

Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) as a Pre-Ontological Category

On the Incompatibility of Existence and Understanding in
Modern Regimes of Stabilization

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Abstract:

This paper develops the concept of Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) as an alternative to classical ontological approaches. The point of departure is the observation that central forms of real efficacy—particularly neurodivergent work, precarious forms of knowledge, and non-normative modes of existence—are factually effective in modern societies, yet are systematically prevented from attaining ontological recognition. Ontology appears here not as a primary descriptive level of reality, but as a secondary effect of social, economic, and epistemic regimes of stabilization.

The paper argues that existence and understanding structurally diverge under present conditions. The sentence “One cannot exist and at the same time be understood” is not read as epistemic resignation, but as the diagnosis of a real conflict structure: being understood presupposes ontological fixation, whereas existence can often continue only through the refusal of precisely this fixation. Ontological categories thus do not function neutrally, but as selection mechanisms that determine which processes count as being, as value-capable, and as institutionally sustainable.

For the formal clarification of this tension, the paper draws on a structural analogy from quantum mechanics. The classical observer paradoxes lose their paradoxical status once the observer is no longer understood as a punctual instance within a given world, but as a folded spatial structure within which world-formation takes place in the first place. Transferred to social and epistemic contexts, it becomes visible that paradoxes of recognition and invisibility do not arise from reality itself, but from false model assumptions about observation, understanding, and stabilization.

Against this background, Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) does not denote an ontological redefinition, but the real change of the conditions under which processes, activities, or forms of knowledge can count as being. Ontology thus appears not as a foundation, but as the result of

successful or failed Seinsverschiebungen (Shifts of Being). The paper proposes using Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) as a central category for the analysis of work, poverty, neurodivergence, and epistemic violence.

(This paper is an interface text. The author's primary research corpus employs an autistic, non-linear, rhythmically recursive writing mode that cannot be fully preserved in academic English without structural loss of epistemic function.)

1. Introduction

Ontology, Recognition, and the Problem of Real Invisibility

Modern societies possess highly developed systems for the description, classification, and evaluation of reality. Scientific categories, administrative procedures, and economic metrics create the impression that reality is fully captured wherever it is conceptually stabilized, measurable, and institutionally recognized. At the same time, however, empirical indications are increasing that central forms of real efficacy—particularly in the domains of work, knowledge, and social reproduction—remain systematically invisible, despite the fact that they contribute in practice to the maintenance of social reality.

This tension is often described as a deficit of recognition, as a problem of inclusion, or as a communicative misunderstanding. Such interpretations, however, fall short. They implicitly assume that reality is fundamentally present and accessible and merely needs to be distributed more fairly or explained more adequately. The present paper takes a different starting point. It argues that invisibility, non-recognition, and precarity are not marginal phenomena, but structural effects of modern regimes of stabilization that decide which processes can attain the status of “being” at all.

Against this background, the sentence from the book *Denn sie können nicht verstehen / They Cannot Understand*, “One cannot exist and at the same time be understood,” is not read as a subjective experience or poetic intensification, but as a theoretical diagnosis. It points to a structural incompatibility between real existence and the conditions of being understood in modern systems of knowledge and administration. Understanding here is not merely cognitive apprehension, but a form of ontological fixation that presupposes connectivity, comparability, and evaluability. Existence, by contrast—understood as real efficacy under conditions of difference—frequently eludes precisely these requirements.

The paper therefore proposes shifting the focus from ontological foundational questions to the conditions of ontologization themselves. Not “What is?” stands at the center, but “Under what conditions may something count as being?” This shift makes it possible to take real processes seriously that are indeed effective, yet fail at the thresholds of ontological recognition. The central concept for this purpose is Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being).

2. Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being)

Conceptual clarification beyond classical ontology

The concept of Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) in this work does not denote a shift between ontological models, nor a conceptual redefinition of being. Rather, it describes a real structural operation through which the potential of a process, an activity, or a form of knowledge is removed from the open field through its fixation and replaced by a stabilized world-form.

Every ontological fixation thus operates not as a neutral description, but operatively. It intervenes in a field of real possibilities by fixing a particular aspect as “being” and thereby does not preserve the potential associated with this fixation, but cuts it off. What appears as being is therefore not the unfolding of the named potential, but its substitution by a filter: a geometry of order, a mechanism of spherical closure, a form of world-formation in which openness is transferred into stability.

Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) designates precisely this transition. It marks the point at which an open field of real efficacy closes between singularity (space of possibility) and stabilization. Singularity—understood as a not fully formalizable, difference-holding reality—is not integrated in this process, but reshaped along an ontological threshold. The field folds itself in the difference between singularity and recognized form of being, whereby everything that does not enter this form is shifted in content, form, and relation. A structural indeterminacy thereby arises.

This shift is not a mere reduction, but a systematic distortion. With the fixation of a being, not only the named object changes, but the entire field in which it is situated. Relations are newly weighted, causal relations are recoded, marginal areas are devalued or rendered invisible. Ontological stabilization thus replaces real dynamics with a closed world-structure in which what existed persists only as a represented remainder.

Decisive is that this process is not to be understood as a conscious act or a subjective decision. Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) unfolds structurally, across institutional, epistemic, and economic mechanisms. Processes can be really effective and nevertheless fail at the threshold of ontological recognition, while at the same time stable forms of being can emerge whose real efficacy is low or already exhausted. Ontological stability is therefore not an indicator of reality, but of successful closure.

In this sense, Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) is a pre-ontological concept. It does not designate what is, but the process through which reality is transferred into a particular form of being—or prevented from being transferred into it. Ontological categories appear here as sediments of past field closures, not as the origin of reality. They do not preserve the potential they name, but replace it with a durable and administrable world-form.

Everything that is fixed as a thing distorts reality insofar as it conceals potential in the pre-ontological space and replaces it through formal stabilization, which is often explained by diversity of observer positions, but is in fact a structural phenomenon of world-formation itself. Not everything can exist at the same time. That would overload an observer. Here, “observer” does not mean an individual instance, but the structural condition of world-formation itself. Therefore, an observer is not only a filter, but a variant of space that follows the difference between possibility and fixation.

Ontology is thus not rejected, but newly situated: not as a foundation, but as an effect of spherical closures (world-roundings) that decide which forms of work, knowledge, and existence

may continue to operate and which fall out of the field as unsustainable. *Seinsverschiebung* (Shift of Being) designates the conflictual site of this decision—there where reality does not disappear, but continues to operate in a distorted form.

Here it becomes apparent that being and reality stand in a structural contradiction to one another, because both cannot exist simultaneously in the same form, because every fixation shortens reality, and does so structurally and pre-ontologically.

3. Existence and Being Understood

Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) as Structural Incompatibility

The sentence “One cannot exist and at the same time be understood” does not, in this context, denote a subjective experience of misunderstanding, nor a communicative pathology. It describes a structural incompatibility that arises from the conditions of modern world-formation itself. Existence and being understood are not two degrees of the same process here, but are bound to different forms of stabilization.

Existence, in the present understanding, denotes real efficacy within an open field. It is not identical with visibility, recognition, or conceptual graspability, but with the capacity to hold difference, to unfold effects, and to continue processes. To exist means to stand in the field, not as an object, but as part of the reality-forming dynamics itself. This form of existence is necessarily precarious, because it cannot be fully formalized without losing its own potential.

Being understood, by contrast, presupposes a different operation. Understanding here is not merely cognitive insight, but an ontological and epistemic fixation. Something is understood by being transferred into a stable form, categorically determined, relationally ordered, and thereby made connectable. Understanding demands fixation. It requires the reduction of open potentials to a durable form of being that can be integrated into existing orders.

The structural tension arises from the fact that both processes depend on opposite field conditions. Existence requires openness; understanding requires closure. Existence operates in the pre-ontological space of real possibilities; understanding presupposes ontological stabilization. As soon as a process is fully understood, it is no longer part of open reality dynamics, but a component of a closed world-form. Conversely, what really exists often eludes precisely those conditions that would be required for its being understood.

Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) designates the point at which this incompatibility becomes effective. In order to be understood, a process must undergo a *Seinsverschiebung* (Shift of Being) that does not preserve its potential, but transfers it into a stabilized form. This form replaces real dynamics with representation, comparability, and regularity. The price of being understood is therefore not merely simplification, but the interruption of real efficacy.

This explains why certain forms of work, knowledge, or existence—such as neurodivergent, artistic, or non-normative practices—can be really effective and yet at the same time systematically appear as incomprehensible, irrational, or deficient. Their problem does not consist in being too complex or too individual, but in the fact that they derive their efficacy precisely from that openness which would be closed by understanding. Their existence depends on the refusal of complete ontologization.

The frequent reference to different perspectives, cultural backgrounds, or observer positions falls short here. The incompatibility of existence and understanding is not a relative problem of interpretation, but a structural problem of world-formation. It does not arise from divergence of standpoints, but from the necessity of making reality manageable through spherical closure. Understanding functions here as a mechanism of world-rounding, not as access to reality itself.

In this sense, incomprehensibility is not a deficiency, but an indicator of real existence. What can be fully understood is already stabilized, administered, and transferred into a closed world-form. What exists, in the sense of real efficacy, by contrast stands in a tension with every form of final fixation. *Seinsverschiebung* (Shift of Being) marks precisely this conflict: the transition from open reality to closed world—or its conscious or structural refusal.

This makes it understandable why being and reality stand in a structural contradiction to one another. Reality, in the sense of open efficacy, cannot be complete without ceasing to be reality. Being, in the ontological sense, cannot be real without concealing the potential from which it emerged. Existence and being understood therefore exclude one another not logically, but structurally.

4. Observer Structure and World-Formation

On the Resolution of Classical Observer Paradoxes

The incompatibility of existence and being understood described in Section 3 cannot be explained solely in social or epistemic terms. It points to a deeper structure of world-formation itself. A precise access to this structure emerges through a formal analogy to the classical observer paradoxes of quantum mechanics, provided these are read not physically, but in structural-theoretical terms.

The paradoxes of quantum mechanics arise under the tacit assumption that the observer is a punctual instance within an already given world that accesses this world through measurement. Observation appears in this model as a subsequent access to an objective reality. It is precisely this assumption that produces the paradox: the world changes through observation, even though observation is conceived as an external act.

The paradoxical character disappears once this assumption is abandoned. If the observer is no longer understood as an instance in the world, but as a structuring condition within which world-formation takes place in the first place, the entire modeling changes. Observation is then no longer a punctual intervention, but a spatial operation through which reality is transferred into a particular form. The observer is not a unit, but a variant of space that follows the difference between possibility and fixation.

Transferred to social, epistemic, and economic contexts, this means: the world is not simply present and subsequently described or understood. The world emerges through spherical closures (world-roundings) that are necessary in order to make reality manageable, distinguishable, and stable. These closures are not epistemic errors, but structural prerequisites of world-formation. They generate order by limiting openness.

The observer structure thus functions not only as a filter, but as a geometry of world-rounding. It determines which differences can be held and which must be excluded in order for a coherent world-form to arise. Not everything can exist at the same time. A completely open field would

itself abolish the conditions of observability, comparability, and stability. The overload lies not in the subject, but in the structure of space that is meant to make world possible.

Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) describes precisely this process of spatial folding. In the difference between singularity as a space of possibility and ontological fixation, the field closes into a world-form. This closure is not a complete elimination of the excluded potential, but a distortion of reality that from then on continues to operate only in represented, attenuated, or indirect form. What does not enter the world-form does not disappear, but becomes structurally invisible.

The observer paradoxes of quantum mechanics thus do not point to a mysterious role of consciousness, but to a general structural condition of world-formation: reality cannot be simultaneously open and fully stabilized. Observation—understood as a structural condition—forces a Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) through which reality is transferred into a manageable world. The price of this transfer is the systematic distortion of the open field.

In this light, the problem of understanding also appears anew. Understanding is not a neutral approach to reality, but a form of observation in the structural sense. It participates in world-formation by transferring openness into fixation. The incompatibility of existence and being understood is therefore not a special case of social communication, but a consequence of the same structure that also produces the classical observer paradoxes.

It thus becomes clear that ontology does not function as a description of what is, but as the result of a particular observer structure. It is the form that reality assumes after the field has closed. Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) designates the process of this closure. Observation, understanding, and ontologization are in this sense not subsequent acts, but constitutive operations of world-formation itself.

5. Implications

Work, Neurodivergence, and Epistemic Violence

The structural theory of Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) developed so far remains incomplete as long as it is not reconnected to concrete social practice. Its actual analytical force unfolds where it becomes visible that the described mechanisms of world-formation do not operate neutrally, but systematically damage or exclude certain forms of existence. This concerns in particular work, neurodivergent modes of existence, and non-normative forms of knowledge.

In modern societies, work appears primarily as an ontologically stabilized activity: measurable, assessable, comparable, and administrable. This stabilization takes place through wage forms, performance metrics, time regimes, and institutional attributions. What counts as work is not what is really effective, but what can be maintained within this closed world-form.

Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) operates here as a selection mechanism: real activities that cannot be transferred into this form of stability lose their status as work, regardless of their actual efficacy.

This becomes particularly evident in neurodivergent forms of work and knowledge. These often operate in open, non-linear, relational fields and unfold their efficacy precisely through deviation from standardized procedures. Their productivity is not sequential, not continuous, and not reliably retrievable in the sense of administrative planability. Yet it is precisely in this that their

real capacity for performance lies. The ontological criteria of modern work worlds are structurally incompatible with this form of existence.

The result is not mere non-recognition, but epistemic violence. Neurodivergent work is not only devalued, but distorted in its very form of existence. In order to be understood, it would have to allow itself to be ontologically stabilized. This stabilization, however, would destroy precisely that openness from which its efficacy emerges. The choice is structural: either being understood at the price of self-abandonment, or existence under conditions of systematic incomprehensibility.

Epistemic violence does not appear here primarily as false attribution or misinterpretation, but as coercion toward *Seinsverschiebung* (Shift of Being). Certain modes of existence are forced to lose their reality through fixation in order to become recognizable. Where this fixation is refused or does not succeed, they appear as deficient, irrational, or unproductive. The violence does not lie in the judgment, but in the structure that necessarily produces this judgment.

Poverty, too, is in this sense not a lack of reality, but the result of failed or refused *Seinsverschiebungen* (Shifts of Being), which flatten the complexity of world-formation and thereby marginalize those affected. Poverty does not denote the absence of activity, knowledge, or contribution, but their systematic non-stabilizability through an under-complex filter. Real efficacy remains, but is excluded from the ontological categories of work, performance, and value. The social system does not respond with correction, but with further closure: control, activation, pathologization.

This makes visible that modern regimes of stabilization do not fail due to a lack of reality, but due to an excess of reality that they are unable to hold. Ontological closure serves to reduce this overload. It produces a manageable world by cutting off and distorting open fields. The exclusions that result from this are not accidental, but structurally necessary.

Today it is often claimed that the world has become too complex. More accurate is the observation that the filters of perceiving and fixing reality have been overly simplified through continuous simulation as a consequence of excessive world-rounding. The reality of minorities is not only not seen, but no longer representable.

Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) makes it possible to describe these processes precisely, without psychologizing or moralizing them. It renders visible that exclusion, incomprehensibility, and precarity do not result from individual deficits, but from the incompatibility of real existence with the conditions of ontological stabilization. Epistemic violence is in this sense not a marginal phenomenon, but a constitutive effect of modern world-formation.

The analysis suggests that social transformation cannot be achieved primarily through better recognition or more inclusive categories. As long as the underlying regimes of stabilization remain unchanged, even expanded ontologies reproduce the same distortions. A change would require reshaping the conditions of world-formation themselves—that is, holding more reality without destroying it through premature fixation.

6. Conclusion and Outlook

Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) as Critical Infrastructure

This paper has shown that the central conflicts of modern societies are not attributable to a lack of knowledge, recognition, or inclusion, but to a structural overload produced by real efficacy. The widespread assumption that reality can be grasped and stabilized through ever more precise ontological categories proves, in this respect, to be part of the problem. Ontology does not function as a neutral descriptive level, but as an effect of spherical closures that generate world at the expense of reality.

The concept of Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) makes it possible to grasp this process precisely. It describes the structural transition in which open potential is replaced by fixation, real dynamics are substituted by stable world-forms, and efficacy is distorted through representation. Decisive here is that Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) cannot be understood as an epistemic misunderstanding or a subjective failure. It is a necessary operation of world-formation itself—yet an operation with systematic side effects.

The analysis of the incompatibility of existence and being understood has shown that these side effects do not occur accidentally. Under present conditions, understanding is bound to ontological stabilization. What is to be understood must be fixed, ordered, and made comparable. Precisely through this, however, the potential from which real efficacy emerges is destroyed. Incomprehensibility thus appears not as a deficit, but as a structural marker of continued existence.

The inclusion of observer structure makes clear that this dynamic is not limited to social or cultural contexts. It points to a general formal condition of world-formation: reality cannot be simultaneously open and fully stabilized. The classical observer paradoxes show, in condensed form, what also applies to social, epistemic, and economic systems. World arises through closure. This closure is necessary, but it is never innocent.

The societal implications of this structure are considerable. Work—particularly neurodivergent, artistic, or non-normative work—is not marginalized because it would be inefficient or incomprehensible, but because it derives its efficacy from forms of openness that would be destroyed by ontological stabilization. (See also Value Threshold and Diversity Threshold.) Poverty appears in this light not as a lack of contribution, but as the result of failed or refused Seinsverschiebungen (Shifts of Being). Epistemic violence does not operate here as an exception, but as a constitutive effect of modern regimes of stabilization.

Against this background, the widespread call for better recognition, more inclusive categories, or expanded ontologies proves insufficient. Such measures shift the boundaries of what can be said without changing the structure of world-formation itself. They reproduce the logic of closure at a higher level. A genuine transformation would require reshaping the conditions of stabilization—not in order to fully capture reality, but in order to endure more reality without destroying it through premature fixation.

In this sense, Seinsverschiebung (Shift of Being) is not a new ontology, but a critical infrastructure. It makes it possible to render visible the violence of ontological stabilization without falling into relativism or mystification. It offers an instrument for thinking real efficacy where it is systematically rendered invisible. And it opens a theoretical space in which existence is no longer bound to being understood.

The paper therefore does not end with a solution, but with a shift of the question. Not: How can reality be better understood?

But: Which forms of world-formation are capable of holding real efficacy without distorting it?

This question marks not a conclusion, but the beginning of a necessary theoretical and societal confrontation.

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