay responsive to the insights I’ve been tracing from both Heidegger and Zwicky, we should perhaps say instead that several wholes occupy a *common* space.

But questions arise: what holds together all of the interpretations or perspectives of a bush *within* our world? Or what enables ‘the bush’ to be disclosed differently in and *across different* worlds?

Things are othernesses that are always gathered in world. We must “take things in stride” (Heidegger, 1997, p. 22), and we do so within world. It is a particular world’s conception of the thingness of things and of this particular thing that holds together different perspectives *within* a world.<sup>17</sup> What I mean is that it is not simply world and things that are differently disclosed; it is also the worldness of world and the thingness of things: the very nature of worlds and things are up for interpretation within a given disclosure. This means that the bush for us may not be a bush within another world — it may not be individuated as a single entity. Although ‘things’/othernesses exist before they enter human worlds, they only exist *as things* for us in our worlds, and so we must as it were pass over them in silence before or after then.

Why must we pass over in silence? Because a thing only ever *is* as (hermeneutically) gathered in world; a thing can only ever appear with and within world. We cannot reach around all disclosures (let alone *our* disclosure), and yet disclosures do share aspects in common. Othernesses flicker in a variety of disclosures. But if we try to pin these commonalities down as *things* or ‘stuff’ — e.g., base sensations, wavelengths and atoms, solidity or shape, substance, using terms like ‘materiality,’ and so on — we continue to interpret the phenomena from within our world in such a way that forecloses on different disclosures. If we understand that a given thing must be differentially determined within the totality of involvements that is a world (§2.1), which thus includes the worldness of world and the thingness of things, then we can see that a “sensitive

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<sup>17</sup> Identity, for instance, can be held together within a world.

[attempt] to be responsible to our actual experience” (Zwicky, 2008, p. L102) must avail itself of some kind of humble gesture, such as perhaps passing this problem over, at least for now, in silence.<sup>18</sup>

But isn't the Necker cube *one* thing? The cube is an unreduced phenomenon. It opens as a thing with multiple faces as any thing in our world does. Its reality is this actual possibility of multiple appearance. It is a relational — internally relational — unreduced entity. ‘The Necker cube’ is what we call this particular phenomenon.

Instead of progressing to what the bush *really is*, in a reductive, hypostatized sense, we *attend* to the bush, and thereby attempt to offer a sensitive response such that we fit or resonate with the bush, with the thing in question, with the phenomena as they appear for us (Zwicky, 2008, p. L102). Phenomena can *demand* attention, which can lead to a reorientation. It may suddenly (perhaps after long contemplation or conversation) *strike* us, for example, that a bush *is* a house of gods — it may strike us *how this is a real possibility*, and is not merely an abstract idea, as it most likely is here. Such an understanding of the bush may have never appeared to us before. Its entering into our realm of the sensible is a mystery.<sup>19</sup> Zwicky suggests that the “creation (apparently) of new meaning” is “to recognize [...] to re-think, as in *think through differently*,” i.e., to re-cognize (Zwicky, 2008, p. L1). For us, the bush — with its world — is thought through differently.

It may be asked what kind of fit or response is legitimate, but this cannot be determined in advance: there are better and worse ways to respond. Resonance can be an indication of an internal relation. Also, standards emerge within a world that allow us to judge responses within our world — both those within a shared disclosure and those without. In either case, some truth-claims are true and others are false. (It is often more strategic to appeal to standards within other world disclosures: standards within a world allow us to see if practices in other groups adhere to their own standards.) After encountering other ways to be, we ought to ask ourselves whether there is something more that we can learn to help us respond better. Though we are always within our world, we

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<sup>18</sup> Compare Wittgenstein (1961, §7). Also, my discussion here is somewhat similar to what Derrida calls the concept of the “as such” (Derrida, 2008, pp. 140–143, 156, 159–160) in Heidegger; Heidegger problematically argues that this “as such” (e.g., beings as such) is undisclosed for animals in contradistinction from *Dasein* and he wrestles with how to articulate what there *is* without *Dasein*, i.e., what animals encounter (Heidegger, 1995, pp. 197–199, 241–243, 247–248, 253, 259, 269, 274, 284, 365). A fuller engagement on these points would take us beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>19</sup> What can make sense; what can be sensed: sensibility or perceptibility (e.g., see Arendt, 1998, pp. 198–200, 2006a, pp. 147, 152, 219, 2006b, p. 88; Nancy, 1999; Panagia, 2009; and Rancière, 1999, 2001, 2004).



are always also ‘outside’ our world, encountering openings to other meaningful arrangements, other transformative possibilities for world.

That there are better and worse ways to respond means that we need to be aware of how we relate to other disclosures. I am not implicitly proposing, for instance, that one ought to accumulate a list, a catalogue, or database of all of the ways that a bush has or could appear, for such a project would gain its sense from within a particular disclosure. There is a danger in thinking that an itemized list of practices could capture the call/response structure of Being, as though we could itemize other ways Being has appeared objectively without actually experiencing them *as* possibilities: this would risk levelling difference, for other possibilities are brought into one’s own world without an understanding of their rootedness in different ontologies. This is, again, to adopt a reductionist stance.

Instead, I propose a more suitable response with two strands (which are never actually separable): first, we heed *our* rootedness, *our* responsiveness to Being. Other groups and entities will necessarily be seen from within our world, and so, second, the question is one of letting the other appear, of *welcoming* the other’s appearance — even, for instance, when the other *forces* its appearance.

How are we to understand a metaphoricity of Being in this context? For Zwicky, a metaphor operates on the *hinge* of “what is common” (Zwicky, 2008, p. L62) (see §3.1 above). When we encounter another world and the two contexts are brought together on what they have in common (as with the Necker cube), it must be emphasized that this is *not* because there is some X that is the *same* (objective or universal) that allows for internal constitution in relation (either in the ‘object’ or in the ‘subject,’ or in some other way); rather, it is because of the hinge. Thus, it must also be emphasized that ‘the hinge’ itself is neither some (self-identical, reductionist) *thing* nor some kind of basic *stuff*; rather, ‘the hinge’ is the (metaphoric) name for the ‘process’ of shifting. It is a temporary term in need of subsequent erasure, like footsteps that limn the shore.

In this sense, and from the epochal possibility traced out above, I claim that there is a *metaphoricity of Being* in and through *alethic* releases — i.e., Being metaphorically opens up varying, divergent disclosures. We can say, because of the different disclosures, that particular manifestations of world and things both *are* and *are not* the case. All the while, as we keep in mind that one always listens *from* and *because of* one’s world, the metaphoricity of Being enables us to see world and things differently: Being, in *alethic* release, paradoxically reveals contradictory, yet reconciliatory, worlds. There are many worlds; there are many ontologies.

The metaphoricity of Being, therefore, is not only that Being is structured metaphorically — that the structure of Being is analogous to the structure of metaphor (or that the process of Being is analogous to the process of metaphor) — but also that beings, which only ever *are* in light of Being, are also structured metaphorically; beings are caught in metaphoricity through the metaphoricity of Being. But because the hinge puts thingness and worldhood at stake, it is more

accurate to say that the metaphoricity of Being (or, as discussed earlier, the image of the Necker cube) shows the process of transformation between disclosures of Being, not individual beings. A transformation in the part is a transformation in the whole, for world is this relational network. The metaphoricity of Being is analogous to the structure and process of the Necker cube.

It is not the case that there is first Being, which subsequently flashes out metaphorically (i.e., in a metaphorically-structured way). Being ‘is’ metaphorical through and through. Where Being ‘is,’ there ‘is’ metaphoricity of Being — there ‘are’ *Beings*. ‘Being’ shows multiple faces, non-reductively, not traceable back to a sameness: many worlds are opened in a space in common. These overlapping ontological contexts have aspects in common, but are different metaphorically-structured manifestations of Being.

Thus, to return to our question at the end of §2.2, there need not be an ‘it’ that is the same to enable two worlds to meet. Rather than sameness, worlds have aspects in common, where such commonality is grounded in difference. Worlds *seem* to have a lot in common, but it is only through deep engagement with difference that one can gain a better sense of both the commonalities and divergences. — Being flashes out in different ways and gathers beings in a world like iron filings to a magnet, like lightning across the sky, in varying actual and divergent constellative possibilities.

The limits spoken of before (§§3.1, 3.2) — i.e., limits to the range of world-disclosures — have to do with limits imposed by the phenomena themselves in their *aletheic* ‘release’: we *attend*, stretch out and towards, the other. However, rather than focusing on limits as such, the account I have been tracing enables us to turn towards beings and the plurality of worlds in such a way so as to not foreclose on different disclosures by *imposing* limits (e.g., culturally hypostatized limits) or external relations, denying the phenomenological appearance as such.

#### 4. Conclusion

‘The world,’ as resonant structure, is not set to resonate in only one alignment: there are many ways of thinking and being that take seriously the claims of ‘the world.’ Within our group, in the midst of other groups, we try to understand ‘it,’ try to respond to ‘its’ gestures, and yet, analogous to the Necker cube, we all face the ‘same’ whole — we all have ‘the whole’ in common: *beings as a whole*. Each gesture we attend to, each aspect we grasp, changes the whole.

Instead of a view of eventual progress towards one truth, my view requires a constant effort to be responsive to the shiftings in and of the world, and to our positions within them: i.e., this is the asymptotic limit in Zwicky’s concept of truth (§3.1). I have drawn on Heidegger’s concepts of world and truth and Zwicky’s concepts of metaphor and *gestalts* to gesture towards a metaphoricity of Being. This proposition is onto-ethical: it includes ontological and ethical dimensions. My main argument can be summarized in this way: if Heidegger is right about worlds, then there is a metaphoricity of Being.

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