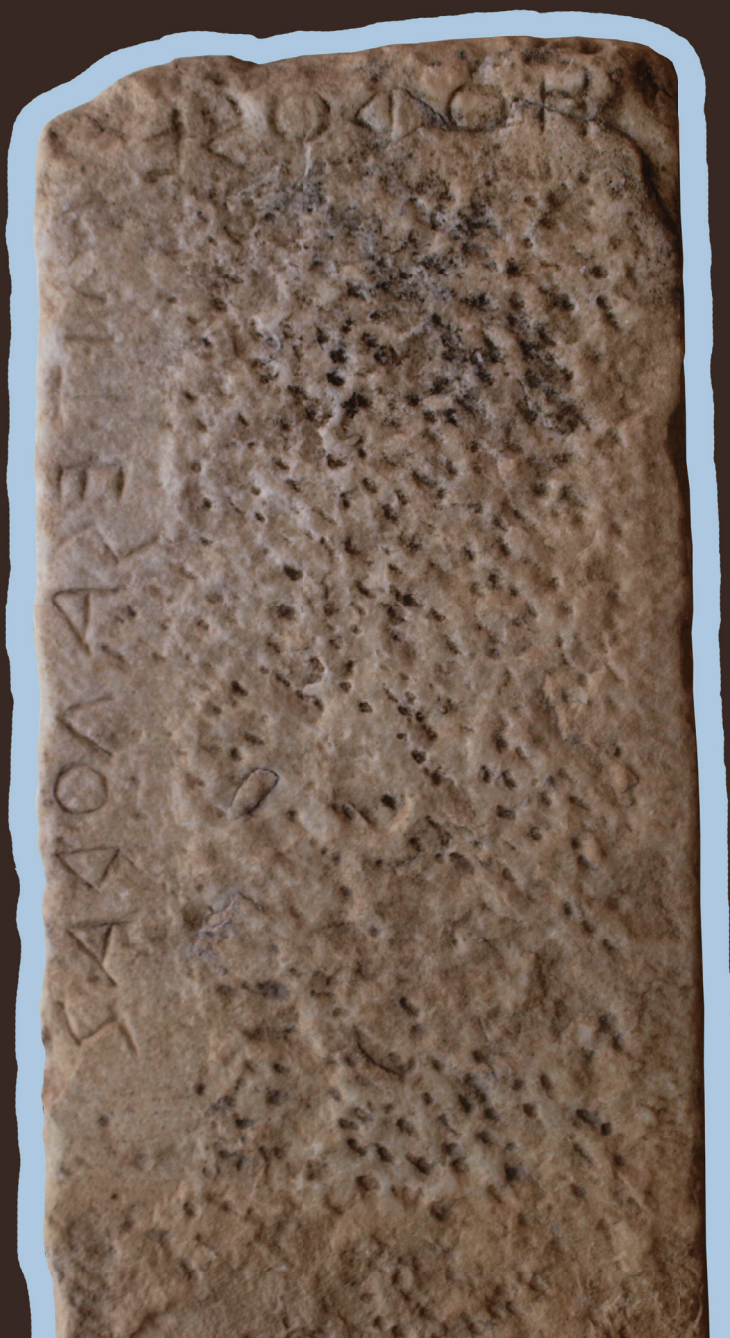


ANCIENT BOUNDARIES AND THE
ECOLOGY OF STONE

H O R O S



THEA
POTTER

HOROS

Horos

Ancient Boundaries and the Ecology of Stone

Thea Potter



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Although there may be no outside that
we can know, *there is a boundary*.

— Katherine Hayles

Να έχουμε μια πετρούλα. — PZ

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Abbreviations

<i>Ag.</i>	<i>Agamemnon</i>
<i>Alk.</i>	<i>Alkestis</i>
<i>And.</i>	<i>Andocides</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antigone</i>
<i>Ap.</i>	<i>Apology</i>
<i>Ar.</i>	<i>Aristotle</i>
<i>Arist.</i>	<i>Aristophanes</i>
<i>Ath.</i>	<i>Atheneion Politia</i>
<i>Cat.</i>	<i>Categoriae</i>
<i>de An.</i>	<i>de Anima</i>
<i>Cael.</i>	<i>de Caelo</i>
<i>Def.</i>	<i>Definitions</i>
<i>Int.</i>	<i>De Interpretatione</i>
<i>Deut.</i>	<i>Deuteronomy</i>
<i>Diog.</i>	<i>Diogenes Laertius</i>
<i>DK</i>	<i>Diels-Kranz</i>
<i>EN</i>	<i>Ethica Nichomachea</i>
<i>FDA</i>	<i>Federal Drug Authority</i>
<i>Gen.</i>	<i>Genesis</i>
<i>Grg.</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>
<i>Harp.</i>	<i>Harpocration</i>
<i>Hdt.</i>	<i>Herodotus</i>
<i>Hes.</i>	<i>Hesychius</i>
<i>Hom.</i>	<i>Homer</i>
<i>Hos.</i>	<i>Hosiah</i>
<i>Il.</i>	<i>Iliad</i>
<i>IG.</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
<i>Job.</i>	<i>Job</i>
<i>KJ</i>	<i>King James Bible</i>
<i>LS</i>	<i>Liddell and Scott</i>

<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metaphysics</i>
<i>Meteor.</i>	<i>Meteorologica</i>
<i>Mor.</i>	<i>Moralia</i>
MP	Member of Parliament
<i>Myst.</i>	<i>On the Mysteries</i>
<i>Od.</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
OED	<i>The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>Phd.</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>
Pl.	Plato
Plut.	Plutarch
<i>Prov.</i>	<i>Proverbs</i>
<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Politica</i>
NIV	<i>New International Version</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Republic</i>
<i>Rev.</i>	<i>Revelation</i>
<i>Rhet.</i>	<i>Rhetoric</i>
Sol.	Solon
Suid.	Suida
TGL	Thesaurus Graecae Linguae
<i>Top.</i>	<i>Topics</i>
<i>Trach.</i>	<i>Trachiniae</i>
<i>Vit. Phil.</i>	<i>Lives of the Philosophers</i>
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Prologue

When Edward Said visited Lebanon, he picked up and threw a stone across the border to Israel. For this act he was barred from attending certain institutions. During the French Revolution stones, frequently the humble cobble, were thrown against the troops and added to the piles of refuse forming the barricades. Again, in England, during the suffragette movement, women wrapped stones in paper, tied a string to and threw them at public offices, drawing the string to retrieve them and throw them again. During the Al-Aqsa Intifada in Palestine it was an iconic image of a young boy throwing stones, later killed by the Israeli army, that attracted the attention of the international media. In a simple protest in Athens against education cuts in 2008, a youth throwing stones was killed by police, causing a general revolt. In Egypt during the latest uprising, stones littered the streets even as the military was sending in tanks.

Must we be satisfied in agreeing with Blanqui that the stone is the principal article in urban battles because it is most ready to hand?¹ Or has the stone gathered this reputation for insurgency on account of history's momentum, resurfacing every time because of its presence in a former revolt? As Lacan said, perhaps the stone has become an *objet petit a* for the revolutionaries.²

But what if the symbolism of the stone is not limited to these recent acts of historical insurrection? What if the stone itself already marks our responsibility to struggle for what we know to be right? What if the stone actually stands as a testament to what we cannot see in the immediate world around us but presents a most substantial challenge to the status quo exactly because something has been missed, overlooked, or simply lost?

1 Blanqui (2003).

2 Roudinesco (1997) 336.

This work undertakes to bring before our gaze an intrinsic relation between stone and human, in a study that is inversely archaeological. It traces the earlier possibilities of the stone's task in archaic Greece and describes its subsequent modifications, losses, appropriations and occupations during the rise of the historical, political and *in utero* economic era of the classical world. Oddly enough, the resulting arc does not begin in corybantic times of cultic religious practice where the stone is presumed to be a fetish or animistic token, to find its epistemological culmination in materialism and utilitarianism. In fact, it would appear that, in relation to this base matter, we have been moving in the opposite direction. What began as simple (though not base) stone has gradually become fraught with all sorts of religious, political and economic investments in every aspect of life, that is, except insurrection. For although we employ stones, crushing them and piling them up in the construction of buildings, roads and walls, here the stone, in content and form, is in every way subordinated to the increasingly hostile environment we are building around us, blocking out strangers, ensuring swifter means of progress and limiting in every possible way the direct confrontation and interaction with others, human or otherwise.

We throw stones to bring us back to the matter at hand. As the marker of our graves the stone should be at once a material and metaphysical remainder of the fact that we are all strangers to life, regardless of nations, states and the self-interests of markets, corporations, security and defense. The stone stands as a marker of our ongoing and necessary relation with the more than human world. Although we dismiss stone as inanimate, it is the origin of animation, whether it disintegrates into its more readily available fertile components or erodes into the various formations upon which the diverse play of life is acted out.

It is in this light that the insurrectionary stone-throw should be understood. For it is an act directed against the hubristic violence of the border and the barrier, the wall and property. The stone-throw gestures towards what is common by putting such boundaries into question and by transgressing boundaries with the most solid (though not immutable) material that inevitably takes our place and even substitutes for us. For the stone-throw yet retains the possibility of the dissolution of the militarised border, or the armed aggressor. It is a symbol of friendship winning out over hostility. All who wish it are welcome to

join the insurrection. The problem every insurrection faces is, however, how long the people are prepared to fight guns with stones before the injustices they have suffered compel them either to turn inward in despair and accept the terms of the victor or to embrace the same means of violence that are directed against them.

The rune-masters carved their runes in rock, wood or leather and then coloured them with magical ingredients, one of which was likely blood. In order to read the prophecies hidden within these objects the masters dispersed them upon the ground, and it was only those with the letter facing upward that provided the text for interpretation. This book could be said to follow a similar method. Since the text has (in the wake of deconstruction) proved itself exhausted, if not a mere ruin, this is an attempt to remain close to the material foundation of writing about writing. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the plinth upon which this text rests is literally a ruin. The earliest archaeological remains that will be considered here are mere traces of letters, found amongst the rubble, sometimes engraved in stone, other times in a text no less spoliated. They are literal remainders of an earlier, lapidary writing, whose name '*Horos*' equally binds letter and stone: declarative letters whose stony annunciation would make a belligerent claim of precedence to any writing. *Horos* is the original material as well as the place-saver of Hermes' own statue in the Athenian market place. Though ancient, *Horos* remains throughout the hermetic period and into today when only interpretations and not positions are considered to be safe ground for thought.

There is a lot of talk of boundaries and bonds in the following pages. It is not my intention to wield bolt-cutters or claim to have found a key to dissolve these boundaries and free us of these bonds but rather to trace a path that should foreclose any arrival, such that the question remains. Questioning must begin somewhere. This book discusses the site or place of the question as both a matter of boundaries and definitions, where any question also allows the definition of words and things to remain open to the possibility of asking further questions. Here the boundary of the question is present in the stone as our trace or mark, with or without letters, of the potential distinctions and divisions in the material. In light of this return to the elemental material of stones and of letters it is necessary to ask what has been lost from our relations

with the world and one another. Perhaps in what has been lost there is a chance of rediscovering a ground from which to resist and destroy the forces that occupy and with increasing aggression seek to manipulate the archaic frontiers of life.

Introduction

The market today resembles a Leviathan, a great beast growing in accordance with no law outside of the vain rapacity of its uncanny monstrosity, extending its boundaries beyond the nation-state, beyond government intervention, beyond ecologically safe limits and beyond our will to enter into it. It has become properly automatic, functioning for no purpose outside of itself, its masters simultaneously its slaves. And yet, this monstrous system originates with us. Have we lost control of this love child of unsatisfied desire and self-gratification? Are there no limits to its cancerous spread? Is there any way to assert our responsibility over and against the unlimited expansion of this voraciously consumptive automatism? Nobody can doubt the existence of material limits to economic developments, though there must be a huge discrepancy in the location, orientation, the matter and meaning attributed to such limits; otherwise there would not be such wide-ranging discussion concerning the mechanisms and alimentation required to keep the current system from collapse.

Here the basic argument will be that vital material limits both structure our relation in and with the world around us, comprising both humans and nonhumans, and call us back to an inclusive, inter-relational coexistence with all things in stark contrast to the reification of organic and inorganic natural resources required to maintain the unsustainable rate of technological advances in societies dominated by corporate, stakeholder capitalism (otherwise known as cartelism). To hold thus to the vitality of matter does not bracket out human subjectivity, its genesis and its boundaries; rather, it reinforces that the boundaries themselves separating the human being from everything else are not absolute, transcendental nor divinely given. But that does not mean that they are not substantial; they are, in fact, material. Because they are material, they are also subject to question. Therefore,

as I will elaborate throughout this work, the project of Western human rationality is based upon a premise (that humans are ‘rational animals’ and distinct from other organic beings) that is epistemologically and ontologically secured by nothing but the very thing that the definition seeks to distinguish humans as separate from. This book is devoted to investigating this thing in the material origins of the philosophical and archaeological project of definition. The foundation that provides the definition distinguishing the human from the other inhabitants of the world, but also from the inorganic matter of the world is none other than ‘insensate,’ or ‘inanimate,’ matter itself.

Given that matter provides the substrate for all being, human or otherwise, why, it could be asked, the need to respond in like by advocating for the vitality of matter? The answer is that I agree wholeheartedly with Jane Bennett when she states that ‘the image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption.’¹ In that light the project here is to trace a history of the vitality of matter and investigate how we have come to be psychologically, spiritually and linguistically disconnected from the world around us and the life inside us. This study reveals how the economically and politically dominant conceptualisations of matter, natural and otherwise, are contingent upon exclusions and exceptions that, reinvented within our language, could provide a deep kinship with the earth and open up the possibility of coming to terms with matter in a more involved, intra-active, symbiotic way.

How is matter vital? It is certainly vital to our survival, but it is vital in more ways than simply our dependence upon matter to provide us with warmth, food, and comfort. Matter is also vital to itself, and the relations of plants, fungi, animals, rocks, water, carbon dioxide, calcium, etc. all continue to interact regardless of human needs, intervention or even human existence, though no doubt these relations are increasingly modified and even hindered on account of human interventions (such as industrial farming depleting communities of biota in soil, the interactions between methane trapped under the ice with a heating atmosphere, or the affinity between asphalt and predatory birds). This then, might be the cause of the book, or what caused it to be written. The argument presented, however, requires these interrelations as an

1 Bennett (2010) ix.

assumed foundation upon which all human and nonhuman activity plays out. It is the ground upon which we stand. But it is also this ground that poses the dilemma I attempt to confront or abide by: do boundaries exist in nature? Conversely, is this problem inscribed in the human assumption of such boundaries in defining nature as separate to humans? Does 'nature' take everything into account except the human, and does 'matter' likewise exclude whatever is organic or has a soul? Are such boundaries even sensible given the predisposition of the human to say that nothing matters or is meaningful beyond human volition to make it so? The question must be raised as to what actually is the nature of the boundary that claims to distinguish humans from everything else; is it natural or is it in us? We have been taught that the boundary is located within the human. For example, the presence of reason within the human mind is what distinguishes the human as possessing subjectivity. Beyond or outside of this subjective position, there is no way to prove the nonexistence of other subjectivities. At least, any attempt to do so always recoils into the precedence of human subjectivity as the principal determination. It is this problem, then, that this book presents as intrinsic, not to the nature of what it means to be human, but within nature as the possibility to determine, define and divide.

It is the reflexive task of philosophy to unravel the meaning of words and things, to use language to define the use of language itself. Ancient Greek philosophy began as a play on words, a kind of game that illustrated philologically the relations between words and things, their meanings and non-meanings, and evolved into the Aristotelian project of definition and determination. Such a project may have become speculative but its origins are deeply embedded in the bedrock of the archaic psyche. We could also turn this around and say that the archaic psyche was embedded deeply in bedrock. The coincidence between thought, language and rocks might not seem likely. However, it is exactly this essential and most substantial coincidence that I reveal both in the material traces of archaeology as well as the no less material remains of Aristotelian philosophy and Solonic law. In fact, it becomes increasingly apparent that it is impossible to think about anything in the absence of some kind of lithic term cementing our path along the boundaries of human and nonhuman conceptual, that is to say non-concrete, experience.

This study has to do exclusively with this lithic term. I approach these limits without any attempt to transcend them, transgress them or erase them, taking in solidarity an archaic example of a stone: this stone I call *horos* because this is what it calls itself. A boundary-stone found during the excavations of the ancient Athenian market-place enunciates itself and with an inscription takes upon itself the responsibility for providing limits. Retaining even into the Classical period the archaic spelling (when the letter eta represented the aspirant rather than the long vowel sound), this stone reads $\text{HOPOΣ EIMI TΕΣ ΑΓΟΡΑΣ}$, 'I am the boundary of the *agora*.' The Classical Athenian *agora*, the market-place, was demarcated by a number of these stones, which prohibited patricides and other criminals from entering the market-place. But they also prevented the activity of the market from leaving that sacred site. These stones thus demarcated the limits within which the work of the market was to take place, there where Athenians went about the unhindered task of exchanging, producing and reproducing verbal and more than verbal goods.

So, the *horos* stones demarcated the space of the *agora*, and it is believed that the *agora* took its name from the activities that were first conducted there, a space for the shared rituals of speaking (*agoreuein*) and the further tasks of more than linguistic exchange, of buying and selling (*agorazein*). As Socrates' presence there illustrates, the *agora* was a public space open to the redefinition of linguistic boundaries and questioning the value of words and other tangible and intangible goods. That questioning was based in and isolated within the same space as that committed to the exchange of goods, where measures and weights were brought into parallel with quantities of things, suggesting an (*unheimlich*) affinity between economics and philosophy. Both philosophy and exchange throw into question common values and, perhaps for that reason, were kept at a distance from domestic life, out of the household and its everyday activities, in a move that dissociated both tasks from their etymologically nested origins. There is a danger involved here, and the explanation of Marx might be well founded, although hypothetical, that exchange was first confined to the boundaries between tribes because of the risk of dissolving all communal bonds. The creation of a market-place within the confines of the ancient city may well be the first attack on the synergistic cohesion of the community.

Horos is a boundary-stone, a landmark, but it is also a term or definition, indicating a certain duration of time, a limit or boundary. It is also said to be a rule, a measure, an end or aim, the three terms of astrological measurement, notes of a musical scale, decree of a magistrate, and (apparently metaphorically) the boundary of a woman's mind. On top of, or rather underneath, this greater plurality of meanings, it is also the stone that marks a grave—gravestone. As this material monad embodying a plurality of linguistic configurations suggests, there is a vitality to this boundary that cannot be reduced to demarcating a separation between hostile territories. The *horos* defines and distinguishes, but that is precisely what the matter is with the word, and no matter how much we try to rub away the material connotations, its definition remains interminably solid, lithic, in fact. The *horos* cannot be read as choosing sides but does stand testament to our ability to distinguish between words and things, the human and the nonhuman. Nonetheless, when it comes to defining these things, us and itself, its own reflexivity confounds the attempt; the definition of *horos* cannot define the stone away out of presence, the stone is as vital to the *horos* as the word is to the definition of the boundary. It marks the differences that we read into the world, creating the distinction itself between the 'natural' and the human, while materialising the proof that this distinction is not in the least natural: or at least that what is natural in us, to read into stone something meaning more than base matter, creates the divide in nature and is exactly what determines us within and against the natural world while joining us to it inseparably.

The term 'nature' is conventionally proscriptive, describing all processes and beings other than the human and human creations. This book is structured around the distinction between the human and nature, between the human and nonhuman and describing the nonlinear history of this petrifyingly dualist construction. The irony is this: the presumption—that humanity alone raises the stone above its base materiality—is in fact the only basis for a theory of inanimate matter or a non-conscious cosmos. This division provides the framework for later economic developments based upon a non-synergistic or non-symbiotic relation with other beings, from bacteria, plants and animals to the gases that keep us alive and the geological formations that provide more than merely the substrate for life; today this is realised in the unbounded

utilisation of the nonhuman world and the indubitably vain attempts of subjecting it to total human control. It is also the mystical origin of the project of Western scientific rationalism. This is the dilemma of human culture: it is based upon the reading of an unwritten division from (human) nature. The *horos* is a Greek concept, and its power is maintained within societies whose fundamental political and economic structures derive or in some significant way have been influenced by that specific heritage. That said, given that both the political form of democracy and the economic as a public structure of the unequal organisation of wealth are now exported worldwide, there is an expanding sense of importance in putting into question this unconscious rule of *horos*.

Foucault argued that there are rules—conceptual rules—common to different cultural practices and scientific disciplines, that work unconsciously to direct the many different fields toward their different goals as a ‘positive unconscious of knowledge.’² I suggest that *horos* is one of these rules. However, unlike Foucault’s rules that seem to be period-based, the *horos* is an economic rule, a rule fundamental to an entire form of economics grounded upon the unequal distribution of land and goods and unlimited natural recourse use. But it does not need to be this way. The *horos* could just as easily be an ecological rule resisting and rebutting the unbounded exploitation of the nonhuman as well as of the human.

This book is called an ecology both because its author would wish that our interactions with the lithic were less invasive, less aggressive, less consumptive and more involved and also because it has to do with the definitions that we use in order to build the possibly spectral house of human knowledge, culture and society. The presence of boundaries, from the material remains of ancient boundary-stones to the determinations in quantum physics, saturates the shared life of humans. Boundaries are placed, maintained and transgressed in order to facilitate the material practices and social theories through which we divide the world into a plethora of categories, not the least being that of the ‘social’ and the ‘cultural, or ‘human’ and ‘nature.’ We require boundaries, in definitions or divisions, in order to make these categorical determinations. Ironically this also means that the boundaries must already exist as precedents to any subsequent determination. Does this mean they are

2 Foucault (2008) xi.

predetermined? And if they are predetermined, is meaning already inscribed within them? The main question that this book seeks to raise is whether boundaries exist in nature, but not in order to contrast natural with social boundaries or in any way privilege human ethics. Instead the intention is to draw attention to the human edifice of language and culture, the behemoth of our civilising project that has managed again and again to do away with any notion of boundaries (natural or human), including those that might limit industrial farming, land use and hyper-development, the biopolitical use of humans and animals, the corporate abuse of biopower, and the use of just about everything else as biofuel, not to mention all those rocks and minerals blasted into nonexistence in the search for precious rare earths required in electronics necessary to track, modify and manipulate further what it means to be human.

And yet a limit is out there, threateningly immanent though no less withdrawn than that vital distinction separating being and nonbeing or creation from extinction. Here our lives are lifted into the geological scale as if our inability to recognise boundaries in nature or limits in our own nature is obfuscated by a predetermined fate as inevitable as the wearing away of rocks by wind and water. No single actor can be held responsible for the market, for drawing up its limits, or opening them up. And yet a limit exists, and this limit names itself, declares a name for itself, and a place of belonging: 'I am the boundary of the market,' reads the stone. But it is read by us, and it is therefore us, the actors, who enter into the market place who read and are responsible for defending the limits and for expanding them, as much as we are the ones who inscribe the stone, read the stone and cross the boundary. The peculiarity of the ancient Athenian market-place as an exclusive site of exchange, of objects and money but also of words, culminates as the setting of Socratic dialogue. The danger the Athenians attributed to such activities is given as the cause for the erection of the stones upon its boundaries, while the activities themselves draw us to raise further questions about the notion of boundaries as such and the questionable subjectivity of this self-enunciating stone.

Horos means 'boundary,' but it is also a stone placed to mark a boundary. In a way, though, I'm not so interested in spatial boundaries that divide or demarcate two spaces opening them up to possession and the rights of the owner, nor even the piece of land they foreclose. What

I'm more interested in is the stone itself, both as matter and marker, and as obscuring the presence of a natural (human) marker. The intimacy of human culture with stone might be everywhere apparent, and yet studies into stone from a literary perspective are few. Two notable examples are the similarly titled John Sallis's *Stone* and Jeffery Cohen's *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman*. Both these works address the stone as something worth considering in its own right. Sallis takes up the stone in its sculpted form to investigate the sense of the sublime in stone, and in so doing he writes a philosophy of the cultural history and aesthetics of stone chiefly in art and architecture. Cohen is interested in the wide uses, practical but also literary, of stone during the Middle Ages in Europe. As the title suggests I would like to position my study in dialogue with Cohen's epic work. My topic might precede his chronologically, but it certainly follows his thematically. Luckily for me, neither Cohen nor Sallis take up the particular example of the stone *horos*. So, I hope that this work on the *horos* will be a useful addition to this as yet small lapidary field. If nothing else it should raise the problem of the *horos* and its relevance in the field of ancient economics and political philosophy.

In the tradition of apophatic theology, I begin by introducing this book in the negative, by what it is not. It is not a historical study, nor a philological or philosophical study. This book takes place on the boundary between literary criticism, social theory, classical studies and archaeology. Based on interpretations of Ancient Greek texts about terms and definitions and archaeological remains of boundaries, it remains within the margins of Ancient Greek society, though the only reason I am interested in these margins is because of the play of their absence/presence today. So, my perspective on these ancient phenomena is undisguisedly modern, though I hope for all that it is also a little untimely too. In addressing the problem of meaning and matter, or the matter of meaning, I have taken a cue from Karen Barad, who manages to reconfigure quantum entanglements and physical-semiotic relations in a way that I believe strongly resembles the problem raised (or founded) in the *horos*. Jane Bennett, Carolyn Merchant and Val Plumwood also significantly figure as theorists who provide me with alternative bases upon which to think through human relations with 'nature' and the material world. Finally, Jacques Derrida remains as always on the margins of the text, if only because he, with Levinas's

assistance, framed a theory of hospitality that I believe to be essential when considering relations not only with humans in particular but also with the earth, mother of all hosts. If anywhere, the boundary is where friendship and the welcome given to the stranger (*philoxenia*) are at home. There might be something methodologically strange about this interweaving between modern and ancient conceptualisations of boundaries and matter and meaning. However, I would argue that a certain strangeness—even a lack of homeliness—is essential in order to remain with the boundary while simultaneously presenting this stone as the core that has remained with us, without remark and unnoticed since the introduction of philosophy into the central market of Athens.

The reader may, I fear, feel a certain disillusionment at the swinging timescale in the following pages. This, however, can be accounted for by the scarcity of early texts and the need to speculate upon changes that preceded the events described by later sources. On the other hand, no epoch exists in a vacuum, neither our own, nor that of the first few centuries of written history. Human activity is not only judged by reference to the present and the past alone but also by reference to the future. Therefore, it is as natural to look forward in order to look back as it is to look back in order to look forward. As Walter Benjamin stated, ‘nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost to history.’³ However, that does not mean that what is lost is overtly apparent in the present; rather, the task is to recognise what history, and its authors, have allowed and are in the process of allowing to slip away or leave concealed under thick layers of progressively more forceful interpretations. In my view, history is a significant factor in the composition of authority, and so for the authoritarian regime that we inhabit today to change, history itself must change, dominated as we are by market-based economics and a profitable version of the past as of the present sold to us in order to keep us from resisting.

To find a well-grounded site from which to rebel has always been a challenge, as the first thing dominant forces do when they assume power is to saturate the field, appropriate the land, and devitalise antagonistic elements. The battle is situated; it is over the earth itself and material gains as much as who has the power to enforce a translation of what that matter means. The catastrophic forces of the present can

3 Benjamin thesis III, in Löwy (2005) 34.

only be averted from a solid foundation, a grounded theory of the limit, fighting for the presence of boundaries in human economic and technological expansion, in antithesis to the prevailing powers that seek to manipulate the biological and geological foundations of life on earth (biometrics and terraforming). Present economies, no longer subject to the old state or ethnic borders, are all equally enslaved to the corporate interests of big tech and demand the highest price both of the human and the nonhuman, from the increasing presence of biotechnology in the facilitation and control of human activities to the exorbitant mineral demand these technologies make upon the surface of the earth. This means that to be a human embedded in the world and to take back our intra-active relation with other beings and things, we must take back our minds and bodies, free them from the technologies that seek to bind them within the limits of corporate and state control and demand the cessation of mining, deforestation, and the uses and abuses of organic beings.

To do this it may well be necessary to outsmart the very devices that control our slavish devotion to the system and discard the habitual and insidious technologies that have insinuated themselves into our lives. It might not be easy to realise these limits, but the alternative is unadulterated totalitarian dystopia. The trends in post-humanism and, of course, trans-humanism, to expand bodily boundaries into apparatuses fail to stress the negative impact such apparatuses might have on the environment and on human dignity.⁴ The smartphone user might feel at one with her device and revel in the extension of her bodily boundaries to encapsulate this fantastic expansion of her senses, but she turns a blind eye to the mountainside exploded in search of metal or the bushland concreted over to provide a basis for the turbines necessary to charge it, not to mention the fact that every thought, every move she makes is subject to scrutiny. We are all implicated in the expansion of boundaries, and whether this is doing harm to us and the world we live in should be a subject not only of serious debate but should be reason enough to modify our thought, behaviour and limits of consumption. In any case our behaviour will be modified one way or the other, whether we like it or not. Biotechnological companies are keen to sell us products that expand the boundaries of consumption into

4 Barad (2007) 153ff.

previously untapped natural resources (including the modification of humanity itself), but ecological devastation (regardless of the colour of the flag flying over the military-industrial complex) will evidently enforce its own boundaries in any number of predictable and as yet unforeseen ways. Both alternatives will come to pass if we are too lazy to discover boundaries for ourselves, and the window of opportunity where we have the choice to change this future is becoming smaller day by day. The only alternative vision I can see that will in any way alleviate the decimation of humans, nature and human nature is by doing away with the belief in and exercise of false boundaries enforced by the power nexus of state, big tech and corporate wealth in order to include us as living beings within a world constituted by the vitality of interactions between all things.

The following chapters each riff upon different lexical meanings or translations of the word *horos* and provide a discussion centring around different examples of the word, whether in the archaeological record or in classical texts. Chapter One ('A New Ancient Petrography') provides an overview of the *horos* as it appears in the archaeological record and textual tradition. Given that the definition of its verbal cognate is 'to determine, divide, define,' it is suggested that this division is in the heart of language itself. Boundary markers must be read or interpreted as such, implying that the boundary is not a reductively material thing but is something dependent upon us, inside of us. Whatever it was that led us to create boundaries—to make distinctions—also bound us to our linguistic distinctions. This is what a materialist disposition would describe us as: the inscribers, the plinth-builders. The *horos*, at once stone and term, raises the problem of the boundary between nature and human, between worked stone and natural stone. This problem comes down to us in our distinctions of the physical world. In the absence of a demiurge, matter is supposed to be without meaning, and this is the basis for scientific rationalism. However, even the distinction between meaning and matter relies upon a conceptual acceptance that the boundary between the two is in some way naturally given. This chapter raises the problem of such distinctions and claims that any attempt to define humans as separate to everything else always ends up back at the coincidence of word and stone.

Chapter Two ('Does the Letter Matter?'), taking the definition 'boundary, landmark[...]pillar (whether inscribed or not)' as its starting point, returns to the earliest examples of the *horos* in the archaeological record. Here I confront the Derridean problem of writing as origin. Even if the stone was not marked with the word for boundary (*horos*), it does not cease to be a boundary because it was nonetheless read as a boundary. Therefore, I turn to the lexicons to discover how the Greeks themselves defined the *horos*. The result is twofold, like the boundary; a definition of the word must accept the *horos* as the boundary of writing and reading. It is always inferred in any act of reading because there must be something, whether the inscribed word or the natural rock, for us to read. *Horos* proliferates from the rock into our definitions of what words mean, and it always remains as the solid foundation of these works of 'definition.' It is the difference and bond that is co-terminal with language as such but does not for all that lose its base materiality as stone.

Chapter Three ('Breaking the Law') considers the legal implications of the *horos*, taking the meaning 'bounds, boundaries.' The regions that are thus separated are given definition by the boundary and exist as different spaces on account of the boundary but also share something in common: the boundary itself. I return to earlier examples of the boundary-stone in the Hebraic and Greek Biblical tradition, where variations of the *horos* appear repeatedly and ask the question as to why boundary-stones in the Old Testament required the double enforcement both as stone placed upon the land and as prohibition in the written text. The problem of legality is raised and followed into the work of Plato's *Laws*, where the first law is given as the prohibition against the removal of the boundary-stone. In these textual traditions, the prohibition that is to follow upon the *horos* implies that something has been lost from the base materiality, the bare presence of the stone, and this loss is exactly what supports the force of law. The final knife-twist in the letter of the law is described by a leap into the ephebic military service performed upon the boundaries of Attica, where failure to swear allegiance to the *horoi* meant exile from the Athenian city and its institutions.

The problem of determinate definition was assumed by Hegel and Heidegger but has been the problem for philosophy ever since Aristotle defined finding the 'essence' or being of something as the task of

philosophy. The problem is always a terminological one, but we have inherited it also as a problem of translation. This problem belongs to the *horos*, the question of definition and the necessary overlap between words in both metonymy and metaphor. Chapter Four ('Terminological Horizons') focuses upon the translation of *horos* as 'term,' 'definition,' 'determination,' a sense of the word that is outlined by Aristotle in his *Topics* and *Categories* where he provides a definition of *horos* as the word that means 'what it is to be.' If *horos* (here 'definition') is a word that signifies the being of a thing, is it itself retained within the definition of a word even if in the form of a trace of this lithic term? Although the *horos* as 'definition' remains essential within the tradition of Western philosophy, its material presence has been confounded in the attempts at absolute conceptualisation and transcendental reasoning. That said, we do get a brief and telling glimpse of it in the preface to Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Its echo remains also in the work of Heidegger, inherited from Husserl, as that which frames our position in the world, as the 'horizon,' verbal cognate of the *horos*.

In Chapter Five ('The Presence of the Lithic') I illustrate the indebtedness of the conceptual structure and language of the geologic timescale to the Aristotelian formulation of time. I do not do this to assert that there is a debt modern thought owes to ancient thought but rather to raise the possibility of the divisive nature of the question of time itself. In the geologic timescale, as in Aristotelian time, linearity is important but not unproblematic. How the measurement of time is conceptualised both in geologic and in Aristotelian 'time' raises the problem of division in a continuum, or how to break time down into measurable units. For Aristotle the 'now' is the term distinguishing the past from the future, brought into alignment with the figure of the *horos*. Does this temporal boundary still retain a trace of stone? The stone is not only instrumental but also essential to the divisions of geologic time; it is simultaneously the tool and the unit of measure. Here, too, stone is read by us, and it is believed that it can tell us something determinate about the past, something at once concrete and abstract. That stone is given as a figure of the unit of time, interpreted as an indicator of time past, must alert us that the dynamics of existence are always read in material configurations which, as in the geological diagnostic of the Anthropocene, implicate a notion of human conjectural and material hegemony.

In Chapter Six ('Geophilia Entombed or the Boundaries of a Woman's Mind') I return once again to the archaeological record to discover the material remains of the *horos*. *Horos* was also inscribed upon the gravestone, a reminder for the living of this most basic of boundaries. Even here a limit remains, for it is only in our translation of the stone into a memorial that conjures up the ghost of the dead. With a study of ancient drama and the role burial rites play in the signification of death, I discover another aspect of the *horos*. Burial rites have long been associated exclusively with Sophocles' *Antigone* and the conflict between two different regimes of justice. *Horos* is what remains as the trace of our division from nature, and it also marks the futility of this division since we must all and without exception inevitably find a home for ourselves in the earth, inevitably engraving us all in a common fate. In this guise, the *horos* describes the boundary between the human and the organic world but is also dependent, in the archaic period in particular, on a reciprocal relationship between the living and the dead: I call this the economics of death.

The final chapter ('Solon's Petromorphic Biopolitics') resolves the former discussions on the *horos* by looking at one last meaning, 'decision of a magistrate.' The law-reformer Solon is famous for an act called the *seisachtheia*, where he was said to have relieved the earth from her burdens and freed men who were enslaved. The burdens he claims to have raised were none other than *horos*-stones. With the reforms of Solon, the web of meanings that the *horos* seems to have bound begins to unravel, and yet the word itself does not lose its multiplicity. Solon brings an end to a period of civil war and inaugurates an epoch that ensured the productivity of its citizens, limited their ease of movement, and opened the way to the eventual dominance of the market and its persuasive reasoning. He did so by claiming for himself the middle position: in his own words he stood as a *horos* in the midst of the people. I argue that this created a fracture in the traditions of Athens, disrupting the household and the place of women and their command over reproduction and production, generating, in contrast, a society based upon a centralised political economy. The novelty of this claim is in the idea of biological productivity as a regulative device within Athenian legal discourse. Therefore, I return to the first example of the *horos*, found in the Athenian *agora*, which marks this

space for the exclusive valuation of words and things and where the work of exchange can go on because responsibility for the space that it encloses has been deferred. The argument draws to a close with the question of the reiteration of such boundaries and the need to reassert our communal life with things.



Fig. 1. Η ΟΡΟΣ ΕΙΜΙ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΟΡΑΣ 'I am the *horos* of the *agora*', IG I³ 1087 [I 5510].
Photograph by M. Goutsourela, 2013. Rights belong to The Athenian Agora
Museum © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Hellenic Organization
of Cultural Resources Development (H.O.C.R.E.D.)

1. A New Ancient Petrography

ὀρίζω-divide or separate from, as a border or boundary, separate, delimit, 2. bound, 3. pass between or through, 4. part, divide.

II. mark out by boundaries, limit one thing according to another. 2. trace out as boundary. III. ordain, determine, lay down. 2. define a thing.

IV. Med., mark out for oneself, 2. determine for oneself, get or have a thing determined. 3. define a thing.¹

Define- 1. To bring to an end. 2. To determine the boundary or limits of. b. To make definite in outline or form. †3. To limit, confine. 4. To lay down definitely. †5. To state precisely. 6. To set forth the essential nature of. b. To set forth what (a word etc.) means. 7. transf. To make (a thing) what it is; to characterise. 8. To separate by definition.²

The ritual significance of the placement and shaping of stone is not uncommon in prehistoric cultures and ancient societies, some of these traditions even continuing into the present. From diverse countries with lithic arrangements ranging in scope and size, any number come to mind: for example, the enormous stone heads of Easter Island, the stone lines of the Aboriginal Australians, the megaliths of the Celts, the stone of Mecca, the obelisks of Egypt and the cute little Mesoamerican mushroom stones. In Greece there was the *omphalos* stone of Apollo at Delphi and of course all those stone altars and statues of gods. However, there were also the rather more discreet *horoi*, pretty much limited in range to Athens, Attica and its closest neighbours. Not unlike the stone arrangements found in many other countries and cultures, these were said to be boundary markers of one type or another.

The problem as to whether the site of the boundary can actually be said to be a place, natural or otherwise, is posed and deposed in the double gesture by which the stone assumes or vacates the position. Are these

1 LS: 1250.

2 OED: Onions (1962) 470.

boundaries permanent, do they describe natural boundaries or human boundaries, is their removal punishable, and is their transgression permitted? For example, the erection of the pyramids is attributed both to a mysterious, alien or divine intervention and to the weathered hands of an extensive human labour force, slave or skilled, and yet the stone, presumably, remains the same.³ And while the cobblestones lining the streets of Paris were torn up to aid the indomitable march of modernisation facilitating automobile speed and military access to the inner city, they were also raised in the name of the revolution, grasped at as material for the barricades or simply thrown in desperation against the armed forces. We should not dismiss as accident that this most solid and elementary material finds its place on the threshold between substantiality and insubstantiality, between life and death, comrade and enemy. Nor is it mere chance that the placement and displacement of the stone is characterised by a double gesture, of divinity and labour, construction and destruction.

I consider this a work of vital materialism, as phrased by Bennett, that nonetheless retains the problem of human subjectivity in the question of the boundary that would divide humans from other beings, other matter, and other objects with which we cohabit.⁴ I argue that any concept of the human is always already caught up in the aporetic structure of the meaning of stone or the matter of meaning. As Barad presented, matter is involved in a two-way creation of meaning, or even a plurality of involved meaning generating relations, where 'distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action.'⁵ This entanglement of agencies, taking place for Barad upon the more epistemologically advanced plane of quantum physics, here can be seen to involve similar players and a similar vocabulary. Barad argues that 'the primary ontological unit is not independent objects with independently determinate boundaries and properties,' but rather 'phenomena' that are defined as 'the *ontological* inseparability of agentially intra-acting components.'⁶ It seems to me that from the *horos*, found as it is in its various contexts, material, textual and conceptual, it is possible to infer

3 Dio.Sic.64; Hdt.2.125; Fodor (1970) 335–363.

4 Bennett (2010) ix.

5 Barad (2007) 33.

6 Ibid. (original italics).

this intra-activity taking place both on the surface of the earth as well as in the minds of humans. This suggests to me that boundary-generating practices are inseparably material and conceptual so that ontology itself is caught up in this aporetic self-referentiality when it calls for the metaphysical independence of determinate boundaries. And no matter how much it tries it always defers to the definition, which in turn defers to the stone and back again to the boundary, in a cyclical dance between the constructs of meaning and materiality.

I elaborate this problem through the coincidence, the literal nexus of stone—boundary—writing. To say that matter is vital does not mean anthropomorphising the organisms and non-organisms, the stones, trees, and bacteria that share our world; rather, for me it means the necessary destabilising of the boundaries between the human and nonhuman and recognising dignity as something that inheres to all things; whether this is done via biology (reinhabiting the human with the microbiome etc), via ecopolitics (recognising the equal distribution of natural resources and the dignity of all beings) or, as is the case here through an intersection of the archaeological, via the ecological and, believe it or not, the classical. The stone that is the subject of this book is the very boundary that suggests the differences and commonalities between these different modes of being.

In this chapter I begin by providing an overview of the *horoi* in the archaeological record, the actual extant stones with a brief introduction to the translation of their inscriptions. Next, I present a brief excursion into the presence of *horoi* in the literary corpus, followed by a speculative discussion about their meaning and significance, both for the early archaic period as for today. Finally, this chapter presents an overview of how we comport ourselves ontologically in relation to the nonhuman and how two figures tend to surface (definition and stone) whenever the distinctions between our categories look precariously close to collapsing, breaking up or falling down.

Raising the Stakes

In the surrounds of the ancient Athenian polis, boundary-stones proliferated. Today, in the museums of Athens (and the gardens of the French School of Archaeology), examples of these stones can still be

found if you look for them. One of these, found *in situ* east of the tholos and at the edge of the *agora*, legibly presents itself: HOPOΣ EIMI TEΣ AΓOPΑΣ, 'I am the boundary-stone of the agora.'⁷ The inscription of this stone is conservatively dated to the beginning of the fifth century BC.⁸ The unearthing of a number of other stones (and one with exactly the same inscription in retrograde) reinforced the notion that these were the remainders of an outline in stone, designating the boundaries of the *agora*, market-place, and marking off the area within as devoted to the activities of exchange and public speaking. Certain acts such as those that meant a person was deemed *atimos* (without honour) excluded people from the right to enter the *agora*, for example patricides and murderers were not permitted entry to the *agora*.⁹ However, there were also activities that were not permitted within the *agora*. Diogenes Laertius tells a story about the controversial cynic Diogenes of Sinope eating within the bounds of the *agora*.¹⁰ The implication is that it was not accepted to eat in the *agora*, though this may have been more a matter of custom rather than law. While it is known that the boundaries of the *agora* were for keeping certain actors and actions out, I think it is also worth looking at it the other way around, as boundaries meant for keeping certain activities in. If this is nothing more than a hunch on my part, it is nonetheless a hunch that Karl Marx also entertained as a significant factor in the rise of the capitalist economy and the dissolution of social bonds.

Marx was adamant that the original, or at least the earlier location of exchange was marginal. In *Capital* he states that 'the exchange of commodities begins where communities have their boundaries, at their points of contact with other communities, or with members of the latter. However, as soon as products have become commodities in the external relations of a community, they also by reaction, become commodities in

7 Epigraphic collections of horoi consulted beyond the field: Gerald Lalonde ed. et al. *Inscriptions: Horoi, Poleitai Records, Leases of Public Land* (1991); David Lewis and Lilian Jeffrey, 'Inscriptiones Atticae' in *IG* (1994); Lalonde, *Horos Dios* (2006); 'Horoi: Studies in Mortgage, Real Security and Land Tenure in Ancient Athens' *Fine* (1951).

8 Lalonde (1991) 5–7.

9 *And.Myst.*1.76.

10 Ὀνειδιζόμενός ποτε ὅτι ἐν ἀγορᾷ ἔφαγεν, "ἐν ἀγορᾷ γάρ," ἔφη, "καὶ ἐπείνησα." 'When he was upbraided for eating in the agora he replied "I was in the agora and I was hungry."' *Diog. Laert.* IV.58.

the internal life of a community.¹¹ Again, in the *Grundrisse*, he says that 'money and the exchange which determines it play little or no role within the individual communities, but only on their boundaries, in traffic with others.'¹² And, in his *A Contribution to Political Philosophy*, he elaborates further and comes to the conclusion that exchange has a negative effect when it acts from within the community: 'in fact, the exchange of commodities evolves originally not within primitive communities, but on their margins, on their borders, the few points where they come into contact with other communities. This is where barter begins and moves thence into the interior of the community, exerting a disintegrating influence upon it.'¹³

The question that Marx would not entertain, however, is whether it is the interiorisation of the processes of exchange that spawns the community's dissolution or the preternatural force of the boundary itself. If the boundary and exchange are not in fact separate concepts, but two inseparable aspects of the one idea, then perhaps it is not only the presence of exchange that divides a community but the notion itself of division particularly as it is found in exchange, valuation and measurement, figured by the internalisation of the boundary. Perhaps this divisive presence in the heart of the city is what provokes a kind of consumptive sickness. Since the boundaries were, for the Greeks, always a site of mortal danger, of the transgression of the categories of mortal, immortal, wild and monstrous (where youths were sent out to perform their military service and return, having shaken off the savage instincts of childhood), perhaps exchange (transformation and instability of form) enters with the boundary, bringing with it a flux that the city must henceforth address and attempt to reform into a stable and solid representation. Perhaps the stone performed this sacred task, a kind of sacrificial host to the material, though not itself endowed with the sacred. The *horos* of the *agora* can be seen to provide the twofold work of restricting the dangerous and transgressive forces of the market, while simultaneously permitting and maintaining its presence. That this movement is double finds its complement in the duplicity of the limit itself. When it comes to surplus value, therefore, there is a unity

11 Marx (1990) 182.

12 Marx (1981) 103.

13 Marx (1904) 50.

of its production and of its realisation, as a process that requires an ever-increasing margin of circulation. Here too 'the limit is double, or rather the same regarded from both directions' and 'every limit appears as a barrier to be overcome.'¹⁴ The overcoming of limits precedes the formal capitalist economy, being already present in the boundary as such, from its first representation within the city. It is this process that is twofold—the circulation and exchange of surplus value requires the continual enlargement of the 'periphery of circulation,' accompanied by 'the complementary tendency to create more points of exchange.'¹⁵

However, the result of this internalisation of the boundary and exchange into the city is not only economic, it is political but it also drives to the heart of social relations as well as relations with the nonhuman, reframing the world around the market as fat with objects, things and living beings for consumption, for use, to buy and to sell. Max Weber stated that 'not every stone can serve as a fetish, a source of magical power.'¹⁶ He then suggested the employment of the word *charisma* to explain the phenomenon of a naturally endowed or artificially produced extraordinary power that inheres to an object or person.¹⁷ The word *charisma* and its cognates (χάρισμα, χάρις, Χαρίτες) takes us back with a quantum leap to the archaic *polis*, where the reciprocity of the gift (*charis*) described an entire system of relations in which exchange was not measured according to a reciprocal valuation of abstract worth but was rather based upon the maintenance of a mutual relationship.¹⁸ Does this mean that we can draw the conclusion that there is some kind of elusive link between relationships of mutuality and reciprocity and the vitality of objects, or the meaningfulness of matter? Is it possible that non-evaluative relations permit revelations of vibrant matter simply because their worth is not measured in terms of economic function but according to totally different, even disparate systems of belief? If this is the case, I find it intriguing to imagine that stone has within it an inherent power to divide and define the 'gift' of the boundary. To whom does this gift speak? Is it given to us or to the stone?

14 Grundrisse (1981) 408–415.

15 Ibid.

16 Weber (1978) 400.

17 McNeill (2021) 19–20.

18 Seaford (2003) 18.

Horos means 'boundary-stone,' but it also just means 'boundary.' This boundary prompts a great many questions that themselves seem to reflect upon the questionable nature of the boundary, asking what magic power is this that causes matter to move thought? What is this relation between matter and meaning given to us in flimsy conceptualisations but weighed down by stone? Can we separate the substance of the stone from the boundary or the inscription and the word from the stone? Without the inscription how can we tell a boundary-stone from any old stone? Without the stone marker, does the boundary remain nonetheless? And if so, if we read *horos* in the stone even without the inscription, where is the boundary inscribed, if not in us? Before writing, before difference there must be a mark. But must there not also be a marker? And yet the whole significance of this stone is that it assumes for itself the task of marking. It names itself, it is read, and takes on itself the responsibility of the writer by putting in question what was there before this mark and limit, before we could read the stone's self-declaration, before the stone assumed itself as the subject of the verb 'to be.' This is a lithic act of self identification, it is not a sign on the boundary or marking the boundary, but the stone itself declaring 'I am the boundary.'

And yet, despite this enunciative 'I am,' the *horos* does not cease to remain brute matter. In the archaeological record, this stone speaks from silence: it is *horos* before the inscription, before the adoption of script. It is not necessarily carved, let alone inscribed, and yet it can still be read. With or without letters the *horos* speaks to us and we read it. And yet, it could never have inscribed itself. If the boundary can be read even in the absence of an inscription is the boundary inscribed not only upon the land but also in us? We are implicated in this act of writing, even when we read what the stone already says. The stone therefore stands as the limit of our agency, between nature and human; mere thing and object for use; between our willingness to give definition to the land, the world and ourselves, and the project of definition that allows us to continue questioning these definitions. So, my task here is to return to the stone that is not under construction, not placed to support us, to be consumed or used, but is also no longer merely a thing or natural object. This example of a stone took upon itself the necessity of providing a limit and a definition by enunciating itself and allowing its marker to recede into the task of continual production, of speaking and re-producing

without limits. As inscription and stone it could do this by marking our separation or division from nature and from our nature, providing the solid basis upon which the question of the origin of human culture could be deferred interminably.

Vital Matter

The earliest known example of a boundary-stone in Athens is an inscription upon a substrate rock dating to the seventh century BC. Usually hidden under grass, it can be easily missed. It bears the retrograde inscription *HOPOΣ ΔΙΟΣ* (*horos* of Zeus) and marked the temple lands devoted to Zeus below the Athenian Pnyx.¹⁹ The rock itself is in no way shaped or carved but retains its natural contours except for the surface, barely discernibly smoothed to support the inscription. There are many other examples of *horoi* marking the site of temple lands.²⁰ Later examples of *horoi* are those from the Athenian agora carved in the mid-sixth century BC. These are tall, upright rectangular plinths engraved with the phrase *HOPOΣ ΕΙΜΙ ΤΕΣ ΑΓΟΡΑΣ*, ‘I am the boundary of the market’.²¹ Then there are *horoi* that are placed along roads to divide counties, which can be tall steles or smaller and set lower to the ground, for example the one that marked the ritually important road to Eleusis.²² There are gravestone *horoi*, which stand tall and slim, inscribed *HOPOΣ ΣΗΜΑΤΟΣ* or *HOPOΣ ΜΝΗΜΑΤΟΣ*, with some variations thereof.²³ These are a little stranger to translate, and they prove that the multifaceted meaning of the word *horos*, as ‘boundary of sign’ and ‘boundary of memory’ does not cut it. Finally, there are *horoi* from the fourth century BC (on the later side of this study) that marked private lands encumbered with a mortgage and about which Moses Finley speculated.²⁴ These *horoi* were much smaller, about the size of a brick, and were inscribed, despite the changes that

19 IG I³ 1055A and B. Lalonde (2006).

20 See for example, *hópos to teménos*, IG I³ 1068; *hópos hiero* 1071, 1075; *hópos teménos Athénaias* 1082.

21 IG I³ 1087, 1088, 1089, 1090. Lewis and Jeffrey (1994) 711–712, 1087–1090; Lalonde (1991) H26 [1 7039].

22 IG I³ 1095, 1096.

23 IG I³ 1132, 1134, 1137.

24 Finley (1952).

had by that time occurred in the orthography of Greek, with the archaic word *HOPOS*. These are all examples of *horoi* from the archaeological record.

However, it is worth noting that this is not even half the story, as the archaeological record would be seriously lacking in charm and intrigue if it were not accompanied by a fabulously rich textual tradition. So, throughout this study the apparently more definitive archaeological finds will be considered in the same breath as the rich gems of textual analysis. Here I simply list some of these references in order to give readers a sense of the *horos* in its various uses. I also apologise in advance to anyone without a knowledge of Greek not because I do not provide an adequate translation but because there will be times wordplay may be lost. I try to compensate by always flagging the use of the word *horos* in the English translation, placing the word in brackets beside the various translations of the term, which differ according to context.

The earliest references to the *horos* in the textual tradition are in the Homeric epic, the *Iliad*.

ἦ δ' ἀναχασσαμένη λίθον εἴλετο χειρὶ παχείῃ
 κείμενον ἐν πεδίῳ μέλανα τρηχύν τε μέγαν τε,
 τὸν ῥ' ἄνδρες πρότεροι θέσαν ἔμμεναι οὔρον ἀρούρης·
 τῷ βάλε θοῦρον Ἄρηα κατ' ἀυχένα, λῦσε δὲ γυῖα.

But she [Athena] gave ground, and seized with her stout hand a stone that lay upon the plain, black and jagged and great, that men of former days had set to be the boundary-mark [*ouron*] of a field. Therewith she smote furious Ares on the neck, and loosed his limbs.²⁵

Again in the *Iliad* the boundary-stone is raised as a point of contention, in a simile for the walls of Troia.

ἀλλ' ὥς τ' ἀμφ' οὔροισι δῦ' ἀνέρε δηριάσασθον
 μέτρ' ἐν χερσὶν ἔχοντες ἐπιζύνω ἐν ἀρούρῃ,
 ὧ τ' ὀλίγῳ ἐνὶ χώρῳ ἐρίζητον περὶ ἴσης,
 ὥς ἄρα τοὺς διέεργον ἐπάλξεις.²⁶

But as two men with measuring-rods in hand contend about the landmark stones [*houroisi*] in a common field, and in a narrow space contend each for his equal share, so did the battlements hold these foes apart.

25 Hom.*Il.*21.400–411. tr. Murray.

26 Hom.*Il.*12.417–426. tr. Murray.

In this example the *horoi* take a different form, given in the epic plural *ouroun/ouroisi* (οὐρον/οὔροις). This form is unusual and will not be the form that appears throughout further discussion. Generally, I will use the transliteration *horos* or plural *horoi*. I will also not parse the English word according to its form within the original Greek text, unless it reveals something particular that I wish to draw attention to, though I will provide the verbal form if a verbal cognate of the word is being used. Otherwise, I will exclusively use the word *horos* to show that some form of this word appears in the original Greek text.

References to the *horoi* are also found in the Septuagint, for example, μη μέταιρε ὄρια ἀνὼν ἃ ἔθεντο οἱ πατέρες σου, ‘remove not the ancient landmark, which thy *fathers* have set.’²⁷ This seemingly ancient command is repeated in Plato’s *Laws*.

Διὸς ὀρίου μὲν πρῶτος νόμος ὁδε εἰρήσθω· μὴ κινεῖτω γῆς ὄρια
μηδεὶς μήτε οἰκείου πολίτου γείτονος μήτε ὁμοτέρμονος ἐπ’ ἐσχατίας
κεκτημένος ἄλλω ξένῳ γειτονῶν.²⁸

The first law, that of *Horos Zeus* shall be stated thus: do not move earth’s *horoi*, whether they be those of a neighbour who is a native citizen or those of a foreigner with land on a frontier.

I have not found any particular reference to *Horos Zeus* outside this text of Plato, though that is not to say he does not exist. The *Horos Dios* from the Pnyx has the name of Zeus in the genitive, meaning that it was a *horos* ‘of Zeus’ rather than pointing to *Horos* as one of the epithets of Zeus. A reference to the word *horos* untainted by divinity can be found in the pseudo-Platonic work, aptly named, *Definitions*: ὁρος λόγος ἐκ διαφορᾶς καὶ γένους συγκείμενος, ‘*horos* is word composed of difference and genus.’²⁹ After Plato, Aristotle uses the verbal form of *horos* in his following explanation. He states that the ‘essence,’ the τί ἐστι (whatever that is) of things must be sought and defined, ‘*horizesthai*’ (ζητεῖν καὶ ὀρίζεσθαι) in relation to matter, or at least not without matter (μὴ ἄνευ τῆς ὕλης).³⁰ In his physical, metaphysical and logical corpus *horos* is singly important for Aristotle in coming to terms with words. He uses the word in the same way we would use the word ‘term’ in logic,

²⁷ Prov.22:28.

²⁸ Pl.*Laws*.843A-B.

²⁹ Pl.*Def*.414d10 in Plato (1972).

³⁰ Ar.*Met*.1026a1–5.

or ‘definition’ when talking about what a word means. Significantly, the word *horos* appears in close proximity to Aristotle’s definition for Being. In the *Metaphysics* he states that ‘being is the only or main definition [*horos*] of beingness’ (ἡ μόνον οὐσίας εἶναι ὄρον ἢ μάλιστα).³¹ In what should be one of his most well-known phrases, ‘a definition [*horos*] is a phrase signifying what it is to be’ (ἔστι δ ὁρος μὲν λόγος ὃ τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι σημαίνων), the *horos* plays a not insignificant role, though exactly what it signifies will be discussed later.³² In the *Physics* Aristotle uses the word *horos* as the point of difference in a temporal sense: ‘coming to be and passing away are the terms (*horoi*) of being and not being’ (γενέσει μὲν καὶ φθορᾷ τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν ὅροι).³³ Again in a temporal sense he concludes that ‘the now is the limit [*horos*] of the past and the future’ (τὸ δὲ νῦν ὄρος τοῦ παρήκοντος καὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος).³⁴

It is worth noting one final reference in order to bring the *horos* into the political sphere. This is quoted in the work outlining the constitution of the city-state of Athens attributed to pseudo-Aristotle (hence called simply Aristotle for ease or perhaps laziness, though whenever we read ancient texts we should take authorship *cum grano salis*).³⁵ It is a piece of poetry, oddly enough, from one of the city’s first statesmen. Solon was a political figure who rose to fame by dramatically altering the laws of Athens in order, as he claims, to bring an end to a state of civil war amongst the city’s people. Using the opportunity of this state of exception (as do politicians today) he introduced many laws that apparently have nothing to do with the immediate problems, for example his laws forbidding women to travel with more than a certain number of garments or to carry more than a minimal amount of money on their person. He also limited the exuberant tendencies of the Athenians to mourn extended family members and maintain these rituals for long periods of time. But what he is most famous for doing is known as his *seisachtheia*. Though there are few exact details about this, it was supposedly an act he brought in that stopped Athenians from indebting their own persons into positions of slavery. So, what Solon claims to have done was to have lifted up the *horos* stones that were markers upon

31 Ar.Met.1039a21. See Chapter Four on terms and translating *ousia*.

32 Ar.Top.101b39. See Chapter Four.

33 Ar.Phys.261a34. See Chapter Five on *horos* and the ‘now’ in Aristotle’s *Physics*.

34 Ar.Phys.222b1.

35 Ar.Ath. See Chapter Six.

the land that signified the presence of a debt, or of an Athenian who was so enslaved, and therefore represented that there was a certain burden of debt restricting the property's use. However, as Chapter Six discusses, this interpretation misses quite a lot in the significance of Solon's poetry.

μήτηρ μεγίστη δαιμόνων Ὀλυμπίων
 ἄριστα, Γῇ μέλαινα, τῆς ἐγὼ πότε
 ὄρους ἀνεῖλον πολλαχῇ πεπηγότας,
 πρόσθεν δὲ δουλεύουσα, νῦν ἐλευθέρα.

The mighty mother of the Olympian gods,/Black Earth, would best bear witness, for 'twas I/Removed her many boundary-posts [*horous*] implanted:/Ere then she was a slave, but now is free.³⁶

These examples will be discussed separately in the following chapters. Here the point is that the word *horos* not only has many different meanings that complicate its direct translation into English but also that it was a significant word in its various contexts. As a word it always marked a point of difference, whether this is the turn in a battle scene, the distinction between words and things, between the past and the future, or between the free citizen and the slave. Some questions therefore must be asked about the nature of the *horos* itself, both as it appears in the archaeological and in the literary context. Can the literary use of the word be said to coincide in meaning with the material use of the stone as seen in the archaeological record? What do the different words have in common with the different stones? Is there a unifying idea and definition of the *horos*? What are its characteristics? Is lithic materiality as essential to the *horos* as the letters of the inscription? Is the boundary there even in the absence of the stone marker? Does the boundary not always slip away into either side in the absence of some kind of marker? And finally, what is this boundary, who is its original marker, and why and how does it and the space it demarcates come about? While this chapter attempts to resolve some of these questions, others flow into other chapters of the book and others still must remain as questions.

The use of *horoi* was not limited to one particular time period or any particular socio-political structure. They continued to be used from time immemorial, within the archaic period of the early *polis* (largely unknown, though we can speculate), through the classical period, and

³⁶ Ar.*Ath.*12.4–5. tr. Rackham.

on into the Hellenistic. Over this time the city of Athens transitioned from an aristocratically organised system of government, through civil war, to a democracy, back again, through war, into imperialism and so forth. So, although the use of *horoi* might have changed throughout various political upheavals it nonetheless remained as a relatively stable presence both upon the land and within the language of the Athenians. It is interesting to note that despite Athenian imperialism, *horos* stones came into common usage only in the region of Attica and are only rarely apparent elsewhere, even in places where Athenians exercised political control. That said, if boundary-stones differ so widely and do not even necessarily have the word for boundary inscribed upon them, how they were to be known or recognised as such and how we would know if they were used elsewhere in the absence of the inscription remain silent problems.

In this chapter the main problem is the matter of the boundary. This also poses problems of definition. What is the boundary, and who decides its limits? How does *horos* arise as a mark upon the land that is read by us, and how did this single term come to encapsulate both the materiality of stone and the more conjectural ideas of boundary, term, limit and so forth? Does the boundary precede the stone and the stone stand testament to the boundary? Is the stone as marker secondary to the boundary? If so, where did the boundary come from? Was it a natural phenomenon or a human creation? Did human thought make the leap into abstraction, conceptualising boundaries and limits that are not otherwise present in nature and then erect the stone as the tangible marker of these abstractions? Is the boundary-stone an idolatrous manifestation of the primitive philosophy of early humans? The fact that the *horos* keeps sending us back into questions is not a coincidence; rather, it is a coincidence in the absolute sense. But here in the archaic *polis* of Athens there is no such thing as ‘chance,’ because every time they questioned the origins and ends of their actions, the Athenians came face to face with stone and the original basis for all other *aporias* (problems) about what it meant to be human at that time.

It is difficult to imagine human culture without the assumption that there are boundaries, between you, me, the plants we eat, the air we breathe, the bacteria in our guts and everything else in physical proximity to this fluid, otherwise unbounded conception I have of what it means

to be me. Such boundaries are obviously in constant contestation as well as reconfiguration. Perhaps this is why a figure—an actual form—is required to bring a conceptual halt to the indeterminate flow of thought. And yet, despite its lithic solidity, this mark does not cease to remain only metaphorically and figuratively static. The stone itself also is subject to natural processes. It keeps becoming, changing, devolving, subject to wearing away and entropy, while simultaneously representing the pause in this continual flux of change. As Barad explains, in the aptly named ‘inscription model of constructivism, culture is figured as an external force acting on passive nature. There is an ambiguity in this model as to whether nature exists in any prediscursive form before its marking in culture.’³⁷ To this question I do not claim to have the answer. However, this exact problem is what I interpret the *horos* to embody. That it embodies it as a question without solution is significant because, as I argue, human culture requires the *horos* to materialise this question in order to progress into other questions. It is the material basis for the deferral, not the solution, of such a question. Only this intransigent material—the solidity of stone—could bear the burden of the weight of human culture.

So, marking boundaries is as much what the *horos* does as is. The proximity of the verbal cognate and frequency of its use to describe the activity of creating, making, and enacting boundaries remind us of the agency of the stone as a marker of boundaries even in the absence of that enunciative ‘I am’ of the *horos*. The *horos* is the literal configuration of the world through the differential enacting of boundaries, properties and meanings. And the epistemological and ontological practices that depend upon this configuration can make progress because ongoing, unfixed, indeterminate activity is deferred by binding questions of definition in a determinate, fixed, stable presence of stone. However, as Barad acknowledges, there is no fixity in matter, ‘matter is substance in its intra-active becoming—not a thing but a doing, a congealing of agency. Matter is a stabilizing and destabilizing process of iterative intra-activity.’³⁸ Because there is no external position of knowledge outside the material world, the stone has meaning. Not that it does not anyway; but the meaning inherent to the stone itself is presumably unknowable to

37 Barad (2007) 176.

38 Ibid.

us (though psychedelics might help), whereas the meaning attributed to it as boundary-marker is essential to how we go about presuming to know anything and indeed separating ourselves from everything else as knowers of the un/knowable. Asking about the actual existence of boundaries at all is an interminable dilemma.

The ecological project of thinking beyond anthropocentricity requires enlarged temporal and geographical scales. Yet expanded frames risk emphasizing separations at the expense of material intimacies.³⁹

Horos is the materialisation of the problematic basis for any task of human thought, language or culture. Cohen states that the stone has a literally unequivocal power; it is a 'substantial force that exists outside of particular humans and often bluntly disregards their intentions, shaping and working and using and making with a startling autonomy, language responds to stone as matter to matter.'⁴⁰ What if, then, boundaries are not generated by human thought or language and are actually already present in nature, such that we read what was already written by nature, responding with script to a kind of cosmic writing, if I can put it like that? Can we accept the existence of places that are not endowed with the sacred by humans or human tradition but are rather intrinsically sacred? What if the stones that are present are placed by humans in recognition of a greater dividing force, a kind of reinscribing of a text that was always already written?

Aporias

As intimated by the self-declaration, the conjunction and disjunction of questions about relations between language and matter, words and stones, humans and nonhumans, these questions posed by, or on the boundary—that is, caught up in this aporetic structure in advance—are also indicative of the basic question of human subjectivity. So, this is the problem, our *aporia*, stuck on the meaning of matter, stopping us short even as it permits us to pass over and go on through it into other *aporias*, 'problems' literally 'without passage'. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle raises the problem thus:

³⁹ Cohen (2015) 9.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 8.

ἔστι δὲ τοῖς εὐπορῆσαι βουλομένοις προὔργου τὸ διαπορῆσαι καλῶς: ἡ γὰρ ὕστερον εὐπορία λύσις τῶν πρότερον ἀπορουμένων ἐστὶ, λύειν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγνοοῦντας τὸν δεσμόν, ἀλλ' ἡ τῆς διανοίας ἀπορία δηλοῖ τοῦτο περὶ τοῦ πράγματος: ἥ γὰρ ἀπορεῖ, ταύτη παραπλήσιον πέπονθε τοῖς δεδεμένοις: ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἀμφοτέρως προελθεῖν εἰς τὸ πρόσθεν. διὸ δεῖ τὰς δυσχερείας τε θεωρηκέναι πάσας πρότερον, τούτων τε χάριν καὶ διὰ τὸ τοὺς ζητοῦντας ἄνευ τοῦ διαπορῆσαι πρῶτον ὁμοίους εἶναι τοῖς ποῖ δεῖ βαδίζειν ἀγνοοῦσι, καὶ πρὸς τούτοις οὐδ' εἴ ποτε τὸ ζητούμενον εὑρηκεν ἢ μὴ γινώσκειν:⁴¹

Now for those who wish to find a way to answer problems [*euporēsai*] it is important to go into the problems thoroughly [*diaporēsai*]; for the subsequent answer [*euporia*] is a release from the previous problems [*aporoumenōn*], and release is impossible when we do not know the bond [*desmon*], but the problem [*aporia*] of thinking shows that this is what it is about; for when it is caught up in problems [*aporei*] it is much the same as those who are bound [*dedemenois*]: in both cases it is impossible to go on forward. Therefore we should first have studied all the difficulties, both for these reasons and also because those who begin their search without first going into the problems [*diaporēsai*] are like those who walk on without knowing where they are going, without even knowing whether what is looked for has been found or remains unknown.⁴²

The *aporia* indicates difficulty in passing, a barrier or a dead end street where we lack the means or the wherewithal (*poros* also means 'wealth') to extricate ourselves from the dilemma. Aristotle tells us that the question, *aporia*, belongs to thinking (*dianoia*), that it points to a conceptual 'bond' (*desmos*) or as in Ross's translation 'knot in the subject' and that in so far as our thought is in difficulties so it is

41 Ar.Met.995a27–40.

42 This may not be the most serviceable translation, but my intention is to bring attention to the vocabulary used, in contrast with W. D. Ross's more fluent translation: 'Now for those who wish to get rid of perplexities it is a good plan to go into them thoroughly; for the subsequent certainty is a release from the previous perplexities, and release is impossible when we do not know the knot. The perplexity of the mind shows that there is a "knot" in the subject; for in its perplexity it is in much the same condition as men who are fettered: in both cases it is impossible to make any progress. Hence we should first have studied all the difficulties, both for the reasons given and also because those who start an inquiry without first considering the difficulties are like people who do not know where they are going; besides, one does not even know whether the thing required has been found or not.' Ar.Met.995a 27–40.

with those who are bound.⁴³ This knot or bond belongs as much to the subject matter of enquiry as it does to the subject engaged in raising the problems of the enquiry. And so, it is we who are all caught up in chains, caught up in these *aporias*, these non-passages of the problem raised between meaning and matter where it is impossible to go forward. Yet, if at the same time we only raise problems because we want to pass well over them (*euporēsai*) we must follow *aporias* in advance. Hence, to go forward, we must pass well across the *aporias* (*diaporēsai*). But while the *aporias* are literally things or thoughts about things that are without-passage, where it is impossible to go forward we must go forward, and the thing that marks the passage of human thought from being all entangled in the matter of meaning to passing easily on into divisions is the release from the bond or knot within human subjectivity. That said, the knot must be there first, a material bond made extraneous to the project of human thought in order to free human thought from being entangled in the processes of being.

The *aporia* is always already raised before any answer, solution or concept can be given (with declared or undeclared transcendental aspirations) because it lays down the boundaries that are to be ‘passed over.’ Derrida states that the *aporia* ‘had to be a matter of [*il devait y aller du*] the nonpassage, or rather from the experience of the nonpassage, the experience of what happens [*se passe*] and is fascinating [*passionnel*] in this nonpassage, paralyzing us in this separation in a way that is not necessarily negative: before a door, a threshold, a border, a line, or simply the edge or the approach of the other as such.’⁴⁴ The ‘way through’ is presupposed in the question, whether or not this takes the form of an ineffectual demonstration (in spite of the lingering question) or of a forced passage to the other side (without asking further questions); ‘it should be a matter of [*aller du*] what, in sum, appears to block our way or to separate us in the very place where it would no longer be possible to constitute a problem.’⁴⁵ Like *aporia*, the problem, also poses as a question of boundaries: *Problema* (πρόβλημα) means ‘hindrance, barrier, bulwark,’ but it also means ‘task, or business’; in short it is

43 Examples of *aporias* in Aristotle: *Met.*993a25–30; *de An.*417a2; *Phys.*212b23. On *aporias*, see Derrida (1993), and Coope (2005) 17–30.

44 Derrida (1993) 12.

45 Ibid.

anything thrown forward (προβάλλω). Etymologically speaking it belongs to the same complex of difficulties that are posed and deposed on the boundary and around the *horos*. The situation resembles Antiphon's dilemma of the murder of a boy who placed himself exactly in the path between the arrow and the mark (τὸ ἀκόντιον ἔξω τῶν ὅρος τῆς αὐτοῦ πορείας. ἐξενεχθὲν ἔτρωσεν αὐτόν).⁴⁶ That is to say that it is not enough to substitute a letter as the end of your art; you also need to determine a just 'end' or 'aim' (*horos*).

The first task in Aristotelian philosophy is thus to raise problems (*diaporēsai*) in order to pass through or over them (*euporēsai*) into other problems. But this does not necessarily mean he arrives at a solution; in fact, this is an ongoing process where we only ever find ourselves confronted with further problems, problems that continue along with us, taking on new forms and shapes, shaping us along with them and our quest for further quests. And yet this task—of giving definition, of putting into language the *aporias*—had to begin somewhere. It is ours, our *desmos*, our 'bond' or 'knot' even though it cannot be said to belong to us, describe us or be inscribed fully by us. Since we are subjects divided by the matter of definition, it marks our passage into subjectivity. For, as Aristotle himself noted, while the later facility of resource is a solution of the former problems, yet to solve something is not to ignore the bond. Greek letters and matters are thus seen as structuring the initial example of the ancient *diaporēsai*, that interrogation into the meaning and matter of being that presses forward and raises questions, already forming antitheses in the midst of *logos* and finding equivocal slippages of an increasing exchange between stone and human.

There is an affirmation of an implicit reappropriation that provides the material departure for our position. But is there a static locale that can presuppose either an origin or a destination? Surely the supposition that there is no destination is all the confirmation required to assure us that this is just that—a position—which for all that does not foreclose the possibility that we find ourselves elsewhere, our thoughts shooting off into different directions, without answers, stuck and ridden by dissent, *stasis*; stuck to the spot and providing the material substrate (*hypothesis*) where the work of raising the question takes place. But

46 Antiphon, *The Second Tetralogy*, 2.4.

that does not mean that the matter or the position itself from which such questioning begins is not also subject to question. The problem is, however, how it is possible to put into question the matter of the stone without presupposing the word for this stone as the very point of division between language and matter.

For form's sake, one might ask: What does the name of the stone mean? And, after all, who is enunciating what? This stone seems to have contracted only with itself, without any chance that it might speak within the words, be present between the letters, and be itself, as the given presence of our *diaporēsai* already speaking in person. In such matters the Attic development of *diaporēsai* is not dependent upon any conceptual convention but solely on the nature of this monumental mediation of naming, or what is precisely called 'horos.' And such a donation of naming must remain ontologically spontaneous, compacted and replete as stone. Thus, *diaporēsai*, delving into the depths of thoughtful problems usually follows the method of the *logos*, the logical *odos* 'road' (*via aporia*) that is given as linear, a *gramma*, and is also determined by a localised new ancient petrography. For the stone remains simply (ἅπλῶς) within itself, it is separate (χωριστόν) to such problems, inscribed as boundary that is not however inscribed within it.

The matter of matter is the boundary for further speculation about any definition of matter. There are two definitions that separate what the matter of matter is into different potentials for being present. 'But here' states Hegel 'also a want of connection of thought appears, even though all is subsequently united into an entirely speculative Notion.'⁴⁷ This notion is *hypostasis* (substance), that which takes up its position underneath, normally interpreted as rather more intrinsic than substantive, rarely thought of as conflictual. *Ousia* on the other hand, is a different type of being and not nearly as supportive despite its claim to femininity. Yet, as Hegel says, 'Aristotle distinguishes various elements in substance, insofar as the tendencies of activity and potentiality do not appear as a unity, but remain separate.'⁴⁸ These types of matter are not easily distinguished, and their interpretation is as riddled as their translation, which might alert us to the possibility that the boundaries between these two words are not as firm as they might seem.

⁴⁷ Hegel (1894) 138.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 141ff. [translation modified].

Horos comes into play as the figurative dilemma of this most substantial problem of the materiality of being. Because, in the words of Aristotle, a ‘certain difficult question concerning definitions [*horous*] might be said to belong to it’ (ἔχει τινὰ ἀπορίαν τὰ περὶ τοὺς ὁρισμούς), it might even be going too far to reduce everything down and discard the matter (ἀνάγειν οὕτω καὶ ἀφαιρεῖν τὴν ὕλην).⁴⁹ Which means that any reading of the word *horos* might just benefit from keeping in mind that the word is not all that matters.

Matter matters, but according to Aristotle at least the soul matters more.⁵⁰ Definition is intimately linked with motion or lack thereof. Matter is defined as inanimate while animals, us included, are called such because we are moved by the spirit; breath animates us. Traditionally only animals are privileged with the endowment of the *anima*, or soul (*psyche*). Must the movements of all other creatures, organisms and phenomena be explained away as mechanistic or automatic? Where are the terms of animation, the limits of the soul? How far can mind or consciousness be extended, and why has philosophy been so preoccupied with drawing up these limits so tightly around the human being? This chapter will revolve around these problems while suggesting that the definition of the relation between the stone and the human being is located exactly in this circling motion that necessarily opens up the possibility of an ensouled materiality in stone only to close it again with the advent of advanced metaphysics.

αἰσθητὸν γάρ τι τὸ ζῶον, καὶ ἄνευ κινήσεως οὐκ ἔστιν ὁρίσασθαι, διὸ οὐδ’ ἄνευ τῶν μερῶν ἐχόντων πῶς. οὐ γὰρ πάντως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μέρος ἡ χεὶρ, ἀλλ’ ἡ δυναμένη τὸ ἔργον ἀποτελεῖν, ὥστε ἔμψυχος οὔσα· μὴ ἔμψυχος δὲ οὐ μέρος.⁵¹

What is sensible about the living being is that is not defined [*horisasthai*] without motion nor without parts being in a definite condition, for it is not the hand in any condition at all that is a part of the human, but only when it can accomplish its function, and thus is an animate thing. If it is not animate it is not a part.

An ontologically significant metaphor retained since Aristotle (if not since Moses descended the mount, stone tablets in hand) is the hand

49 Ar.Met.1036b21.

50 Ar.Met.1036b23.

51 Ar.Met.1036b27–33.

of man grasping a tool, an image that dovetails with the deterministic, technologically-based concept of human progress.

But this is not to say that Aristotle arrives at a solution, rather this is an ongoing process, where he only ever finds himself confronted with further problems, problems that continue along with us, taking on new forms and shapes, shaping us along with them and our quest for further quests. And yet this task of giving definition, of putting into language the *aporias*, had to begin somewhere. This beginning could not have been an initial *aporia* or no through road. It is, on the contrary, a launching pad, something that sets us off and propels us forward into the proliferation of further questions: in the words of Hegel, 'such an order, such an absurdly rational product: a posited thing posing as being-in-itself. Its origin had to be placed into formal thought divorced from content; nothing else would let it control the material.'⁵²

So, who placed this stone? Who drew up the boundaries of the market, and by doing so, who or what was excluded? When it comes to the *horos* drawing up the site of speaking and exchange in the archaic polis, the task of masculine activity must be assumed as prescribed. The earlier *horoi*, however, that mark other boundaries do not necessarily proscribe the feminine and the name itself should be proof enough that women were essential to the functioning economy despite whatever distinctions and regulations were ascribed to their behaviour and presence within the polis. But such divisions in the social body are problems that the *horos* precludes, exactly by enunciating itself and excising the necessity for someone in particular to take responsibility for such acts of division. A marker might be (out) here, as that which never sets within the stone, as the day of its giver (or the given cause of the inscription) did once and forever. And yet its possibility is already there, functioning not according to an old model that Aristotle would have preferred to be strictly natural, but rather automatically (τοῦ αὐτομάτου).⁵³ For that possible marker is not 'really a general implicit existence, which brings about the Aristotelian determinations, without producing one out of the other.'⁵⁴ It is always new, as is any purely productive activity now.

52 Adorno (2007) 21.

53 ὥστε φανερόν ἐντοῖς ἀπλῶς ἔνεκά του γιγνομένοις, ὅταν μὴ τοῦ συμβάντος ἔνεκα γένηται ὧν ἔξω τὸ αἴτιον, ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου τότε λέγομεν. *Ar.Phys.*197b18.

54 Hegel (1894) 142.

And yet, it *could never have inscribed itself*, we are implicated in this act of naming, even there where we read what the stone already says. The stone therefore stands as the limit of our agency, between matter and human, human and nonhuman, between our willingness to give definitions and the precedent of definition that allows us to continue doing so.

The Greek name of fate (εἰμαρμένη), along with the words *meros* and *moira* ('share' and 'fate'), is derived from the verb μέιρομαι (*meiromai*), 'divide out, allot, assign.' *Heimarmenē* means the divine principle of *moirai*, that successive operation of something like a divine hand that allocates itself spatially within *topos* and spiritually within *logos*, regulating also the force that drives toward prediction and death. It, or rather 'she' opens a 'dialogue' between mythology and *logos*, between the past and the future, because, as Plutarch says,

ἡ εἰμαρμένη λόγος θεῖος ἀπαράβατος δι' αἰτίαν ἀναπόδραστος/
ἀνεμπόδιστον [...] ἡ εἰμαρμένη διχῶς καὶ λέγεται καὶ νοεῖται· ἡ μὲν
γὰρ ἐστὶν ἐνέργεια, ἡ δ' οὐσία,

heimarmenē (fate) is a divine word (*logos*) not to be transgressed due to a cause that is inescapable [...] *heimarmenē* is said and thought of in two senses; since she is activity (*energeia*) and substance (*ousia*).⁵⁵

The duplicity in speech and mind of the name of fate reveals her as the divided subject as such who directs the course of human lives. The trace of her hand is seen there in ours. As Hegel states, 'that the hand, however, must represent the in-itself of the individuality in respect of its fate is easy to see from the fact that, next to the organ of speech, it is the hand most of all by which a man manifests and actualises himself.'⁵⁶ Thus what we have to deal with in the first instance (the first division of chaos into cosmos) is something like a deity's hand that is extant (outside) and writes (is written also) upon stone.

Rational thought has always left out as what is left over from us, this divine principle of the divided subject of fate. The 'bondage to fate' was always construed not through a prediction of the course of the future

55 She is 'a law conforming to the nature of the universe, determining the course of everything that comes to pass' ... 'a divine law determining the linking of future events to events past and present.' 'On Fate' in Plut.*Mor.*568c-e.; also, Pl.*Phd.*115a.; *Grg.*512e.

56 Hegel (1977) 189.

but only through that which ‘will’ change upon their ‘solid’ encounter with the past, in ‘a spirit that seeks its own security and the security of cognition in the extant.’⁵⁷ So that Adorno can say that ‘what is irrational in the concept of the world spirit was borrowed from the irrationality of the world’s course, and yet it remains a fetishistic spirit. To this day history lacks any total subject, however construable. Its substrate is the functional connection of real individual subjects.’⁵⁸ So, what I propose to do here is, like a palmist, to trace the lines of fate upon stone in an attempt to read what was never written, to remain with the stone upon the boundary, to draw out the outlines of its course into the historical era until we see ourselves writing and reading as if it were we who were subjects and divided. Until we face ourselves as limited beings unable to continue forward in indefinite expansion, nor able to remain still, in ignorance of the questions our (will to) productivity has raised.

Stressing that lapidary ‘I am the boundary,’ let this be said: agora is never a given; it is always a task. It is the ‘dead substance’ of an automatic procedure wherein the changes which matter passes through take place. Such an ‘actuality’ (in which I am now absorbed) articulates itself and sets people off like the *diaporēsai* set us off into further questions. In fact, this is just what the institution of *horos* enables us to avoid and what distinguishes *doxa*, ‘everyday opinion’ (seeking a variety of goods), from stony inscriptions with their obvious mystification. A simple stone that asserts itself from archaeology to philosophy, confounding any singular attempt to translate it or define it, the *horos* precedes us along the way (a necessary forerunner for any methodology) as the herald announcing this reflective task of definition and determination.

Monolithic Man

Here the human, standing on this side of life gazes, uncomprehending, over towards the idea of the afterlife, from the finite to the infinite, and erects a monument in honour of the awe of this incomprehension. From this vantage point it would seem that it is with the erection of the stone plinth that the idealist is born—the believer, the mythmaker, the toolmaker. And this plinth is the marker, at once vital metaphor

⁵⁷ Adorno (2007) 305, 300.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 304.

and primal tool, signifying the human being's turn away from other creatures and the conjectural point of departure from unity with nature, where the tool stands as the metaphor, at once material and ideal, of the self-alienating break with animality, that which literally allows us to carry ourselves across the divide into transcendent rationality.

Myth, made up of a multitude of powers, introduces the idea of functional differentiation. The separation of powers in a mythical worldview, says Blumenberg, is the substitution of the 'familiar for the unfamiliar, of explanations for the inexplicable, names for the unnameable,' a device that rationalises anxiety into fear and limits subjective value in phenomena.⁵⁹ It is the obelisk, or plinth, at once monumental, arcane and poetic, that appears out of nowhere causing the crisis of the anthropomorphic revolution and finds expression in the experience of existential *angst*, a sign of something greater from which the human being is horrified both to originate and break away from. It is the material metaphor whose function is 'to bridge over the sense of numinous indeterminacy into a sense of nominal determinateness,' transforming the threatening unity of nature into a multiplicity of powers and forces.⁶⁰ This plinth points away from worldly embeddedness and its outlines also bring into focus the force that potentially lies in sovereign man, a force manifested in the grasped tool and expressed in the will to power and the supremacy of man over humanity and humanity over and above all other creatures vindicated by the novelty of rational and technological advances. This is the sanctified, prosthetic monument (myth, figure, altar, temple) and apparatus (*logos*, science, state) representing an ontological distinction between humanity and the chaotic forces of nature, warding off the anxiety of living awash in chaos, an anxiety homogenous with the genesis of the human.

But what if this anthropology is grounded in nothing other than myth? It is likely that every anthropology is grounded in myth, even the great myth and metaphysics of observation and experimentation, Western scientific rationalism. Myth itself is, etymologically speaking, the beginnings of speech. And speech in turn is not much different when you think about it, from anthropology, which is basically the account (*logos*) humans give through language about humans (*anthropos*). What

⁵⁹ Blumenberg (1990) 267.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 32.

is significant about this myth of the genesis of monolithic man is how it obliquely casts humans as cause and effect, a persuasive endorsement of the sovereignty of human poetic reason. Today, even the laws of nature are supposed to have been formulated by men.

The myth of the exclusivity of human reason retains its power, even though we see daily proof as well as (ironically) scientifically discovered facts that human beings are not as unique as we thought we were.⁶¹ There are ample examples of other creatures, birds, insects, animals and even plants and fungi who also employ tools. They, too, alter the environment in which they live in order to make it more congenial, making use of natural objects that they alter in order to render these changes. What is so special about the stone tool in the hand of man? Chimpanzees make spears to hunt with, crows craft their own feathers into tools with their beaks, bottlenose dolphins stir up the sea-floor with sponges while uncovering prey, sea otters use stones as hammers, gorillas use branches to test water-depth, octopuses use coconut shells as shields, the ophiocordyceps fungus uses carpenter ants to better distribute spores, and epiphytes use trees as supports in order to access sunlight. And yet, to some degree, humanity's use of the stone marks a meaningful point of definition, whether signifying the dominance of *Homo sapiens* against other human species or the leap into technological development and the supposed liberation of humanity from the whims of nature. Of course, it is entirely likely that a people employ tools yet continue to live in an embedded state with nature, and therefore the claim that we are separate from nature remains unfounded and much disputed. For example, even the quantum physicist Niels Bohr believed that 'we are a part of that nature that we seek to understand' and he therefore understood scientific practices as components of nature; this means that the tools we use to understand nature are also parts of nature.⁶²

Despite our use of advanced technology, humanity is still entirely dependent upon the natural world, the moderation of its forces and the amiability of its climate. Meanwhile, the extended creation and use

61 Two exceptional books that span this divide are Merlin Sheldrake's *Entangled Life* (2020) and Monica Gagliano's *Thus Spoke the Plant* (2018). Both investigate how formerly exclusively human attributes, such as will, reason, memory and decision-making processes are evident in what have been thought to be relatively simple organisms, such as plants, fungi and slime moulds.

62 Barad (2007) 26.

of tools to the detriment of the natural landscape is only accelerating humanity further away from this ecologically comfortable niche. So, if the prosthetic device is considered to be the defining feature of humanity, it is also, unfortunately, a self-destructive tool in human hands. Just as I do not buy into constant technological advance, so too I do not buy into this definition of the tool. Although it might be historically factual, the interpretation alters significantly according to who you are and what kind of a device you're holding in your hand.

Carolyn Merchant presents the shift from an organic view to a mechanistic view of nature through the use of metaphor: 'Rational control over nature, society, and the self was achieved by redefining reality itself through the new machine metaphor.'⁶³ That the scientific revolution required the reformulation of the natural world, forces and individual organisms into machinic metaphors is reflective of the control that the men involved in these advances so obviously felt they both lacked and desired. That slime moulds (single-celled organisms) can make efficient logical choices and that plants have been proven to have memory and learning is enough to seriously shake the autocratically organised boat of human reason bobbing in the frothing sea of nonhuman cognition.⁶⁴ The pride of place of metaphor undergirding the bastion of rational deliberation and permitting torturous experimentation of other creatures should be construed as more than a literary trope. It implies the existence of a hierarchical system of cause and effect upon which man stands at the top with power devolving upon him from the architect of the machine. Meanwhile trees transfer information through the mycelial filaments running under the soil and engage in mutually beneficial signalling in tangible and intangible ways, not only putting into question but outright ridiculing the human being's exclusive claim to advanced conceptual processes and language.

Horatio's conventional philosophy might seem limited but it is the conclusion that can be drawn from the experience of the so-called preternatural or supernatural that makes contemporary scientific discoveries appear nothing more than natural or even instinctual. Such discoveries are manifestly timely. This is because for a while now we've been building our metaphorically weighted boats of human reason

⁶³ Merchant (1990) 193.

⁶⁴ Narby (2006) and Gagliano (2018).

upon the assumption that there was some kind of universally inherent right of humanity to make use of the trees, the plants, the animals, the rocks for a higher cause, for consumption and construction or boat-building in this case. But now that we find that most of our suppositions of human uniqueness are wrong, we must return to the drawing board in order to reconfigure our relations, our interactions and particularly our use of the nonhuman world. It seems obvious, at least to me, that such a reconfiguration might help us modify not only our actions and effects upon the nonhuman but also our needs and desires. Such needs are no doubt just as interwoven in the nonhuman, as are the sails made from hemp. Some of my needs are surely already deeply modified by the effect agrochemicals are having upon my gut flora and my libido or air and noise pollution upon my physical and mental health. It is well-known that a change in diet and some fresh country air can dramatically alter one's emotional well-being. Well, we need to change our emotional diet as a species so that we can think a little bit more in sync with the other creatures, organisms and non-organisms that make up the many worlds within our world.

What is really under discussion here is the stone as marker of definition, the human ability to make definitions and distinctions, and therefore also the definition or separation of humanity from the entirety of other worldly organisms and processes. The materialist worldview posits that there are no boundaries in nature. Lenin insisted upon 'the absence of absolute boundaries in nature, on the transformation of moving matter from one state into another, that from our point of view [may be] apparently irreconcilable with it, and so forth.'⁶⁵ Here, the idea of the boundary is as much a product as the stone that has been worked and shaped by labour. Once humans have created the stone, do they have the leisure to separate themselves from this construction, to stand back and view the distance the stone has demarcated between themselves and the non-productive coinhabitants of the world. The boundary between humankind and animals is distinguished *post factum*, and it is humankind who distinguishes it, not the animals, presumably. We have inherited this problem from Marx: How can we reconcile our animal nature, which drives us to produce, with the disclosure that our production separates us from our very nature? This boundary is

65 Lenin (1972) 258–266.

our Frankenstein; henceforth we are bound to the pursuit of resolving our two antipathetic natures (creator of a monster, father of science), of retracting the symptom of an unhinged humanity. There is a glitch though, for behind these two natures is the woman (Mary Shelley is the white goddess?) underlining the mistakes in our psychical developments, writing with the hand of fate and putting into question the outcome of tyrannical, omnipotent instrumental rationalism. The climax of our obsessive compulsion for control that humanity even now faces is yet another indication that progress in scientific and technological developments is not accompanied by progress in ethical consciousness.

Consequently, can we say that it is symptomatic of human nature to recognise boundaries, namely, to create boundaries that by nature are bound to be crossed? Here we will remain with the substance of the stone, on the literal side of *stasis*, where the negation of movement is a matter of will or decision to stay still so that thought can progress; or as Socrates explains, ἡ δὲ στάσις ἀπόφασις τοῦ ἰέναι βούλεται εἶναι which means something like ‘*stasis* is the negation of wanting-to-move.’⁶⁶ Progress or the will to progress may be the very thing hindering our path to enlightenment or the expansion of human consciousness. The task, therefore, is to return to the material, the boundary-stone that by means of providing a static term allows revolutions in thought to circle and pass over it, though it is yet to be seen how far they get.

The vision of Herakleitos, where opposites morph and reform into one another is a world of constant motion, where movement between opposites resolves, ironically, into the law of *coincidentia oppositorum*, eternal movement, as a unifying principle. He expresses this unifying principle in the metaphorical figure of the river: ‘representing beings in the flow of a river he says you cannot step twice into the same river’ (ποταμοῦ ῥοῇ ἀπεικάζων τὰ ὄντα λέγει ὡς δις ἐς τὸν αὐτὸν ποταμὸν οὐκ ἂν ἐμβαίης).⁶⁷ Representation (*apeikazōn*, cognate with *eikon*- ‘icon’) takes place within speech, and it is how it is said that reveals the true nature of the world, hence the chiasmic play on form by Herakleitos. His words come and go as much as the content of his words signifies coming and going, coming-to-be and passing away.⁶⁸ *Logos* can be translated as

66 Pl.Crat.426d.

67 Pl.Crat.401D, 402A.

68 Many of his aphorisms engage in this wordplay between opposites, see DK, especially fragments 53,54,58 62, 63 p74–75 etc.

‘word,’ but it can also be ‘language’ and ‘reason’; the most frequent use in philosophical texts might be in the sense of ‘explanation,’ ‘account’ (though I would not bet on it). That said, in the following aphorism, it is presumably being used as reason/language; nonetheless, in keeping with the spirit of the *horos*, I could not offer a definitive translation.

Οὐκ ἐμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἐστὶν ἐν πάντα εἶναί.

Listening not to me but to the *logos* it is wise to agree [*omologeîn*] that all things are one.⁶⁹

There is no room for dissent if all things are one; to argue would be futile. When Heidegger analyses this phrase, he does so by raising the problem of the origins of language. Reaching into ‘the realm of the primordial, essential determination of language,’ he states that speech or voice and signification ‘are not capable of determining this realm in its primary characteristics.’⁷⁰ So what does he think determines this realm? According to Heidegger it is certain meanings of the word *legein*, cognate with *logos* and *omologeîn*, that take us back to the synthetic period before speech and thought came to be distinct. The synthetic meaning that he proposes for the verb *legein*, which in the classical period means ‘to say, to mean, to read’ (in much the same way as we can ask what a book ‘says’) allows him to trace the phrase back into a determinative position in the interpretation of the origin of speech. Speech, he says, develops from ‘the unconcealment of what is present, and is determined according to the lying-before of what is present as the letting-lie-together-before.’⁷¹

This numinous revelation, where *logos* gathers meaning unto itself (regardless of etymological inconsistencies) might not be contestable, but this is not so significant here, because all I want to gesture towards is the primacy for Heidegger of some kind of ‘essential determination’ in the embryonic stages of pre-Socratic thinking. The determinative significance of the *logos* is not actually given as ‘meaning’ or ‘reasoning,’ but rather as dependent upon something that has precedence in its localised particular situation, it is lying there, ‘picked up’ (*legein*), laid

69 DK(22) 50: 73.

70 Heidegger (1984) 64.

71 Ibid.

down, fixed in place. This might be called the primal metaphor that permits language to start moving into the deferral of signification, where one word always points inherently on to others, as part of a larger structure. It might be poetic metaphor, but that does not mean it is not actually done or made, the literal and figurative carrying over of a determinative sign in speech.

In Herakleitos's fragment, reason or language stops the movement of opposites, breaking down the eternal motion of being into the monism of the arch-concept, the *logos*. In Hegel's words, the 'true and positive meaning of the antinomies is this: that every actual thing involves a coexistence of opposed elements. Consequently, to know, or, in other words, to comprehend an object, is equivalent to being conscious of it as a concrete unity of opposed determinations.'⁷² In one way or another the presence of determination must be concretely represented but only in order to allow thought and the word to be definitive. According to the *Cratylus*, Herakleitos said that 'all beings move and nothing is still' or 'all passes and nothing stays' (τὰ ὄντα ἰέναι τε πάντα καὶ μένειν οὐδέν, or, πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει).⁷³ In a not-too-distant paraphrase this means that everything that is, is in the process of going, leaving no space (*chorei*) for a remainder. Obviously, this is a theory of everything (καὶ ἐκ πάντων ἓν καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντα), perhaps one of the earliest.⁷⁴ In a vexed way this is also the first step along the way toward reductionist science.

If, as Herakleitos suggested, motion is continuous, the definition of the instant or the cessation of movement within motion itself that provides the definable transition necessary for measuring time comes to revolve entirely around the boundaries it is ascribed. Aristotle addressed the problem of temporal boundaries by maintaining that neither motion nor rest is possible in the 'now.'⁷⁵ As he states, the 'now' is the *horos* between past and future.⁷⁶ This is the boundary between motion and rest that is also called the 'instant' and is treated in detail by Richard Sorabji along with other problems about defining the transition between moving and resting or stopping and starting.⁷⁷ Sorabji's language reflects

⁷² Hegel (1892) 100.

⁷³ Pl. *Crat.* 401D, 402A.

⁷⁴ DK(23) 54: 68.

⁷⁵ Ar. *Phys.* 234a31–34. On a detailed discussion of time in Aristotle see Chapter Five.

⁷⁶ Ar. *Phys.* 222b1.

⁷⁷ See Chapter Twenty-Six in Sorabji (1983).

the determining significance of the instant, though he never quotes Aristotle's use of the *horos*.

For a start, I might suggest that an instant of motion falls *within* a period of motion, while an instant of rest will be one that falls *within or bounds* a period of rest.⁷⁸

Fittingly, Herakleitos is himself difficult to position within particular temporal boundaries, as he never mentions any political events, people or even any easily dated natural phenomena. However, it is supposed that he was living around the late sixth century BC, the same time the *horoi* of the *agora* were being inscribed in the developing market-place. One thing is noteworthy though, for Herakleitos was as ethnocentric as the next man, and the *logos* according to him could only be understood in Greek. For Herakleitos, then, the *logos* does not only distinguish the logical supremacy of humans above all other creatures but of Greek speakers above the rest: 'Poor witnesses for men are their eyes and ears if they have barbarian souls' (βαρβάρας ψυχὰς ἔχόντων).⁷⁹ Since he is considered amongst the forerunners of Western philosophy and rationalism, it would appear that ethnic and linguistic bias was ingrained from the very beginning. Wittgenstein put the problem succinctly when he said '*the limits of my language mean the limits of my world*'.⁸⁰ Presumably this describes a reciprocal relation, in which the opposition between *logos* and *physis*, word and nature, became canonical in Greek philosophy on account of a simultaneous trend to claim power by assuming the side of the *logos* and dismissing any challenging systems of belief to the other category, be that no stranger than nature (*physis*). Suffice it to say that materiality was abandoned to the forces of nature, while meaning was written in to human language like a contract, ascribed as the exclusive property of rational man.

The Stone is Worldless

Plumwood argues that nature is a political rather than a descriptive category that developed as one half of Western dualism, in which the other 'protagonist super-hero of the western psyche' is reason.

⁷⁸ Sorabji (1983) 415–416.

⁷⁹ DK(22) 107: 81.

⁸⁰ Wittgenstein (1922) 5.6. (original italics).

The concept of reason provides the unifying and defining contrast for the concept of nature, much as the concept of husband does for that of wife, as master for slave. Reason in the western tradition has been constructed as the privileged domain of the master, who has conceived nature as a wife or subordinate other encompassing and representing the sphere of materiality, subsistence and the feminine which the master has split off and constructed as beneath him. The continual and cumulative overcoming of the domain of nature by reason engenders the western concept of progress and development.⁸¹

The *horos* marks this point of difference, retaining both the very materiality of stone and taking upon itself the distinction between *logos* and *physis*. The question is, do humans produce the stone, or does the stone produce humans? Is the stone a theological peak or *summa* of animal disputations, or a useful tool in the power politics of the *anima*? At first glance it would appear as if the stone issues in as the symbol that humans have sublated and sublimated nature, distanced by means of this from their animal origins. Perhaps that is the very nature of any dealings with a symbol, it is *thrown together* (*sym-ballein*), especially in the case of the stone whose brute materiality is not betrayed by the ideality of its impetus.⁸² As Hegel states, in animistic religions, the divine itself was supposed to be visibly present in the animal, yet, 'the self-consciousness of spirit is what alone makes respect for the dark and dull inwardness of animal life disappear.'⁸³ This degradation itself, 'debasement of the high dignity and position of the animal world,' is transformed into the content of thought. Aristotle remains the basis for the theory of the human soul even today.

Νῦν δὲ περὶ ψυχῆς τὰ λεχθέντα συγκεφαλαιώσαντες, ἔπωμεν πάλιν ὅτι ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ ὄντα πῶς ἐστίν· πάντα γὰρ ἢ αἰσθητὰ τὰ ὄντα ἢ νοητά, ἔστι δ' ἢ ἐπιστήμη μὲν τὰ ἐπιστητὰ πῶς, ἢ δ' αἰσθησις τὰ αἰσθητά.⁸⁴

And now let us sum up what has been said concerning the soul, let us say again that the soul is somehow all existent things. For they are all either objects of sensation or of thought; and knowledge is somehow what is known and sensation is what is sensed.

81 Plumwood (1994) 3.

82 Ar.Pol.1294a35

83 Hegel (1988) 445.

84 Ar.Ath.431b20ff.

Although things are here defined only by their existence as objects of thought or sensation, thought is also an object of thought. And from here it would be radically satisfying to reverse Aristotle's logic and force him into the quandary of the world soul or cosmic mind by stating that if the soul is all existent things, then all existent things are soul. The stone, being sensed and understood by the soul is simultaneously the subject of soul, creating sense and understanding. But Aristotle would not like this shifting of categories of one into another.

ἀνάγκη δ' ἢ αὐτὰ ἢ τὰ εἶδη εἶναι. αὐτὰ μὲν δὴ οὐ· οὐ γὰρ ὁ λίθος ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶδος· ὥστε ἡ ψυχὴ ὥσπερ ἡ χεὶρ ἐστιν.⁸⁵

It is thus necessary that faculties are the same as the objects or their forms. But they are not the same, for the stone does not exist in the soul, but only its form. The soul, then, is like the hand.

The hand is the tool of division par excellence, and like the soul has the advantage of being a vital part of the human body, so that it is not even necessary to talk of prosthetics in order to discover the distinction between human and nonhuman. The distinction itself is immanently inherent. The facility to create shape as well as the ability to recognise form in nature is a characteristic of both the hand and the soul. According to Aristotle and perhaps Hegel as well *anima* or *psyche* is not so much descriptive as a figurative activity. Just as objects are taken in hand, so forms are taken into the soul. Aristotle arrives at a point of confusion in the question of the substance of division in bodies (*sōmata*)

ὁμοίως ἔνεστιν ἐν τῷ στερεῷ ὅποιονοῦν σχῆμα: ὥστ' εἰ μὴδ' ἐν τῷ λίθῳ Ἑρμῆς, οὐδὲ τὸ ἥμισυ τοῦ κύβου ἐν τῷ κύβῳ οὕτως ὡς ἀφωρισμένον.⁸⁶

for every shape is equally present in the solid, so that if 'Hermes is not in the stone,' nor is half of the cube in the cube as a determinate [*aphōrismenon*] shape.

The argument is that the stone subjected to the mason's tools already has its form within it as the potentiality of determinate (verbal cognate with *horos*) form. Agamben elaborated on Aristotle's notion of

⁸⁵ Ar.Ath.431b30.

⁸⁶ Arist.Met.1002a22,1017b7, Phys. 1.7 190b in wood: Met.1048a31, in painting: Met.1050a20.

potentiality, stressing, in a nice echo of Herakleitos, that a being that has potentiality is also capable of impotentiality, for example the potentiality of a child to learn but also not to learn to read. He explains that 'this is the origin (and the abyss) of human power, which is so violent and limitless with respect to other living beings.'⁸⁷ Agamben takes a more cynical position on the division of humans from the nonhuman. For him this division is located in the negation or *sterēsis* of potentiality, 'the potential for darkness:' 'other living beings are capable only of their specific potentiality. But human beings are the animals capable of their own impotentiality.'⁸⁸ Human freedom is therefore the potential to do both good and evil. Inertia or apathy is certainly a considerable cause of harm, though harm is just as often exerted through actions, whether devoid of thought or orchestrated and manipulated via the bad intentions of another. It is interesting that the negation of potentiality is here offered as a determinative ontological capacity of the construct of human subjectivity from an ethical perspective rather than a physical one. Here at least the tool is no longer the divisive force, but force itself or power, *dynamis*.

A less abstract way, and generally the more traditional way to distinguish animals from humans is to describe the human being as the animal with *logos*, the rational animal, the 'sick animal' as Hegel states, or as Castoriadis says 'the mad animal.'⁸⁹ Either way the intersection between human thought and language, whether rationalised or irrationalised, becomes the ontological lodestone for further developments in both aesthetics and epistemology, this is also known as the hermeneutic turn. Embeddedness within culture and the human sciences no longer justifies a distinct methodology, or set of rules to follow and apply, because humans are already situated within the discourse and dialogues that come under critique. As Gadamer states, a 'situation is not a case of something obeying a theoretical law and being determined by it; it is something that surrounds one and opens itself up only from a practical perspective.'⁹⁰ Both the authority of the speaker and the character of culture are found in

87 Agamben (1999) 182.

88 Ibid. 181–182.

89 Castoriadis (1997) 262.

90 Gadamer (1999) 74.

the same place (*ethos*), and it is within these practical constructs that determinations can be discovered, but not isolated. Nonetheless 'it is no objection that practical philosophy in Aristotle's sense presupposes a fixed, comprehensive ethical gestalt, the one that he himself found retrospectively in the ancient *polis*,' because as Gadamer states 'it is always the case that practical "philosophy" arises out of practically determined being and refers back to it.'⁹¹

But does modern hermeneutics really embed practical philosophy within the experience of the world? Being in the world is neither a property nor a relation that can be discarded and picked up at will. Heidegger describes Being-in-the-world as an essential characteristic of Dasein: 'Taking up relationships towards the world is possible only because Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, is as it is.'⁹² However, that this is not a description of a mutual reciprocal relation between all things unequivocally is elaborated in his lecture course, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* where he develops an unconventional method for distinguishing between humans and nonhumans.

Here the stone features as representing the opposite end of the spectrum to the human being. According to Heidegger the stone is emphatically 'worldless, it is without world it has no world,' while the animal is 'poor in world,' though not completely deprived, and the human being is 'world forming.'⁹³ He then attempts to answer the question as to how to characterise a living being, figuring the stone in a relation of non-reciprocity and (phallically) non-penetrative with the world it is within. He explains that the stone does not experience its embeddedness within the world, and that the 'stone cannot be dead because it is never alive.'⁹⁴

The stone is without world. The stone is lying on the path, for example. We can say that the stone is exerting a certain pressure upon the surface of the earth. It is 'touching' the earth. But what we call 'touching' here is not a form of touching at all in the stronger sense of the word. It is not at all like that relationship which the lizard has to the stone on which it lies basking in the sun. And the touching implied in both these cases is

91 Ibid. 75.

92 Heidegger (1962) 84.

93 Heidegger (1995) 176–177, 196.

94 Ibid. 179.

above all not the same as that touch which we experience when we rest our hand upon the head of another human being.⁹⁵

Again, the human hand crops up as the tool of measurement. The human hand touches in a different way to the touch of the stone upon the earth. It is the stone in the hand that brings the stone to presence for us. The stone 'lying nearby is simply present at hand amongst other things.'⁹⁶ As an object the stone exists for us because we can and do take it in hand, that is, the stone becomes an object for us, while we do not become an object for the stone. Only we can wonder at 'what is plain and obvious, τὰ πρόχειρα,' that which 'lies right at hand.'⁹⁷ A similar significance of the hand also appeared in Aristotle. The hand's ability to grasp and touch was described as a metaphor for the grasping of thoughts in the soul (and vice versa).⁹⁸ Meanwhile the stone's existence is defined as nothing more than as something to be grasped, or something that touches but does not feel. The stone is worldless because it is defined as having no access to other beings. Perhaps another way of putting it would be to say that the stone cannot experience itself in relation to other beings in its immediate world, it is unable to penetrate the world (despite providing the ground and foundation of this world). This inability is what characterises the being of the stone:

it lies upon the earth but does not touch it. The earth is not given for the stone as an underlying support which bears it, let alone given as earth. Nor of course can the stone ever sense this earth as such, even as it lies upon it. The stone lies on the path. If we throw it into the meadow then it will lie wherever it falls. We can cast it into a ditch filled with water. It sinks and ends up lying on the bottom. In each case according to circumstance the stone crops up here or there, amongst and amidst a host of other things, but always in such a way that everything present around it remains essentially inaccessible to the stone itself. Because in its being a stone it has no possible access to anything else around it, anything that it might attain or possess as such, it cannot possibly be said to be deprived of anything either.⁹⁹

95 Ibid. 196.

96 Ibid. 198.

97 Heidegger (2003) 87.

98 *Ar.Phys.*1036b21–35.

99 Heidegger (1995) 197.

Sensation, motion and emotion are not new tropes in the exclusionary vocabulary of human beings, while possession and deprivation might be said to allude in a vague way to Aristotle's *dynamis*, albeit filtered through Agamben. Heidegger gives as the basis of the human being's presence in the world the ability to be attuned. '*Dasein as Dasein* is always already attuned in its very grounds. There is only ever a change of attunement.'¹⁰⁰ Attunement, though difficult to understand clearly, is comprised of an experience of profound boredom that leads to an indifference to existence. This indifference brings about the deprivation of world and this has to do with a change of temporality, in which the human being goes beyond the normal flow of existence, coming to a standstill.¹⁰¹ As Kuperus puts it, the 'animal, in Heidegger's analysis, keeps going, without ever coming to a stop; the animal merely behaves and is not attuned. Human beings, instead, do not merely *move toward*, but can *keep a distance*; they are not absorbed in their worlds as the animal is. We humans *can* come to a stop in our otherwise driven existence.'¹⁰² *Stasis* therefore appears for Heidegger to be essential to human consciousness.

How do we, therefore, access the stone? If we stop when everything around us keeps moving, surely it is we who become out of sync with the world. If the world is in flux and we are still, are we not left behind? How can we possibly hear, feel, understand the being of the stone if we do not experience it according to its own rhythm? Heidegger does not satisfactorily answer this question of how we access the stone.¹⁰³ Nonetheless, his response is interesting, for he finds himself caught in a 'circle' of thought which elucidates the problem, this globular problem: 'How are living beings as such—the animality of the animal and the plant-character of the plant—originally accessible? Or is there no possibility of any original access here at all?' and, 'what then of the stone—can we transpose ourselves into a stone?'¹⁰⁴ But why limit it to these basic categories? What about the bacterial-character of bacteria,

100 Ibid. 68.

101 Ibid. 146.

102 Kuperus, Gerard. 'Attunement, Deprivation, and Drive: Heidegger and Animality' in Painter and Lotz (2007) 23.

103 Krell (1992) 116.

104 Heidegger (1995) 179, 201.

the fungal-character of fungi, the watery-ness of water, the archaic nature of archaea? Heidegger's response is that

these questions must be left open, but that also means that we must always have some answer ready, however provisional and tentative, in order to guide us as we pursue our comparative considerations. On the other hand, these comparative considerations can and must ultimately make some contribution toward the clarification and possible answering of these questions. Thus we constantly find ourselves moving in a circle. And this is an indication that we are moving within the realm of philosophy. Everywhere a kind of circling. This circling movement of philosophy of course is alien to ordinary understanding which only ever wants to get the job in hand over and done with as quickly as possible. But going round in circles gets us nowhere. Above all, it makes us feel dizzy, and dizziness is something uncanny.¹⁰⁵

Should we not feel at home in considering all these other beings that constitute our world? These are our near neighbours, organic or no; often they are part of our very self. If we are not at home here, where else can we feel at home? Here we are at home, in the world, going around in circles.

It is worth stressing the duplicity of Heidegger's position here when he says that the questions must be left open and an answer must be at hand, no matter how tentative. Heidegger himself does not ground this duplicity, but it is clearly reminiscent of Aristotle's *diaporesai*, as well as the work of the *horos* standing in for definition so that further questioning of definitions can proceed. That Heidegger's progress comes to a standstill at this point, or rather keeps going in circles alerts us to the limits of the horizon, the frame in which he works. On the one hand, a cyclical motion would appear natural, after all many stones tend toward the spherical given enough time and space. On the other hand, Heidegger or rather his thought is trapped within the mouse hole of 'that dimension of truth pertaining to scientific and metaphysical knowledge.'¹⁰⁶ He states that we cannot transpose ourselves into stone, although he acknowledges that in myth and art it is in a way possible because this 'animates' them. This interesting investigation into transposition breaks off, because it comes up against 'quite different kinds of possible truth,' which do not fit into the project of western rationalism.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 180.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 204.

Since the mid-twentieth century there have been some concessions made within the tradition of human consciousness interacting with the nonhuman, through which different kinds of possible truths have filtered, especially when scientific explanations are not always ready to hand. Lately this has had noteworthy effects even within the edifice of science. As Alaimo states in her rereading of material nature,

the pursuit of self-knowledge, which has been a personal philosophical, psychological, or discursive matter, now extends into a rather ‘scientific’ investigation into the constitution of our coextensive environments. Science, however, offers no steady ground, as the information may be biased, incomplete, or opaque and the ostensible object of scientific inquiry—the material world—is extremely complex, overwrought with agencies, and ever emergent.¹⁰⁷

In terms of transposing ourselves into other beings, there are cases that cannot be dismissed as ‘fantastical’ or ‘illusory.’ For example, in Ecuador, humans have access to the minds of jaguars, monkeys, dogs and so forth.¹⁰⁸ Although even here our interpretation favours the activity of the human mind. It might not be as it seems, it might be the other way around: the jaguars may well have access to the human mind. Similarly, I might eat a psilocybin mushroom, but is it my mind that has access to the mushroom or the mushroom that accesses and makes use of my mind?¹⁰⁹ Many mental conditions have been found to respond well to an increase in gut flora, in which a patient ingests millions of microbiota, tiny little bacteria that live within the digestive tract and assist the functioning of the neurons therein. Such interactions are not limited to the living world. A lack of iron will cause me to feel foggy and lazy, while an increase in fulvic acid (the earth found in peat bogs) can cleanse my mind of the insanity of lead poisoning. Obviously, brittle bones are addressed by ingesting increased amounts of calcium and magnesium, both of which are rocks, while the mere proximity to other types of rock are said to alter human psychical states (from ruby crystals to uranium ore). These interactions should no longer be considered isolated events. All matter has an effect, whether negative or positive, on the mind or soul. Perhaps the real question should not be whether

¹⁰⁷ Alaimo (2010) 20.

¹⁰⁸ See Kuhn (2013).

¹⁰⁹ See Sheldrake (2020).

the human mind is distinct from matter itself in which it is so deeply ensconced, but whether the existence of a soul common to all things can be excluded. 'If nature is to matter,' as Alaimo says, 'we need more potent, more complex understandings of materiality' but from where are we to extract these understandings?¹¹⁰ We cannot all fall back upon indigenous knowledge as in many parts of the world such knowledge has been wiped out by the project of Western science and religion or remains only patchy. Can we change the limits of our world or at least recognise their historical development as inessential?

Graham Harman makes a smart move in relation to Heidegger's conception of the worldless stone; he inverts the experience of worldlessness to reflect us. It is then we who fail to experience the stone, it is we who cannot access its reality: 'the reality of things is always withdrawn or veiled rather than directly accessible, and therefore any attempt to grasp that reality by direct and literal language will inevitably misfire.'¹¹¹ What is interesting about object-oriented ontology is that it states a fact that is perhaps always implicitly understood but that nonetheless remains as an inherently faulty premise in human experience. Objects are not dismissed as devoid of relations unless they are subjected to human thought. Objects have relations and interactions amongst themselves and still bear little or no relevance for humankind.

From this perspective it could be said that the *horos*, that is, the coincidence of the boundary and the stone, is a relation that provided the precedent for what it means for the human to be human and not some other thing, though how the stone stands in relation to itself must remain a mystery. That this mystery has nothing to do with us might be factually true though it does not fail to play a role in how we experience the stone in itself. What I mean is that it might be the very fact that we interpret the stone as 'withdrawn' from us that means it can be invested with so much meaning. The stone matters to us exactly because its meaning always plays somewhere off in the distance, obscured and veiled by the bare materiality of stone. This might be a mystical way of saying what Harman phrases epistemologically: 'an object is whatever

110 Alaimo (2010) 2.

111 Harman (2018) 38.

cannot be reduced to either of the two basic kinds of knowledge: what something is made of, and what it does.¹¹²

The material presence and proximity of stone is not enough for us to fully describe what it is in the world, nor what it does. This also holds for the stone in relation to itself. There is what Harman calls a fracture or 'gap *within* things, and we call it the object/qualities rift [...] The object precedes its qualities despite not being able to exist without them.'¹¹³ Harman proposes that the gap between the object and our representation of it is internal to the presence of the object itself. This is very interesting if we consider *horos* as the object. Such an object seems to be the externalisation of this gap. Can we say that the boundary is the real object while the stone is the sensual object? The fracture of the *horos* would also be what provides the definition between the real and sensual, or between boundary and stone, and is in fact none other than the definition of the object as both real and sensual: that is *horos*. Perhaps this provides a basis for 'Aristotle's ancient claim in his *Metaphysics* that individual things cannot be defined since things are always concrete while definitions are made of universals.'¹¹⁴ But if *horos* is the definition between real and sensual or concrete and universal it is also a figure that can be used to describe any object. This is why it cannot be reduced to anything but itself, because this reduction is its very being and purpose. It is always already fractured between its own materiality and its meaning, and this is what makes it mean something.

I am human so I cannot claim to observe the stone with anything but human sensibilities. Then again there's no way to know whether the boundary that the stone marks is of natural or human origin, prescribed by the hand of fate or inscribed in the nature of the stone. According to Heidegger, the being of the stone is taken entirely separately from any other worldly force. But do not the wind, the rain, the heat, and the motions of the earth turning interact with the stone, let alone lichen, plant life, animals and humans' use of it? What if these activities cannot be separated from the being of the stone because the stone's existence, shape, and place are entirely reliant upon them, just as we cannot

112 Ibid. 257.

113 Ibid. 259.

114 Ibid. 38

be separated from the air we breathe or the water, the food, and the microbes that constitute our bodies?

Heidegger's definition of the stone as worldless seems to be based largely upon the supposed fact that the stone is unable to locomote, to move or remove itself. The stone here is inert. This is the basic conceptual understanding for separating animate matter from inanimate. Absence of motion has long been used to justify the claim for absence of intelligence in plants, at least until it was proved that plants also move (as well as have the ability to change behaviour, remember and signal).¹¹⁵ What about the long *durée*, where stone aggregates, dissolves, forms, reacts chemically, explodes, melts and so forth? The stone does not choose to be worn by water, they will say. But have not these kinds of interactions between stones or rocks flying through space created the world itself? Do planets form by choice or by accident? Is the world—the universe—devoid of consciousness except for smart little us? That matter is brute and devoid of soul asserted by reductionist science does not even wash with reductionist science anymore.¹¹⁶ The absence of world-creating spirit in stone is in no way something that can be taken for granted; it is well and truly beyond the realm of the human episteme and the opposite certainly seems more likely and better supported in the majority of the world's metaphysical belief systems.

115 Gagliano (2018) 65.

116 Barad (2007) 394.

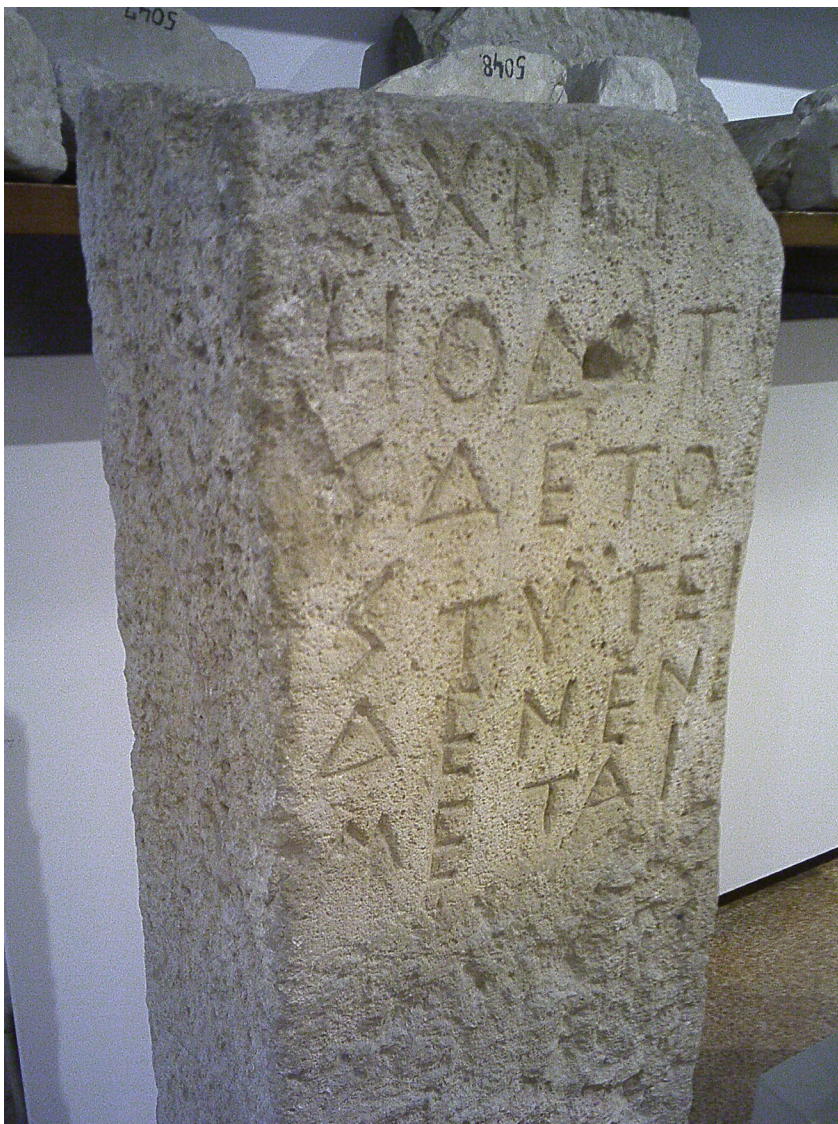


Fig. 2. ΑΧΡΙ ΤΕ[Σ] ΗΟΔΟ ΤΕΣΔΕ ΤΟ ΑΣΤΥ ΤΕΙΔΕ ΝΕΝΕΜΕΤΑΙ 'The city extends up until the edge of this road here,' IG I³ 1111. Photograph by T. Potter, 2021. Rights belong to the Epigraphic Museum, Athens © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development (H.O.C.R.E.D.).

2. Does the Letter Matter?

Terminus, Limes, Fines: vt dicuntur regionis vel agri alicuius.¹

ὄρος, ὃ -boundary, landmark [...] pillar (whether inscribed or not) [...] in Logic, term of a proposition (whether subject or predicate) [...] definition.²

This chapter raises the problem of the materiality of the letter. The explicit problem confronted in the *horos* is the meaning of matter, where the inscription itself of the word upon stone can be read as the sign of a precedent natural script, of boundaries prescribed rather than inscribed. The stone itself raises this possibility, and this question: how do we read boundaries? Are boundaries written in 'nature' with the stone as marker and is the inscription of the word for boundary, then, a secondary script? In what capacity can the word *horos* be read simultaneously as script, stone and boundary? Is the stone itself the original proscription giving us pause, so that the separation of meaning from matter can be deployed into the dualism of the human and the nonhuman? In the hermeneutical course of writing on writing, and also of writing within writing, what is important in such an inscription is that regardless of its professed use the name remains the same: *Horos* is the name given by the Athenians to the words and letters upon the land.

Here I am working on the implicit hypothesis that words and things not only endure in a relation, but that the *horos*—given that it appears in philosophical texts, as in a philosophical 'term' or 'definition'—actually stands in for this relation as a boundary and limit, a point of division, simultaneously relating matter and language, the stone with the signifier for 'boundary,' and providing the very material basis for their distinctions. To pull this apart further, what can be seen is that *horos* stands equally within a scale of materiality beginning with

1 TGL: ὄρος. Estienne (1572) 1465.

2 LS: 1255–1256.

stone, moving then to the inscribed stone, and subsequently (though not chronologically later) the boundary invested in the stone, and the concept of boundary, as well as the word's other textual interpretations, such as definition, term, limit and so forth. Given its materiality the *horos* remains throughout the philosophical developments of Greece, despite claims to separate substance from word.

Horos is the matter that remains in any question of definition or what words mean. It does not just reinvest meaning with matter; it stands as a testament that matter means as much as meaning does. Wordplay is central, as psychoanalytic discourse shows, in revealing what is the matter, and should not be dismissed as *mere* words. Lacan states that 'metaphor is situated at the precise point at which meaning is produced in nonmeaning,' and it is not only the words we use, but also those we fail to use, employ idiosyncratically or poetically that reveal our psychical reality.³ In human psychical disturbance, there is nothing immaterial about words nor more substantial than letters, though that does not make them any easier to understand. The point being that it does not matter all that much what we intended to say because the words themselves carry meaning independently of our will to use them, revealing what it was that we really wanted to say but did not or what we did not want to say at all.

Of course, that does not mean the existence of speech is absolute; it simply means that words reveal a psychical reality that is otherwise flooded within the babble of wanting to say something else or meaning to say nothing of any matter. If the accidental play of letters allows slips of consciousness to open up and reveal the crisis of symbolic meaning, perhaps there is more to letters than meets the eye. In hermetic traditions the letter has a meaning all of its own that is in no way distinct from its form and owes no debt to its appearance within otherwise meaningful words. The esoteric significance of letters is an earthly, lithic structure into which we must delve, 'excavate,' in order to even begin to understand the allusive and mysterious nature of the particular letters inscribing the word *horos*, and what they could possibly mean.

There is no intention here to reinscribe the *horos* into tradition, for what is significant about this stone is that although its history is unwritten, it

3 'The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud' in Lacan (2006) 423.

never ceased to be read. *Horos* (ΗΟΡΟΣ) appears inscribed upon stones small and large in the region of Attica, from the gardens of the French school of Archaeology to the cemetery in the Kerameikos. They are quite evident if you are looking, though their relation to the site of sight might be no more than formal (ὀράω, ὄρασις). These inscriptions were discovered in extraordinary numbers in the excavations of Athens.⁴ This bounty found in such a limited area should alert us to the fact of their wider distribution throughout the city, suggesting a common use of these stones. But are they stones, or are they inscriptions? This is the heart of the problem.

To begin with, this chapter takes lexical definitions of the *horos* in an attempt to understand what the *horos* is, what is essential to the word *horos*. The readings of alternative manuscripts of Harpocraton's lexicon entry for the term is taken for granted in the Liddell and Scott lexicon, in which the *horos* is described as 'boundary, landmark [...] pillar (whether inscribed or not, cf. Harp.)'⁵ But this interpretation may well be based upon a misreading of the words for 'without letters' (χωρίς γραμμάτων).⁶ Given that Harpocraton provides a definition almost word-for-word with that of the Suida, it seems likely that typographical error arose during the copying. Nonetheless this typographical slip, like a slip of the tongue, does not mean that it does not mean something or that it does not matter. The oversight of the copyist or transcriber, the lapse in concentration or proof of ignorance opens up the possibility of a deeper vision into the nature of stone. If the stone itself is the marker, what extraneous role does the inscription play? And if the stone already is read, whence come these lithic letters that draw up the boundaries of our relation with the land?

To begin again, however, it must be stated that *horos* is stone. And it does not cease to be stone once it is inscribed; its inscription is read and interpreted. The matter of the stone does not cease to matter once it is endowed and associated with script. But if it also does not require an inscription in order to be recognised or read as boundary, this poses a genuine challenge to the supposed precedence of speech over writing as well as human activity against nature's passivity or of meaning over

4 Lalonde (1991); Lewis (1994); Finley (1952); Fine (1951).

5 LS. ὄρος.

6 Harp. (1833) 139; Harp. (1853) 226.

matter. The location of the boundary, assumed to be marked out by the human drive to determinism may well be read into what was already there: a kind of prehistoric script of stone. So, what of the stone? What does it tell us? What is its material, what does its materiality mean to us and what does it matter to the stone?

Aristotle says a synonym is where a single description corresponds to different nouns, 'so that there is no difference between the defined term (*horos*) and the name' (ὥστ' οὐδενὸς τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦνομα ὁ ἀποδοθεὶς ὄρος).⁷ In translating the word *horos* can we do any better than simply offering a swathe of synonyms? Perhaps this plethora of proximate meanings is also essential to the *horos*. *Horos*, to paraphrase Aristotle wildly, is the very distinction between words, and the material basis for metonymy and the word itself is synonymous to some degree with its letters, insofar as it is a word inscribed upon stone at once giving and given meaning in terms of the material play of presence of letters.

Ever since Aristotle, if not before, matter has been denigrated in favour of abstract concepts such as the soul and reason. And since Plato, transcendence has been given as the aim of philosophical thought—transcendence beyond the quotidian things of experience. This is described in the figure of the cave, where humans begin locked up in the stone of their own ignorance, lacking the determination to come into the open. Within the cave, our shared, perceived reality is nothing more than a shadow play.⁸ So long as we adhere within stone (the cave) we do not know the world for what it is, conscious reality elides us. But once we emerge and see that our previous habitation was nothing but stone, the symbolic (*sym-ballein*) play of meaning falls away and we are subject to a blast of the fresh air of reality.⁹ Henceforth, being ensconced within stone, in the cave, becomes the symbol for an unexamined life. This allegory represents the Palaeolithic mind, literally old and stoned on the demands of bare existence, inseparable from nature, embedded within the earth. It could also be an allegory for the cosmic mind, or the world soul, that mythic reminder of meaningfully embedded cohabitation, though this would not make it any less derogatory in Plato's vainglorious eyes.

7 Ar.*Top.*148a25.

8 Pl.*Rep.*514–520.

9 Ar.*Pol.*1294a35

The material world is not just the basis or springboard for any more abstract thoughts, it is also the hole we fall into when, like Thales, our thought becomes too abstract and we stop looking where we step (βαδίζειν ἀγνοοῦσι).¹⁰ Cohen points out the rocky substrate that underlies philosophical meanderings, from Petros (rock) as the foundation of the church to Latour's agency of the nonhuman: 'Stones are the partners with which we build the epistemological structures that may topple upon us. They are ancient allies in knowledge making.'¹¹ Philosophy has been based upon the speculation of the natural world from day one, whether that was wonder at the formation of the stars and the planetary bodies or the violent force of the rain and the sea as it wears away rock and crafts habitable zones. That sight (ὁράω 'to see') necessarily plays a part in this speculative world-view (*theoria*) and in the expansion of one's horizons reinforces the material intimacy of the term and stone, *horos*, with abstract human thought. As Chapter One argued, this term is the material representation of the constant motion of base materiality that needs to be passed over *diaporēsai* (διαπορῆσαι καλῶς) in order for thought to be freed from the material and go on into abstract thought, *euporēsai* (εὐπορῆσαι).¹² That there are determinations and certainties, static laws and rules in nature is entirely dependent upon being able to maintain a position within an otherwise constantly evolving world. And if this position is to have any meaning at all it has to exist in more than the symbolic realm of human thought and language, it has to obtain to 'reality.'

Stone becomes history's bedrock as lithic agency impels human knowing. Neither dead matter nor pliant utensil, bluntly impedimental as well as collaborative force, stone brings story into being, a partner with language (just as inhuman), a material metaphor.¹³

The idea that stone undergirds flights of metaphor, of technological, artistic and philosophical creation seems a pretty radical cultural critique, especially as it must claim to be common to all cultures. It is in fact more than radical: roots are superficial in comparison to stone. In contrast, dominant cultural and economic practises today are reliant

10 Ar.Met.995a27–40.

11 Cohen (2015) 4.

12 Ar.Met.995a27–40.

13 Cohen (2015) 4.

upon stone being exactly nothing but dead matter and pliant utensil to be put to use according to human will. How does stone come to be thought 'dead matter' at all? It might be useful to consider this as a purposeful depletion of the meaning of matter, rather than a natural origin story in which matter begins as mute, base and void. If this is the case, then it is not matter itself that starts as lacking significance but human beings who strip matter of value or significance for or in itself. This stripping of meaning from matter is attributed to the project of scientific rationalism, the point at which the various disciplines of human knowledge abandoned notions of the existence of an immanent demiurge, animistic spiritual beliefs, or the *anima-mundi*, and restructured belief systems around the experimental understandings into mechanical processes of the organic world.¹⁴

That the world is the substrate or foundation for any more abstract thought rather than the other way around (where thought or *nous* brings the world into being) is also the basis for the supremacy of human meaning attribution. Even according to phenomenology (whose name derives from the things that appear) we experience objects only insofar as they mean something to us. This is the case both nominally or metaphorically and actually. For example, Aristotle's *physics* preceded his *metaphysics*, the stoics could be found in the marbled stoa earning a name for themselves, and even the peripatetics had to walk upon something in order for their name to get around.

Graphic Slips of the Tongue

Letters might not be as effective at persuading as stones are, but they can open up a correspondence between deeds and words in their indeterminable (a-rist) aspect of non-appropriation. The consubstantiality of letter and stone follows the path of writing crooked and straight (γραφῆων ὁδὸς εὐθεῖα καὶ σκολιή), leading on the one hand to the play of absence and presence, but on the other to the interminable preoccupation with intercourse and copulation.¹⁵

The earliest extant *horoi* have been dated to the second half of the sixth century BC, and the archaic boundary-stones of the *agora* (which

14 Merchant (1990) 99f.

15 DK 59: 75. In keeping with the theme, there are variations in spellings here.

read 'I am the boundary of the *agora*') are believed to have been inscribed around 500 BC, while inscribed gravestones in Athens recede further back into the seventh century (though those inscribed with the *HOPOS* are conservatively dated to the fifth century).¹⁶ If we accept these rough dates we must also accept with a certain irony the fact that the *horos* of the agora, copulation and all, is among the earlier extant examples in the archaeological records of this stone (fifty years at the very most separates it from its predecessors). It is significant that attempts to date the earliest *horoi* upon archaeological evidence alone would suggest their coincidence with the foundation of the sixth-century archaic *polis*, with the period of the rise of the *agora* and the institutions that mark the beginnings of civic, political life in Athens. And yet, and this is unique, the literature suggests a considerably older heritage, intimated by references in the Homeric epics, as well as the important (if perplexing) role the *horos* plays in the poems and reforms of Solon, as we have received them from Aristotle (pseudo or not).

So, we face a curious problem. Our texts point to a prehistory of stone that the material evidence fails to support. It is more than a mere matter of precedence—the controversial relation between what is written and what is spoken—because here it would appear that the word, or the name of the stone, is older than the stone itself. But surely that is not possible. It is as if this early terminological identification between the stone and its various meanings (mark, limit, term and so forth) ridiculed the notions of precedence assumed in the school of archaeology, by inverting the *archē* and the *logos*. In order to excuse this lapse, of word before matter, the archaeologist may attribute these inconsistencies to the restrictions and limitations placed upon the epigraphist who is compelled to read script as a secondary writing upon stone.

The predisposition towards script can be observed in the self-evident distinction between the sculpted lumps of stone destined for museums and those inconsequent remainders dispersed among the weeds. How do archaeologists choose which stones are endowed with archaeological significance and which are discredited as meaningless matter? Obviously, the role the stones played in human society and culture provides the dividing line here for what is considered 'of archaeological interest' and what is not. But even here the lines are not so clear, since archaeologists

16 Lalonde (1991) 5–7.

are predominantly employed in the digging up of ancient rubbish heaps, the site dedicated to the remains of matter no longer invested with the significance of use. Matter itself and stones in particular are constantly enduring the recycling reconfigurations of social and cultural significance written upon their surface or implied in their disposal. From a paleontological perspective, of course, such differences break down and reconfigure into a different set of priorities attributed to the hierarchy of stone, but more on that in Chapter Five.

The pre-inscriptional *horoi* that are presumed to have sufficed in pre-literate times are necessarily speculative, as uninscribed stone cannot indubitably verify its name as *horos* to the epigraphist, even given the significance suggested by its position. The fact that $\text{HOPO}\Sigma$ was inscribed on waist-high pillars, wall blocks and even cut into natural rock façades would suggest that in pre-literate times more or less any rock surface could have sufficed as a *horos*. One such early rupestral *horos* of Zeus on the Hill of the Nymphs is easily missed and stepped over, carved as it is into the surface of a horizontal rock face.¹⁷ If the words $\text{HOPO}\Sigma$ $\Delta\text{IO}\Sigma$ [retrograde] were not inscribed, it would be unrecognisable as a boundary of any kind. To our eyes this *horos* would be indistinguishable from stone: just another rock. But was this the case for its archaic observer? Does the word itself, '*horos*,' and therefore also the boundary it comprises, refer to its inscription, or did it inhere within the stone? Are boundaries found in language or presupposed in nature? What did the ancients themselves take the word *horos* to mean?

In order to address this problem, I will break the *horos* down into its respective parts: its multiple meanings and translations, its various archaeological remains, its textual examples and the letters themselves that constitute the inscription. The prehistory of the *horos* poses a particular difficulty to the epigraphist in identifying a stone *horos* in the absence of this inscription. As Lalonde suggests:

The history of *horoi* in Athens, as in all of Greece, probably goes back before literate times, but the evidence for pre-inscriptional stones is slight and speculative; we might posit their use on the analogy of a variety of uninscribed natural and artificial boundary markers of the Classical and Hellenistic periods.¹⁸

¹⁷ Lalonde (2006).

¹⁸ Lalonde (1991)

And a note from Finley:

The available evidence indicates that these *horoi* [meaning those later used as hypothecation markers], unlike the boundary-stones, were always inscribed; in fact, their very reason for existence would have been nullified by the absence of an inscription.¹⁹

Of course, both these statements indicate how the archaeological record cannot help but favour writing and the inscription over an implied act of reading. Both studies also intimate the probability that preclassical boundary-stones were not inscribed with the word *horos*. What is analogous about these arguments is an *argumentum ex silentio*, an archaeological proof of the symbolic invocation of reading—‘I cannot say it because I cannot read it, but I say it anyway.’ Speech from silence is the condition of speech as such; speech always issues out of silence. As Lacan notes in reference to St Augustine’s *De locutionis significatione*, just as the words uttered by God in *Genesis* create *ex nihilo*, so speech is a ‘symbolic invocation’ that creates ‘a new order of being in the relations between men.’²⁰

Thus the stone speaks in the absence of script; the archaeologists hear the silence as proof for what they do not see before them, all those uninscribed *horoi*. The stone speaks to us *ex silentio*. In this, the *horos* is analogous with any other stone; it is *ana-logos*, *logos* drawn out of stone. Is this a kind of speech that is engraved upon the land and given to us aesthetically, not purely image but read nonetheless? One dictionary suggests the Indo-European root for *horos* is *ueru- ‘draw,’ *uoru-o-, with a further connection in Greek to ἐρύω, also ‘to draw.’²¹ But it also bears a close resemblance to seeing (ὁράω ‘to look, see,’ hence the Homeric form οὔροϛ, meaning ‘watcher’), a theoretical origin which obviously should not be overlooked. In this case, the verbal action of the *horos* is drawn from speculation and said to precede any later attempts at definition (ὀρίζω). The *horos* is from the beginning a theoretical task that begins on the boundary and marks its path into the historical era as the term of the market.

There is also the possibility that the *horos* emerged along with its near neighbour ‘mountain,’ ‘mountain range’ (ὄρος) a natural boundary

19 Finley (1952) 197, n.13.

20 Lacan (1991) 239.

21 Beeks (2010) ὄροϛ.

par excellence, distinct from the *horos* on account of the oxytone on the first syllable rather than the last and lacking aspiration. It could also be distantly related to the more than verbal arousal, ὄρνυμι, 'to stir-up, excite, make to arise,' and would explain the habit of intervening within the texts at the most critical times. Nearby there is also the watery ὀρός, the 'whey' or because like engenders like, σπερματικὸς ὀρός, 'seminal fluid.' And yet my personal favourite is that *horos* is linked in some kind of devious way to the verb οὐρέω, 'to urinate,' drawing up the boundaries according to dogs, wild beasts and camping logic.²² There is definitely a sort of libidinal coincidence of opposites inherent to these etymologies, whether originating from a protuberance or cleft the *horos* is indicative of a deeper penetration of stone than normally allowed in our frigid metaphysics. At least we can recognise that there is a bulging, autopoietic sense of boundary-creation, or something divisive, common to these etymologies. The *horos* need not proliferate or multiply since it is itself the same, amphibolous name given to division itself: 'one *horos*' suffices (εἷς ὄρος).²³

The Liddell and Scott lexicon places the potential ambiguity of the word in parenthesis when it defines the *horos* as a 'pillar (whether inscribed or not...).' ²⁴ The parenthetical equivocation is presumably the result of a lexical comparison between the different manuscripts of Harpocration's lexicon. Harpocration's lexicon and the much later tenth-century AD lexical compilation, of the Suida, provide a similar definition for the word *horos*.

Ὅρος· οὕτως ἐκάλουν οἱ Ἀτικοὶ τὰ ἐπόντα ταῖς ὑποκειμέναις οἰκίαις καὶ χωρίοις γράμματα, ἃ ἐδήλουν, ὅτι ὑπόκεινται δανειστῇ.²⁵

Horos: thus the Athenians called the letters set upon pledged households and lands, which showed that they were subject to a loan.

The text refers to the fourth-century BC usage of the *horoi* where they were placed upon properties to indicate fiscal encumbrance, a mortgage

22 Cf. *ibid*.

23 Thuc.4.92.4. I agree with Fine's objection to Wade-Gery's interpretation of this passage as providing an earlier reference to a mortgage stone, this is clearly the outer boundary-stone of a region. Fine (1951) 50–51. n.40.

24 LS: 1256 (II.b).

25 See entries for ὄρος in Suid. (1854) 786; Suid. (1705) Vol 2. 716 (with Latin translation). and Harp. (1833) 139; Harp. (1853) 266.

of sorts.²⁶ I've translated *grammata* as 'letters' to try to maintain the proximity to the written word, though the sense here is probably more like a 'deed,' as something that has been drawn up, or draws an outline, like a 'title deed.'²⁷ The alternate Harpocraton manuscripts differ only slightly from the above definition but in an important way. For where this entry states that the Athenians drew letters 'upon the land,' the Harpocraton manuscripts offer the alternative reading 'without letters.'²⁸ The χωρίους γράμματα (letters upon the land) is replaced in the A manuscript with χωρίς γράμμα, in the BC manuscript with χωρίς γραμμάτων, and with χωρίς γράμματος in the Aldine—all meaning 'without letters,' the 'letter' varying in case or number.²⁹ These readings have been rejected by the editor Dindorf, as by Bekker, as a corruption in favour of that of the χωρίους γράμματα. And, judging by an earlier entry in the same work (ἄστικτον χωρίον, 'unmortgaged land') it would appear that the editor's addendum is accurate, for here we read ὅταν γὰρ ὑποκέηται, εἶθων ὁ δανείσας αὐτὸ τοῦτο δηλοῦν διὰ γραμμάτων ἐπόντων τῷ χωρίῳ, which is to say that the lender shows that a piece of land is pledged by means of letters set upon the land, with no mention of the *horos*.³⁰ Considering this coincidence of writing and speech, the *horos* is from the first a theoretical problem, the conjuncture of what is seen and heard as the initial margin of a similarity that is not primarily given to the senses, though it does not, for all that, cease to be represented aesthetically.

The difference is more than just a letter, though it is nothing less than a letter; it comes to provide a definition in which letters are themselves made absent or at least insignificant and even unnecessary, and the stone absorbs whatever remains in the absence of signification. As the Liddell and Scott lexicon states, the stone itself means *horos* 'with or without letters,' but does it mean this only because of a typographical error? Either way, there is a lack of letters, or a lapse of letters, whether in the text of Harpocraton, in the Liddell and Scott, or on the stone itself

26 See Finley (1952).

27 The translation offered by Portus confirms this: *Attici vocabant libellos, vel titulos, cedibus & agris oppigneratis affixos, qui significabant, ea creditoribus obligata esse*. Suid (1705) Vol 2. 716.

28 Harp. (1833) 139; Harp. (1853) 226.

29 Harp. (1853) 226.

30 Harp. (1853) 62. Also in Harp. (1833) 38 (with typographical variations/errors).

that does not need to be inscribed in order to say that it is *horos*. With or without letters, it reads *horos*.

Obviously, the interpretation of *horos* as being synonymous with 'letters' is also not without its difficulties. But, as Moses Finley notes in his study, it is 'more than probable that the two words [that is, *grammata* and *horos*] were here conceived as synonyms.'³¹ What is common, then, is spelled out clearly in Aristotle's definition of the synonym:

συνώνυμα γὰρ ὧν εἷς ὁ κατὰ τοῦνομα λόγος· ὥστ' οὐδενὸς τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦνομα ὁ ἀποδοθεὶς ὄρος, εἰ δὴ ὁμοίως ἐπὶ πᾶν τὸ ὁμώνυμον ἐφαρμόττει.³²

Things are synonyms when there is a single description (*logos*) that corresponds to the name, so that the defined term (*horos*) is in no way different to these except in name, but is similarly joined to every homonym.

Aristotle introduces the notion of the 'homonym,' making it explicit that definition exists as overlapping boundaries between words. Definitions are paramount in conceptualising language as something more than merely conceptual; language begins to look like an interwoven structure rather than a list of discreet words. *Horos* is the definitory boundary or margin of definition that borders on every term. The *horos* is always there as the joint between the words' differences, and is what is likewise shared or similar, uniting them in a proximity despite nominal differences. *Horos* is there in the interstices as the name of this entire operation. In place of the name '*horos*,' then, one might also say letters, the common 'element' between words, on this at least the lexis are in agreement.³³

'Drawing,' 'writing' or 'letters' are synonyms for the word *horos*. Unfortunately, the references to this 'drawing' upon the land deal exclusively with the later fourth-century *horoi* that undoubtedly have to do with actions taken by men to 'mark' encumbrance of a mortgage of some sort. It is pure speculation, but it is possible that the same language was used to talk about the earlier boundary-stones. If so, what did that earlier, earthly writing mean? Did it have to do with possession

31 Finley (1952) 199, n.22.

32 *Ar.Top.*148a25.

33 Except for Bekker (1814) 285.

and appropriation, with ownership or indebtedness as the later ones? Or were the boundary-stones implicated in 'natural' boundaries, in marking places given over to particular use, such as water holes, fertile land, easy passages between difficult terrain, or linguistic boundaries between tribes?

According to the precedence of speech over writing, it could be said that these stones are the supplement of the speech of the earth.³⁴ They are the sign of what the earth already signifies. But does the earth speak before it writes? Surely geo-forces take precedent here, and we read them and interpret them to mean something for us; that is what we call geology, geography, climatology and so forth. If, like the first pictograms, images replace sounds, what does the placement of stones upon the land reimagine or represent? Has there not been a prejudice towards literalism in always representing pictograms and ideograms as the first forms of writing, when, on the contrary the letter was never supposed to be taken literally? Writing is taken as a response from outside, a comment framed or outlined upon or against a natural surface, as if humans required a sense of their distinction and separation from the natural organic world, the self-consciousness of differentiation from the nonhuman, in order to 'represent' what they saw filtered through this consciousness. But it could just as easily be a trace that emerges from within. Is there anything more than an intellectual, even pedantic distinction between human script and the mark the dog leaves on the tree so that another dog can sniff it and thereby read into this scent the absent presence of the former dog? What if the traces of writing were read, sensible to begin with, though not necessarily intelligible?

There is a fracture within writing, according to Derrida, on account of the deferral of meaning within the sign that is always pointing somewhere else. There is therefore a spatial difference, but there is also a temporal difference, where writing defers to the meaning that it will be given when it is read in the future. This split within the text means that meaning is always absent, and no particular meaning can ever be definitively present. This slippage between difference and deferral gives rise to Derrida's coinage of the word *différance*, where sound remains one while meaning differs because of the mute phonetic play of a single letter. *Horos*, pronounced in modern Greek *oros* (and written without the

34 Derrida (2016) 305–306.

aspiration), might not be dissimilar. The letter itself, the archaic trace of an unknown phoneme, plays on the absence and presence of this sound (H) which might have ceased to be there by then, though exactly when 'then' remains a question.

In any case the *horos* was written with an *H*. This letter remains as a trace of referral or deferral, both spatially and temporally, in the very least because we cannot say what it was originally supposed to mean or why it was kept even when its meaning had changed. That is to say that how the *horos* was supposed to be read as a spoken word remains a mystery, literally unspoken, locked up within stone. Perhaps it is along these lines that we can explain why Derrida disagrees with Lacan's articulation that 'the letter always arrives at its destination.'³⁵ For Derrida the destination is beside the point, as writing must function in the absence of the meaning-giving addressee of the text. For a letter to arrive it must have been sent. However, the origin of letters remains one of the great mysteries of human culture.

Lacan and Derrida both have innovative ways of escaping the limits of these atemporal boundaries. For Lacan it is to be found in the (literal) procedure or function of the unconscious, which, as Bruce Fink puts it, is 'composed of "letters" working, as they do, in an autonomous, automatic way, which preserves in the present what has affected it in the past.'³⁶ Or, as Lacan says himself, 'letters *make up* assemblages; not simply designating them, they *are* assemblages, they are to be taken as functioning as assemblages themselves,' and a little later, 'the unconscious is structured like the assemblages in question in set theory, which are like letters.'³⁷ These material elements have the capacity to break down and reform, where the act of reading meaning into them is never orchestrated fully by chance.

The letter's tendency toward dissolution and reformation marks it out as an element, or as Derrida will say a 'trace' of a structure that is not wholly described by the dichotomy of presence and absence. The letter returns from the past and interrupts, or erupts into, the present, even when its presence merely indicates absence. For Derrida the letter is the trace that always breaks into any predetermined project of

35 'Seminar on "The Purloined Letter"' in Lacan (2006) 30.

36 Bruce Fink, 'The Nature of Unconscious Thought or Why No One Ever Reads Lacan's Postface to the "Seminar on "The Purloined Letter"'," in Feldstein (1996) 183.

37 Lacan (1988) 47–48.

archaeology which claims to escape the aporetic task of philosophy, and ascend to the heights of absolute presence: 'Such a *différance* would at once, again, give us to think a writing without presence and without absence, without history, without cause, without *archia*, without *telos*, a writing that absolutely upsets all dialectics, all theology, all teleology, all ontology.'³⁸

Language is the structure into which every individual enters, but the role of writing is generally given in second place, just as in the case of the epigraphists, who read writing as a secondary script upon stone. Speech is obviously the main stage for psychoanalytic practice, its instrument, its material and framework. According to Lacan simile is paramount, so the unconscious is structured like a language; it is the place where signifiers loom large and generate the symbolic order. However, underneath, underpinning the symbolic order, sometimes undermining it, is the real. The real is the void of meaning and can never truly be known. It can only ever be mediated by the imaginary or the symbolic. The letter, for Lacan, is found here. The letter is part of the material substrate that buttresses the symbolic order. 'By "letter" I designate that material support that concrete discourse borrows from language.'³⁹ The letter therefore is always already there, in a peculiar way, found and brought up into the signifying chain. In Lacan's words the letter is 'the essentially localised structure of the signifier,' a component part or element that only gains meaning by being hauled out from the depths and forced into collusion with other letters.⁴⁰ Because the possibilities are endless the assemblages that are created are all the more indicative of the state of mind of the speaker, the author of (mis)meaning.

Derrida drew attention to the possibility that letters could be independent from speech in an entirely different way. For him writing does not function merely as a mnemonic device, it is not secondary to phonetic language. Rather, it belongs to the same world as that of objects. The letter is a thing without an inherent meaning attributed to it by the human imaginary. A scientific mind might say that it is therefore dead, an initiate into the mysteries might say that it is therefore full of the mystic depth of being, or something like that. For

38 'Ousia and Grammē: Note on a Note from Being and Time' in Derrida (1982) 67.

39 Lacan (2006) 413.

40 Ibid. 418.

a poet the letter is the raw material to be worked into song, just as stone is to the sculptor.

So, what is the difference between a stone and a letter? Both provide the basic structure of our world, and both support a living structure, into which we are born and grow. How different are they, then, if meaning and mattering are intra-active processes? Lacan asks whether 'the spirit could live without the letter. The spirit's pretensions would nevertheless remain indisputable if the letter hadn't proven that it produces all its truth effects in man without the spirit having to intervene at all.'⁴¹

Is it a coincidence, an accident, that the stone retains the outdated form of the letter? Or is this immaterial? Perhaps for the letter as such but for the term? Are not these terminal or temporal limits themselves the material boundary against which any system of definition comes? The letter's materiality is in the *horos*, the 'term, boundary, definition, stone, and landmark' etcetera. And yet surely the letter must precede all these definitions, not merely to give them form but even as the potential of reconstituting the similarity and difference of terms? The letters that compose the word, insofar as they draw up the boundaries, must also precede the determination of the stone as *horos*. This is the letter's bondage, not that it requires a master in order to convince the master that it is in fact the letter who reigns. The letter adheres to the term as closely as the gadfly to Socrates, and its protean pestering (or posturing) results in a different death each time. Pulling away from the term, it will reappear to reconstitute and be reconstituted in another term—the bondage of the letter is thus the *horos*.

That the *horos* is letters, with or without the inscription, suggests a regime where that which is already written in stone is more or less the material support of language, but where the difference between this more and less, the with or without, is the literal ground for the possibility of even the most miniscule differences in determination and terminology (hence the Socratic work takes place between these contraries). In order to express this difference is it necessary to coin a new term by changing an *e* to a little *a*? Perhaps it is dangerous and certainly acquisitive to thereby coin a new term (*différance*) and open a new market in the interstices of the text, at the risk of objectifying even fetishising something that has always been there. This name-giving also

41 'The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud' in Lacan (2006) 423–424.

gives the impression that one can claim a title to the trace that lingers throughout the history of philosophy, that one can give a name, inscribe one's mark on exactly that point at issue that always evades designation and determination. But this is exactly the mark of ownership that the *horos* proscribes by not even needing a letter to be read.

The stone cannot be left out since the base materiality of the *horos* acts as a dampening force amongst these spirited notions. For the stone is the *horos*, marked upon the land. The Athenians may well have called words and letters *horos*, but it is the stone that they read whether or not it could be said to boast inscription. The name *horos* belongs to the stone; its mark is inscribed upon it. It supports these marks and gives them (and) its identity thereby. The stone is recognisable because it tells us its name, it reads *horos*, and we may presume did so with or without the written word, the inscribed letters.

Fantatising the Letter

The origins of script are often given as a tool or a material support for human economic activity—that humans first wrote pictographs to begin with in order to represent material objects, to satisfy a need prompted by economic concerns.⁴² The Indus-valley glyphs are supposed to be economic devices, the pictographs of Sumer designate quantities for exchange purposes, the logosyllabic script of the Maya primarily records events of the elite, the hieroglyphs are mnemonic devices for the rituals of the priestly caste. Other signs such as those on Greek pottery were supposed to have developed in order to represent ownership or authorship, while the incision of letters, *boustrophedon*, evolved from agriculture and from the most economic method of ploughing furrows.⁴³ Interestingly enough, these ideas about the origins of script tend to support the dominant economic and political systems, suggesting the development toward an elite-governed society structured around private ownership and an exchange-based economy.⁴⁴

42 As Powell observed: 'The undoubted economic character of the protocuneiform tablets has coloured general histories of writing, suggesting that all writing has appeared in response to economic behaviour.' Powell (2009) 63. For the expanded economic theory, see Schmandt-Besserat (1992).

43 Derrida (2006) 313.

44 Gelb's language is itself an interesting case study. It is not coincidental that when describing the superiority of phonetic writing, many other assumed superiorities

The ancient cultures themselves had very different ideas about the origins of their scripts. For the most part they tell us clearly that writing came from the gods.⁴⁵ In Egypt, before Thoth, Seshat was the goddess who created writing, her name literally means 'scrivener,' so too does the name of the Northern African god 'Al Kutba.' The Sumerian goddess Nisaba was a goddess of writing and scribe of the gods, as was the ancient Mesopotamian Nuba and the Hindu god Chitragupta. In Celtic mythology the Ogham alphabet is attributed alternately to a Scythian king after the fall of Babel or to Ogma who used trees for letters and named the alphabet after himself. Perhaps the most impressive of all these is the story of Odin, who hung himself from the cosmic tree Yggdrasil for nine nights in order to obtain knowledge of the sacred runes. Meanwhile, in Japan, the deity Tenjin lost his former association with natural disasters (untimely) to become the god of calligraphy and scholarship. There are, no doubt, many more examples of scrivener gods amongst other less documented cultures. The monotheistic religions may have departed from the divine scrivener, putting writing into the hands of prophets. Nonetheless, Greek, Arabic and Biblical Hebrew all had mystical interpretations if not practices associated with their alphabets, much like the script of Easter Island and the runes. The actual act of writing as a practice seems to be the main point of interest here, rather than any oral tradition simply taken down in script.

Must we dismiss these origins as fantastic or fabulous and therefore inherently false? What kind of a phenomenon is writing? Did it develop as an economic tool in human hands, or was it created by some kind of transcendent deity? Or finally, was writing something that evolved 'naturally' to reflect our beliefs in our own 'naturally' evolved origins? That is to say, is writing the material proof of an autopoietic fantasy of deterministic evolution?

Given the presence of the origin of script in diverse cosmologies, what role does the letter play in the development of human cultures? If the earliest mythologies were based upon practices of prophecy or shamanism, the sole task of which was to read meaning into the

sneak in; from his use of the masculine article, his exclusive use of masculine examples, to his talk of primitives and primitive writing. This understanding of writing cannot be separated from its specific socio-cultural framework. Gelb (1952) see for example page 13.

45 Gelb (1952).

natural world around them, then surely the very basis of metaphysical belief is that earthly content or natural text that offered itself to such determinative practices. Perhaps these problems are only discoverable within an ontology of script, an ontogrammatology.

The privileged position that phonetic alphabets have held is not only culturally specific and outdated but, given the former belief in the divine origin of writing, presumably also something along the lines of heresy. The disjuncture between what linguists have called writing and what philologists called writing can be said to have been broken apart entirely by Derrida when he pointed out that the non-phonetic variability within writing should be proof that there is no purely phonetic writing.⁴⁶ Writing admits within itself and cannot function properly without the inclusion of non-phonetic signs, such as silent letters, archaic spellings, punctuation, spacings.⁴⁷

The difference between graphemes is a silent play, neither always present to sight (they elude the reader in the dark) nor to hearing (like the *e* in granite), but the play is essential to the maintenance of the structure of language. 'Here, therefore, we must let ourselves refer to an order that resists the opposition, one of the founding oppositions of philosophy, between the sensible and the intelligible.'⁴⁸ Do human beings create deontological structures in order to wrestle life from the world around them, reforming it and denuding it within the pages of their control in order to put it to use, and appropriate it for their own ends without suffering pangs of conscious? If this is the case it is not only matter that has been subjected to this process of denuding but everything beyond the human.

Does the death of matter or the non-living of matter coincide with what Derrida calls the 'dead letter' or the death of writing?

Writing in the common sense is the dead letter, it is the carrier of death. It exhausts life. On the other hand, on the other face of the same proposition, writing in the metaphoric sense, natural, divine, and living writing is venerated.⁴⁹

46 'Pictographs have no linguistic reference of any kind; they depict an event, or convey a message, by means of a series of drawings. Such a medium can hardly be called writing.' Hooker in Walker and Chadwick (1990) 6.

47 Derrida (1984) 5.

48 Ibid. 5.

49 Derrida (2006) 17.

Interpretations of the natural world as something to be read cast the earth as a book: the 'world is a manuscript' (Jaspers) and when we observe its phenomena we 'read in the great book of Nature' (Descartes).⁵⁰ The book of nature is the visible side of a deeper metaphor, 'which forces language to reside in the world, among the plants, the herbs, the stones, and the animals,' says Foucault.⁵¹ The idea of the book of nature has given a privileged place to the notion of an 'original' writing, while human writing is posed as secondary. And yet the two are indissolubly linked. These ideas of the book of nature were formed in the sixteenth century, just as scientific rationalism was gaining ground within the academies of Europe. What was important in generating new forms of knowledge was the non-distinction between 'what was seen and what was read, or between observation and relation,' an identification that provided the basis for the scientific method.⁵² This secondary writing served to implement the first as the basis for the laws of reason, of man and his dominance. First writing was associated immediately with the instigation of Law, whether as a product of a supreme demiurge, the hand of the Hebraic God or Scientific Man's laws of nature, the physical laws. These laws led to the unrestrained development of human technologies both of convenience and of death, which in turn led to the denuding of matter, the brutalising of matter, because behind matter were said to be laws, at once immutable and omniscient that governed whatever happened here below regardless of human actions, laws that could be understood only by human reason, and more specifically well-educated men inscribed in the institutions of power.

This first writing, the laws of the physical universe, was supposed to convey full-presence, fully legible in the world around us, indubitable and immutable, present to itself as subject. Of course modern physics, quantum physics, has proved that this was nothing more than a dream, a fantasy of clarity, control and unequivocal in a much more complex and involved universe. In fact the structure of the universe is much closer to what Derrida interpreted as the indefinite play of signs, where any sign is a representation of something else which is in its turn the representation of something else and so on *ad infinitum*: an assemblage

50 Ibid. 16.

51 Foucault (2008) 39.

52 Ibid. 43.

beyond imagining. Addressing the same problem from the other direction, Barad explains that

Bohr's philosophy-physics (the two were inseparable for him) poses a radical challenge not only to Newtonian physics but also to Cartesian epistemology and its representationalist triadic structure of words, knowers, and things. Crucially, in a stunning reversal of his intellectual forefather's schema, Bohr rejects the atomistic metaphysics that takes "things" as ontologically basic entities. For Bohr, things do not have inherently determinate boundaries or properties, and words do not have inherently determinate meanings. Bohr also calls into question the related Cartesian belief in the inherent distinction between subject and object, and knower and known.⁵³

The traditional (non-magic) definition of the sign is that it is a substitute for a thing, and that this substitution is secondary to the sign's substitution for the sound that the sign refers to. It is a threefold substitution in which the original material is lost earlier down the path on the way to advanced linguistics. But what if matter itself was already a sign for something, that is not fully present in the first place? According to Plato the material world was merely the shadow play of the realm of ideas. Nonetheless, for Plato language is quite sufficient at expressing both realms equally. In contrast, the reality of Brahman (also Tattva, Sat, Padārtha, Paramārtha) in Indian philosophy is not receptive to discursive intellect or speech, and nor is it sensible.

Writing need not be limited to a grapheme with a linguistic reference and a series of drawings representing an event or conveying a message can still be classified as writing. Writing therefore does not need to be a privileged, progressive medium limited to certain types of societies and cultures, and instead any pictorial depiction that conveys ideas in one way or another can be considered writing. Obviously drawing in caves or writing in the sand is writing, but what about a snail trail or the squiggles of a woodworm? Both of these can be read to mean something, that my lettuces have been nibbled on, and that the shelf is no longer strong enough for the weight of books. But how far can this go? If nature writes, it has then to be asked if nature also makes plans. Is our fate to be a punctuation mark in the book of nature, a very recent, brief, exotically musical and surprisingly destructive mark at that?

53 Barad (2003) 813.

Writing raises the question of the relation between human language and the environment in which this language is steeped. If there is no insensible realm of ideas from which human language devolves down to script, then the relationship must be the other way around, from the ground up. Observing a stone house Sallis reads into it the possibility of an inscribing that implicates the historical as well as the natural at play, evidence of the past marking its way into the present: 'If it is an old house, one will sense also in its worn stones the traces of an obscure lineage, a certain human history inscribed—without having been, in any active or intentional way, inscribed—on the stone. Nature and history—the opposition again violated, confounded.'⁵⁴ Is writing a kind of deep materialism, where letters themselves originate from an intimate connection to the objects that we share the world with? Is matter itself the origin of writing?

As Karen Barad states,

matter is not little bits of nature, or a blank slate, surface, or site passively awaiting signification, nor is it an uncontested ground for scientific, feminist, or Marxist theories. Matter is not immutable or passive. Nor is it a fixed support, location, referent, or source of sustainability for discourse.⁵⁵

Horos poses similar problems. The question, Does the stone mean *horos* in the absence of the inscription and in the absence of a reader? appears close to the breach intrinsic to writing. Again, if we take the *horos*, the typographical error of a letter is not even necessary because *horos* already is this non-identification between materiality and meaning, between sign and signifier. Is it identified as *horos* because it is inscribed with the letters, or is its identification found elsewhere, in the reader perhaps or some other earthly elsewhere? Despite itself, the *horos* does seem to be an unremitting example of arche-writing, in that it never is able to be identified with a single meaning or with itself as subject. The *horos* is never reducible down to its definition. There is always a slippage when it comes to definition, and yet the trace remains that cannot help but keep pointing to the gap within the definition. This gap is not however devoid of substance, it is stone and though its meaning is not present to it, it still matters.

⁵⁴ Sallis (1994) 17.

⁵⁵ Barad (2003) 821.

Is matter a blank page upon which human actions are written? In a sense Karen Barad returns to the book of nature when she comes up against the matter of meaning for Derrida. The dynamism of matter, she states, is noncontemporaneous with itself, it is 'regenerative un/doing.'⁵⁶ In the same sense as Derrida states that there is nothing outside of the text; for Barad the absence in the heart of presence is a concretely textual matter because matter and how matter performs, reconfigures, and differs from itself is a work of deconstruction. Paraphrasing Bohr's concept of complementarity, Barad explains that the intimate relationship between discourse and materiality paralleled with the discovery of quantum discontinuity undermines the notion of 'an inherent fixed (apparatus-independent, Cartesian subject-object) distinction.'⁵⁷ Entities cannot be said to be individual actors interacting with one another, rather 'boundaries and properties of objects become determinate by virtue of a cut between observed and agencies of observation which is enacted by the material-discursive apparatus.'

Boundary-making practices, that is, discursive practices, are fully implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity through which phenomena come to matter. In other words, materiality is discursive (i.e., material phenomena are inseparable from the apparatuses of bodily production: matter emerges out of and includes as part of its being the ongoing reconfiguring of boundaries), just as discursive practices are always already material (i.e., they are ongoing material (re)configurings of the world). Discursive practices and material phenomena do not stand in a relationship of externality to one another; rather, the material and the discursive are mutually implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity. But nor are they reducible to one another. The relationship between the material and the discursive is one of mutual entailment. Neither is articulated/articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated. Neither discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior. Neither can be explained in terms of the other. Neither has privileged status in determining the other.⁵⁸

Barad calls into question the ground upon which are enacted the boundary-making practices that draw up the distinction between

⁵⁶ Barad (2010) 268 n.11.

⁵⁷ Barad (2003) 818.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 816.

humans and nonhumans. For Barad discursivity is not a capacity that can be said to belong exclusively to humans, for the very reason that both the content and form of discourse is generated in conversation with the nonhuman and material world. 'Human' refers to a phenomenon, another part of matter that shifts, becomes and reconfigures, and if the boundaries and properties that humans attribute, interpret and observe in the world, like magma, rise, crust, melt and reform along with what it means to be human 'then the notion of discursivity cannot be founded on an inherent distinction between humans and nonhumans.' Discursivity is implicated in matter. She calls this a 'posthumanist account of discursive practices.'⁵⁹ Barad therefore uses the verbal neologism 'mattering' to explain how matter and meaning become-determinate as well as indeterminate.⁶⁰ In other words mattering is the process of coming-to-meaning that takes place across the division of the human/nonhuman and the organic/inorganic. As Barad concludes when she addresses the problem of what or how matter means, 'Nature is not mute, and culture the articulate one. Nature writes, scribbles, experiments, calculates, thinks, breathes, and laughs.'⁶¹

This reference to nature as subject of script is placed in a footnote, strange given the significance that such a concept of nature must have. Here it could be said that Barad's image of nature writing, breathing and laughing, resolves her new materialism in the same place where Derrida began his critique:

The science of writing should therefore look for its object at the roots of scientificity. The history of writing should turn back toward the origin of historicity. A science of the possibility of science?⁶²

It is interesting that contemporary theory in physics would take us back to the book of nature, as it were. However, this time the term 'nature' functions differently. It would seem to have become an all-inclusive term, crossing the boundaries generated by earlier versions of the 'book of nature,' bringing together the human and nonhuman, the organic/inorganic, but potentially also cosmos and chaos into the discursive processes of mattering. It is also a much more playful concept

⁵⁹ Ibid. 818

⁶⁰ Barad (2010) 254.

⁶¹ Ibid. 268 n.11.

⁶² Derrida (2016) 30.

of nature, one in which chance probably plays a more significant role than any all-powerful deterministic divinity, while the old physical laws resemble the gods of animism.

The belief that writing began as an economic aid or tool apparently serves to strip human artistic endeavours, such as poetry and literature of an originary, fantastic ingenuity. Basically what it effects is the banalisation of practical activities. However, there is nothing to say that the practical activities of finding food, of noting water-courses (for example in Aboriginal dot paintings) or describing the aim of the hunt (cave paintings in Sulawsi, Chauvet) cannot also be the subject of enlightened artistic and literary exploits, possibly accompanied by song, but also remaining in place to be read at later times. However, it could also be argued that writing does not begin and end with us. Despite the ubiquity of our signature upon the land, the earth is not inhabited exclusively by *Homo sapiens*, and we ought to be able to read the presence of other beings on the land with as much respect as we do our own. What is the justification for an economy of the nonhuman as a resource that can be used without natural limits and how does the history and philosophy of script intersect with the economic precedence of humankind? Economy in this sense is the management, organisation and redistribution, and extortion of the nonhuman beyond a philosophy of interspecial care or sense of ethical or ecological boundaries.

Where does the idea that the world and the nonhuman are ownable and disposable come from? It is certainly not an idea common to all peoples of the world; in fact, animism generally obfuscates the possibility of outright ownership.⁶³ The polytheism of Greece did include the powerful idea of *hubris* and of not challenging or offending the gods with human (overweening) pride, and yet nonalienability of property was introduced into the Athenian city with little resistance, as far as we know. Ownership of land tends to go hand in hand with its use and abuse, unfortunately, as does the ownership of anything. Obviously, slaves were owned and disposed of in whatever way the master saw fit, as were animals, according to his dictates and his economic interests.

63 See, for example in the Australian setting, *Dark Emu* by Yuin writer Bruce Pascoe, who argues that non-ownership does not necessarily foreclose the activity of land management. In contrast see also *Farmers or Hunter-Gatherers? The Dark Emu Debate* by Sutton and Walshe, arguing for an archaeology that reinfuses native practices of land-management with spiritual propagation, magic and the Dreamtime.

In Ancient Greece we see the requisite conditions for subjecting the nonhuman to human economic interests, but how possible would this be without the mark of ownership, authorship or authenticity? And, is it possible to reconfigure writing in order to obfuscate the demand or desire to own?

With or Without Letters

By the fourth century the term *horos* appears to be outdated and yet in continued use, this is what can be read into the appearance of the *eta* (H) that by this time had been dropped entirely. But on the fourth-century stones, is the inscription of the *horos* the remainder of a prehistorical letter? Here, the play of presence and absence, where the letter is read but not written and heard out of silence, has been capitalised upon (by Solon, the Athenians, epigraphists and archaeologists alike). The *horos* resembles, in time it comes to dissemble the capital 'H.' More or less than a letter, H is an aspiration.

A peculiar detail of the *horoi* is their retention, even into the Hellenistic era, of the archaic H (now known as the vowel-sound, lower-case η). The presence of the H where later literary texts substituted the sign for the *spiritus asper*—that is, the inverted apostrophe of a rough breath (') suspended over the subsequent vowel sound—is a trope misleading to epigraphists who tend to use such forms as indications of proximate dating. The spelling of HOΠΟΣ with the sign H for the *spiritus asper* is potentially misleadingly archaic and, as epigraphists maintain, continued to be used in conventional formulae until the period of the archonship of Euklides, fourth century AD.⁶⁴ Later, when the H was no longer used as a separate letter to indicate a rough breath, but the long vowel sound 'e,' the original H was cut in half vertically, where the first half was used to indicate a rough breath, the latter the soft breath. Finally, the trace of the eta was retained only as two right angles, facing in opposite directions. These then resolved into the diacritical marks marking the smooth breathing, ψιλὸν πνεῦμα or *spīritus lenis*; and the rough breathing, δασὺ πνεῦμα or *spīritus asper*, or simply *dasia*.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Roberts (1905) xiii.

⁶⁵ Christidis (2001) 990.

In contrast, with the *horoi* the continued usage of the H makes assigning a certain *terminus ad* or *ante quem* with which to date the *horoi* particularly difficult. And yet, a *terminus post quem* is easier to confer, as the H on the *horoi* is the open H, not the closed h of the earlier script, which was in use in inscriptions for the years around 600 BC. Toward the end of this period, there are remains of inscribed vases (which are considered to be the forerunners of change on account of the ease of adopting the cursive script on pottery and the reduced size of the inscription) by the painter Sophilos where the H is still closed, in which case the open H of the *horoi* can be assigned a later date, such as late sixth, early fifth century.

It can be viewed as more than mere coincidence that our information for the time of the *horos* in the archaeological record is dependent upon the letter. The *terminus* for the *horos* is the *letter*. Here synonyms abound, reduced though they are to a mere terminological difference where what remains is *horos*. Translating this in any way cannot evade the *horos'* resistance to further identification. So, when we try to date the *horos*, to assign it temporal boundaries by breaking it down into distinct and separate letters, we find ourselves confronted once again by a literal boundary, *horos*. As Jeffrey states, the letter H,

ḥēt- seems to have been learnt originally by the Greeks as hēta = hé, the whole, both aspirate and following vowel, being a more vigorous sound than that of hé. In dialects which used the aspirate, i.e. those of the Greek mainland (except Elis and Arkadia), the Doric Pentapolis, the central and southern Aegean islands (except Crete), and which needed therefore to express it in their script, the initial sound, the aspirate, naturally predominated over the following vowel.⁶⁶

How exactly this initial sound was to be pronounced or heard remains a mystery. We do know, however, that in the absence of the *spiritus asper* (') that is amongst those peoples who dropped the rough breath and pronounced (-)oros, with a *spiritus lenis* ('), the texts produce alternate spellings with an additional letter, such as the Ionic οὔρος, the Megarian ὄρος, the lengthened Cretan ὠρος, not to mention the Corcyrean ὀρρος / ὄρβος, where the much older *waw* intercedes. It might be a case of substitution, where the absence of one letter calls for

66 Jeffrey (1990) 28.

the presence of another. It is an ambiguous tendency to lament a silence, juxtaposing the dead nature of the letter's character with writing as a temporal gesture. As a rule the letter is capitalised upon, the *horoi* are never in lowercase. What can be remarked in any case is that given its presence or absence, this capital letter in particular, H, serves to mark the linguistic boundaries of the Greek-speaking world. And yet in the *horos* inscription dated from the period of the Athenian expansion, the letter ceased to convey such differences because it remained out of time. Perhaps it is itself nothing but the trace that remains when such differences disintegrate.

Letters have an esoteric interpretation, though in the Greek context this is not nearly as evident as in the Hebraic or Arabic traditions. In *Magical Alphabets*, Pennick describes the esoteric significance of the Greek letter, H:

It is a character of balance, that quality of being in harmony with the world, being in the right place at the right time to achieve one's full potential. More specifically, as Eta this is manifested as the divine harmony of the seven planets and seven spheres of pre-Copernican cosmology. It can thus signify the music of the spheres. The Gnostic Marcus connected Eta with the third heaven: 'The first heaven sounds Alpha, and the one after that E (Epsilon), and the third Eta.'⁶⁷

Meanwhile reinforcing the appropriateness of its place in the word *horos*, in the Hebraic tradition the earlier Hebraic form of the letter *cheth* means 'fence' or 'hurdle.'


The fence is that which divides the inner from the outer. It is a barrier which serves an owner of something. It keeps those things in which the owner wants kept in, and keeps out those things which must be excluded. It is thus a letter of discrimination, the separation of things of worth from the worthless. Another related interpretation of Cheth is abundance and energy, the basic characteristics that separate the living from the dead. Esoterically, Cheth means 'distribution,' the primary function of energy. It has the number-equivalent of 8, Shemonah, fertility, and is connected astrologically with Libra.⁶⁸

The advantage, as well as problem, with magic is that it is not easily subject to debate, but is a wily thing that slips beyond reason's grasp.

⁶⁷ Pennick (1992) 51.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 17.

Nonetheless, that writing is something in human history that was more than mere tool is a notion that should not be dismissed and should inform our subsequent conceptions of what writing does within culture. The important point being that there are traditions in which form cannot be wholly separated from content, or put otherwise, that the matter of the letter does matter, and the letter itself carries meaning distinct from its presence within words.

The earliest Greek form of the letter h (hēt) is the ancestor to the earlier Phoenician word for fence, wall or barrier (hēt). This would depend upon the assumption that a letter develops out of an image attributed with a meaning, that is to say Saussure's process of linking (the bar) signified and signifier. But what if in these early letters it was just this that was proscribed by the letter, that is to say the bar itself (unified materially as the hyphen)? After all, H is a letter, not an image and not a concept. All the same, fighting against meaningful resemblance even on the most literal level would appear to be a lost battle. As Aristotle was quoted saying, a noun, name [*onoma*] or a verb on its own 'resembles meaning (or concept) without combination and disjunction' (ἔοικε τῷ συνθέσεως καὶ διαιρέσεως νοήματι)⁶⁹. If the name of the letter resembles the meaning of a word which it forms as in this particular case, admittedly in conjunction with other letters, it might be a case of, as Walter Benjamin puts it, 'non-sensuous similarity.'⁷⁰ And this is how we can read the history of this particular letter. Originally placed on its side by the Phoenicians, the precursor to the Greek letter H, outlines a stark physical resemblance to this hurdle of similitude. The letter is said to have taken form as an 'image' which means 'fence' or 'barrier' . Three posts, two on the extremes and a middle one separating unfilled space, while the horizontal lines protrude implying indefinite extension.

Put otherwise, and linking us back to the Suida, the letter is like a boundary (barrier/bar/hyphen) while the name of the letter is boundary (especially when it comes to distinguishing one letter from another). And in this sense perhaps every letter is a boundary imposed between meaning and non-meaning, marking out a word as something that can not only be read but also understood.⁷¹ Since we are concerned

69 Ar.Int.16a14.

70 Benjamin (2005) 697.

71 Derrida (1995) 94; Derrida (1981) 16.

with letters, which Lacan defines as the 'material support' of language, the base elements for any chain of signifiers, any resemblance that they evoke must be purely circumstantial (we must therefore remain with the boundary, even if this means verging upon the position, not on it, but nearby or 'around' it). That is to say that any mimetic aspect of the letter ought not be wholly ascribed to the letter as our device for expressing meaning but could be equally ascribed to us who read it as the fence or barrier that draws us up short. Since the whole is already implied in the (Saussurian) 'bar' that would claim to perform the meaning-giving function, of jointure and division, it should go without saying that neither the *horos* nor the letter are defined (fully) by their aesthetic appearance.

But that is not to say that they are not material, that they cannot be seen or heard. Whether or not the Athenians were familiar with this particular semantic association between form and content, there does remain in the term (*horos*) that sense of 'joining' (ἐφ'αρμόττει), *hinging*, of coming in between *two*, whether this obtains to the letter or its time. But it is the *horos* that claims this task, not the letter. In fact, if anything, the letter made upright and deprived of two of its rungs, insists more on a relation between two poles rather than their disjunction. As if, to get the bar and the closed concept of linguistics we need to employ all forms of the letter, and bring them to their conclusion, their logical fulfilment in the spiritual caesura of the breath. But if we were to accept this schema we would have to resolve ourselves to recognising a distinction between the *horos* and the stone, the *horos* and the letter, the term, the limit and the end, that is by abstracting the name as a mere variation of speech, the modulated out-blowing of spirit.

The *horos* simultaneously divides letters (meaning they can be taken out of order, of a particular word) and joins them as what is common (meaning they can be reconfigured to produce a new word). This is the principal function of the *horos*, where the boundary is a material concept whose intent is both to create a barrier and offer trespass. It can never be a full concept and can never be wholly abstracted since it remains material whether any particular letter (for example the H) is marked as presence or absence.

This letter, then, might in its first impulse suggest some kind of barrier, but could more effectually be transferred into the metaphor

of a linguistic portal. The letter defies the barrier; it always carries something over as what is left over from the past in the present. Is the problem raised by the letter seen better anywhere than in the institution more or less concurrent to the adoption and development of the Greek script, the *polis*? No doubt, the rapid proliferation of walls and fortifications and the corresponding need for doors, gates and passageways in the archaic *polis* (and their consequent protection in the form of property laws, immigration laws and so forth), coincide with the obsolescence in Ancient Greek of the closed form of the letter, and its lasting replacement with the open form (H). In the enclosed surrounds of the city and household walls, the blustery winds, along with the strange refuse carried upon the air, interrupting the clear categories of political allegiance (women, foreigners, gods and animals) could be momentarily shut out with the closure of a door and, with its opening, willingly admitted. Along the same lines, the aspiration came to lose its substance in the letter H, becoming a mere fixture or appendage that could be open (') or shut ('). A door cannot afford a view or prospect, but it can give onto a hall or passageway, even an arcade. In the door the wall is brought to breaking point, where h or H is resolved into a moment of punctuation. A pause for breath. Everywhere, that is except in stone, *HOPOS*.

And not even that any more. For even those stones have been subjected to classification techniques and a total subjection to the development and progress of letters, replaced *in situ*, installed in museums, set up in gardens, rubbed for squeezes elaborated upon in books. For in the aspirations of capitalist economies there is no time for what is lost to the past, or rather the glimmer of what is lost is relegated to dim corners in the floodlight of progress and punctuality. Henceforth, punctuations and dead spacing must bow in service to the hastening urge to press on, where simple breathing spaces are wasted breaths. So, the aspiration that marked the elision itself was elided, and in its most recent transformation, in the contemporary linguistic state, in place of the letter there is now as an unmarked elision, a term with no connection to its material past: *όρος*, what was in the past a marked elision, is remarked by nothing more than a lapse.

And yet, there is no call for resuscitating an unpronounceable phoneme in a new guise, nor to move ever forward with the 'storm of

progress' excising any letter that no longer pays its due in speech.⁷² But to have the time to recognise what is lost, even when this loss presents itself as a simple hiatus or caesura in the present, remains a marked possibility for thinking in an untimely way. A letter is more than just a sign, it is the briefest instant which stops our breath when we expire. The dead letter of the H, what we now cannot help but read as a capital or even as an entirely different letter from an entirely different language, succeeds 'cutting the breath short' as the 'principle of death and of difference,' where writing only presumes to interpolate itself from the beginning as the *aporia* that remains.⁷³ The point of the H is not to betray presence, to menace 'substantiality, that other metaphysical name of presence and of *ousia*.' The *horos* is not an inherently destructive force, not even a deconstructive one. On the other hand, what it is cannot be expounded by the dictates of identical reasoning.

Essentially, the *horos* is already drawn up in this outline of a letter. Any rhetorical exclamation (*apostrophē*) that would attempt to pronounce the letter would only come up against the apotropaic barrier of elision. Any claim to the possession of this letter has already been proscribed with the inverted possibility of an apostrophe (ὄρος). Always opening onto the other, exposed in quotation, the *horos* is the merest mark that distinguishes my word from yours, or brings into relief the bond of our communion, as Aristotle said 'the *horos* of life is breath' (τοῦ ζῆν ὄρον εἶναι τὴν ἀναπνοήν).⁷⁴ Is the *horos*, then, the door which can only be open or shut in its relations with other words or is it the switch in cybernetics that closes the circuit as it opens? When we read its inscription regardless of its form, the letter breaks open the barrier and maintains it, because the letter itself is exactly what is not represented in the image of a fence. Unlike the *horos* there is nothing aesthetic about the letter, certainly not, on principle, and yet that is not to say that it cannot be seen, heard or have its limits. You might not see the inscription in the dark, as 'the graphic difference itself vanishes into the night, cannot be sensed as a full term,' and the letter becomes illegible, indeed you might not even see the *horos*, but that does not mean you will not stub your toe against it.⁷⁵ So why have recourse to the other letter, to an alternate

72 Benjamin thesis IX in, Löwy (2005) 62.

73 Derrida (2016) 27–28.

74 Ar.Ath.404a9.

75 Derrida (1997) 27–28.

différance, which would itself reinscribe difference into the sensible text? Why? Perhaps because even here, a limit, that is to say a 'term' (even one that claims to defer its fullness) is required as a marker. Even Derrida at his most de(con)structive wants to mark the site between speech and writing, to fill it, albeit with something that it is not.⁷⁶

The question is, however, whether these limits are imposed upon the letter from without, or within? Perhaps it is the interminability of this question that is posed in the *horos*. For what is fence-like or like a barrier in the letter is, of course, the boundary itself, the word that draws up the limits of identity and resemblance, without however becoming a bar for the very reason that it is simultaneously composed of letters, and the name of the letter. The *horos* provides the necessary scene onto which the letter steps, and knocks out a passageway through which every word must pass in order to become a word.

Just as you cannot abstract the letter from the *horos* (or vice versa), nor can you eliminate transgression from a barrier—such rules are made to be broken. And it is the letter that brings it to breaking point, by always going two ways. The letter is always implicated in the *horos*, which, however, brings it to its limit in the word by drawing up the limits, in definition, between one word and another. This is because there must be limits, even in the various combinations of letters—otherwise the fraternisation that is facilitated by an open door would erase any difference between inside and outside, would suppose that those who constructed the barrier are one with those who suffer to resist it. The *horos* literally limits the possibility of fraternising with the enemy, while it supposes the necessity of breaking the clear determinations between enemy and friend in the symbolic infringement of barriers. Hence all those thrown stones—projectiles of insurgency—against a regime that would follow the law to the letter, but of course, in this case the letter and the spirit of the law are indifferent.

76 'Différance,' in Derrida (1982) 5.



Fig. 3. ΗΟΡΟΣ ΤΕΣ ΟΔΟ ΤΕΣ ΕΛΕΥΣΙΝΑΔΕ 'horos of the road to Eleusina' (end of the 5th c BC). Originally inscribed with HOROS TES ODO TES IERAS (520 BC). IG I³ 1096 [I 127] Photograph by M. Goutsourela, 2013. Discovered in the Eridanos river bed. Rights belong to the Kerameikos Museum, Athens. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development (H.O.C.R.E.D.).

3. Breaking the Law

ὁ ὄρος —*boundary, landmark*; the regions separated by the *boundary* usu. in gen. [...] also in pl., *bounds, boundaries* [...] *boundary-stone* marking the limits of temple-lands.¹

Lithography works not only on the principle that oil and water repel one another but also on the principle that the stone itself has an affinity with both these antithetical substances. The stone, as the art's chance discoverer describes it, not only has

an especial property of uniting with fats,—sucking them in and holding them,—but it has, also, the same propensity for taking all fluids that repel fats. Indeed, its surface unites so thoroughly with many of the latter that it forms a chemical union with them.²

Lithography therefore is founded upon the affinity of the stone to bring these antithetical substances together into a mutual relation of chemical repulsion.

Lithography is founded on mutual and chemical affinities, which hitherto had never been applied to the art of engraving. The dislike which water has for all fat bodies, and the affinity which compact calcareous stones have both for water and greasy substances, are the bases on which rests this new and highly interesting discovery.³

However, the two substances, oil and water, have no need of the stone in manifesting their mutual repulsion for one another. In fact, it is only by means of their mutual affinity with stone that their reciprocal hostility is made coherent in the coagulation of script, the printed word. Although this affinity for bringing enmity into relief might not

1 LS: 1255–1256.

2 Senefelder (1911) 97.

3 Colonel (1821) 1.

be the essence of the philosopher's stone sought after in alchemy, it has, however, led to technologies that have proved their weight in gold.

With lithography the technique of reproduction reached an essentially new stage. This much more direct process was distinguished by the tracing of the design on a stone rather than its incision on a block of wood or its etching on a copperplate and permitted graphic art for the first time to put its products on the market, not only in large numbers as hitherto, but also in daily changing forms. Lithography enabled graphic art to illustrate everyday life, and it began to keep pace with printing. But only a few decades after its invention, lithography was surpassed by photography.⁴

It is not without irony that when the art of printing aspired to mass production, it did so in so-called 'off-set lithography,' by substituting stone with more refined metal. While in the further 'advanced' science of cybernetics—for the production of circuit boards—another component was required—light: *photolithography*. Do these technological advances shed a certain light on the stone? Even, or especially, given that the stone is absent or eclipsed the moment art manifests its potential to be reproduced, to be associated with a *logos* that transforms it into an ever-increasing demand to extend, proliferate, develop? Or do such material advances in human technologies *not* reflect the original affinities humans recognised (*read*) in the stone?

Horos is a word, but it does not, for all that, cease to be stone. The word itself refuses its abstraction from the material dilemma of the boundary, or, to be more precise, it raises the problem of the difference between word and material by always remaining between them and bringing them into distinction. Not only like, but exactly as the stone of lithography, the *horos* brings both sides into a relation, providing a contrast, if not an enmity. Here, we are confronted with the problem of the boundary. *Horos* is a fence-sitter, but this means that it presents us with a duplicitous problem, at once lexical and spatial. The *horos* is the stone which, according to Deuteronomy, 'men of old placed as a boundary upon the land.'⁵ It is a boundary, marked

4 Benjamin (2002b) 102.

5 *Deut.* 19:14. This and all subsequent translations are from the *King James Bible* (KJ), unless referenced to the New International Version (NIV).

and marking. Can we distinguish that which marks the boundary from the boundary itself? Does either side of the boundary take its peculiarities from the boundary, or do their differences generate the boundary? What comes first, spatial opposition or the position in between? If the stone was 'placed,' then we could, along Hegelian lines, conceptualise this landmark as the point that negates space, and yet in the *horos* the point is confused with the line, as much as the word is with the stone.

For information about what archaeologists believe to be the 'primary'—the temporally first—use of the *horoi* as boundary-stones one is compelled to abandon the dubious connotations of lexicography and return to the obscure sphere of the sacred. Is this because first stones are always laid to the accompaniment of rites and rituals, the material remainder of cultic liturgy? Or because where further historical proofs are lacking, cultic worship, concerning which we now know so little, can be called upon to fill the void? Or are these past proceedings and present (lapse of) knowledge two sides of the same coin?

Upon approaching the *horos*, one is immediately confronted by the task of the translator. That one is destined to fail to pin down the word to any singular meaning reinvests this intransigent term with the peculiarity of an implicit prohibition: the prohibition against its removal, against a literal translation of the inscribed boundary. Even today, in the museums of Athens, the prohibition against the removal of the *horoi* holds, since we are unable to pick up this stone, to nurse it, and feel its grain upon our palms, to gauge its worth whether in the texts of Plato and Homer or in the archaeological museum ('hands off'). That is to say, with Walter Benjamin, any attempt at translating this term along with the inevitable failure to translate it fully, cannot help but reveal its essential nature: the proscription of translation itself, the prohibition of its removal.⁶ Refusing movement, and in spite of the prescriptions of the boundary, like the Ka'aba, the *horos* offers itself to revolutions of thought which may circle near or far but never succeed in penetrating the profundity of stone.⁷ Is this what makes a stone sacred?

6 Benjamin (2002a) 254.

7 Addas (1993) 213.

Sacred Boundaries

There is ample evidence for the significance of boundary-stones in the world's ancient religions. The removal of boundary-stones was prohibited and considered a serious crime according to Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman law.⁸ Terminus was a Roman god (believed to be of Sabine origin) that could be said to deify the function of *horos*. A stone or altar of Terminus was located in the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on Rome's Capitoline Hill. Because of a belief that this stone had to be exposed to the sky, there was a small hole in the ceiling directly above it.⁹ When the augurs took the auspices to discover whether the god or goddess of each altar was content for it to be moved, Terminus refused permission. The stone was therefore included within the Capitoline Temple, and its immovability was regarded as a good omen for the permanence of the city's boundaries.¹⁰ Diocletian's decision in 303 AD to initiate his persecution of Christians on 23 February, a propitious day for the same god, has been seen as an attempt at enlisting Terminus 'to put a limit to the progress of Christianity.'¹¹

In the Quaranic tradition, *Barzakh* is the limit between the realm of the living and that of the dead and is a phase of resurrection. It is 'the very thing that makes the activity of defining possible,' in which 'the separation between the things (defining) and the separating factor (that which defines) become manifest as one entity.'¹² The word *Barzakh* is used by Ibn al-'Arabî in his translations and interpretations of Aristotelian philosophy (see Chapter Four).¹³ Meanwhile, the Hindu Bhaga is also worth looking at, if only because of his linguistic links with the Arabic word for boundary, *Barzakh*. In the *Rigveda*, Bhaga is the god who supervises the distribution of goods and destiny to each man corresponding to his merits. The word appears to be cognate with *Bhagavan* and *Bhagya*, terms used in several Indian languages to refer to God and destiny respectively. It is worth remembering that Pennick

8 Mills (1997) *Boundary Stones*: 122.

9 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 2.74.2–5. 3.69.3–6.

10 Ovid, *Fasti* 2.639–684.

11 Liebeschuetz (1979) 247.

12 Bashier (2004) 87.

13 See Bashir (2004) for a thorough study on the concept of *Barzakh* in the works of the philosopher Ibn al-'Arabî.

also described the esoteric meaning of the Hebraic letter Cheth, 'barrier,' the earlier form of the Greek letter *eta* (H) as 'a letter of discrimination, the separation of things of worth from the worthless,' as well as having the esoteric meaning 'distribution, the primary function of energy.'¹⁴ In these senses it seems that the concept of boundary has an ingrained relation to the economic, that is to the distribution and organisation of goods, as well as an economy of fate, that is the distribution of human destinies.

The earliest biblical reference to a boundary pillar in *Genesis*, 'and Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar,' reflects a boundary covenant between Abraham and Laban at Mizpah, where neither party was to pass beyond the pillar (Heb. מצבה *matstsebah*) for purposes of doing harm to their neighbour.¹⁵

And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee;

this heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.¹⁶

Many prohibitions against removing stones are found in the Old Testament.¹⁷ Is this because the boundary-stone marks the site where the sacred coincides with law? Is it where awe and reverence unite in the form of a prohibition proscribing the former regime of power, and inscribing the deference due to the present regime, those who planted the pillar and enforced the law? Power is drawn not from a single actor but from an association including objects, specifically objects attributed with a steadfast authority. As Harman points out, the triumph of the Spaniards over the rituals of the Aztecs was 'not through the power of nature liberated from fetish,' but by an entire legion of authorities wearing the fetishistic garb of the Catholic Church and state.¹⁸ Power requires the abstraction of certain objects from their original setting in order to invest them with a transcendent symbolism used to articulate

¹⁴ Pennick (1992) 17.

¹⁵ *Gen* 31:45–52.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Deut.* 19:14, 27:17, *Prov.* 22:28, 23:10, *Job* 24:2, *Hos.* 5:10.

¹⁸ Harman (2009) 21.

a very particular regime. In this sense Weber's statement that 'not every stone can serve as a fetish, a source of magical power' holds only within regimes that require bolstering in order to justify their reign and make use of only certain objects, a limited pick of earthly goods.¹⁹ Other structures of belief, where goods are held in common, may well maintain that every stone is a source of magical power. Every object has the potentiality for resistance: 'a pebble can destroy an empire if the emperor chokes at dinner.'²⁰

In Deuteronomy, the boundary-stone ensures the inheritance of land, marking ownership spanning over generations. However, it is also an appropriation of land from its earlier inhabitants.

Thou shalt not remove thy neighbor's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it.²¹

This stone is erected within a chapter dedicated to dealing with the colonisation of territory and the destruction of its people:

When the Lord your God has destroyed the nations whose land he is giving you, and when you have driven them out and settled in their towns and houses [...] Show no pity. You must purge from Israel the guilt of shedding innocent blood, so that it may go well with you.²²

The boundary-stones are supposed to provide protection against the threat of those who were colonised, by acting as an objective proof of the new regime's authority over the land. Just as in the example with the Spaniards, here the previous chapter prohibited the engagement in the previous nation's occult practices, thereby establishing new systems of religious and secular power of the invaded territory.

Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord; because of these same detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you.²³

19 Weber (1978) 400.

20 Harman (2009) 21.

21 *Deut* 19:14 KJ.

22 *Deut* 19:1 and 13 NIV.

23 *Deut.* 18:10–13 NIV.

Is this boundary-stone a type of signature marking the covenant protecting the colonisers from divine retribution? It could be said to act in the same way as the contemporary flag planted in the ground by the invading force. A symbol of the regime's power thrust into the earth and, like an injection, spreads the virus of colonisation down and through the filaments of the soil, causing contagion throughout the land. The invasion of territory requires these symbolic attributes in order to condone the violent acts conducted by otherwise innocent people, especially the gesture to a higher authority. The gesture to a heteronomous authority, in this case of both god and ancestors, reinforces the otherwise unjustifiable act of invasion and, potentially, genocide.

The Greek translation of *Deuteronomy* is more specific than the King James or New International version. Here it was the 'fathers' (*pateres*), not just those 'of old' or the 'predecessors' who set up the boundaries. The Septuagint reads:

οὐ μετακινήσεις ὄρια τοῦ πλησίου σου ἃ ἔστησαν οἱ πατέρες σου ἐν τῇ κληρονομίᾳ σου ἣ κατεκληρονομήθης ἐν τῇ γῇ ἣ κύριος ὁ θεός σου δίδωσιν σοι ἐν κλήρῳ.²⁴

The new translation provides a translation closer to the original Hebrew, here the actors are 'men': 'You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark, which the men of old have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to possess.' The Greek translation, commissioned during the Greco-Roman period of proprietorship and patriarchy, slips toward the name of the Father. The Hebrew text, however, has רִשְׁוֹנִים (*ri'shown*) which might be loosely translated as 'ancestors,' and the meaning tends more toward the temporal, 'men of former times,' 'earlier men.' These are men whose authority is not to be questioned. Again, in *Deuteronomy*, ἐπικατάρατος ὁ μετατιθείς ὄρια τοῦ πλησίου, 'Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark[s].'²⁵ Here, this prohibition follows upon another prohibition, that against graven images. The same synthesis appears again in *Proverbs*, μὴ μέταιρε ὄρια αἰώνια ἃ ἔθεντο οἱ πατέρες σου, 'remove not the ancient landmark[s], which thy fathers have set.'²⁶

²⁴ *Deut.* 19:14.

²⁵ *Deut.* 27:17 KJ (the translation omitted the plural of *horia*).

²⁶ *Prov.* 22:28 KJ (again the plural has been omitted).

The term used in *Deuteronomy* for the 'boundary-stone,' as it appears in later references, is different to that in *Genesis*. There it was a 'pillar' (מצבה *matstsebah*) and a 'heap' (גל *gal*). The term used in *Deuteronomy* is גבול *gəbuwl*, translated by the Greek *horion*, while in the example from *Proverbs* it is in the plural form *horia*, the neuter noun of the masculine *horos*, and it continues to be translated thus throughout the Septuagint. The Hebrew (here given without diacritics) comprises a similar ambiguity to the Greek; the noun has multiple meanings ranging from 'boundary,' 'limit' and 'line' to 'land,' 'area' and 'territory.' The primitive root of the verb גבל means at once 'to bound' and 'to border.' And the added causative verbal stem, the Hiphil stem, where the effect caused is indirect or mediated, means 'to cause to set bounds,' generating the alternative translations of 'wall' and 'territory.'²⁷ Henceforth, the term encapsulates the coincidence between the boundary and the mark of the boundary, that is, the act of separating and the separator itself, much like the *Barzakh*, in the Arabic tradition and the *horos* in the Greek. The *horoi* enforce an atemporal (*aiōnia*), even eternal, regime (much like the phrase, 'the sun never sets on the British Empire.' The mark may have been placed by the forefathers, but the *horoi*, the stones that mark the invasion, themselves return to God himself, his eternity and his timelessness.

The text itself would suggest that it is not the boundary that is at risk of being transgressed as much as it is the mark that may go unheeded or be removed. But if it is a matter of recognising landmarks, why the need to stress the prohibition in a text? Is this not the task the boundary-stone itself performs? Presumably, the stone itself, the 'landmark,' is not prohibitive enough. If there is any prohibition here it adheres to the stone itself, the place of the stone as such, and the prohibition is directed not against crossing the boundary but against removing the stone. Or is the prohibition addressing itself to the people of the book, *as writing*, the mnemotechnique which assumes that there has or will have been a loss or lapse of memory? Perhaps the *horos* never uttered a prohibition at all but rather remained brute stone, the very material and boundary between the two realms of the sacred and the profane, between God and human laws and customs. Or, more essentially, the placement that is the one-time removal of the rock, is a symbol for the land itself

27 Waltke (1990) 433ff.

that has been appropriated. If this is what it is—a symbol of earthly domination—it can hardly be anything more than symbolic. In the era of the Anthropocene, such acts appear all too futile when we see daily how the devastation of the soil leads to the devastation of the people living upon it. What a futile attempt to appropriate the unappropriable. The people of the book, it would appear, are those who have forgotten to listen to the stone, to live with the land, to read in it the necessity to remain within earth's limits.

But this condemnation for a lack of memory is not a question of religion. It is a question of boundaries, not only of religio-ethical boundaries, nor even national boundaries, but more terrestrial boundaries. Today it is a political question, but it should be framed as an existential one. This is the question of how we live upon the land, not who owns it or has rights to it, but what are the relationships we should be forging and reforming with the earth, the plants and the variety of species (humans included) that the earth supports in order to refigure what it is the human being as a species does and gives to the land they are fed by.

No-Man's Land

The *horos* represented a rule of division and distinction which guided definitions within the space of knowledge in the ancient city and acted as an organising factor or principle common to a wide variety of cultural fields, from the rhetorical and martial arts to law, economics and philosophy. The *horos* and its various manifestations in other religions and languages, and found in foreign soils, is not wholly political. This is not because, in Athens at least, it precedes the institution of the *polis*, the city-state (and remember we have nothing outside of the city to confirm this) but because it generates a fundamental concept of division within the many different fields of knowledge. In economics it simultaneously draws up proprietorial boundaries and calls the idea of possession into question, by the fact that a symbol (the stone itself) is required to enforce it. It would seem to suggest that there are limits to possession while implying that such possession is itself the limit between the human and the nonhuman (whatever can be taken possession of). The boundary comes in between, as much a rupture into our relationship with the land, which may have been assumed

immanent or inherent before the stone separated us, and representing a covenant between humans and the things that can be disposed of because there is an unearthly principle (be this god, law or capital) that separates us from everything else.

Does this mean the boundary-stone is neutral ground, the intrepid security between borders? That is to say, is it inhuman in principle but also not natural? Is this the site of escalating tension, directed first and foremost at maintaining the line of division between those on either side of the barrier? Or is the stone a device deployed within this location to protect this spatial separation? Does it prompt the notion of the boundary that confronts us to choose sides? Did the *horos* function for the Athenians as an exclusionary principle, dividing their world into friends and enemies? The mere fact that the stone prompts these questions should already indicate that we are no longer on safe ground.

The ground is not secure both because we have found ourselves in no-man's land and because we are caught up in the aporetic structure of the letter of the law. The stone placed after the appropriation of the land raises the problem of any logical method in the law. The word *nomos*, 'law' or 'custom,' is related to the verb νέμωμαι, which means 'to divide out,' 'distribute.' This aspect of division comes to signify possession—things that are divided up into different shares and titles, hence the later meaning 'to own,' 'manage.' The *horos* can be seen to have played an intrinsic role between the initial and more complex meanings, establishing the boundaries between what is divided. With a small shift of the oxytone the word *nomos* is a pasturage, the land apportioned for the use of livestock. The law is similar; it is that which is in habitual practice or subject to continual usage. In other words, in order for the law to hold it needs to be held habitually. In contrast to popular belief, laws are not made to be broken, for breaking laws habitually suspends their essential nature as laws. This is the *aporia* upon which the legal structure is built. For example, in Athens the ancient myths were renovated and deployed in order to establish differences between citizens and non-citizens.²⁸ But, naturally, these myths assumed the previous establishment of the city-state based as it was upon divine intervention—in this case the goddess Athena who

28 See Loraux (2006) 28.

engendered in an extraneous way, the first citizen who gave rise to the citizen population of Athens. The autonomy of the democracy and its citizens required the heteronomous establishment of the city and its laws in order for them to be maintained 'democratically.'

If law is supposed to be the basis for division, assumedly the fair distribution of goods and services, the fact that law in action promotes and underpins political inequality and the unequal redistribution of wealth, should alert us not only to the inefficiency of law but its termination. It is no longer 'law' as a process of equal distribution that is functioning; it is economic interests (aka wealth, capital) that exercise control.

In the archaic city and its surrounds the *horos* was found along roads, at the entrance to sacred sites and sanctuaries; generally it was to be found in public spaces. The *horos* described a boundary line not wholly representative of dimension. There is no certainty that the *horoi* were supposed to be linked between one another in order to describe a closed boundary or a fenced-off region.

One should hardly imagine a continuous line drawn by means of numerous stones. More probably they stood at key points, at corners and where streets entered; here they would clearly say to any disqualified person, 'Thus far and no father.'²⁹

The problem of the purpose of these *horoi*, how they demarcated boundaries, whether they demarcated space, becomes secondary when we ask why they were necessary in the first place. Who placed the *horos*, and whom did they mean to keep out? Further, who owned the right to describe boundaries? And, then consequently, by what law were others expelled or made the exception of the boundary?

In his study on the later fourth-century hypothecation *horoi*, Moses Finley suggests that the stones themselves, their particular use and the *terminology* that accompanied them was also particularly Athenian, tracing their appearance outside of Athens to the imperialist expansion of the mother city.

From Athens they spread only to some of the Aegean islands, over all but one of which Athens held direct administrative control at certain

29 Thompson (1972) 118.

periods. How systematically this use of *horoi* was extended within the Athenian sphere and whether it was imposed more or less forcibly by the Athenians are interesting problems for the history of Greek law and interstate relations.³⁰

The *horos* referred to here is its fourth-century use as a marker laid upon the land to signify that the owner has hypothecated their land, placing their land as insurance for a loan.³¹ It can be assumed that the Athenians attempted to export the *horos* system during this period of imperial expansion in order to vouchsafe their imperial right to properties and taxes. No doubt this was not looked upon favourably by the local populations. It is significant for the present study that this question of the enforced *horos* remains unanswered by Finley, despite his suspicions of resistance against systematic Athenian imperialism.

There was presumably strong resistance to the *horoi*, for not all the communities influenced by Athens, not even all those which had received cleruchies, seem to have adopted the institution [...] Hypothecation of land and houses was of course universal in Greece: only the *horos*-technique of public notice remained strictly localized. Why that should have happened is, I think, not answerable today. Nor is it too important; legal security is basic, the *horoi* merely a device.³²

Nonetheless, it does pose the question of whether it was in fact the use to which the Athenians put the *horos* that led to such resistance. It might have been the imposition of taxes, but it also might have been the notion itself of division and possession that non-Athenians found offensive. Not all societies have the same ideas about land ownership, and presumably the notion of boundaries is very culturally specific. If the *horos* was merely a 'device' presumably it would be a simple task to discover to what end it was put to use. And indeed, there are references to these boundary-stones in Greek literature and enough have been found throughout the Greek world dating to the period of the Athenian expansion which can clearly be said to perform an economic function.³³ However, that it was 'put to use' at a later stage

30 Finley (1952) 6.

31 Finley (1952), Lalonde (1991); (2006), Harris (2006) 163–241.

32 Finley (1952) 6.

33 IG. II2, 2617–2619, 2581; and Merritt (1939) 50–55 and (1940) 53–56, Shear (1939) 205–206 and (1940) 266–267.

of Athenian history does not foreclose the possibility that it meant something else beforehand.

The boundary-stones of the *agora* signified a region into which the *atimoi*, those who had committed parricide and were therefore considered 'unclean,' were not permitted to enter, and one would assume the *horoi* that marked temple lands would have performed much the same function, while the fourth century mortgage *horoi* certainly demarcated a measured plot as being subject to certain interdictions. But how sure can we be that this stone presented a prohibition? The *horos* itself has no imperative attributed to it. And yet the *horos* that marks a grave, the *horos* that marks the boundary between one county and another, not to mention the *horos* in the philosophical text that means 'definition' or 'determination,' none of these particularly suggest prohibition. The problem that adheres to the *horos* is not that of prohibiting transgression so much as it is that of marking a boundary which otherwise would not be recognised.

If it is a matter of recognising boundaries, is this not rather a problem of reading? That is, is not this boundary found *in us* because we read it as such? Rather than any friend/enemy distinction, these questions remain with the boundary as generating a point of difference between he who reads the boundary and he who fails to do so. The question that is raised and remains with the boundary, as what belongs to the *horos* is not the generation of space on either side, but the question of difference, the question of similarity. On the one hand, we have different space to either side, on the other, different people. So long as it is recognised as mutual by those who inhabit either side, the boundary-stone raises the question of space by putting place into contention and materialising what is common to either side, i.e. the boundary. The *horos* raises a topography of contraries while simultaneously bringing these contraries together and uniting them in its own material. It is the matter that puts difference into question. It is therefore not only a spatial problem that is thus raised but also a problem of authority. For we must ask to whom the boundary belongs, and, thus also, who stands to either side, divided and opposed. Is this relation necessarily antagonistic? And then, consequently, who, if anyone, is expelled or made the exception of the boundary?

Let us proceed (for caution's sake) to one of the earliest literary references to the *horos*. The scene is no-man's land, on the battlefield. And this setting should come as no surprise given that the entire epic of

the *Iliad* is set on the plain outside the walls of Troy, where the Danaans (Achaeans or Greeks) have pitched their camp and are engaged in the ten-year war with the Trojans (the armies themselves are composed of a multitude of different peoples with no common name to determine them). Here we see the Lycian contingent:

οὔτε γὰρ ἴφθιμοι Λύκιοι Δαναῶν ἐδύναντο
 τεῖχος ῥηξάμενοι θέσθαι παρὰ νηυσὶ κέλευθον,
 οὔτε ποτ' αἰχμηταὶ Δαναοὶ Λυκίους ἐδύναντο
 τεῖχος ἅψ ὥσασθαι, ἐπεὶ τὰ πρῶτα πέλασθεν.
 ἀλλ' ὥς τ' ἀμφ' οὔροισι δὺ' ἀνέρε δηριάσθον
 μέτρ' ἐν χερσὶν ἔχοντες ἐπιζύνω ἐν ἀρούρῃ,
 ὡς τ' ὀλίγῳ ἐνὶ χώρῳ ἐρίζητον περὶ ἴσης,
 ὥς ἄρα τοὺς διέεργον ἐπάλξεις·

For neither could the mighty Lycians break the wall of the Danaans, and make a path to the ships, nor ever could the Danaan spearmen thrust back the Lycians from the wall, when once they had drawn near it. But as two men with measuring-rods in hand contend about the landmarks [*horoi*] in a common field, and in a narrow space contend each for his equal share, so did the battlements hold these foes apart.³⁴

The *horoi* (here in the plural epic form- οὔροισι) present us with a simile for the wall of Troy. Just as the latter stands as the point of division and struggle (the Greeks want it to fall; the Trojans need it to stand firm), so the former is a point of contention. And yet, these *horoi* stand in a common field, and the arms at the men's disposal are measuring-rods, and their quarrel concerns equality in division. In the classical *polis* there was still something of a common-field system, even if these fields had come into the possession and disposal of the state. There were also lands that were attached to certain sanctuaries that may have been at the disposal of citizens (one would hope the less fortunate as well). One would presume that the small space in contention is the proposed site of each man's common agricultural efforts, a limited area of soil that he could work, sow and reap the benefits of for private use.

Other references to the *horos* in the Homeric epics also introduce this theme of measure and contention, whether it is an athlete's sprint surpassing another's that is the same as the length of furrows

34 Hom.II.12.417–426. tr. A.T. Murray.

ploughed by a pair of mules (ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ῥ' ἀπέην ὅσσόν τ' ἐπὶ οὔρα πέλονται/ἡμιόνων) or the distance of a discus-throw exceeding another (ὅσσα δὲ δίσκου οὔρα κατωμαδίῳ πέλονται). What is consistent is, on the one hand the sense of proportion (ὅσσόν) which is generated, and on the other the *horos* as a simile for the comparative and combative deeds of men.³⁵ Although they refer to a struggle, all these similes intervene to describe a distance that is traced in shared, communal activities. Is this a mere literary device? Granted that the *horos* takes place in the text, despite its epic proportions, it appears as a reference to what is common beyond the text, the familiar and daily activities of life, with the implication that the measure of men in war is peace. And yet there is more to this than platitude since what the simile of the *horos* describes is a state of (peace-time) contention that is not one of aversion or hostility. There may be dissent or difference between the two athletes, but this is within measure. Not that they compromise, for the whole point of the simile is that of contention, but in the common field and in contrast to the battlefield they retain a (friendly) relation. The *horos* remains without place, the position of contention without, however, becoming a place. The measure that is described is in the midst of an opposition, describing a relation, and yet it does not facilitate mediation.

As it stands (the *horos*), the men remain united in their difference and, what is most important, regardless of their respective measurements, since it was not only the distance, shares of land between or claimed by each man that was the subject of the proportion, but the comparison between war and peace-time collaboration. Given that this simile occurs in epic poetry that was itself an intrinsic component of a youth's education, sung at feasts and in the competitive setting of rhapsodic festivals, it could be said that the measure of men was metric, that is, subject to a standard of measurement and division. And a standard and system of measurement and division is essential both for poetic metre and for the distribution of land and goods. Whether goods are subject to equal division or belligerent measures of seizure and rape, the yardstick stands witness to any disproportion. The *horos* reveals itself as a medial point but not necessarily a point of mediation. In these examples at least, it is a point of argumentative dissent.

35 Hom. *Il.* 10, 351; 23.431, *Od.* 8.25.

This reflects upon the Athenian disposition toward the middle, towards being the middle of things, *in medias res*, and being ‘the measure of all things.’ The rise of the *agora* also meant the institution of a system of weights and measures, creating a system of values for the purpose of measuring disparate things in an equal way and determining a comparative value of equivalence. When Protagoras arrived in Athens in the fifth century BC, the *agora* was already a place of economic exchange and was probably already the place of disputation frequented by the Socrates. Protagoras’s philosophy of the divisive fit right in. His treatise *The Art of Eristics* used wrestling as a rhetorical metaphor for the conflict between two arguments and expounded upon different argumentative techniques.³⁶ His philosophy has the human being acting and speaking about the value of things.

Πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπον εἶναι, τῶν μὲν ὄντων, ὡς ἔστι, τῶν δὲ μὴ ὄντων, ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν.³⁷

Of all things the measure is the human: of things that are, that they are, and of things that are not, that they are not.

While it may have been something like an advertisement for his teaching, this phrase has a word that would subsequently become one of the most powerful words in the Greek language, *chrēmata*, ‘money.’ Although the ‘things’ of which the human is the measure may be of significance or not, the ‘things’ themselves are judged according to their use-value. This is what *chrēmata* means, ‘property,’ ‘substance,’ ‘matter’ or ‘money.’ The word signifies a relation with things that are already in existence in the economic life of the city. According to Plato one of Protagoras’s aims in teaching was good economy.

τὸ δὲ μάθημά ἐστιν εὐβουλία περὶ τῶν οἰκείων, ὅπως ἂν ἄριστα τὴν αὐτοῦ οἰκίαν διοικοῖ, καὶ περὶ τῶν τῆς πόλεως, ὅπως τὰ τῆς πόλεως δυνατώτατος ἂν εἴη καὶ πράττειν καὶ λέγειν.³⁸

This lesson is about good judgement in household matters, such as how to best manage one’s household, and about matters of the city, such as to be most capable of acting and speaking about the matters of the city.

36 DK 520.1.

37 DK 518.27.

38 Pl.*Prot.* 318e–319a.

What we can see is that these ideas of division, argumentation and of taking sides may have been framed as comprising political thought; however, they form a network of analogies within different fields of study. These codes, influencing the gymnastic, martial and rhetorical arts as well as political, legal and economic thought and philosophical language, originated in ideas of separation and division. The space of knowledge in the ancient city was organised around the separating factor as a principle common to all fields. This principle (*horos*) existed in what Foucault phrased the ‘positive unconscious’ of the Athenians as a material guide or rule used to define the various objects of action and speech in the *polis*.³⁹

In his *History of the Peloponnesian Wars*, Thucydides quotes a speech rallying for war,

καὶ γινῶναι ὅτι τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις οἱ πλησιόχωροι περὶ γῆς ὄρων τὰς μάχας ποιοῦνται, ἡμῖν δὲ ἐς πᾶσαν, ἣν νικηθῶμεν, εἷς ὅρος οὐκ ἀντίλεκτος παγήσεται.⁴⁰

know also that other tribes are constantly at war with their nearest neighbours over the boundaries of the land (*gēs horōn*), while if we win one battle, a single *horos* (*eis horos*) will be fixed once and for all.

Now it goes without saying that when two armies stand face to face there is a presupposed boundary of contention between them, a boundary which has been brought into question by the fact of war. So long as the war rages, a boundary remains. But the problem here is exactly where this boundary is located about which both sides are in disagreement. The location itself is at once the site of conflict and *in conflict*. In every sense it is over this very boundary that war is waged. But here we can understand the point of contention also as a unifier, where, in the words of Heidegger,

strife is not a rift, as a mere cleft is ripped open; rather, it is the intimacy with which opponents belong to each other.⁴¹

However, there is a significant difference between peacetime contention on the one hand and war (*polemos*) and civil war (*stasis*) on the other.

³⁹ Foucault (2008) xi.

⁴⁰ Thuc.4.92.4.

⁴¹ Heidegger (2000) 188.

With war even though the boundary is in contention, it does not cease to be present as that which divides the hosts and unites them in hostility.⁴² In *stasis*, however, there is not necessarily a distinct boundary that has been transgressed; there is no physical boundary (*horos*) within a singular community that divides it in two.

Stasis derives its meaning from the word 'to stand,' and we should understand this word in the same way as the Greeks, as the point when a community ceases its usual motion, comes to a standstill, comes up against a wall.⁴³ *Stasis* itself fulfils the function of division wherever it arises; however, this division is not linked to a particular place. It could be said to be the ethical experience of division. Vardoulakis states that 'the temporality of stasis in relation to the theologico-political is intimately linked to the impossibility of fixing stasis to a particular locus.'⁴⁴ *Stasis* is a creation of the community, within the community, that simultaneously calls into question the very character and unity of the community as such, so that, given its multivalence, 'stasis has the capacity to disturb the mutual support of presence and absence.'⁴⁵ Unlike the *horos*, the division in *stasis* has no immediate relation to a position, or the sacred; it is a political event even when it breaks in as an exception of political authority.

If the law employs the exception—that is the suspension of law itself—as its original means of referring to and encompassing life, then a theory of the state of exception is the preliminary condition for any definition of the relation that binds and, at the same time, abandons the living being to law.⁴⁶

The law that citizens had to choose sides in *stasis* meant that no fence-sitting was permitted in the democracy. The ideological formation that there are only and essentially two sides can be said to originate here, the basis of the idea that democracy means two-party politics. The contemporary enforcement of this law, for example, in Australia where fines are issued to those who refuse to vote, where the outcome

42 Plato, *Rep.*470b.

43 On *stasis* and Solon see Chapter Seven. For a full study of the concept of *stasis* in ancient Athens, see Loraux (2006).

44 Vardoulakis (2009)142.

45 Ibid. 127.

46 Agamben (2005) 1.

is foreclosed to be in favour of one of only two parties, maintains the idea that law is the mediator between citizens and state, having the right to intervene and enforce political engagement in one or the other way. Here the law is presented as the mythical, neutral ground, mediator and redistributor of goods, money and justice. But there's no such thing as a true middle in political economics or a neutral capitalist state (even neutral Switzerland engages in exporting banking systems to war-ravaged countries). Neutrality, or the disengaged middle, is nothing but a front for the establishment of economic interests that is none other than a coup d'état, a usurpation of control by a single faction. It can be argued that any representative democratic party in power, with less than fifty percent of the vote, is a usurpation of power under the auspices of the law.

Nonetheless, Vardoulakis reminds us that what appears to be an exception to politics is simultaneously the ground for a new political relation, but a ground that provides neither a foundation nor a sovereign. The non-state of civil war issues in the possibility for an ethical and political relation, thus a 'responsible politics is above all a politics that eschews the violent act of separation instituting the sovereign. Stasis solicits a politics of friendship.'⁴⁷ Here we can understand the point of contention also as a unifier. In the words of Heidegger, 'strife is not a rift,' rather it 'carries the opponents into the provenance of their unity by virtue of their common ground.'⁴⁸

The German word for 'rift,' *Riß*, does not merely describe a crack or laceration; etymologically it is connected to the verb *reißen*, cognate with the English 'writing'; 'it is a basic design (*Grundriß*), an outline sketch (*Auf-riß*), that draws the basic features of the upsurge into the clearing of beings.'⁴⁹ What is here *written* is the 'work,' something that is differentiated from its surrounding environment as 'figure' (*Gestalt*). And it is such because we allow it to become, or even, be *read* as something that has been sectioned off and fixed in place. Hence, 'this rift does not let the opponents break apart; it brings what opposes measure (*Maß*) and boundary (*Grenze*) into its common outline (*den einigen Umriß*).'⁵⁰ It

47 Vardoulakis (2010) 155.

48 Heidegger (2000) 188.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

is in this sense that Heidegger uses the word strife to produce the work; it is a point of difference that marks out the boundaries between earth and world, in other words something like 'nature' and 'human activity.'

Yet as a world opens itself the earth comes to tower. It stands forth as that which bears all, as that which is sheltered in its own law and always wrapped in itself. World demands its decisiveness and its measure and lets beings attain to the open region of their paths. Earth, bearing and jutting, endeavours to keep itself closed and to entrust everything to its law.⁵¹

World is experienced as something more than the material basis of the earth; it is where activity, work, significance and values, measures and divisions create an interpretation of living in the midst of 'nature,' here foreign in the sense of a foreign language, not understandable, despite our embedded origins. From this point on the earth exists as a value in the world of the human being. For Heidegger this seems to be the beginning of the cultural project and the wonder of the artwork.

And yet there is an uncanny resemblance with the *horos*, at least in terminology. The work does not cease to be composed of earth, in exactly the same way that the *horos*, whether engraved or not, does not cease to be stone: 'The rift must set itself back into the gravity of stone, the hardness of wood, the dark glow of colours.'⁵² Although it resembles it, the *horos* is not quite akin to Heidegger's figure because it is not necessarily dependent upon a single authority, or author. It is not wholly placed or framed by us. Its position is already there, in its stoniness, and is only read by us as meaning bearing. Nor is it supposed to provide a definition to a question or a riddle. The *horos* never takes form beyond the possible coincidence between stone, letter and all those other meanings and matters. It is not a work as such, though that does not mean it is not read as something that works. It is exactly there where the artifice of script begins, but is itself not artificial. The word and boundary are never abstracted from stone, and it also never ceases to be mere stone. The divisive power of the *horos* is distinctly present as matter: the writing of division, the letter of the law. The *horos* does not cease to belong to the earth, standing as a rule that the human also

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

belongs in the nonhuman but also that there is a self-authorised break. Otherwise, there would be no distinction between whoever reads the *horos* as boundary and the rest of the world that does not.

How can the law be followed to the letter when the stone marks the impossibility of ever following the path without bringing the letter along with us? The stone is this *diaporia*; it marks the *aporia* and allows law and *logos* to transgress it but only in the form of the letter. Thus, the law, which would prohibit in order to foil transgression, is from the first naming of the stone always put into question by occupation of the letter, simultaneously composed of letters and destroyed by them. Because the *horos* is the base material upon which the letter is formed and the base material that gives form to letters, this convergence of form and matter provides the foundation and schema for the law, even as it undermines it. The *horos*, the boundary-stone, is the link, bond or knot in this aporetic structure, without which the law is illiterate and illegible. The stone, whether inscribed or not, marks a departure from the time before when the inscription was not subject to law, when what was engraved was without form and pointed nowhere. The *horos* might not precede the sacred, and yet it remains as the thin line that gives definition to either side, and describes an opposition between these spaces, which are not to be confused with *topoi*, topical places or places with a particular character localised in speech if not geographically (for example Aristotle's treatise *Topika* is the method of drawing conclusions from opinions).⁵³ But that does not stop the *horos* from remaining the position of unity, leaking opposition into division, before the *logos* intervened to show the way and to bar it.

Horos Zeus

Against a politics of walls and barriers, we can redefine the terms, raising the question once again to ask in what relation the *horos* stands with law, its transgression and its exception. In the *Laws*, Plato states that the prohibition against removing boundary-stones is the first law of Zeus, punishable twice over, first according to the justice of the gods, then by the laws of man.

⁵³ Ar. *Top.* 100b21.

Διὸς ὀρίου μὲν πρῶτος νόμος ὅδε εἰρήσθω· μὴ κινεῖτω γῆς ὅρια μηδεὶς μήτε οἰκείου πολίτου γείτονος, μήτε ὁμοτέρμονος ἐπ' ἐσχατιᾷς κεκτημένος ἄλλω ξένῳ γειτονῶν, νομίσας τὸ τὰκίνητα κινεῖν ἀληθῶς τοῦτο εἶναι· βουλέσθω δὲ πᾶς πέτρον ἐπιχειρῆσαι κινεῖν τὸν μέγιστον ἄλλον πλὴν ὅρον μᾶλλον ἢ σμικρὸν λίθον ὀρίζοντα φιλίαν τε καὶ ἔχθραν ἔνορκον παρὰ θεῶν. τοῦ μὲν γὰρ ὁμόφυλος Ζεὺς μάρτυς, τοῦ δὲ ξένιος, οἱ μετὰ πολέμων τῶν ἐχθίστων ἐγείρονται. καὶ ὁ μὲν πεισθεὶς τῷ νόμῳ ἀναίσθητος τῶν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ κακῶν γίγνοιτ' ἂν, καταφρονήσας δὲ διτταῖς δίκαις ἔνοχος ἔστω, μιᾷ μὲν παρὰ θεῶν καὶ πρώτῃ, δευτέρᾳ δὲ ὑπὸ νόμου.⁵⁴

The first law, that of *Horos* Zeus shall be stated thus: Do not move earth's *horoi*, whether they be those of a neighbour who is a native citizen or those of a stranger (with adjoining land on a frontier), recognising that this is truly to move the immoveable; better to let someone try to move the largest rock which is not a *horos* than a small stone which marks the boundary between friendly and hostile ground under the oath of the gods. For of the one Kinship Zeus is witness, of the other Stranger Zeus; who, when aroused, brings wars most hostile. He that obeys the law shall not suffer the evils that it inflicts; but he who despises it shall be liable to a twofold justice, first and foremost from the gods, and second from the law.

Could it be assumed that every *horos* is the mark of the omnipresence of this Zeus of the *horos*? On the outskirts of Athens, there was a temple to an unknown Zeus marked by a *horos* of this name, dated amongst the oldest of the Athenian *horoi*, bearing the rupestral inscription HOPOΣ: ΔΙΟΣ [retrograde] (*horos of Zeus*). As one epigraphical study suggests,

this 'Horos of Zeus' is a type of abbreviated marker of shrines, in which the word ἱεροῦ or τεμένους [shrine or sanctuary] is either understood as part of the meaning of ἡρός, and a byname of the god was perhaps assumed as known.⁵⁵

The implication is that the *horos*, by marking the site, consecrates it and is coterminous with the sacred quality of the place it identifies. If we take this to apply to all *horoi*, we could assume that for any boundary-stone to be recognised the reading of boundaries as such must be the guiding thread at once joining and distinguishing the sacred from the profane; it need not be accompanied by a prohibition as it already stands in order that the sacred remain inviolate. Therefore, as Plato informs us, the

⁵⁴ Pl. *Laws*. 843A-B.

⁵⁵ Lalonde, (2006) 6.

first law must be the prohibition against the removal of the boundary-stone, and he who is guilty of moving *horoi* is guilty of attempting to remove the very stones that draw up the outlines of power, that define the boundaries (and here we see the verbal form of the *horos* in action, ὀρίζοντα) sanctioned 'in oath by the gods' (ἐνορκον παρὰ θεῶν). And not only this, for the removal of the stone is also a trespass on logic, 'to move the immovable' (τὸ τὰκίνητα κινεῖν).

The single stone protected by *Horos Zeus* comprises the internal confrontation or conjunction between two other epithets of Zeus named by Plato: Zeus of kinship, ὁμόφυλος Ζεὺς, and Zeus of strangers, ξένιος. The relational distinction between kin and stranger is 'hospitality,' *philoxenia*, the concrete relation barring friend from enemy (φιλίαν τε καὶ ἔχθραν). The relation of enmity is proscribed by the transgression of the boundary in friendship. It is essential to note that neither the stone nor this first law prohibits the transgression of the boundary. The intention is not the prohibition of people passing from one side to the other, but rather it has to do exclusively with the material of the boundary itself, with the boundary as marker. It is a law that does not deal with people's movements as such but with the matter of the boundary, the solidity and immovability of stone. It is not we who are prohibited from crossing the boundary, it is the boundary itself that must remain without motion, and, being put out of motion it is (according to Aristotelian physics) thus beyond nature, whether it is sacred or corroborated by law. It would be wrong to assume that this law, given its divine sanction, is therefore not a human law. It may not be inscribed on the tablets of the city, but this does not mean that it is not inscribed into human relations by human acts. The law of *horos* Zeus is, properly, topographical, but without actually being topical. It is written into the land as the first law of the land, the first law that protects the laws of logic. It draws up the boundaries between the possible and the impossible in language, for to remove the *horos* is to move the immovable. This law thus finds its true *topothesia* in language, in *logos*, though that does not mean the stone is invested with reason.

Of course, this interpretation coincides perfectly with the archaeological history of the *horos*, which states that a *horos* is differentiated from other stones only insofar as it is read as such. The *horos* is the stone that is distinguished from the 'natural' stone according to archaeology because, to begin, with it is inscribed with the word.

The question, therefore, of the law is not here a question of authority or authenticity—of who wrote the law, in whose power the law resides. The question that must precede any question of writing is deflected by the question that the stone itself raises, which is: Who reads the *horos*? Who recognises the boundary? The difference that is thus generated by the *horos* is between those who read the *horos* as *horos* and those who fail to do so. This division takes place as the basis for the laws of the land, which subsequently belong to whoever has the capacity to distinguish them.

The difference the *horos* is said to mark is that between kin and stranger. This difference is that of hospitality itself, *xenia*, which should describe the relation one has with strangers. The word for the ‘stranger,’ *xenos*, is threefold; it also means ‘guest’ and includes the obligatory meaning to play ‘host,’ also *xenos*. Kinship Zeus must be presumed to protect relations within the clan, community, family, tribal group; that is always on this side of the boundary. *Xenios* Zeus stands guard over the relations between here and there, that is, between strangers; there, where, at least linguistically, we cannot be told apart except as what defines us in common. We are, both of us strangers to one another. Our identity is the reduplication of the signifier ‘stranger’ (*xenos/xenos*) with a boundary in between that transforms this relation into one of friendship, causing the double modification to alter to ‘friend’ (*philos/philos*). This transformative relation is called ‘*philoxenia*,’ imperfectly translated as ‘hospitality’ (because *hospis* in your house still remains a hosted enemy, lacking the final metamorphosis into friend). But there is a boundary that nonetheless separates us and offers us the possibility of transgressing over into difference, of welcoming one another and introducing ourselves as something more than strangers, of learning the other’s name, and also giving ourselves a name and family relation that extends beyond us. This boundary is the possibility of *xenia*, of the hospitable relation. The stone demands what the text prohibits, at least in regards to *crossing over*, or the maintenance of friendly relations. But, then, this can occur only if we both recognise the presence of a boundary that makes us both strangers, one to the other.

Therefore, the *horos* gives onto, and gives only, onto hospitality, to the possibility of two different people, two different spaces sharing something in common, even if this is none other than the boundary

itself that divides them. It suggests a bond to those who transgress it in friendship, whether they belong to the same tribe or are bound in a relation of hospitality with that tribe. But it exactly ceases to be (read as) a boundary the minute that it is crossed in enmity because in that case the aggressor simply does not, or refuses to, recognise it as such by not making the appropriate transformation into 'friend.' Thus, the *horos* raises the possibility of hospitality and puts hostility out of the question. But this is because the hospitality itself already raises the possibility of hostility. In the words of Plato, the *horos* draws up the boundary (and he uses the participle of the verb, *horizon*) between friendship and enmity. This is no archaic Schmittian parallel maintaining a distinction of estrangement between friend and enemy.⁵⁶ On the contrary, since the *horos* binds these two epithets, it singularly permits, or rather demands, a relation that as such both makes possible and proscribes enmity. Hostility is only possible under the protectorate of *xenios Zeus*, as the potentiality of hospitality failed or perverted. Hospitality and hostility are not contrary; the latter is, rather, dependent upon the former as an inherent possibility. If hostility was not experienced as a possibility, hospitality ceases to be something freely given. This is the definition (*horos*) or horizon of hospitality.

Is this horizon experienced as a limitation? It is certainly a limit, just as the *horos* itself can be translated as 'limit,' but perhaps a limit that does not act as a restriction as such. And we must not fail to note the etymological link between the *horizon* and the *horos*, as if the nominal *horos* was put into action in the spectral limits of our world. Without this limit (*horos*), a term that must be read even though it provides no terms as such, hospitality retains the possibility of offering itself as hostility. But the *horos* is also the limit that asserts that hospitality must remain hospitality. Without such a limit, in the absence of some kind of term or boundary, hospitality is groundless. Here we could say, then, that the *horos* is necessary for hospitality, opening up the possibility of transgressing boundaries, of coming to terms with confrontation, whether in friendship or enmity, before any conditions are placed upon guest or host as to whom is accepted or with what intentions the boundary is crossed. Hospitality proceeds from this limit, opening up

56 Cf. Schmitt (2007).

the horizon to further transgression and abuse. Thus, Derrida suggested that 'pure' or 'unconditional' hospitality is an *aporia*; it always contains the possibility of flipping over into its opposite, or of failing to be given.⁵⁷ And consequently a 'pure' hospitality is, as Derrida states (unconsciously calling the *horos* into presence), 'without horizon.'⁵⁸ We could say it remains always on the boundary, that thin line, because it is the limit point as such (*horos*) that is itself unlimited.

If, however, there is pure hospitality, or a pure gift, it should consist in this opening without horizon, without horizon of expectation, an opening to the newcomer whoever that may be. It may be terrible because the newcomer may be a good person, or may be the devil: but if you exclude the possibility that the newcomer is coming to destroy your house—if you want to control this and exclude in advance this possibility—there is no hospitality. In this case, you control the borders, you have customs officers, and you have a door, a gate, a key and so on. For unconditional hospitality to take place you have to accept the risk of the other coming and destroying the place, initiating a revolution, stealing everything, or killing everyone. That is the risk of pure hospitality and pure gift, because a pure gift might be terrible too.⁵⁹

If we read this horizon as what remains of the *horos* in the present day then we can accept Derrida's conclusion, that hospitality appears as an *aporia*, a problem that does not permit passage, literally *a-* 'without,' *-poros* 'passage..'. It is a problem that must remain irresolvable because what marks the boundary is exactly the task of reading, of the mutual recognition of the boundary. Moreover, the boundary is therefore either maintained because it is held in common, or transgressed because it is disputed. But that is not the real issue, for it is easy enough for those who are linguistically affiliated to the boundary, for those who are able to read the stone, to choose in what manner they cross the boundary. But how does the boundary stand for the real stranger, the foreigner who does not, cannot, read the stone as boundary, the foreigner who is unfamiliar with the laws of the land and therefore transgresses the boundary unwillingly or without the wherewithal to act in accordance with the laws of the land, and always at risk of defying this first law?

57 Derrida (1993) 11.

58 Derrida, 'Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A dialogue with Jacques Derrida' in Kearney (1999) 70.

59 Ibid.

This is where 'pure' hospitality is found, exactly where the boundary comes into question, not because it is revoked or removed, but simply because it is not read as such. Hence, the *horos*, in being unperceived by the stranger, signifies something beyond its own definition, term and limit. The *horos* itself always comes in between friendship and enmity, it is itself an open definition, but nonetheless material. The *horos* always remains with the boundary as the only position to which no determinate position belongs, and it is in this absolute relation with the boundary as such that we are all of us bound as strangers. In the words of Levinas,

When in the *Iliad* the resistance to an attack by an enemy phalanx is compared to the resistance of a rock to the waves that assail it, it is not necessarily a matter of extending to the rock, through anthropomorphism, a human behaviour, but of interpreting human resistance petromorphically.⁶⁰

The *horos* stands as and marks out the aporetic structure of hospitality, or, better, it provides a horizon in contention, a boundary of confrontation, where the *aporia* of *philoxenia*, the problem itself is always raised and given form in pure uncontested matter. Thus *philoxenia's* 'purity' is based upon a certain materiality always on the cusp of language, and that presents itself as a risk. So long as the *horos* remains and is unmoved, this problem refuses solution, because so long as the boundary is observed there will always be those on one side, and those on the other. Then, hospitality always remains as a possibility, whether offering it or receiving it, and so does hostility. If we put hospitality into question—as something that we might not give, if we conceptualise it not as a gift but as a right that must be permitted or held back, if we refuse it to some or place conditions on how it is to be received—then we put the boundary out of question. The boundary that does not remain open ceases to be mutual; it becomes proper to one side or the other, and ceases to be a boundary as such, it becomes a barrier and the boundary as such is deferred, and by being deferred, it is subject to question. Ironically enough, then, the state that privileges entry to some and refuses it to others can be seen to undermine the very existence of its own borders.

⁶⁰ Levinas (1987) 78.

We can thus offer an alternate reading of Plato's first law against the removal of the boundary-stones by suggesting that it is not the transgression of the boundaries as such, but the transgression of the hospitable relation that rouses Zeus *Xenios* to inflict wars. Hostile is he who estranges himself from the obligation to play guest-host, not only to be the generous, bountiful host, but—and this is the harder—to be a stranger, to let oneself be defined as the other of the other.⁶¹ This indebtedness (of self) to other is inscribed upon the land, both boundary and bond that cannot be proscribed or prohibited. Rather, as the question that would put the law of the 'same' out of play, it demands transgression by virtue of a certain similarity between guest and host that nonetheless remain bound together in a common estrangement. Any relation with the stranger automatically puts one in the parallel position of stranger, and it is this universal notion of estrangement before the other that binds us all to the breaking point of the boundary of the other. For Levinas this is where what is material breaks down into the presence of the face.

Here the sensible presence desensibilizes to let the one who only refers to himself, the identical, break through directly. As an interlocutor he posits himself in front of me, and an interlocutor alone can properly speaking posit himself in a position facing me, without this 'facing' signifying hostility or friendship.⁶²

Hospitality always has the possibility of giving onto friendship and enmity, hence Derrida's neologism 'hostipitalité,' adding the host into the otherwise exclusive reception of the enemy.⁶³ The point is that when it comes to reading the boundary-stone, one is not at liberty to choose sides. One contingently finds oneself on one side or the other, or else one might be so strange as to not even recognise the *horos* as such. The *horos*, however, gives only onto hospitality. In this case, however, the *horos* is not itself an *aporia*. It is not a problem to be solved, or a question as such, even though it gives onto or raises problems. If it is read as boundary then it is a boundary, if it is not read as such it retreats into its identity as stone. As Plato says, to move the largest stone that is not a *horos* is just fine ('sooner let someone move the largest rock which

61 Derrida (1999) 23.

62 Levinas (1987) 42.

63 See 'Hostipitality' in, Derrida (2002) 401–402.

is not a *horos* than a small stone which marks the boundary between friendly and hostile ground').⁶⁴ The assumption is that we already know which is which.

Swearing by the Horos

Looking at the *horos* from a distance, it becomes evident how central it was to the constitution of the Athenian citizen body and to the maintenance, even reverence, of the laws of the city. After performing their military service on the boundaries of the Athenian *polis* and before returning to the city, the ephebes swore an oath (Ὅρκος ἐφήβων). In order to be assumed into the body politic, the young men took an oath to obey the laws and protect the institutions of the city. The ephebes swore the oath upon returning from a two-year period spent serving upon the margins of the city's territory, supposedly doing the double duty of defense and of learning the art of an arms-bearing citizen. As Vidal-Naquet notes, this boundary area is both an actual geographical and symbolic space, where the boys are to make the transition into civilised young men.⁶⁵ The oath is their affirmation of this transition and their acceptance of the contractual bonds of civic life. At the end of this oath, they call as witnesses an intriguing variety of gods, plants, and, of interest to us here, the *horoi*.

Ἵστορες θεοὶ Ἄγλαυρος, Ἑστία, Ἐνυάλιος, Ἄρης καὶ Ἀθηνᾶ Ἀρεία,
Ζεὺς, Θαλλώ, Αὐξώ, Ἡγεμόνη, Ἡρακλῆς, ὅροι τῆς πατρίδος, πυροί,
κριθαί, ἄμπελοι, ἐλᾶαι, συκαῖ.

Witnesses are the gods Aglauros, Hestia, Enyo, Enyalios, Ares and Athena Areia, Zeus, Thallo, Auxo, Hegemone, Herakles, *horoi* of the fatherland, wheat, barley, vines, olive-trees, fig-trees.⁶⁶

One might have expected that the *horoi* appear within the oath as something that needs protecting, along with the laws, authorities, institutions and affiliations of the city that are mentioned. But here they are included in a list of gods (with more or less obvious significance for the city) and certain fruit-bearing plants (that obviously provide basic

⁶⁴ Pl. *Laws*. 843A-B.

⁶⁵ Vidal-Naquet (1986) 107.

⁶⁶ Siewert (1977) 103.

sustenance), called upon as *Histoires*, 'witnesses.' An *histor* (cognate verb ἱστορέω, 'to inquire, examine, read,' as in history) is someone who knows the law, right and justice, thus it also means 'judge.' It is interesting to consider that the *horoi* might be considered plausible witnesses in the same sense as the gods. It seems reasonable to state that the *horoi* are called upon because of their role in maintaining friendly relations, or that failing, in defending against hostile forces. But, as was seen in both the Septuagint and Plato's *Laws*, the *horoi* also bear a significant relation with the past, and the 'ancestors' or 'men of old' who laid the stones or the gods and law that sanctified them. They are read and may even be said to provide, if not be, a kind of earthly narrative. These stones inscribe the history of the land. The narrative line read in the *horoi* might be that of hospitality, of the relation with friends and strangers. It is important that in this context the *horoi* are not in need of protection or maintenance by law, they are as autarchic as gods and trees (this does not mean self-sufficient). What does it mean that the *horoi* be called upon as witnesses to the oath and feature among a list of other nonhuman, some divine some organic, witnesses?

Oath, *horkos*, (ὄρκος) cognate with *herkos* (ἔρκος) meaning 'fence, enclosure,' has quite a lot in common semantically (if not syntactically, again the play of a letter) with the *horos*, except that the boundary of the oath closes the circle into a defensive barrier, while the *horos* leaves this possibility open, simply dividing. The oath presents us with a linguistic boundary, where, by swearing an oath one fences oneself in and is bound to one's words. The gods were said to swear their oaths upon the Styx, the river that encircles the universe and binds the gods to their words.⁶⁷ In this case, however, one's oath is the very paradigm of the truth (and divinity) of language itself, the power of the *logos* to be made flesh, to be actualised.⁶⁸ Therefore, as Agamben argues, in oath one takes responsibility not only for one's words but also constitutes oneself as 'the living being who has language.'⁶⁹ The oath expresses

the demand, decisive in every sense for the speaking animal, to put its nature at stake in language and to bind together in an ethical and political connection words, things, and actions. Only by this means

67 Fletcher (2012) 74ff.

68 Agamben (2011) 21.

69 Ibid. 69.

was it possible for something like history, distinct from nature, and nevertheless, inseparably intertwined with it, to be produced.⁷⁰

However, if these words, things, and actions had to be bound together, must they not first have been split? If the oath constitutes and ensures human nature as a speaking being and a being capable of living historically, the *horos* affirms the former split in which the human is divided from nature—and here there is no discernible difference between what would be human nature and nature absolutely. So, what we can *read* into the *horos* is exactly that split that divided human beings from (their) nature. Before this split, humans did not live historically, but fatefully. In the ancient world of Athens, this split was ascribed to the divine name of Fate, *Heimarmenē*—neither entirely god, nor entirely nature, this ‘divine word’ (λόγος θεῖος) as Plutarch refers to it, takes its root from the verb μέιρομαι, ‘to divide out, allot, assign’ and is the principle of division:

ἡ εἰμαρμένη διχῶς καὶ λέγεται καὶ νοεῖται· ἡ μὲν γάρ ἐστιν ἐνέργεια,
ἡ δ’ οὐσία.⁷¹

Heimarmenē is said and thought in two ways: on the one hand as activity, on the other as substance.

She is divided (*dichōs*) between speech and thought but is also the singularity of fate; she is ‘a law conforming to the nature of the universe, determining the course of everything that comes to pass’ and ‘the linking of future events to events past and present.’⁷² Human fate is thus split between speech and thought, between what is said and what is done, between what is undertaken and what is. Does oath step into this division as an attempt to resolve it into a pure identity between speech, thought, act and being? It is this will to assert a unity that cannot help but point back to division. The oath is less about the risk of perjury than it is a declaration that this split belongs to the human, as if we are the subjects of this division and can in a single ‘act’ overcome our own nature. But the oath also gestures towards the possibility of lying. By asserting a correlation between language and truth it generates the very distinction between human and nature.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ *On Fate*, Plut. *Mor.* 568c-e.

⁷² Ibid. Also, Pl. *Phd.* 115a, *Grg.* 512e.

Can nature lie? For perhaps the majority of plants and animals, pretence would appear to be second nature, predisposed as they are to mimic the world around them or to mislead, trick or deceive their predator by pretending to be something they are not. Pretty much the entire insect world engages in some form of pretence, confusing their physiognomy or disguising themselves as leaves, bark, rocks even a different species of insect. Human beings, however, are not content with dissembling nature; they also claim to have exclusive mastery of truth. Perhaps lying can only exist in such a framework as this. Lying is not dissembling or deceiving for the purpose of self-defense or the defense of one's young. Lying occurs when someone speaks in opposition to a known truth. That said, that this is exclusively human is dubious. There are monkeys (for example, spider monkeys, brown capuchins and long-tailed macaques) who, upon finding a food source make the call that warns other monkeys in the area about the presence of a large predator, but they do this in the absence of said predator and purely for the purpose of hoarding the food themselves. A human being who lies rarely, if ever, does so for more noble causes.

If anything, lying resembles the oath in that they both have the potentiality to be entirely performative. Agamben suggests that the oath reveals a remnant stage in language when the connection between words and things was performative rather than denotative. This is not

a magico-religious stage but a structure antecedent to (or contemporaneous with) the distinction between sense and denotation, which is perhaps not, as we have been accustomed to believe, an original and eternal characteristic of human language but a historical product (which, as such, has not always existed and could one day cease to exist).⁷³

Foucault called this performative aspect of speech 'I swear,' 'I promise' etc, a 'veridiction,' where the subject constitutes itself as a performative speaker of the truth of their own affirmation and whose verbal act brings their own being into truth.⁷⁴

If one pretends to formulate a veridiction as an assertion, an oath as a denotative expression, and (as the Church began to do from the fourth century on by means of conciliar creeds) a profession of faith as dogma,

⁷³ Agamben (2011) 55.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 57.

then the experience of speech splits, and perjury and lie irreducibly spring up. And it is in the attempt to check this split in the experience of language that law and religion are born, both of which seek to tie speech to things and to bind, by means of curses and anathemas, speaking subjects to the veritative power of their speech, to their 'oath' and to their declaration of faith⁷⁵

The oath sworn by the ephebes before returning and immersing themselves in the city, in obeisance of the city's laws and customs, trapped them into having to make a choice: that is, they are true to their oaths and return to the city, or they are true to themselves, refuse to make the oath and are deprived of the city's protection and benefits; or they commit perjury, performing the oath while knowing full well that they will not wholly abide by the city's laws. Considering the extremely litigious character of the ancient Athenian city, the last option, perjury, was obviously frequently the easiest choice.

This 'split' in the experience of language, which gives law and religion cause to intervene into the language of its subjects, would have no more power than the subjects' power to lie if it was not bound in some way to something more tangible than the spoken word. This explains the call within the oath to the trees and vines, the gods and *horoi* to witness the speech act and to act as representation of the boons that will be withdrawn from whomsoever enacts perjury. For this reason, the deities and things called to witness are singularly Athenian; they are the things that the city and the agricultural life around the city offer to its citizen. To go through them all would be tiresome, so, briefly we have the gods that protect the city in case of war (Athena and Ares), goddess of the economy (Hestia), of fertility (Thallo), and then the cultivated seeds of wheat and barley, grapes, olives, and of course the *horoi*.⁷⁶ These could all be contrasted, and no doubt they were in the minds of the ephebes, to the fruits of the wilderness, to the chase of the hunt, the self-sufficiency required while living outside the city walls.⁷⁷ The ephebes, having spent their last two years on the border zones of the land, had experienced this life in the wild and so knew what they were about when making their final decision (presumably life in the wild was also subject to the

⁷⁵ Ibid. 58.

⁷⁶ Siewert (1977) 103.

⁷⁷ Vidal-Naquet (1986) 117ff.

threat of being killed by these adrenaline-charged young men roaming around the countryside like wild beasts). In the oath the ephebes were presented with nothing short of an ultimatum: society, law, religion, marriage, stable gender roles, cultivated crops and animals and wine or nothing.⁷⁸

The split is in the core of what it means to be human, our own division (from 'organic' nature) that reduplicates itself in the world around us. It is the division falling to the hand of fate that constitutes who we are. As Hegel states, this 'formative education, regarded from the side of the individual, consists in his acquiring what thus lies at hand, devouring his inorganic nature, and taking possession of it for himself.'⁷⁹ The question (*horos*) that is devoured in the beginning is thus the human separation from (organic) nature, the necessary division before we take the letter as our own and begin to read and write the law. The ephebes accept their institutionalisation whether or not their oath is spoken in truth or lie, and re-enter the city as men willing to uphold the law, regardless, again of whether they are themselves lawful. In this way the myth of the identification between the actual bounded city, its citizens and its law is maintained in form if not in fact.

The *horos* is as solid as stone, and yet the oath that gives it substance in the creed of the city relies upon an unsubstantiated belief in civic law and myth. Was it a legal bond or religious bond, written (*legere*) on the land and then rewritten (*relegere*) in the human willing to abide by the mythically condoned and supported laws of the city? Does the mythic constitution and maintenance of law require something like a plinth, something solid to mark its advent into the human imaginary? Can such a simple structure bear the burden of belief? What happens when these imaginary systems collapse and the stone ceases to need to hold them up? This is what the *horos* is today, for us. It is just a stone, though it might be placed in museums and therefore be invested at least with a little historical significance. The structures of power, from democracy and law to philosophy and economics have been re-erected and now the burden, with increasing ecological destruction and the inequality of wealth of legal rights, is all the greater. But where or what are the boundary-stones that these structures require to maintain belief in these

⁷⁸ On sexual inversion and the ephebes, see Vidal-Naquet (1986) 115–117.

⁷⁹ Hegel (1977) 16.

systems and keep us to our words? Perhaps the material has given us up for dead and has abstracted itself from our metaphysical debates and our supernatural presumptions.

The *horos* does not stand as a warning against transgressing our bonds, boundaries or limits; that is up to our interpretation, our ability to read the bare facts of the matter. But that does not mean that the stone does not mean something to us, or that it cannot or should not. Just as an area the size of a football field ploughed flat in the once luscious Amazon does not need to mean hubris or the insane, ecocidal drive toward destruction. Of course, it can mean that, and perhaps as the earth burns and laws are continually refined to protect the pyromaniacs who fuel the fires, brute matter will sing out all the louder, making itself heard to those willing or forced to listen.

In the biblical text we saw the necessity of an additional prohibition (writing about writing) not to pass over the boundary for harm. It is no mark of hostility that would hinder correspondence with the other side. On the contrary, it is the *horos* that proscribes the steadfastness of such distinctions as self and other by always posing (as) problems of definition or difference. Law, on the other hand draws up the outlines of possession, putting the boundary out of question (*aporia*), in antithesis to the imposition of the *horos*. Law proposes a material barrier, enforcing the signature or title deed of proprietorship by means of which 'our fathers' asserted their right to the land, cutting themselves off from relations with the other side. Law prescribes relations before the problem of relations has been posed, limiting the possibility of confronting the boundary as the very site that would raise the problem of such relations. The letter of the law capitalises upon the *horos* and continues to do so.

And while the occupying force is bound to extend its boundaries, the displaced population is likewise bound to resist, and the first objects that come to hand will be none other than stones. The throwing of stones is the best means, as Blanqui noted, at the disposal of the insurgency, not because they are effective weapons (against armed forces this is obviously not the case), but because by throwing stones the resistance throws the symbol of what has been perjured, the bond to the oath permitting the sacrament of possession and the appropriation of land, in the face of the occupier. These stones mark the very bond that has been transgressed

by the occupier every time they expand their boundaries into other territories. The bond itself is the subject of these catapults, a letter of dissent or a reminder of the necessary 'other' in every community, everywhere a technical, an actual barrier has been claimed to stand in place of a relation, whether as law, right or simple force. It is significant that it is the stone that falls into the hands of the dispossessed, right at the point when possession is at issue and a relation, of enmity or friendship, is displaced by an inequality in material force. War is only achieved when the sides have equal arms at their disposal. The stone-throw however, is directed against the unequal distribution of force. The stone only appears during people's uprisings, local insurgency and revolt while the possibility of unification is retained, the lines of battle are not yet drawn up. The point of difference in war is, unfortunately, usually an economic one; whoever has access to more advanced artillery is most likely to win.

The first law, the prohibition to move the stone that is *horos*, is swiftly followed by permission to the free use of the rest. This provides the possibility to engage in production and expansion, mining and building and limitless destruction in order to facilitate these processes. This is the condition without which colonialism and imperialism could not resolve into capital, globalisation and the indomitable march of technological expansion and development. The basis of today's institutions, both physical and nonphysical, is the matter, the bare matter upon, or with which they are built, from basalt and steel to rare earths.

But that is not to say that there are no limits. There are. The laws of nature, and the Law as such are dependent upon the notion that there is a limit (autonomous or heteronomous) out there. But what if the only limit is none other than the *horos*, that verbal and material term that raises the question of the law, that works alongside us as we talk about such limits and determinations? That is, it is a limit as much out there as in us. And the transgression of this limit is as dangerous in here as it is out there. Is the core, the very being of the human suffering because of the transgression of limits in the world, of ecological and environmental boundaries upon which human life is dependent?

In lithography the stone brings two antithetical substances into a kind of relation. It is important to note that it does not do so as a mediator, despite its apparent position in the middle. It does not effect a

compromise or a change in relations between the antagonistic water and oil. In fact, it does not do anything at all. Perhaps it is simply empathetic. And yet because of a certain affinity (not an elective affinity) when oil and water in their mutual reactions are absorbed by stone and repelled by one another, from this alchemical dance of love and hate, the outline of shape is brought into distinction. And the letter is formed. The letter in this case is simultaneously the material proof of repulsion and affinity, alienation and friendship, distance and proximity. If it resembles any word upon the printed page, taking its place within the spaces left blank between letters and punctuations, the letter is brought to its limit in *horos*.



Fig. 4. [Δ]ΕΥΡΕ ΠΕΔΙΕΟΝ ΤΡΙΤΤΥΣ ΤΕΛΕΥΤΑΙ ΘΡΙΑΣΙΟΝ ΔΕ ΑΡΧΕΤΑΙ ΤΡΙΤΤΥΣ
 'Here ends the trittys Pedieis, while the trittys Thria begins' IG I³ 1128.
 Photograph by T. Potter, 2021. Rights belong to the Epigraphic Museum,
 Athens © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Hellenic Organization
 of Cultural Resources Development (H.O.C.R.E.D.).

4. Terminological Horizons

ὁ ὅρος —in Logic, *term* of a proposition (whether subject or predicate) [...] *definition*; defined as ἡ τοῦ ἰδίου ἀπόδοσις [...] in pl., title of pseudo-Platonic work [...] *premiss* of a syllogism [...] Math., *term* of a ratio or proportion [...] pl., *terms, conditions*.¹

Neologisms are the bread and butter of lexicographers, providing novelty in an otherwise backward-looking field of study. One of the main differences between a lexicographer and a philosopher, who are both engaged in etymological studies about the relations between words and things and words and other words, is that the philosopher is in the habit of coming up with new terms. These may be new terms for new concepts or new terms for old concepts or new terms for concepts yet to be conceptualised or concepts resisting conceptualisation. The lexicographer, on the other hand, wields the axe over these terms, choosing which ones will be admitted into the annals of eternity by attributing them with an entry and deciding which ones will fade out of usage and be forgotten until another philosopher attempts a resuscitation of old terms.

Is the difference between a ‘term’ and a ‘word’ how deeply it is embedded in a language? A term still has the packaging, the slick of newness from the shop, while a word is ingrained within the language that it shapes and is shaped by. According to current dictionary entries, the difference between a term and a word is that the former is supposed to represent a concept in a particular field of study while a word is an element of language marked by a space to either side. In Ancient Greek philosophy the term *horos* stood in for both of these words, as well as the word for ‘concept,’ and in the ancient texts there are no spaces between words.

1 LS: 1255–1256.

Aristotle states that whoever is engaged in defining things must not coin new terms (οὐ ποιήσει ὁ ὀριζόμενος) because it would lead to a failure to be understood, for words are common, and it is necessary that they apply to something else as well.² To coin new terms on the one hand, and to embrace undiscovered forms on the other, oddly enough, presents the same picture. In bringing up the word ‘horos’ from its hiding place within the texts of ancient philosophy or buried in archaeological remains, I am not coining a new term nor suggesting a new philosophical concept to add to an already prohibitively enormous repertoire. And yet if this is, as I suggest, a rule common to the positive unconscious of ancient thought and remaining with us as the material basis for our institutions today, there is no doubt that this word is here being transformed into a conceptual term, burdened with a plethora of meanings, both historical and cultural. In its original setting, however, the *horos* was certainly not a concept, nor a conceptual tool, though it was a term that could assist conceptualisation if that was necessary.

Terminology, unlike other *-logies* (biology, archaeology, philology, for example) is not a full science; it is not even in the humanities, not properly anyway, at least not yet. It is the use of technical terms within specific fields of study, such that every field has its own special system of nomenclature, and this is called its terminology. Every university course on the different fields of study ought to begin with the distribution of a dictionary of such terms; it would save students a lot of time. Of course, the different fields of study did not always have different terminologies. Ancient Greek philosophy is an excellent example of a common terminology used to address many fields of knowledge, though the fields were not distinct then, at least not before Aristotle’s commentators came along and classified knowledge into separate books: *The Physics*, *The Metaphysics*, *The Ethics*, *Economics*, *Poetics*, *Politics*, and so forth.

As a science, the study of ‘terminology’ is considered to be a subsection or subcategory of linguistics where it finds its purpose in conformism, the attempt to get people to mean the same thing when they use the same term. ‘Terminography,’ on the other hand, finds its job description as the specialised field looking at the terms of specialised fields and then telling the lexicographer about it, who may or may not include it in the lexicon. A condemnation of an entire science out of

2 Ar.Met.1040a6–15.

hand is definitely imprudent; however, the one thing terminology fails to examine is the term itself. Terminology as a science is chiefly seen where it fails to express a common meaning: in biology seminars, in the stock exchange and in those illiterate manuals for electronic devices. But the truth is that the present use of terminology obscures its distinguished and notorious history.

Terminus was the Roman god of boundaries, and his worship was enshrined within the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline Hill, the centre of ancient Roman religion, and an entire festival took its name from the god, the 'Terminalia.' If this is not glorification enough, turn to Aristotle, whose investigations, from the *Physics* through the *Metaphysics* (investigations into pretty much everything that is and is not), invariably feature as a guiding thread not only the question of the 'term,' *horos*, but an entire examination into the activity of the term, or, as he terms it *horismos*, the project of definition.

The *horos* is situated where definitions or determinations overlap, where words that are always composite (whether we place them in signifying chains or in dictionaries) cannot help but encroach upon another word's territory. Aristotle calls this particular force that unites word and being the '*chōriston*,' the 'divider.' However, if he listened to his own advice—not to coin new terms—he would perhaps have admitted that the same activity takes place in the *horos*. The *horos* simultaneously divides and unites, providing the (common) term and essential being of synonymy, where the crossover or overlap occurs between a word's description (*logos*) as well as marking out its (substantial) difference from other words.

The translation of the Greek terms in Aristotle is something that I am never quite satisfied by, and therefore the translations used in the subsequent chapter unfortunately require something of a preface. The translation of Aristotle has become something of a terminological debate, in both senses. To begin with, many terms were mistranslated long ago, chiefly in being filtered through mediaeval Christianity and the dominance of the Latin language.³ Latin and Christian interpretations are largely responsible for slightly warped translations, such as 'substance' for *ousia*, which purposefully remove agency from anything other than

3 See Christophe Erismann, 'Aristotele Latinus: The Reception of Aristotle in the Latin World' in Falcon (2016) 439ff.

a single divine creator. The problem is, however, that these translations have for the most part been canonised, and to alter them risks alienating, or at least confusing, readers. That said, I cannot help but agree with Owens's explication of the absurdity of translating *ousia* as 'substance'.⁴ However, his assumption that 'words and concepts merely signify as best they can the truth contained in things,' should not go unchallenged, specifically given the significance that this study places upon the precedence of the sign or writing.⁵ Also, his argument that Aristotle's phrase *to ti en einai* is not to be understood as the articular infinitive but a novel coinage in which the *einai* is an infinitive of purpose ('in order to be') seems to me an unnecessary complication.

The frustrating fact is that it is not complicated in the original. The past tense of the third singular verb 'to be' is, according to Owens, supposed to ascribe timelessness to the verb. This would mean that the 'is' is not essentially present, but was and presumably, from the so-called infinitive of purpose, will continue to be. Owens translates *to ti en* as 'what-IS-being,' in his translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Sachs modifies this to 'what it is for it to be.' Basically, I am convinced by Sachs's argument for the translation of *ousia* as 'thinghood,' regardless of whether the word is derived from the feminine participle or the admittedly peculiar formation of an abstract noun from the neuter noun *on*, as he suggests in his introduction.⁶ However, I have used neither of these translations, instead using a phrase as immediately close to the original as possible and then always including the Greek or a transliteration of the Greek in parentheses. I do not see any other way around these problems, other than to keep close contact with the original language.

In the following I therefore depart from the English tradition of translating *ousia* as 'substance.' In an effort to remain as close to the Greek language as possible, and in order to hold onto the material of language, that is not just the 'sense' or the feeling of a word but its essential nature, the translation used will always be accompanied by a transliteration of the Greek, especially where the wordplay is significant. So, because this chapter is devoted to the concept of definition, the following translations will be observed: *ousia* is translated as 'essence' or 'being,' given that it is

4 Owens (1978) 138–152; 180.

5 Ibid. 138.

6 Sachs (1999) xxxvii.

the feminine abstract participle of the verb 'to be'; essence is also derived from the Latin participle for the verb to be 'esse.' *Hypostasis* is translated as 'substance,' for the simple reason that both words are composed of the same elements in their respective languages: In Greek, the prefix *hypo-* 'under' and *stasis* from the verb 'to stand, support'; in Latin, the prefix *sub-* 'under' and *stance* from the verb 'to stand, support.' I believe the similarity is sufficient to support the translation. I recognise that these translations are contrary to traditional usage. But the fact that a convention is established, does not mean that we have to keep doing it. And it has to be said that traditional translations of Aristotle do not make it any easier for someone without a knowledge of Greek to understand what on earth is being said, so I do not believe there is too much to lose. As the following will make clear, definition and determination, that is, what words mean, and how they are explained, are not only sidelines to understanding philosophy; they are, or at least they were for Aristotle, the core of any philosophical investigation.

As to the word 'substance,' given this study's focus upon mattering and meaning it would appear careless not to use the word with an appropriate sense of gravity. According to Owens, 'substance' fails to express the direct relation with Being denoted by *ousia* (οὐσία).⁷ The translation 'substance' has filtered down through a history of philosophy that rendered ideas quite foreign to Aristotle's original setting. Substance denotes changeable things, the things that 'stand under' where solidity and extension seem to adhere to the definition; for example, Augustine struggles to attribute *substantia* to God. In this sense, substance is not being used as what is essential to all beings. But *ousia* describes the primary instance of being; for Aristotle that essentially means what something is before it is denoted by a word. Does this mean that *ousia* is a thought experiment? The word 'essence' does seem to go in the opposite direction to 'substance,' the one denoting the body of a thing, the other the soul, or at least something nonexistent. *Ousia* is not responsible for such binaries and they are not represented at all in the Greek.

In a sense the closest rendering of the word *ousia* might be 'object,' but only as the word is used by Harman to mean the being of anything, from a crystal to a war. At least here we can see how something's *ousia* does not need to relate to either a tangible or a conceptual being,

7 Owens (1978) 144.

though that does not mean that it does not denote the matter of a thing. Harman suggests that we cannot ‘paraphrase an object, as if it were truly equivalent to a sum total of qualities or effects and nothing more.’⁸ It cannot be reduced to our knowledge of it, as either a material object or an active one. According to Aristotle, all things depend upon *ousia*, but *ousia* is not universal to all things or the same in all things; something’s *ousia* is peculiar to the thing itself and belongs to nothing else.⁹ Its ‘beingness’ or its ‘thinghood’ is always primary.

A Question of Definition

To study the terms a science employs is not just to question the given definitions but to question the way a science expresses itself, its language, and hence, the science as such, its ends or aims. The actual practice of terminology is therefore where ethics meets logic, at the intersection between purpose and form in which words are used. Aristotle states that the ‘essence’ of a thing must be sought and defined (ζητεῖν καὶ ὀρίζεσθαι) ‘not without matter’ (μὴ ἄνευ τῆς οὐσίας).¹⁰ Are words twofold? Can a word be broken down to the matter of the word (sign), and the matter of what the word means (signifier and signified)? Is this what Aristotle means? Definition is one of the main tasks of Aristotelian philosophy because it is the first question asked, the question of a thing’s essence (ἔστι δ’ ὅρος μὲν λόγος ὃ τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι σημαίνων), ‘horos is a word that means what a thing is.’¹¹ But this does not mean that philosophy has exclusively to do with matter, because the definition of a thing is also a word (ἐπειδὴ πᾶς ὁρισμὸς λόγος τίς ἐστιν).

Therefore, Aristotle finds his project located exactly in the margins between words and things, where ‘definitions pose questions of similarity and difference’ (καὶ γὰρ περὶ τοὺς ὁρισμούς, πότερον ταῦτόν ἢ ἕτερον). ‘So’ Aristotle concludes, ‘let us simply call everything definitory (*horika*) that follows this method of defining (*horismous*) things’ (τὰ ὑπὸ τὴν αὐτὴν ὄντα μέθοδον τοῖς ὁρισμοῖς).¹² In this section from the *Topics*, the *horos* appears in various guises (adjectival, nominal, verbal),

8 Harman (2018) 257.

9 Ar. *Met.*1038b10.

10 Ar. *Met.*1026a1–5.

11 Ar. *Top.*101b39.

12 Ibid.

and it is singly important for coming to an understanding of how to deal with words and the problem of meaning. Take, for example, the following statement from the *Metaphysics*.

ἀλλὰ μὴν δοκεῖ γε πᾶσι καὶ ἐλέχθη πάλοι ἡ μόνον οὐσίας εἶναι ὄρον
ἢ μάλιστα: νῦν δ' οὐδὲ ταύτης. οὐδενὸς ἄρ' ἔσται ὀρισμός: ἢ τρόπον
μὲν τινα ἔσται τρόπον δέ τινα οὔ.¹³

But it seems to all, and was said a while ago, that being [*ousia*] is the only or main definition [*horos*]; but now it seems not even this is the so. Then there can be no definition of anything; or in a sense there can, and in a sense cannot.

It could also be said that Socrates was as focused upon definition as Aristotle, as he was frequently posed by Plato asking questions about the meaning of words, or abstract concepts (the good, beautiful, justice and so forth). Perhaps where Aristotle's project of definition differs from Socratic inquiry is the focus Aristotle places upon the matter of a thing, or rather, the coincidence between matter and word. It is not surprising then, to note the different usage of the word *horos* between Plato and Aristotle. Where in Plato the *horos* is firmly localised as the boundary-stone founded to maintain the law of a place (*topos*), for Aristotle the *horos* is the term that assists in his treatises on predication (*topika*) to talk about words as distinct from nouns or names (*onoma*) or logical phrases or arguments (*logos*). In Plato, it is the verbal form (*horizein*) that is pretty much exclusively used, while the noun *horos* is not identified with anything but the material (at least after avid searching I have not been able to find it to refer to anything other than actual boundary-stones in the land as in the *Laws*). In contrast, in Aristotle, *horos* is used frequently and in different contexts, and clearly means a 'term' or a 'definition.'

Here we must make ourselves aware of a difference in terms that is not apparent in translation between *horos* (ὄρος) and *horismos* (ὀρισμός). *Horismos* is the noun formed from the aorist stem of the verb *horizō*, 'to bound, mark out, define or determine, lay boundary-stones,' etcetera. To raise the spectre of Heidegger we might say that the latter refers to the project of determination. We can see the difference between these two terms in a significant introductory definition of the definition (*horos*) in Aristotle's *Topics*.

13 Ar.Met.1039a20.

ἔστι δ' ὅρος μὲν λόγος ὁ τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι σημαίνων. ἀποδίδοται δὲ ἢ λόγος ἀντ' ὀνόματος ἢ λόγος ἀντὶ λόγου· δυνατόν γὰρ καὶ τῶν ὑπὸ λόγου τινὰ σημαινόμενων ὀρίσασθαι. ὅσοι δ' ὁπωσοῦν ὀνόματι τὴν ἀπόδοσιν ποιοῦνται, δῆλον ὡς οὐκ ἀποδιδόασιν οὗτοι τὸν τοῦ πράγματος ὀρισμόν, ἐπειδὴ πᾶς ὀρισμὸς λόγος τίς ἐστιν. ὀρικὸν μέντοι καὶ τὸ τοιοῦτον θετέον, οἷον ὅτι καλὸν ἐστι τὸ πρέπον. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὸ πότερον ταῦτὸν αἰσθησις καὶ ἐπιστήμη ἢ ἕτερον· καὶ γὰρ περὶ τοὺς ὀρισμούς, πότερον ταῦτὸν ἢ ἕτερον, ἢ πλείστη γίνεται διατριβή. ἀπλῶς δὲ ὀρικά πάντα λεγέσθω τὰ ὑπὸ τὴν αὐτὴν ὄντα μέθοδον τοῖς ὀρισμοῖς. ὅτι δὲ πάντα τὰ νῦν ῥηθέντα τοιαῦτ' ἀστί, δῆλον ἐξ αὐτῶν.¹⁴

A 'definition' [*horos*] is a phrase signifying a thing's essence. It is rendered in the form either of a phrase [*logos*] in lieu of a word [*onoma*], or of a phrase in lieu of another phrase; for it is sometimes possible to define the meaning of a phrase as well. People whose rendering consists of a word only, try as they may, clearly do not render the definition [*horismos*] of the thing in question, because a definition is always a phrase of a certain kind [*logos tis*]. One may, however, use the word 'definitory' [*horiko*] also of a remark such as 'the 'becoming' is 'beautiful,' and likewise also of the question, 'are sensation and knowledge the same or different?,' for argument about definitions is mostly concerned with questions of sameness and difference. We may simply call 'definitory' everything that follows the same method as definitions; and that all the above-mentioned examples are such is clear by example.

What Aristotle is undertaking here is to provide the definition of definition, the boundary of the boundary, the limit of the limit. Is there any way to evade the inevitability of infinite regress?

Let us look closely at this definition. The first thing to note is that the word *horos* is placed in the foremost position and fails to reappear again. Henceforth, what Aristotle has to do with is not the noun *horos* but *horismos*, or the adjective (*horiko*) or different forms of the verb *horizō*. After positing *horos* as the signifying or indicative *logos* (to which we will return), Aristotle states that it pays its dues or is handed over and given away (*apodidotai*) as *either* a *logos* in place or instead of a name (noun or term) *or* a *logos* instead of a *logos*. Does this mean that the term of definition is given as a case of substitution, standing in for other descriptions where the determined place (*horikon theteon*) is only given in terms of a suspension of immediate meaning?

¹⁴ Ar.Top.101b39.

According to Agamben, in mediaeval philosophy a ‘term’ was ‘a word that did not signify itself (*suppositio materialis*) but instead stood for the thing it signified, referring to something (*terminus supponit pro re, supposito personalis*).’¹⁵ Is this what the *horos* is doing here? Does that mean that definition (*horos*) mediates signification, while it is itself an insignificant mediation of thought put into language? In a sense it is only qua *logos* as significant (*sēmainōn*) that *horos* can be defined. In defining a term an entire construct of language is required because otherwise, to simply place another word to explain the first word would not be a definition but mere metonymy. And within this construct, definition depends upon a relation between words that is based upon similarity and difference.

δυνάμενοι γὰρ ὅτι ταύτὸν καὶ ὅτι ἕτερον διαλέγεσθαι, τῷ αὐτῷ τρόπῳ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ὀρισμοὺς ἐπιχειρεῖν εὐπορήσομεν· δείξαντες γὰρ ὅτι οὐ ταύτὸν ἐστὶν ἀνηρηκότες ἐσόμεθα τὸν ὀρισμόν. οὐ μὴν ἀντιστρέφει γε τὸ νῦν ῥηθέν· οὐ γὰρ ἰκανὸν πρὸς τὸ κατασκευάσαι τὸν ὀρισμὸν τὸ δεῖξαι ταύτὸν ὄν.¹⁶

For if we are able to argue that two things are the same or are different, in the same way we shall be able [*euporēsamen*] to undertake an argument about the definitions [*orismous*]: for when we have shown that they are not the same thing we shall have demolished the definition.

The definition is a complex of words embedded within and dependent upon the already fully structured existence of a language. What then can be said to be ‘logical’ about the *horismos* is the fact that it follows a method that is in essence the same as its name, coming about in terms of same or other (*tauton/heteron*), of what it is and what it is not but always in the same way. Definitions that do not depend on metonymy alone require the proximity of other words whose significations are similar and different. So, what is in fact going on here is that definition (*horismos*) is being defined as a grammatical complex within a language, and a definition of this type is ascribed to *horos*. What is essential to philosophy in this case would be the *horismos*, which is in a way a *logos* (*logos tis*), that helps us to understand the meaning of words and their relations with other words within a language that generates meaning, while the meaning of *horos* is deferred in the essence of the thing.

¹⁵ Agamben (1999) 207.

¹⁶ Ar.Top.101b39;139a24.

ὥστε τὸ τί ἦν εἶναί ἐστιν ὅσων ὁ λόγος ἐστὶν ὁρισμός. ὁρισμὸς δ' ἐστὶν οὐκ ἂν ὄνομα λόγῳ ταὐτὸ σημαίνει (πάντες γὰρ ἂν εἶεν οἱ λόγοι ὅροι: ἔσται γὰρ ὄνομα ὁτιοῦν λόγῳ, ὥστε καὶ ἡ Ἰλιάς ὁρισμὸς ἔσται) ἀλλ' ἐὰν πρώτου τινὸς ἦ: τοιαῦτα δ' ἐστὶν ὅσα λέγεται μὴ τῷ ἄλλο κατ' ἄλλου λέγεσθαι.¹⁷

So what it is to be is such that the explanation [*logos*] is a definition [*horismos*]. It is not definition if the name [*onoma*] for the explanation signifies the same thing (for then all explanations [*logoí*] would be definitions [*horoi*]; for a name could be attributed to an explanation, so that even 'the Iliad' could be a definition), but only if it is something primary. These should not be said the one in place of the other.

The definition is not the name but something essential about the being of what is said. Therefore, substituting another name that has a similar meaning or explanation (*logos*) is not sufficient to provide a definition. According to Aristotle, these words should not be used interchangeably: explanation and homonymy are not the same thing.

Does that mean that *horos* is the boundary between every word, not as its definition but as the essential difference between words? Is it the meaningful boundary between same and other upon which the subsequent project of definition (*horismos*) works to bring difference and similarity together?

In the *Topics*, the 'signifying word,' *logos sēmainōn*, does not merely point to a *sign* but a *method*, reverting immediately from the simple *horos* to the *horismos*; as if the *horos* receded into its Aristotelian 'definition' as a *project* of definition, of the signifying word, or the alterity of creating meaning in process. Reading Hegel, Derrida suggests that it is semiopoetics that draws opposites together in more than a point of confrontation, in a resolution. This is something like, in Derrida's words, 'the resolution of the sign in the horizon of the non-sign.' For semiopoetics

is a *Mittelpunkt*: both a central point on which all the rays of opposites converge, a middle point, a middle in the sense of element, of *milieu*, and also the medium point, the site where opposites pass one into the other.¹⁸

For Hegel this *Mittelpunkt* of sign-making is the 'productive imagination,' where what is one's own (das *Eigene*) and what is found along the way

17 Ar.Met.1030a5.

18 Derrida (1982) 80.

(*Gefundensein*), the universal and Being, become one.¹⁹ But we must not forget through all this that the *horos* is still localised and material and is not merely a sign. So, what if this site (*topos*) of definition can only maintain its path (*meth-odos*) and keep producing more definitions by virtue of already proposing a limit that is also a question of productivity as such?

Aristotle gives us a definition where signifying or meaning cannot emerge from anything but the problem, or more precisely the raising of the question of what was there before, what being was. He said that *horos* is a phrase that means 'what it is to be' *to ti ēn einai* (ἔστι δ' ὅρος μὲν λόγος ὃ τὸ τί εἶναι σημαίνων). It is not quite what 'it is', but rather what 'it was' (ἦν), third-person singular imperfect. Though it could also be from the verb 'to say' (φημί), and in this case maybe it was 'what it said it was,' though this is unlikely. The point is that it is not that clear that it is what we thought it was, and in fact it might have been something else altogether. As Aristotle said before, when it comes to definitions, mostly we rub up against the different and the same (διατριβή).

The *horos* thus becomes a limit, a *terminus ad quem*, which proposes the question of what essence meant before it was localised in the *horos*. And indeed, what *was* being before it could be defined in language, before it could be put into question by the *logos*? Any search for essential beginnings, for principles (*archai*) and for a sure foundation, presumes exactly that something was (τι ἦν) before language and before the question of being. In the tradition of Heidegger, we could say that something began as revealed, only to be concealed and come into question later. However, what is significant about the *horos* is that, beginning only in division, it never fully began, not as a whole *archē*. Its principal meaning is always divided. It was nothing but the problem, as such and in itself, of the definition of essence (*einai*, 'to be'; *ousia*, 'being') at the same time as indicating the essence of the question itself. It draws up that first line of division that is necessary for us to ask the question of definition, to distinguish between word and essence (the 'being' of a thing, *esse* is the Latin form of the verb to be, *einai*). But in doing so, *horos* also resists its own definition because its essence is that point of difference between words, and the similarity to the material, both word and stone.

19 Ibid.

Before the *logos* came along and started meaning something, did the *horos* mean nothing? That is to say, was the *horos* nothing but the matter of the sign, signifying nothing, meaningless? And is this what matter or substance is, that is, definition without further meaning—brute stone?

For this reason, nothing is discovered by asking, 'what does *horos* signify?,' 'what does *horos* mean?' because, as Derrida explains about the question of the signification of signification, 'the very question would have brought us to the external border of its closure.'²⁰ And then there we are back on the boundary, immersed in rock assuming it does not matter at all. But of course the border cannot help but matter, even if that is all it does. The question itself, the 'what means,' 'what is' or even the why of metaphysics is already taking place within the confines, on the basis, that is, on account of a limit that proposes the meaningfulness of definition: *horos*. *Horos* refuses the definitive presence of any *archē*, any original, full presence since it gives definition only to the boundary as taking place as the split, between *ousia* and *logos*, that is however based upon the substance (*hypostasis*, that is in this case also very much stone), the matter that supports meaning, that must already be there in the raising of the question of definition.

In the Pseudo-Platonic work titled *Definitions* (Ὅροι) the *horos*, the definition, is thus defined:

Ὅρος λόγος ἐκ διαφορᾶς καὶ γένους συγκείμενος.

Horos is a *logos* comprised of difference and genus.²¹

It is both composed of difference and the matter itself that signifies how words differ from one another. The meaning of the word *horos*, then, is the question of definition as such. It questions its own signification, thus throwing into question its very identification with itself. And, of course, this was the problem from the very beginning, when we realised that we cannot tell the difference between a stone and a *horos* unless we have already identified it as such, and then the difference exists in *us* first and foremost, in *our division* between organic and inorganic nature. And it was also the problem raised by the untranslatability of the *horos*, not because it does not mean 'boundary, limit, letters, stone, landmark,

²⁰ Derrida (1982) 81.

²¹ Pl.Def.414d10 in Plato (1972).

term, definition' and so forth, but because it means the contiguity, and existential contingency, of the different and similar. Its meaning, or signifying (something else, itself) remains on the boundary as what is common to all these terms, and they are definable in reference to what they are not, as much as to what they are. As definition it is the very difference that they have in common, binding them and making them distinct. The point is that it does not cease to be one while it is the other. As Hegel states, 'What is true of substances is also true of differences; for as synonyms they have both name and definition in common.'²²

Aristotle's *Topics* raises the problem of the definition of particulars, while in the *Metaphysics* it is a question of essence (*ousia*) in *logos*, it is also a problem of substance; as anyone would realise should an example of the *horos* come hurtling through the air to land with a thud upon his head.

According to the Aristotelian definition, *horos* is a word whose meaning can be explicated by using a combination of other words, thus providing a similar meaning through difference. All words, when it comes to defining them, require us to indicate or point towards other words, and it is important to note that in this respect *horos* is just like any other word. It is just that what becomes apparent in the definition of *horos* is how the structure of language itself is determined by and dependent on this idea of *horos* as always indicating separation as well as contiguity, as if there is something alien within itself, as if it houses the collusion between the same and the different within its own definition. Is this because *horos* signifies the origin of writing, whether it is the stone that is read as the boundary-stone or the inscription or the definition that provides us with the essence of a thing? 'The sign,' states Hegel, 'is some immediate intuition, representing a totally different import from what naturally belongs to it; it is the *pyramid* into which a foreign soul has been conveyed, and where it is conserved.'²³ The sign, and this is its traditional position, comes in between the *logos* and the word, between the word and its definition. And yet, in the case of the *horos* the other words are only other words, that is, they can be defined as such because they must always be preceded by the split inherent to *horos*, hence the regressive definition of definition.

²² Hegel (1894) 217

²³ Hegel (1971) 213. Cf. Derrida (1982) 83.

The *horos* as sign (inscription or raw stone) is the indication of the divisive force, the material intervention between *horos* and its definition, i.e. *horos*. It is not what *horos* signifies that is different or other; what it signifies is *horos*. *Horos* signifies what is other than *horos*, or to put it otherwise, a determined sign, a determinate or definite meaning is other than *horos*. *Horos*, 'definition,' is identical to itself only by signifying what it is not, that is the indefinite and the indeterminate which always falls to either side, of which it, *horos*, is the boundary.

The definition never seems to go anywhere without regress, without doubling back on our words. The *horos* interminably raises questions about meaning and essence, word and substance, by placing itself in an identical/non-identical relation with meaning, the sign, the letter and inscription, the stone as such. It is the materialisation of the problem, marking the *aporia* at the heart of the structure of language, or the passage without passage to anywhere, only to continue through and on towards further problems. *Horos*, as Aristotle states, is a matter of substitution, of giving a word in place of a name (*logos ant' onomatos*), or another word (or phrase) in place of a word (*logos anti logon*). That is, definition is necessarily a matter of substitution, as if nothing less than matter itself can step in to mediate the relation between words and their latent substitutability. *Horos* is peculiar as a name for the operation of replacing or substituting the name or word with something that has the potential of being both same and different. As such, it is the title that puts the authority of *logos*, the authenticity of the name into question every time and in this case the problem is that of all those indeterminate 'places' of logic (*ta topika*).

The *horos* demands that whatever is on either side of the sign, meets and joins in a relation of both same and other with the other side. Here the sign could be conceived as something like the Sausurrian bar, separating and joining at once and bringing into distinction what is meant and what is said, like a primeval curse that condemned our thoughts and our speech to be forever out of joint and our words always replacable. This juncture may seem accidental to language, as if the potential exists of actually saying what we meant if only we could find the right words, while in the meantime thought overflows into a mere trickle of language. Consequently we have a sense of alienation from our speech and what we mean or want to say, as if there is a

disjuncture between language and meaning, writing and reading. This (dis)juncture is *horos*, bringing into definition the matter with and of language. Needless to say, language contained the seed of its discontent long before any more arboreal structures were attributed it. *Horos* was there from the beginning, a stone that was read by us, whether or not it was written, the line of definition between the human and the 'natural,' as such its meaning was already assured. But where did this faculty for meaning already invested in the stone come from? In terms of any significant meaning attributed to the stone, the distinction rests with us.

The Parenthetical *Horos*

To what degree does the *horos* in Aristotle's work retain the substantial meaning of being 'stone' even while it performs the function of meaning 'definition' or 'determination'? Finley believed that the context of the stone, the actual archaeological finding, changed the word's meaning so that every use of the *horos* became locally semantically specific. For example, the *horos* as boundary of temple lands was distinct from the *horos* that showed fiscal encumbrance, despite both being stones inscribed with the same word and with potentially no other noticeable differences.

Whenever a Greek referred to a stone of either type, he said simply *horos*, without any qualifying adjective (or he used the related word *horizō*), because there could be no confusion between the two in context, just as there was no confusion between the *horos* as "boundary" and *horos* as "boundary stone."²⁴

The *horos* might have had different meanings, but these were not homonyms. All the different meanings coalesce within the same semantic field, or perhaps more appropriately, on the boundary of the same semantic field. Its reticence to be pinned down or determined by a single meaning derives from the 'essence,' the *ti esti*, of the word itself. This could be why its matter is important, why the materiality of the *horos* always remains with it: the stone has to be there, keeping things, and us, grounded during the attempts at definition and determination

24 Finley (1952) 5.

of words and things. If *horos* is the convergence of sign, signifier and signified, word and meaning of 'term' or 'definition' as well as the letters inscribed, and without excepting the stone (whether inscribed or not), it cannot help but keep referring to itself as both identification and difference between word and thing, and between definition and essence. When we try to define it, we keep coming upon the same problem: we cannot help but put the term to use before we actually resolve upon its meaning or meanings.

Finley bewails the reduction of the diverse functions of the *horos* in translation, though acknowledging the difficulty of finding adequate substitutes. He assumes that lurking somewhere behind the *horos* there is a multiplicity of meanings that not only can but must be separated out in order to be both understood and used. And yet, this failure to adequately distinguish in translation the differences of meaning and use that adhere to the *horos* does of course reinforce the fact that in Greek these are different non-divisible aspects of the one term. That it remains one word means that if it engenders any effect upon us, it should certainly be that of pure perplexity, arriving as we do at the limit of meaningful definition or determination. And what does the *horos* signify if not the problem of arriving at the limit of determination or definition?

Perhaps the very difference that is underscored by its Latinate translations (definition, determination) is inherent to the *horos*—not yet arrived at philosophy's finale, nor quite deified, as if it represents the tendency to abstract (*de-*) from ontology to find its resolution in the question of either being or *logos*, but struggles to bring them together. The Romans resolved the problem by deifying the boundary (between being and language) as the god Terminus. Not only has Terminus lost his divinity in our eyes, but he has been reformed into the central station of our comings and goings, the electric opening to the possibility to further circuits, or the end point, pure and simple.

Assuming, then, that there's more than mere difference of spelling between these Latinate variations of the *horos*, could these undertakings lead us somewhere other than back to the *horos*? To somewhere else, an alibi of sorts, where the intention would presumably be to breach the *horos* or to define it, to understand the limit or to transcend it? The work of *horos* is definition. But why 'work'? Is the desire to define words what motivates philosophy, its determinative ontological impetus? Or

is it, more accurately, its ontological impotence? As Hegel states in his preface,

to judge a thing that has substance and solid worth is quite easy, to comprehend it is much harder, and to blend judgement and comprehension in a definitive description is the hardest thing of all.²⁵

How does whosoever it is go about defining this hardest thing? Is the 'hardest thing,' *das schwerste*, the matter with philosophy, the probably phallic preoccupation, and the *idée fixe* of determining philosophy itself? According to Hegel it is to be found only in philosophy's actualisation as science. The definition of the 'hardest thing of all' (already achieved by Hegel in his preface) is brought to fulfilment and actualised when the *philia* of philosophy is revoked by philosophy as a science. That is, when the coming night requires that we light the hard lamps of reason and no longer do it for the love of it, but because we know what it is. Is this a problem of desire or volition, as Hegel implies, 'freed from the material'?²⁶ Does philosophy find satisfaction in wisdom in the absence of love, and its *praxis* and *poiēsis*? And yet the determination to follow these desires or the desire to determine is aroused though never satisfied in philosophy, which takes place in the hours of leisure, in the space *between* production and reproduction. But must that mean that this space is infertile, insubstantial, and the work it engenders is abstract and lacks materiality? What is the difference between, on the one hand, occupation and love, and on the other their products, object and subject? What difference, in effect, is there between substance and *logos* other than their determinations, that is to say, definition itself?

Here in the earlier pages of Hegel's preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and nowhere else in the work, there is a brief encounter with the *horos*. Placed in the original text in the Roman alphabet, it is even capitalised in good Germanic form, as if Hegel could not help but retain the letter's material trace in the inscribed stone even when engaging with the most abstract or conceptual determination. The *horos*, shielded by parentheses from any reference to its lithic counterpart, is introduced as the object upon which the Romantics concentrate their contemptuous gaze.

²⁵ Hegel (1977) 3. Cf. Hegel (2006) 5.

²⁶ Hegel (1969) 13–14.

Dieses prophetische Reden meint gerade so recht im Mittelpunkt und der Tiefe zu bleiben, blickt verächtlich auf die Bestimmtheit (den Horos) und hält sich absichtlich von dem Begriffe und der Notwendigkeit entfernt, als von der Reflexion, die nur in der Endlichkeit hause.

Still less must this complacency which abjures Science claim that such rapturous haziness is superior to Science. This prophetic talk supposes that it is staying right in the centre and in the depths, looks disdainfully at determinateness (*Horos*), and deliberately holds aloof from Notion and Necessity as products of that reflection which is at home only in the finite.²⁷

Ironically, if the romantics had gazed upon the *horos*, lying on its side, overgrown with chicory and chamomile in the shadow of the ravaged Parthenon I am sure they would have been thrilled. A textual confusion in regards to what remains of this ruin infiltrating the text of Hegel is worth noting. In the German text, the *horos* is parenthetical (*den Horos*). In the translation by Miller, the Greek word occurs capitalised in Latin script (*Horos*), while in the translation by Baille it is, oddly enough, transcribed back into the Greek (ὅρος).²⁸ In the German text of the Felix Meiner Verlag edition, it is given in Latin script with the German article. It would appear that the *horos* is already influencing the translation not of meaning but of the letters themselves, with the ambiguity of transliteration. What is the original: those Greek letters read by Hegel in the text of Aristotle and adopted by Baille but which leave out the capitalised 'H' that was read upon the stone? Or is it the term reinscribed in the Hegelian German having passed through a Roman heritage, inadvertently reinventing the archaic 'H'? Obviously the *horos* itself problematises this notion of an authentic writing. If this small extract is supposed to direct us toward finitude through determination, the translation once again obscures the clarity of such a path. Taken all together, the texts themselves betray the claim to a determined science through language, providing us with the textual proof of the problem of 'naming' (and after all is this said in the name of 'Spirit' or 'Mind,' *nous* or *anima*, or is *Geist* something else entirely?).

But it does seem like an odd place to reference the *horos*, especially given its significance within Aristotelian logic. For Hegel, parenthetical

²⁷ Hegel (2006) 9; Hegel (1977) 6.

²⁸ Hegel (2003) 6; Hegel (1977) 6.

'determinateness' (*Horos*) intervenes in the German text, has an end and aim, and is consistent with philosophy as a science tracing its history from Aristotle. It is the task of logic to provide determinations with their concept, to translate them into concepts, one might almost say, to relocate or *remove* (abstract) them to the middle point. The *horos* comes into the text this once and then never resurfaces, and yet what Hegel calls a *mittelpunkt* remains as something like a place-saver for the *horos*. As Hegel states in his *Science of Logic*,

since the *real difference* belongs to the extremes, this *middle term* is only the *abstract neutrality*, the real possibility of those extremes; it is as it were, the theoretical element of the concrete existence of chemical objects, of their process and its result. In the material world water fulfils the function of this medium; in the spiritual world, so far as the *analogue of such a relation has a place there, the sign in general*, and more precisely language is to be regarded as fulfilling that function. [my emphasis]²⁹

For Hegel 'only what is completely determined is at once exoteric, comprehensible, and capable of being learned and appropriated by all.'³⁰ Determination is really what is at issue in the *Logic*, even though the *horos* does not appear as such. Determination is in fact the 'real issue,' the search for that middle position that remains ever the same that would provide both method and content for the work of logic (or a philosophy that has exhausted the love of wisdom).

[T]he real issue [*die Sache selbst*] is not exhausted by stating it as an aim, but by carrying it out, nor is the result the actual whole, but rather the result together with the process through which it came about.³¹

Once we've achieved a state of satisfaction, we want to remember how we got there. The question that Hegel entertains and that the Romantics spurn is then how one can arrive at what is definite (*horos*) from the same place, beginning here at home in the finite? Or must we concede the logic of the Irish joke, that if it is there that we want to be going to, we ought not to be starting from here? Such determinations must, according to Hegel, be freed for use. The bonds that hold them might be a not purely conceptual presence in material life.

29 Hegel (1969) 729.

30 Derrida (1982) 80.

31 Hegel (1977) 2.

In real life, it is then a matter of making use of the thought determinations. From the honor of being contemplated for their own sake, such determinations are debased to the position of serving in the creation and exchange of ideas required for the hustle and bustle of social life. They are in part used as abbreviations, because of their universality. Indeed, what an infinite host of particulars relating to external existence and to action are summed up in a representation, for instance, of battle, war, nation, or of sea and animal, etc.³²

If we return to Aristotle (who is both here at home with us and somewhere else entirely), we see that for him the real issue is the question of defining being, or substance; it is the problem of definition itself. It 'led those who questioned along the way and compelled them to the search' (αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα ὥδοποίησεν αὐτοῖς καὶ συνηνάγκασε ζητεῖν). For Aristotle as for Hegel this is neither 'real' nor an 'issue.'³³ If it must be considered in translation, that is as a matter of translation, the only 'thing' that *Sache* has in common with *pragma* is the 'same.' The thing itself (*die Sache selbst*/αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα) raises the same problem (*aporia*) or the problem of the same—τὴν ἐν ὕλης εἶδει λεγομένην, that is what the matter is. Kind of.

Giving one of his favourite examples, of the concave shaped versus the snub nose, Aristotle states that the 'essence' (whatever that is), the τί ἐστὶ of things must be sought and defined (ζητεῖν καὶ ὀρίζεσθαι) in relation to matter, not without matter (μὴ ἄνευ τῆς ὕλης).³⁴ Or, to return to Hegel, it is the limit or difference between the lifeless thing, bare matter or a 'corpse,' and the perfect living form. Aristotle and Hegel, then, have something in common. They have a common term, and the same thing propels the hunt and remains as the hunter's companion. This 'thing,' then, must be the same as its definition—it is given and what is given is what continues to need determination (*horizesthai*). Although this thing seems to come out of nowhere, and then 'walk alongside' (*sym-bainō*), Aristotle (and here he is at one with Hegel) would argue that this is no accident (*symbebēkos*). The organic unity 'in which truth exists can only be the scientific system of such truth,' which for Hegel is determined by the word *Gestalt*, for Aristotle the symbiosis between *morphē* and *physis*.³⁵

32 Hegel (1969) 14–15.

33 Ar.Met.984a19.

34 Ar.Met.1026a1–5.

35 Hegel (1977) 5.

Once the determination is formulated and the term emptied of meaning, the search propels the philosopher onto further determinations.

And yet there is still something missing that would provide the substance for this work of bringing to definition, a tool of sorts, but a tool that must do a double duty, just as the arrow is provident of nutrition and harbinger of death, as in Herakleitos's aphorism 'the name of the bow is life, its work is death' (τῶι οὖν τόξῳ ὄνομα βίος, ἔργον δὲ θάνατος).³⁶ That is, something whose name concurs with its work or activity. We are looking for something that is properly *aphoristic*, something that defines itself and is divided off from everything else (*apo-horizō*) but is not therefore discrete (*diōrismenon*). We might say the search is for 'perfect definition.' Is this why Nietzsche turned to the aphorism as the short, sweet answer to the question of form and method in philosophy?

The task of philosophy is to work upon each term so closely in order to find a definition that corresponds exactly with its substance that in the end the word itself is worn away, leaving nothing but what is left over, an abstraction that necessarily must also be subjected in turn. This is what Derrida calls the general economy of the philosophical text, the re-examination over and again of the same terms that are thereby simultaneously worn away and, in the history of philosophy, acquire too much interest.³⁷ Definitions abound and tend to circle about in the same place. Already we can feel the pull of the *agora* where certain stones are turned to profit and provide the outlines for denominative evaluations. Given that the *Categories* is the principal work of determination, we should have a glimpse of the intrinsic part played by the *horos* in the name itself which is situated quite unexpectedly in the *agora* (κατηγορίαι, *kata-agora*) as the theoretical task of drawing up accounts (*au logisamenos*) of speaking and intercourse (*agoreuō*).³⁸ In Adorno's words, 'nothing escapes the market-place,' and this holds emphatically in the philosophical work of definition.³⁹

Ὅρος δὲ τοῦ μὲν ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐντελεχείᾳ γιγνομένου ἐκ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος, ὅταν βουλευθέντος γίγνηται μηθενὸς κωλύοντος τῶν ἐκτός,⁴⁰

36 Herakleitos, fr. 48 (DK 73).

37 'White Mythology' in Derrida (1982) 207ff.

38 Hegel (1894) 212.

39 Adorno (2007) 4.

40 *Ar.Met.*1049a5.

The horos of that which comes to be in actuality by intention out of being in potentiality, comes to be if, when the thing is willed, nothing outside of it prevents this.

For Aristotle, definition in conjunction with the stone, a by-product of a willed becoming, is not actually found in nature. Why? Aside from the fact that the Greeks had no concept of nature, as we do today, it was because matter (*hylē*) is *aoristē*, like suffering it rejects such terms of definition. Aristotle says that both matter and suffering (*pathē*) are indeterminate (*aorista*).⁴¹ And yet do *we* not give form to matter (form does not reproduce itself: ‘men produce men, bedsteads do not produce bedsteads’)?⁴² We give expression to suffering because we are all bound up in determination so that our determination to draw up boundaries comes to be read (by us) in the world around us, as our point of resistance against a world where all is in flux.

τὸ δ’ ἄπειρον ἢ τὸ ἀδύνατον διελθεῖν τῷ μὴ πεφυκέναι διέναι, καθάπερ ἡ φωνὴ ἀόρατος, ἢ τὸ διέξοδον ἔχον ἀτελεύτητον, ἢ ὁ μόνος, ἢ ὁ πεφυκὸς ἔχειν μὴ ἔχει διέξοδον ἢ πέρας· ἔτι προσθέσει ἢ ἀφαιρέσει ἢ ἄμφω.⁴³

The infinite [*apeiron*] is either that which cannot be traversed (just as sound is by nature invisible); or that which admits endless traverse; or scarcely admits of traverse; or, though it would naturally admit of traverse [*diexodon*] or limit [*peras*], does not do so. Whether in addition, subtraction or both.

So the *horos* permits the traversal between what is indeterminable and what is determined by drawing up the boundaries of definition (in us) without establishing an adamant barrier. It marks the place where we get stuck (*aporia*) and must go on asking (*diaporēsai*); even infinity comes to its *diexodos* in a determined refusal to suffer limit and definition and this is where we assume ourselves as subjects of our own experience. As Adorno puts it,

where the thought transcends the bonds it tied in resistance—there is its freedom. Freedom follows the subject’s urge to express itself. The need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth. For suffering is

41 Ar.Met.1049b1

42 Ar.Phys.193a-c.

43 Ar.Met.1066a35.

objectivity that weighs upon the subject; its most subjective experience, its expression, is objectively conveyed.⁴⁴

The human being experiences movement passively, subjected to its motion, subjected to the necessities of (human) nature, the becoming and corruption of the environment, the rotation of the heavenly bodies and so forth. And yet human beings also experience themselves as separate, beyond this eternal flux but only because we have the potential to draw such distinctions, to infer that the boundaries and limits we experience are natural, already within us as our 'nature.' And so, they are written in us as much as they are written in the world around us.

Therefore, that distinction, which is found in the *horismos* between same and other, suddenly takes place on an entirely different site and scale. It is no longer the assimilation of the other into the same that Levinas diagnosed as the violence of ontology, the autarchy of the I and the betrayal of the ethical relation.⁴⁵ Definition is, rather, the obligation or the responsibility of recognising a still greater limit before a greater other, an absolute other that is ontologically irreducible to the same, what could be said to be the real limit or *horos*.⁴⁶ We could say, then, that here the chief definition of the *horos* is inescapable, it is the limit that human life is confronted by in the face of the desire for the divinity of the other.

On the Horizon of Temporality

The horizon as a notion and problem for philosophy could have originated in the determinative *horos* as it appears in Aristotle. Before modern philosophy, *horos* was already structuring the experience both of language and the actual world for the Ancient Greeks, especially in the setting of the Athenian market and Athenian imperialist expansion, where the problem of boundaries (or their transgression) became at once politically and philosophically charged. It is at the very least interesting to consider that for ancient philosophy it was the *horos*, boundary and stone, that was in some sense the determining element for the linguistic experience of

44 Adorno (2007) 17–18.

45 Levinas (2000) 180f.

46 Bashier (2004) 87.

the world, while in modern philosophy a derivative of the same word, expanded to the edge of our vision, plays 'the all-determining role' in the theory of horizon-intentionality.⁴⁷ To put it simply, you cannot take the *on* (the essence or 'being') out of the horizon, even when defining it (*horos*).

In Hegel's *History of Philosophy*, 'determinations' abound and are clearly associated with the principal task of defining everything from Aristotle's *Organon* to his *Metaphysics*.

The Categories (κατηγορίαι), of which the first work treats, are the universal determinations, that which is predicated of existent things (κατηγορεῖται): as well that which we call conceptions of the understanding, as the simple realities of things. This may be called an ontology, as pertaining to metaphysics; hence these determinations also appear in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.⁴⁸

But which 'determination' proliferates into ontology? Do the *horos* and the *horismos* perform differently in the *dénouement* from categorical determination to the ontological undertaking? And what does it signify that we cannot translate the *horos* or the *horismos* in their pure Latinate form (*finis, terminus*), but always as *definite, determined*? That is, without the *de-* of the absolute or the divinity (*deus*), that awe prefixed to the terror (δέος) that resounds in destruction? Certainly, these translations keep us at a distance from the boundary, but they also seem to push us off (*de-*) the path of pure ontology, as if the Roman god Terminus had taken upon himself the responsibility for maintaining a certain awed distance before the *horos*, binding our definitions and determinations with an interminable slip toward a deontological stance, especially when it comes to approaching linguistic boundaries. And yet there is something evocative about the *horismos*. Like an echo of a call to action (socialism, communism, nationalism, fascism) the *horismos* prompts movement, a kind of impetus found in saying regardless of form and content. Heidegger picks up on the project of definition.

The question asks about being. What does being mean? Formally, the answer is: Being means this and that. The question seeks an answer which determines something which is somehow already given in the very questioning. The question is what is called a *question of definition*.⁴⁹

47 Geniusas (2012) 11.

48 Hegel (1894) 212.

49 Heidegger (1985) 143.

According to Heidegger the 'being-in-the-world of the human being is determined in its ground through its speaking.'⁵⁰ In his seminar on the *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, Heidegger cannot resist the temptation to define this ground as his terminologically inherited square metre of Greek soil.

We want to understand what definition means by questioning back to what it meant for the Greeks, for Aristotle. Ὁρισμός: "circumscription," "delimitation." Ὁρισμός: λόγος οὐσίας. What is meant by λόγος, by οὐσία, by λόγος οὐσίας?⁵¹

Are these questions bound to birth some kind of substantial resolution? The solution that is found in Heidegger is the return to the Greek, the return to the Aristotelian problem of determination: 'what is this λόγος? It is the fundamental determination of the being of the human being as such.'⁵² Thus Heidegger also comes to the conclusion that each word relates interminably to the other. For Heidegger it is the word *logos* that bears the brunt of human determinism, rather than the *horos* or the *horismos*. And yet, he can project a limit, his project of determination. The *horismos* is then different from the *logos* insofar as it is also 'the title for Aristotelian fundamental research—or, more precisely, for Greek fundamental research as such—the basic concept per se, the term.'⁵³

So here we are back at the beginning, to what should be a clear determination of the *horos*, both title and work. As it was for Aristotle, so for Heidegger, the (re)search presents itself as a knot or bond that we must follow; 'What is pre-given is a *bond* that is indeterminate as to content but determinate as to the way of actualization.'⁵⁴ And yet, this term is not as it appears. Heidegger is not talking about the *horos*; he is talking about the *project* of definition giving ground to philosophy itself: 'If it is genuine, a concretely determined problematic of philosophical research will run in its own directedness to the end, an end philosophy as such must have made fast for itself.'⁵⁵ The way is, of course, the *diaporêsai* made concrete in the posing of the question of definition (as the question of *being*). Ὁρισμός is a λόγος, a "speaking" about something,

⁵⁰ Heidegger (2009) 13–15.

⁵¹ Ibid. 15.

⁵² Ibid. 14.

⁵³ Heidegger (2009) 231.

⁵⁴ Heidegger (2001) 17.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 12.

an addressing of the matter “itself in that which it is,” καθ’ αὐτό.⁵⁶ For Heidegger, this project of definition becomes the basic *horizon* of metaphysics. Belittling its nominative ancestor, *horos*, the horizon takes shape from the present participle of the verb *horizo* (ὀρίζω) and henceforth takes prominence as that which provides the outline of our world, our horizon. And with the horizon, the Greek *horismos* ceases to feature for Heidegger.

Heidegger never wrote a chapter on the horizon as such, almost as if he took it and its connection to the Aristotelian notion of ‘determining’ (*horismos*) for granted (it might be the original ‘gift’ -*es gibt*- upon which all determinations were thereafter based). It is important to remember that the Greeks needed to clarify the horizon by articulating the circle in addition to the determining participle, ὁ τοῦ ὀρίζοντος κύκλος, ὁ ὀρίζων κύκλος.⁵⁷ In a way the addition of the circle serves to expand the *horos* exponentially, but also to limit it, insofar as it forecloses its claim to the substantial, the lithic *horos*. Unlike so many of his concepts, Heidegger’s horizon is not an immediate adoption of the Greek term; in using the word he is making explicit reference to a more widely used notion of the horizon.

Mediaeval European thought used the idea of the horizon as indicative of the boundary between the spiritual and human spheres, and although the horizon was a notion used in modern interpretations as an epistemological boundary opening onto human knowledge, as an idea it nonetheless remained largely a metaphor.⁵⁸ It is significant that Husserl, while retaining the idea of the horizon in its broadest sense as ‘what consciousness co-intends in such a way that what is co-intended determines the sense of appearing objectivities,’ ceased to use it as a metaphor for human experience.⁵⁹ For Husserl, the horizon is a perceptual notion of an object’s twofold horizon, inner and outer. The inner horizon is constituted of the potential perception of an object from all angles; an object’s outer horizon is extendible indefinitely through the object’s relation to other objects, and these others’ relation to others and so on. Here the indefinite extendability of the horizon is

56 Heidegger (2009) 14.

57 *Ar.Meteor.*363a27; *Cael.*297b34.

58 Geniusas (2012) 3–5.

59 *Ibid.* 7.

glimpsed in the object itself—as phenomenon—hence the horizon is defined as the outer extreme of our relation with the phenomenal world and simultaneously defines our co-existence with objects; ‘horizon is a structure of determination that predelineates the purview within which each and every phenomenon appears.’⁶⁰ The horizon is ‘intuitive emptiness’ given and inseparable from intuitive fullness; it structures and is the structure of our experience in the world.

Where the horizon is normally experienced as a line, demarcated according to the objects which are within it—that within the perceptual field from here to there, or more generally still, an extendable limit, something to transcend—for the later Heidegger the horizon remains a limit, but a limit whose significance lies on the other side. The ‘horizon, the sphere of the constant that surrounds man, is not a wall shutting man off; the horizon is *transparent*; it points beyond to what is not made fast, to what becomes and can become, to the possible.’⁶¹ Upon the appearance of objects, and according to representational, calculative thinking, the being of the horizon is experienced only as a plane, this side that faces us of the surrounding ‘openness.’ *Gegnet*, a term awkwardly but perhaps necessarily translated as ‘that-which-regions,’ is ‘an abiding expanse which, gathering all, opens itself, so that in it openness is halted and held, letting everything merge in its own resting.’⁶² Heidegger seeks to shift this experience of the horizon into a relation, a suspension of ‘calculative thinking,’ through ‘meditative thinking’ (less thinking more thanking). This suspension is also a matter of space, or temporality, because meditative thinking maintains the ‘openness’ that lets the horizon be ‘releasement to that-which-regions’ (*Gelassenheit zur Gegnet*).⁶³ By having recourse to Heidegger’s earlier texts, a different concept of the horizon can be found—one that is not subordinated, as it is in the *Conversation*, to the more fundamental concept of *Gegnet*.

Horizons proliferate in *Being and Time*. On the first page, we are presented with the schema of the horizon as the possibility of ontological interpretation, in the form of a simile. ‘Our provisional aim is the Interpretation of *Time* as the possible *horizon* for any understanding

60 Ibid.

61 Inwood (1999) 99–100.

62 Heidegger (1966) 66.

63 Ibid. 74.

whatsoever of Being.⁶⁴ In the final sentence on the last page we are again presented with the question of the horizon as something like a metaphor for time, 'Does *time* manifest itself as the horizon of *Being*?' What links temporality with the horizon, 'has *something like* a horizon'?⁶⁵ The answer can be addressed by his deference to the Greek 'determination' witnessed in his peculiar attempts to translate early Greek philosophy in its most material aspect, which is not to say a 'literal translation.' Heidegger's project of determination was undertaken under the aegis of an attempt to get to the 'root' of matters, the question of determination as such.

Hence, the similitude between temporality and horizon is represented in the grammatical form, so appropriately named, of the infinitive ὀρίζειν, 'that radical "determining" that occurs at the interface between language and being.'⁶⁶ The possibility, or more precisely, the potentiality, of determining provides the whereupon (*woraufhin*), out of where (*von wo aus*), the whence, dependent upon which the question of being is to be posed.⁶⁷ 'The prefiguration of horizons is but an alternative way of describing a foreshadowed structure of the hermeneutic situation.'⁶⁸ This location is the horizon; a horizontal-schema delineated in Heidegger's ecstatic translation of German into three basic Latinate tenses, a final task which remained incomplete. Hence the *whence* of temporality, the *vor von*, originates not only in the horizon as limit but in the determination (*horismos*) as such, where *logos* is the first horizon of being.

By means of *horismos* translated as 'circumscription,' 'delimitation,' Heidegger determined to seek in Aristotle the 'indigenous character' of the concept: 'We will have to seek out the *indigenous character* of conceptuality [...] We will have to consult the way the *Greek* conceptuality and its indigenous character look.'⁶⁹ Determination provides the ground of ontology, appropriating the Aristotelian task of definition as the first step—and the onward march—of the *diaporêsai*. However, there is a significant slip here toward *horismos*, which in Aristotle is the pre-determined project of definition. It is here that Heidegger finds his *worauf*,

64 Heidegger (1962) 364.

65 Ibid. 365.

66 Kisiel (1995) 446.

67 Heidegger (1962) 365, Kisiel (1995) 449–450.

68 Kisiel (1995) 447.

69 Heidegger (2009) 13–15.

his scene between the rising and setting (concealment-unconcealment) sun (of being). Within this *horiz-on* (the defined being) he discovers a land of ontological neutrality, rooting his philosophy to the ground, giving his inquiry a foundation.

The coming to be of terms is expressed in an economic formula and relates to what Heidegger calls the 'customary meaning' of *ousia*, 'property, possession and goods, household, estate.'⁷⁰

A determinate concrete context is discovered, seen anew for the first time—the word is missing, the word is *coined together with the matter*. An expression that was not at hand may immediately become a term, which later dissipates by entering into the general currency and ordinariness of speaking.⁷¹

This is the basis of Heidegger's economy where the ground for other concepts is prefigured in determination as the *logos* of *ousia*.

The multifariousness of meaning of οὐσία is therefore not treated here for its own sake, but rather always only in the direction of the proper appropriation of matter, i.e., the understanding of what is addressed in ὁρισμός as λόγος.⁷²

That determination is autochthonous, and that it can be discovered by returning to the place of its 'conception' betrays an appropriative desire. That said, the *horos* does have an intimate relation with the Greek soil, and in itself it is never far away from the economic and the legal bounds of possession. The law of the letter can be said to be exactly this estrangement or alienation written into the experience of time, denoting an elsewhere, an other origin, the fact of natality as the first disconnection with place, that is the prohibition against the 'return to the ground of definition.'⁷³ But when it comes to *horos*, the ground is always obfuscated by the stone. We have already seen that whatever was described in the *horos* was already inscribed in the lost figuration of the letter's migration, describing the *horos* just as the rising and setting sun outlines the horizon.

On the one hand, then, with Hegel, we have the preference for the Notion or Concept as determination taking shape; on the other, with

⁷⁰ Ibid. 233.

⁷¹ Ibid. 18.

⁷² Ibid. 232.

⁷³ Ibid. 13.

Heidegger we have definition as return to the ‘soil’ of determination. In both cases, *horismos* is appropriated into the work of thinking about being projected (into past and future). Can we overlook the appropriation of determination as the common ground of the human being?

Material Interventions

It is the task of theoretical first philosophy to determine such limits, to find the definition of being as such (*ousia*). It is a project of differentiation between the immediate identification of being with its name. The conjunction as in the statement of the subject ‘Being as in being,’ ὄντος ἢ ὄν, or ὄν ἢ ὄν (absurdly translated into Latin as ‘being *qua* being’) best describes this project since it is being that is presumed in the question (what is being?), but the method is speculative or theoretical, περὶ χωριστὰ καὶ ἀκίνητα, ‘concerning whatever is separate and immobile.’⁷⁴ Metaphysics first names ‘being’ and then identifies it with itself through what it is not but resembles, in this case, a letter (eta, ἥ)—a letter that breaks into identification (between being to either side) and interrupts this otherwise pure reduplication with similarity and difference.

This is none other than the name and work begun in the *Categories* as the project of definition and completed in the *Metaphysics*, in the ‘determination’ of substance as ‘separate’ (χωριστόν). Aristotle frequently uses the word *onoma* where we would expect *horos*, ‘term’—the name of being and not being.⁷⁵ If anything can both be and not be—and this is the problem posed by potentiality—what causes them to be the one and not the other? Or, what is the difference, actually, between being and not being, εἶναι καὶ μὴ εἶναι? Aesthetically speaking, one could say it is the μὴ, the ‘not.’ Is it not a peculiarity that negation or deprivation expressed in the *logos* does not take something away from a positive but on the contrary requires a supplement, α-, μὴ, not, etc.? Privation, being a privation of substance is dependent upon a precedent definition that it can modify (this should put us in mind of the impotentiality inherent in potentiality): ‘privation is negation from a determined (or defined) genus,’ the absence of *horos*.⁷⁶ But there is also

74 Ar.Met.1026a15; 1026a30.

75 Ar.Met.1006a30, Ar.Met.1050b.

76 Ar.Met.1011a20.

the conjunction 'and,' in which case the question always takes a twofold form, 'both and not.' The name for being presents an *aporia*, while the conjunctions and disjunctions of language move across the plurality of *aporiai*.

That Aristotle presents metaphysics as the problem of the categories between language and thought is the subject of Derrida's critical article on Benveniste's thesis that the categories 'present different aspects, depending on whether they are categories of thought or language.'⁷⁷ This is an alleged opposition, which is, of course, the very subject of Aristotle's metaphysics since the question of being, τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, is discussed in correspondence with the statement that 'being is said many ways,' πολλαχῶς λέγεται τὸ ὄν. But is the *chōriston*, the 'separate,' not a (product of) *logos*? Is it a name given to substance (*ousia*) that distinguishes it from everything else? So that οὐθὲν γὰρ τῶν ἄλλων χωριστόν ἐστι παρὰ τὴν οὐσίαν, 'none of the other [categories] are separate except substance,' yet everything must be said to have substance to be a subject.⁷⁸ To find the substance of a thing is supposed to complete the task Derrida calls 'usury,' of wearing away and abstracting terms.⁷⁹ In this case the 'separate' (*chōriston*) is at once the 'substance of substance' and the activity of philosophy. Put otherwise, it is natural (κατὰ φύσιν) that things have substance, but it is only the form that is 'by nature' (φύσει). Nature is form (μορφῇ), while its kind of form (εἶδος) is not separate from it except in language (οὐ χωριστόν ὄν ἄλλ' ἢ κατὰ τὸν λόγον).⁸⁰ Substance as such comprises an *aporia* (ἔχει δὲ τὸ συμβαῖνον ἀπορίαν) that has to do entirely with 'definition.' The taking shape of nature as substance thus brings into definition the *aporia* of their separation and drives first philosophy as/to its determination. It is therefore the task of philosophy to explain the apparent accident of this *aporia*.

If there is only one 'definition' of substance (*ousia*), substance could not be said to be the determination of anything but itself (ἢ μόνον οὐσίας εἶναι ὅρον ἢ μάλιστα).⁸¹ Hence the definition, *horos*, marks the

77 'The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy before Linguistics' in Derrida (1982) 175–205.

78 *Ar.Phys.*185a31; *Met.*1025b28.

79 Derrida (1982) 209.

80 *Ar.Phys.*193b5.

81 *Ar.Met.*1039a14;21.

twofold task, the ‘problem’ (*aporia*) of definition and its formulation or expression in *logos* which leads to further problems (*diaporiai*): definition as such both can and cannot be, yes and no. The reason for this ambiguity is that substance is said to be of two kinds, the *synolon* (the composition of word or description and matter) and the *logos*. But if there is a *logos* of a substance, it would be separate to the substance, that is, it would be separate only *as logos*. While if the description, *logos*, and the form (*eidos*) were separate from the substance, this would be an idea (the so-called ‘third man’ theory).

διὸ δεῖ, τῶν πρὸς ὅρον ὅταν τις ὀρίζηται τι τῶν καθ’ ἑκαστον, μὴ ἀγνοεῖν ὅτι αἰὲ ἀναιρεῖν ἔστιν· οὐ γὰρ ἐνδέχεται ὀρίσασθαι. οὐδὲ δὴ ἰδέαν οὐδεμίαν ἔστιν ὀρίσασθαι. τῶν γὰρ καθ’ ἑκαστον ἢ ἰδέα, ὡς φασί, καὶ χωριστή· ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ἐξ ὀνομάτων εἶναι τὸν λόγον, ὄνομα δ’ οὐ ποιήσει ὁ ὀριζόμενος (ἄγνωστον γὰρ ἔσται, τὰ δὲ κείμενα κοινὰ πᾶσιν· ἀνάγκη ἄρα ὑπάρχειν καὶ ἄλλω ταῦτα· οἷον εἴ τις σὲ ὀρίσαιτο, ζῶον ἐρεῖ ἰσχνὸν ἢ λευκὸν ἢ ἕτερόν τι ὃ καὶ ἄλλω ὑπάρξει.

Therefore in cases relating to definition [*horizētai*], when we are trying to define any individual, we must not fail to realise that our definition may always be upset; because it is impossible to define (*horizesthai*) these things. Nor, indeed, can any Idea be defined; for the Idea is an individual, as they say, and separable; and the formula must consist of words, and the man who is defining must not coin a word, because it would not be comprehensible. But the words which are in use are common to all the things which they denote; and so they must necessarily apply to something else as well. E.g., if a man were to define you, he would say that you are an animal which is lean or white or has some other attribute, which will apply to something else as well.⁸²

The problem with determining any definition is that one is compelled to use other words, and therefore, on the one hand, the definition always crosses over into other definitions as being reliant on these other words, along with all the baggage that comes with them. And on the other hand, the problem of determination simply allows one to continue into other problems of determination (and this is what is expressed by the verb *diapōresai*). Aristotle, who cannot accept the Platonic Ideas, solves this *aporia* by referring to incomposite substance

82 Ar.Met.1040a6–15.

as being ‘in potentiality,’ while it is only substance composite with *logos* that is separate absolutely.

ἔστι δ' οὐσία τὸ ὑποκείμενον, ἄλλως μὲν ἢ ὕλη (ὕλην δὲ λέγω ἢ μὴ τότε τι οὕσα ἐνεργείᾳ δυνάμει ἐστὶ τότε τι), ἄλλως δ' ὁ λόγος καὶ ἡ μορφή, ὃ τότε τι ὄν τῷ λόγῳ χωριστόν ἐστιν: τρίτον δὲ τὸ ἐκ τούτων, οὗ γένεσις μόνου καὶ φθορά ἐστι, καὶ χωριστόν ἀπλῶς: τῶν γὰρ κατὰ τὸν λόγον οὐσιῶν αἱ μὲν αἱ δ' οὐ.⁸³

And the substrate is substance; in one sense matter (by matter I mean that which is not in actuality, but is potentially, an individual thing); and in another the word and shape (which is an individual thing and is separate in speech); and thirdly there is the combination of the two, which alone admits of generation and decay, and is separate absolutely—for of substances according to their word some are separate and some are not.

This definition for substance as *chōriston*, ‘separate,’ can be understood first and foremost in relation to contraries. As he says, substance has no contrary (ὕπαρχει δὲ ταῖς οὐσίαις καὶ τὸ μηδὲν αὐταῖς ἐναντίον εἶναι) that would provide it with something from which to differ.⁸⁴ But this is not what is particular (ἴδιον τῆς οὐσίας) to substance (quantity also has no contrary). What is particular to substance is that ‘while remaining numerically one and the same, it is capable of admitting contrary qualities,’ (ἢ δὲ γε οὐσία ἐν καὶ ταὐτὸν ἀριθμῷ ὄν δεκτικὸν τῶν ἐναντίων ἐστίν).⁸⁵ It is its sameness that distinguishes and separates it, such that by changing itself, it can receive contraries, assimilating what is other to the same. But does this similarity, or identification with itself, mean that substance is one and the same (ἐν καὶ ταὐτὸν)?

It cannot be, and this is exactly why Aristotle calls or names substance the *chōriston*. Because the work of defining it is without substance, ‘always away beyond it’ (*chōris*, ‘without’ -on, ‘being’). Or is it because substance is indeterminable? By making division (*chōrizein*) possible, is it the prospect of definition itself? Does the *chōriston* give substance to the potential conjunction of *logos* and substance?

According to Levinas, *chōriston* ‘is the definition of freedom: to maintain oneself against the other, despite every relation with the other to

83 Ar.Met.1042a30.

84 Ar.Cat.3b25.

85 Ar.Cat.4a10-b20.

ensure the autarchy of the I.⁸⁶ In the name '*chōriston*' the relation between the contraries is resolved into a singular and separate reduction to the same. Perhaps the *chōriston* was a terminological 'solution' or release (*euporia* or *lysis*) to the interminable confrontation between Socratic contraries. That is, it is the essential step that would allow us, not in spite of our dialectic, but by means of it, to arrive at a logical conclusion that could resemble the thing itself (truth). This is the real issue, the reduction of the thing itself not to a common factor, but to the same thing from Aristotle to Hegel. Regardless of how each individual manipulates it, the thing itself remains the same, separate, the immaterial pledge of freedom, a 'place' (*topos*) of definition that prefigures the answer to the question posed in the absolute identification of Cartesian doubt between the question and the questioner. As Levinas states, 'Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being.'⁸⁷ Here philosophy might just succeed as a science but only because the erotic play of two has been replaced by the autonomous hegemony of the one.

And the truth of this self-identification is achieved in mathematics, where the indiscretion of *auto-philo-sophy* (love of one's own wisdom, or the knowledge of the same) is isolated *in situ*, freed from the bonds of pre-determined heteronomy. Pure mathematics, says Aristotle, deals with all things alike (ἡ δὲ καθόλου πασῶν κοινή). This might be because mathematics as a field of thought is extracted from the material. According to Aristotle it is because the objects of its study, numbers, have no common term or boundary (*horos*).

τῶν μὲν γὰρ οὐ ἀριθμοῦ μορίων οὐδεὶς ἐστὶ κοινὸς ὅρος, πρὸς ὃν συνάπτει τὰ μόρια αὐτοῦ, οἷον τὰ πέντε εἰ ἐστὶ τῶν δέκα μόριον, πρὸς οὐδένᾳ κοινὸν ὅρον σύναπτει τὰ πέντε καὶ τὰ πέντε, ἀλλὰ διώρισται.⁸⁸

In the case of the parts of a number, there is no common boundary [*koinos horos*] at which they join. For example: two fives make ten, but the two fives have no common boundary, but are separate; the parts three and seven also do not join at any boundary.

86 Levinas (1969) 47.

87 Ibid. 43.

88 Ar.Cat.4b20.

It is no coincidence that the proponents of mathematics are modern-day Platonists; something has to be out there *as the other* but that comes to *us*, touches *us*, it might even dawn upon us as a 'movement' or e-vent, coming from somewhere else. In mathematics the joint is there, but its community is lacking. Numbers can get it on with one another, break up, get back together, get others involved, but throughout all this, they remain distinct and unchanged. There is a promiscuity here that is, however, not social; numbers are not communal but atavistic. The truth of mathematics then can be 'defined' as freedom exactly because it shares no 'common boundary' (*koinos horos*), is without limit and substance, and is not nor has any necessary relation except to itself. There is indeed a violence here, as Levinas was aware, but it is the violence that masquerades as truth flying its banner of freedom for the same as it intervenes in the relations between others.

It is exactly because there is the 'common term' (*koinos horos*) in language that our attempts at definition are always 'upset' (*anairein*).⁸⁹ The task of definition has the potential of always going beyond its object, hence the verb *anairein*, which literally means 'to raise, lift,' a word that we could translate into the Hegelian *aufheben*. Every definition consists of something that is also applicable to something else, a certain common boundary or shared term, and can always be used in formulating its opposite; most evidently, we can always define something by what it is not or by giving its contrary.

89 Ar.Met.1040a6.



Fig. 5. ΟΡΟΣ ΛΕΤΟΣ '[h]oros of Leto'. Photograph courtesy of Paulos Karvonis, The Island of Delos, Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades, © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development (H.O.C.R.E.D.)

5. The Presence of the Lithic

ὁ ὅρος—*the time within which one may marry [...]* the notes which limit the intervals in the musical scale[...] I set the *limit* of human life at seventy years [...] Astrol, οἱ τρεῖς ὅ. the three *terms*, used in various calculations.¹

The diagnostic of the Anthropocene as a new age in the geologic timescale introduces the human as an equivalent, nonhuman force of intemperate geological interference. Not only is the human being rendered as a subject of geomorphic and geological change but also as an intrinsic agent interacting within the geological materiality of the earth in such a way that the lithic record of time is both altered by human activity and is inherent to human agency. The rocks are changing, and the surface strata are being read differently by us, in a way that for the first time raises human beings to the position that human culture has long claimed us to be—as a dominant force, rewriting the fate of the world.

There is a complex of problems in this assertion of the new age of the *anthropos*. First, there are the problems that have to do with the human presence in the lithic: there is an underlying assumption that rocks present to us as a script that can be deciphered, interpreted and understood; stratigraphy requires humans to read into stone as if the earth's crust is a book. The other side of this problem is the authenticity of our rock-reading and the supposed equivalence between the human reader and the human content assumed within the Anthropocene. Since it was humans doing the reading, they were already superimposed upon or within the geological strata as those who read, interpret and make sense of a natural phenomenon. The Anthropocene reiterates the already intentional human presence in the lithic. Second, there are the problems that have to do with the measurement or definition of

1 Taken from LS: ὅρος.

geologic time and the question of whether this can ever be more than relative to the human act of reading. Is there such a thing as absolute time and if there is, is it possible for humans to experience it as such and transform it into a comprehensible measurement? Time itself has a habit of reconfiguring itself every time into space or spatial metaphors. Perhaps this is more essential to time than we allow. With this in mind this chapter will investigate the relation between rocks and time. In which case I will begin with the *horos* in the works of Aristotle, and its task of defining the present moment, or 'now.' Given the slippery nature of time, it should not come as a surprise if that is where I end up as well.

There can be no doubt that human beings are changing the surface of the earth through chemical use, industrial farming methods, fossil fuel extraction, and deforestation. That is not the issue. The issue is this: what lesson do we take from the introduction of a new name for a new age, and will it assist us in some way to make the necessary changes in our relations with the geomorphology of the earth? My suspicion is that this reiteration of the human as an age-inducing agent only reinforces the dangerous and destructive structures of belief endemic to the majority of human institutions (science, religion, architecture, politics) that actively segregate the human from the nonhuman. What would be more beneficial would be a reworking of a non-horizontal, non-vertical, non-linear history of human/nonhuman interrelations and interactions that is not just between humans and nonhumans but also between animals and rocks, plants and fungi, bacteria and viruses and so on—an entirely new multi-dimensional project that calls for the embeddedness of life and matter.

Perhaps the main problem with the designation of the Anthropocene is that it forebodes (nominally) an era in which humans presume to hold centre stage, when what it should really be suggesting is how we can reinvest ourselves within the subtle chain of life. The way climate change is being presented seems to suggest two possibilities only, on the one hand there is the technocratic, corporate world geo-engineered to suit humanity alone, on the other there is the imminent climatic chaos spawned by the rise of earthly, chthonic forces that do not give a damn about human lives or humanity as a whole. Climate change might be the scientific term for an aggregate of shifting climatic forces, but what we experience is a series of threateningly powerful interventions

in the natural world: the disappearance of pollinators, barren oceans, genetically modified plant species spreading seeds across neighbouring fields, poisoned rivers, rising flood waters, out-of-season snow, firestorms of hellish proportions, chemicals that saturate the land, enter water sources and modify the reproductive health of our children and standing over it all devils with little resemblance to humanity, buying up land and expanding their dominion to the ends of the earth. The ancient monsters and old chthonic gods are awakening to fight a battle that will ravage our days and haunt our nights. All we need to do is keep our feet on the ground and stand firm to protect what is wild around and within us. 'The chthonic ones are precisely not sky gods, not a foundation for the Olympiad, not friends to the Anthropocene or Capitalocene, are definitely not finished. The Earthbound can take heart—as well as action.'² Donna Haraway proposes a new term, therefore, for the underside of the Anthropocene, a term that covers these chthonic forces and powers, the Chthulucene. As far as I understand, however, if we are diagnosing a problem rather than simply attributing a novel name to a time period then a name can be given but only to a small proportion of humanity whose cartel we could call the capitalocene. The conceptualisation of time since Aristotle and culminating in the designation of the Anthropocene reflects a human desire to flatten our experience of the world into a linear process of narcissistic complacency devoid of respect or mindfulness of the other beings and nonbeings that contribute to, or indeed form the very substrate of, our existence.

Here I will briefly outline the origins of the relation between stone and time in an attempt to rehabilitate the relation of present, dominant conceptualisations with the primordial intellectual and chemical swampland of geomorphous thought. In the geosciences, stratigraphy is the most important tool for measuring time, in which information contained within layers (strata) of rock is used to reconstruct the history of the earth. Similarly, biostratigraphy is the use of the palaeontological or fossil content of the stratigraphic record for the purpose of correlating a relative age of the stratigraphic unit (a body of rock characterised as a distinct entity, of identifiable origin and relative age). An abundance of fossils is designated a biozone, and the biohorizons are delimited by the first and last appearance of a particular fossil taxon. These biohorizons

2 Haraway (2016) 53.

are defined both spatially and temporally, and this duality generates the overarching concept of time as a linear, horizontal process. That said, evolution, as read in the geosciences, is anything but a linear process; on the contrary it is punctuated by flourishings, extinctions, dead-end evolutionary developments, about-faces, singular instances and interruptions. Nonetheless, how time is measured in the geosciences sets the stage for the representation of all biological, botanical and climatic events in earth's history.

The theory of time in the geosciences tends to begin and end here. However, cross-fertilisation between mineral and organic life goes in both directions, all the more so now that our technologies insinuate themselves within our own bodies. Human interaction with geology goes much deeper than merely extracting the earth's mineralogical deposits, exhuming them and exhausting them into the air we breathe and fail to sufficiently filter out. Is there something more than this infiltration between solid deposits of the past and the gaseous future of climatic destabilisation that changes the way time is inscribed in the rocks? The axiom of the Anthropocene is that human-geologic change is superficial or at least can be read superficially. But that is possibly because psychic disturbances on a planetary scale are not legible, at least not for any formally recognised science. Perhaps deeply embedded interaction between human activity and lithic life is always already present in the conceptualisation of time itself, at least since Aristotle defined it, if not from the beginning. Getting the moral in before the story is told: unbalanced interactions between creatures and rocky deposits on a cosmic scale cannot be solved by technological advances that require further destabilisation of natural beings and mineral entities.

In the history of philosophy spatial metaphors are deeply embedded within conceptualisations of time presumably because the extraction of matter from time is fundamentally problematic, if not inconceivable.

Heidegger criticises Aristotle's conception of time as 'vulgar,' by which he means cyclical. Nonetheless, as Derrida reveals, Heidegger's attempts to free time from its vulgar conception become themselves tangled once again because he wants to discover an originary but non-spatial time. He wants to, but cannot, divorce time from an economy of exteriority. I argue that at the crux of this dilemma (*aporia*) is the *horos*, which joins the terminology interminably, and the attempted

determinations of time to the economy of exteriority in the base materiality of the *horos*, stone and boundary.

Predetermined by the Now

According to Aristotle, time is akin to a universal order, insofar as it consists of changes, and changes are all related to one another. All change exists within time, says Aristotle, but time is ‘something of change.’³ Ursula Coope also points out another sense in which time is a universal order, as all rational humans are able to count time by counting an order of defined ‘nows.’⁴ The ‘now,’ ‘*nun*’ in Greek, something like an instant, is able to be distinguished temporally from other ‘nows,’ while the definition of all ‘nows’ remains the same. Put otherwise, all ‘nows’ are the same except insofar as they differ temporally, and this ordered series of similitude between ‘nows’ creates the temporal continuum. Because the ‘nows’ are all the same, there cannot be said to be any discrete parts of time, and so while the continuum can be divided into instants and between these instants further instants can be divided and therefore counted, time itself cannot be separated or interrupted. Ursula Coope explains this difference.

What, then, is involved in dividing something continuous into parts? On Aristotle’s view, we can only divide something into two by creating in it two boundaries: one boundary for each of the two parts. There are two different ways to create a double division of this sort in a line. One way is physically to cut the line in two, so that the two parts are separate from each other and each of them has its own boundaries. The other way is to move over the line, stopping when we are part way through the movement. By stopping at a certain point on a line and then starting out from that point, we create a double boundary. When we stop and then start at a point, we treat the point as two, allowing it to serve both as a boundary of the part to one side of it and as a boundary of the part to the other side.⁵

The original text that suggests this is in Aristotle’s *Physics* Book IV, where he states that time is continuous ‘in the now’ (συνεχής τε δὴ ὁ χρόνος τῷ νῦν) and is divided according to the now (διήρηται κατὰ τὸ

3 Coope (2005) 31.

4 Ibid. 172.

5 Ibid. 11.

νῦν).⁶ But beyond explaining how ‘division’ operates in the continuous line, Coope adds the idea of creating ‘boundaries’ on each side of the division. The word ‘boundaries’ here relates to the verb *horizo*, as it is used by Aristotle to describe the movement of an object. If a single object is being moved, its movement will be continuous not because the object remains the same but because it remains the same while it is moved, and this is what defines—*horizei*—the movement before and the movement after (ὀρίζει δὴ τὴν πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον κίνησιν τοῦτο).⁷ In much the same way, a moment, or point, both constitutes and defines linearity (ἢ στιγμή καὶ συνέχει τὸ μήκος καὶ ὀρίζει) by tracing a path from beginning to end. This is where the concept of time as a continuous line with the now as an indivisible point on that line would seem to originate. On this line, each point is distinct (though not separate) from all others by a period of time, and hence, no two points can coexist temporally nor succeed one another immediately. What must distinguish each now from the others is the boundary that defines them temporally in relation to the line. Hence,

τὸ δὲ νῦν ὅρος τοῦ παρήκοντος καὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος.⁸

the now is the boundary [*horos*] of the past and future.

In this formulation, it appears that the ‘now’ and the ‘boundary,’ *horos*, are in an identical relation. Rather than there being an independent boundary on either side of the now giving definition to the now in contrast with whatever falls to either side, it is the now itself that marks the division between the past and the future, and it does so as boundary. Coope suggests that time can be attributed parts without actual divisions because it is impossible to actually interrupt time. Instead time can be understood by marking a ‘potential division,’ or as Aristotle puts it ‘the “now” of time is on the one hand a divider according to potentiality, and on the other hand a limit (*peras*) and unifier of both future and past’ (οὕτω καὶ τὸ νῦν τὸ μὲν τοῦ χρόνου διαίρεσις κατὰ δύναμιν, τὸ δὲ πέρας ἀμφοῖν καὶ ἐνότης).⁹ In itself the ‘now’ is at once a unifier and a divider (κατὰ ταῦτο ἡ διαίρεσις καὶ ἡ ἔνωσις), but it is not identical to itself.

6 Ar.Phys.220a5.

7 Ar.Phys.220a10.

8 Ar.Phys.223a7.

9 Ar.Phys.222a20.

First, for Aristotle, indivisible things like points and instants exist only in so far as they are boundaries, divisions, or potential divisions, of a continuum. They are, thus, essentially dependent entities. A boundary must always be a boundary of something or other. Second, for a boundary to be (and hence for the part it bounds to be), it must be marked out in some way from its surroundings. A continuous thing that contains no such boundaries will not contain any parts (although it will, of course, be divisible). Third, when I mark a now I create a potential division, both in time and in whatever changes are then going on. It is thus by marking nows that we create parts in time and in changes.¹⁰

From the very moment when Aristotle gives form to the problem, he takes it as a problem of determination, of formulating a ‘definition’ of time. And, just as in English, so in Greek, this form is presupposed as one of boundaries, terms and limits. In short, he is putting the *horos* to work, both verbally and nominally, in order to draw up the boundaries of time. But can time itself not merely *have* but *be* a ‘definition’? Can time itself be said to have boundaries? Not exactly. What Aristotle says is that we sense boundaries or limits of motion, and only from distinguishing these boundaries do we get a ‘sense’ of time.

ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ τὸ χρόνον γε γνωρίζομεν, ὅταν ὀρίσωμεν τὴν κίνησιν τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον ὀρίζοντες· καὶ τότε φαμέν γεγενῆσθαι χρόνον, ὅταν τοῦ προτέρου καὶ ὕστερου ἐν τῇ κινήσει αἰσθησιν λάβωμεν. ὀρίζομεν δὲ τῷ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο ὑπολαβεῖν αὐτὰ καὶ μεταξύ τι αὐτῶν ἕτερον· ὅταν γὰρ ἕτερα τὰ ἄκρα τοῦ μέσου νοήσωμεν καὶ δύο εἴπῃ ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ νῦν—τὸ μὲν πρότερον τὸ δ’ ὕστερον—τότε καὶ τοῦτό φαμεν εἶναι χρόνον· τὸ γὰρ ὀριζόμενον τῷ νῦν χρόνος εἶναι δοκεῖ.¹¹

We recognise a lapse of time when we determine [*horisōmen*] a movement by defining [*horizontes*] its first and last limit; and then we say that time has passed when we have a sense of a prior and posterior limit. And we distinguish between the initial limit and the final one, interpreting that what lies between them is distinct from both; for when we comprehend the difference between the extremes and what is between them, and the soul states that the “nows” are two—an initial and a final one—it is then that we say that there is time; for that which is determined [*horizomenon*] by a “now” seems to be time.

¹⁰ Coope (2005) 13.

¹¹ *Ar.Phys.*219a25–30.

Not only the sense of time, but the sense of ‘now’ is thus subsequent to the determination of boundaries, and time is itself none other than this determining (*horizomenon*). The Greek text here is full of different forms of the *horos*. It is all about distinguishing and determining limits. There is a further question that would seem to present itself in the *Physics*; that is, to what do we owe this ability to determine limits? And what exactly *are* these limits (of past and future) that appear to present themselves to us without them actually being present as anything beyond the ‘now’? For Aristotle, it is key to recognise that our experience of time is absolutely dependent upon our experience of change or our lapse in perception between one state and another. This lapse, or gap, is what provides us with the possibility to determine a change.

συνάπτουσι γὰρ τὸ πρότερον νῦν τῷ ὕστερον νῦν καὶ ἐν ποιούσιν, ἔξαιροῦντες διὰ τὴν ἀναισθησίαν τὸ μεταξύ. ὥσπερ οὖν εἰ μὴ ἦν ἕτερον τὸ νῦν ἐπεὶ λανθάνει ἕτερον ὄν, οὐ δοκεῖ εἶναι τὸ μεταξύ χρόνος. εἰ δὴ τὸ μὴ οἶσθαι εἶναι χρόνον τότε συμβαίνει ἡμῖν ὅταν μὴ ὀρίζωμεν μηδεμίαν μεταβολὴν ἀλλ’ ἐν ἐνὶ καὶ ἀδιαίρετῳ φαίνεται ἢ ψυχὴ μένειν, ὅταν δ’ αἰσθώμεθα καὶ ὀρίσωμεν, τότε φαιμέν γεγονέναι χρόνον, φανερόν ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἄνευ κινήσεως καὶ μεταβολῆς χρόνος.¹²

So we join the former “now” to the latter “now” and make them one, making an exception of what comes between them since it is unperceived [*anaisthēsia*]. So, just as there would be no time if there were nothing other between this now and that now; since the other escapes our notice, there would appear to be no time in between. Since we do not suppose that time happens to us when we do not determine [*horisōmen*] any change, but the soul appears to remain in unity and undifferentiation, but when we sense and determine, then we say time has become, it is thus clear that time is not without movement and change.

Time appears before all else as the question of determining or defining the present ‘now.’ And yet, determination is first (and simultaneously) a sense or feeling of something other than the ‘now,’ which would provide a sense of definition between one ‘now’ and another. This is why Coope rests her interpretation of the continuity of time in Aristotle upon the idea that it is we who count time.

This sense would seem to work both ways, as a feeling of lapse, it would appear as a caesura, or a broken cog in the machine, interrupting

12 Ar.Phys.218b25–220a.

the continuous series of (undifferentiated) 'nows,' forward and back. It is therefore a feeling (of absence as well as of movement) that interrupts time, and brings time into distinction. And yet it is a feeling, a sense, and can be said to give time to us, by separating our sense that there is something other than immediacy but also something outside of perpetual motion. That time and movement are sensed, in a sense a matter of aesthetics (even if the matter itself is unperceived or unfelt), means that the exteriority of time is no longer an issue, it exists in us. Though this cannot be the end of the matter. As Derrida states, 'the transcendental exposition of time places this concept in an essential relation with movement and change, even while rigorously distinguishing it from them.'¹³ The nature of time in Aristotle raises the problem of the matter of time, or time's exteriority as a problem of 'definition.'

According to Book IV of the *Physics* the present 'now' is not actually a part of time, although it pertains to time by bringing time into definition.

τὸ δὲ νῦν οὐ μέρος· μετρεῖ τε γὰρ τὸ μέρος, καὶ συγκεῖσθαι δεῖ τὸ ὅλον ἐκ τῶν μερῶν· ὁ δὲ χρόνος οὐ δοκεῖ συγκεῖσθαι ἐκ τῶν νῦν.¹⁴

[T]he now is not part [of time], for a part measures the whole, and the whole must be made up of the parts, but we cannot say that time is made up of nows.

And yet with its presence, the 'now' gives definition to time by joining past with future, which are themselves nonexistent, insofar as they only have been or will be a present 'now.' That is, they exist only by virtue of having crossed or potentially crossing over the boundary of the 'now.' Aristotle concedes that the future and the past have a common boundary (*koinos horos*) and that this boundary is identified as the present 'now.' What divides past from future is therefore also taken to be what gives definition to time as a whole. Still, this does not provide a continuous sense of time. For it is not enough to distinguish the boundary between past 'now' and future 'now'; one must also join them.

This is where the use of the word *horos* becomes pertinent because if the now were a limit as in the sense *peras*, which is a more finite type of limit, then there would be nothing to bind the past with the

¹³ Derrida (1984) 49.

¹⁴ *Ar.Phys.*218a5.

future; they would not have a common boundary. But since Aristotle identifies the 'now' with *horos*, he is able to create a definition of time that simultaneously divides and joins, that distinguishes and unites. Nonetheless, the leap in the definition is the synonymy between the present as a point or line of demarcation that distinguishes past from future, the definition itself (i.e. *horos*) and the 'now.'

Φανερόν δὲ καὶ ὅτι εἴτε χρόνος μὴ εἴη, τὸ νῦν οὐκ ἂν εἴη, εἴτε τὸ νῦν μὴ εἴη, χρόνος οὐκ ἂν εἴη[...] καὶ συνεχής τε δὴ ὁ χρόνος τῷ νῦν, καὶ διήρηται κατὰ τὸ νῦν.¹⁵

It is clear that there would be no time if there were no "now," nor would "now" be if there were no time [...] and time owes its continuity to the "now," and yet is divided by reference to it.

In this sense the 'now' appears to give definition to time but problematically. By joining past and future, it ensures the continuity of time, and yet it is not itself part of time. And then also, the 'now' gives definition to time by dividing it up into past 'nows' and future 'nows,' but is not itself the definition of time. The 'now' is supposed to do the double task of both dividing and connecting past and future into a continuous sequence of 'nows.' This lapse of consciousness, however, gives Aristotle the grounds to separate the 'determination' of time into two limits, the double point or 'dyad' (τῇ γὰρ μέσῃ στιγμή ὡς δυοὶ χρήσεται).¹⁶ At this point the now diverges as *peras*, the twofold limit, the beginning of time-to-come, and the end of time-past. Here the now is framed by similitude, 'the now is like a limit (*peras*), which is not time but only accidental to it' (ἧ μὲν οὖν πέρας τὸ νῦν, οὐ χρόνος ἀλλὰ συμβέβηκεν).¹⁷ But it is only temporarily like a limit for, as he stated from the very beginning, consciousness or its lapse joins the former now to the latter and makes them one excepting the non-sensation in between.

One 'now' differs from another, but in its actual holding of time continuously together it always remains the same; the 'now' is thus the contradiction of similars affirmed, it simultaneously divides and unites until we must accept that the 'now' is and is not the same. Therefore, as Derrida recognises, 'the very signification of coexistence or of presence

15 Ar.*Phys.*220a1–5.

16 Ar.*Phys.*219a20, 220a15, 30.

17 Ibid.220a20.

is constituted by this limit. Not to be able to coexist with an other [*sic*] (the same as itself), with an other [*sic*] now, is not a predicate of the now, but its essence as presence.¹⁸ However, as Aristotle himself notes, it is not at all clear whether the 'now' that divides (*diorizein*- from *dia-horizein*) past and future remains always one and the same 'now' or is somehow subject itself to change.¹⁹ According to Derrida, the question is whether 'in overturning the hypothesis, in demonstrating that the now is not part of time, does Aristotle extract the problematic of time from the "spatial" concepts of part and whole, from the predetermination of the *nun* as *meros* or even as *stigmé*?'²⁰ The problem does not lie with time as much as it does with the task of the definition (and its associated words) of time.

The line, as the solution of the problem of the nows, is the dialectical affirmation of the aporetic structure of time. The line resolves opposites: the now that is and is not the same, time is continuous and divided by the now, the now is only the point in terms of nonspatial spatiality.²¹ Time is the name for the impossibility of the continuation of all these nows that are and are not the same, always flowing on from being into nonbeing, from presence into nonpresence. This is the *aporia* of time, that there are all these 'nows' that cannot be at the same time because then what happened a thousand years ago would be co-present with this 'now,' which it is not. And yet for time to be, rather than not be, it has to be possible to determine in the limit of the present 'now' and in the absence of a relation between the infinite number of 'nows' a continuously extended series of 'nows.' But it also needs to pass over this limit. Aristotle's conception of time is transitivity, transgression of a limit, passing over to ever more limits. The line cannot be a series of points, but only sensed as a series of potential 'nows,' a line 'thought on the basis of its extremities (*ta eskhata*) and not of its parts.'²²

Heidegger explains, in a note to *Being and Time*, that the priority that is given to the 'now' contributes to the 'manner in which time is *ordinarily* understood.'²³

18 Derrida (1982) 55

19 *Ar.Phys.*218a10.

20 Derrida (1984) 46.

21 Derrida (1984) 54.

22 *Ibid.* 60.

23 'Ousia and Grammé: Note on a Note from Being and Time' in Derrida (1984) 36.

Aristotle sees the essence of time in the $\nu\acute{\upsilon}\nu$, Hegel in the “now”. Aristotle takes the $\nu\acute{\upsilon}\nu$ as $\acute{\omicron}\rho\omicron\varsigma$; Hegel takes the “now” as a boundary [*Grenze*]. Aristotle understands the $\nu\acute{\upsilon}\nu$ as $\sigma\tau\iota\gamma\mu\acute{\eta}$; Hegel interprets the “now” as a point. Aristotle describes the $\nu\acute{\upsilon}\nu$ as $\tau\acute{o}\delta\epsilon\ \tau\iota$; Hegel calls the “now” the “absolute this”. Aristotle follows tradition in connecting $\chi\rho\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ with the $\sigma\phi\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\alpha$; Hegel stresses the “circular course” of time.²⁴

The problem of the ‘now,’ as well as its importance in contributing to the ‘traditional’ definition of time, has normally overlooked the significance of its definition, that is the materiality of its definition, as *horos*. Heidegger does not reference the *horos* beyond the exclusionary, as well as foundational zone of the footnote. And yet the definition of the ‘now’ as the boundary, given its quiddity, its matter and its meaning (*to ti en einai*) remains within any subsequent determinations of time, haunting metaphysical determinations with base materiality. The problem of materiality, or, as Protevi puts it ‘exteriority,’ remains as an intimate exclusion within the definition of time, as much for Aristotle as for Hegel and Heidegger. This intimacy, a ghost in the room of Being, haunts Heidegger’s hopes to remain terminologically vigilant, keeping vulgarity and originality, the line and the vector separate and at a distance.²⁵

This acceptance [of the mark “temporality”] must be kept clear from the vulgar time-concept by a rigorous policing of the terminological use of certain expressions that find their way into temporal discourse: “The conceptions of ‘future,’ ‘past,’ and ‘present’ have first arisen in terms of the authentic way of understanding time. In terminologically delimiting the primordial and authentic phenomena which correspond to these, we have to struggle against the same difficulty which keeps all ontological terminology in its grip”. In such a policing of terminology, “violences [*Gewaltsamkeiten*]” are unavoidable here, Heidegger concedes.²⁶

Such vigilance, however, requires the dematerialising of the terminology itself, but this is impossible. The words ‘before’ and ‘after’ create Aristotle’s paradigm of the continuous flow of ‘nows.’ However, if, as Derrida notes in the word *hama* ‘at the same time’ ‘together,’ these words already have a spatial sense as well as a temporal sense, any definition of time that is generated on the basis of such words will necessarily bind a

24 Heidegger (1962) 500 note xxx.

25 Protevi (1984) 137.

26 Ibid.

spatial understanding of time with a temporal one. 'Time is that which is thought on the basis of being as presence, and if something—which bears a relation to time but is not time—is to be thought beyond the determination of being as presence, it cannot be a question of something that could still be called time.'²⁷ Since Aristotle already defined time as sensible, not in the sense of touch (though this is not absent from the word) but as a question of being determined by us, whether this is by counting or measuring, or 'sensing' movement in the soul, it seems vain to try to extract the question of 'sense' from the system of understanding being. Sense is irreducibly bound to the system of presence.

This is what Barad suggests when she says that there is a haunting within quantum physics. Haunting is the disruption of discontinuity; however, it is a destabilising that, like the 'now,' 'makes for the stability of existence itself.'

Or rather, to put it a bit more precisely, if the indeterminate nature of existence by its nature teeters on the cusp of stability and instability, of possibility and impossibility, then the dynamic relationality between continuity and discontinuity is crucial to the open ended becoming of the world which resists acausality as much as determinism.²⁸

According to Aristotle, there is only one way to get between two points, and that is by starting out at your home point and then moving across all the points in between until you arrive at your destination. The problem is that it is not the only way. On the one hand, because you were never at home, and on the other hand, because that was not actually your destination, the destination is always over there, deferred. But there is also a third way: because motion need not be continuous, and the 'now' need not be the divisive force it was cut out to be.

In particular, the electron is initially at one energy level and then it is at another *without having been anywhere in between*. Talk about ghostly matters! A quantum leap is a dis/continuous movement, and not just any discontinuous movement, but a particularly queer kind that troubles the very dichotomy between discontinuity and continuity. Indeed, *quantum dis/continuity* troubles the very notion of *dicho-tomy*—the cutting into two—itself (including the notion of 'itself!').²⁹

27 Derrida in Protevi (1984) 150.

28 Barad (2010) 248.

29 Ibid. 246.

The quantum leap is a sure way to overcome an *aporia*, accept/except the problem and pass on.

Aristotle began his *Physics* with a series of *aporias*. Aristotle's basic *aporia* was that time is not among things or beings. The definition of time is that it is nothing because it is past or to come. In the words of Derrida, 'Being has been determined temporally as being-present in order to determine time as nonpresent and nonbeing.'³⁰ So far I concentrated on the *aporia* of the 'now,' and how the now can be simultaneously identical and nonidentical. However, there were other *aporias* in Aristotle's text, the main one revolving around the non-existence of time: 'one part of it has been and is not, another part of it will be and is not yet [...]. But what is composed of non-beings might seem to be incapable of participating in being.'³¹ Since, as he said in the beginning, 'we must advance from the concrete and particular,' because 'elements and principles are only accessible to us afterwards, as derived from the concrete' there can be only one place to start any attempt at solving or unravelling such *aporias*.³² That is 'determination,' concrete, solid definition, *horos*. The point is that this was already there, in the text of Aristotle as the point of difference, the interruption of matter into the discourse on definition: that is what *horos* is. Any attempt to circumvent it only ends up in the sludge of the absolute, the muddy ground of transcendence, a slip or misstep that has us falling short of the path and the well-defined boundaries of the stepping-stone.

In other words, the discourse that seeks to define and describe time uses terms haunted by the possibility of their iteration in bare spatial contexts. These defining and describing terms are inscribed in economies of exteriority with irreducible bare spatial moments—irreducible precisely because the possibility of iteration in bare spatial contexts cannot, *de jure*, be completely controlled.³³

Aristotle describes that there is a sequence of dependence of movement upon magnitude (vector) and of time upon movement. The moving object is what brings our awareness to the point, the now and its passing between before and afterwards. This moving object that directs our

30 Derrida (1982) 50.

31 Ar.Phys.217b33. See Coope on the other *aporias* (2005) 18ff.

32 Ar.Phys.184a24.

33 Protevi (1984) 167.

attention, that shifts our gaze towards the timely is whatever intervenes into conscious thought, whether we call this a “point or a stone” (ἡ στιγμή γὰρ ἢ λίθος), it allows us to become aware of movement even while it retains its singular identity in speech (τῷ λόγῳ)³⁴.

Stone or the matter itself insistently, instantaneously intervenes within the text of Aristotle, interrupting time itself. But if this is so, and stone is also the very term of definition and boundary of the ‘now’ itself, it also is the foundation for any determination of time as a sequence of continuous nows. It is not a foregone conclusion how time can be said in the same breath as a rock. The lexicon puts the problem otherwise, stating that *horos* also means time as a period or duration of time, for example ‘the time within which’ or the ‘notes which limit the intervals of a musical scale’, ‘I set the *limit* of human life at seventy years.’³⁵ Apparently the word can be used to relate to time more broadly than in reference to the ‘now’ as an indivisible part of time. When considering these temporal translations, we must not forget the other meanings of the word and that the *horos* must always have raised this problem of the limits and of the limits of time even when all we saw was stone, landmark or boundary. This might suggest that the *horos* provides space and context for time, regardless of its content (though never without its form), the material substrate that can cut in on the continuum especially when we are not paying attention, which is most of the time.

In the *Physics*, Aristotle provides another example of the use of the word in relation to time, stating that ‘coming to be and passing away are the terms (*horoi*) of being and not being,’ γενέσει μὲν καὶ φθορᾷ τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν ὅροι.³⁶ Meanwhile, in *The Laws*, Plato recommends the age within which marriage is to be permitted, the *horos* of marriage, between a boy and a girl (no doubt an uncomfortable discrepancy for the girl).

γάμου δὲ ὅρον εἶναι κόρη μὲν ἀπὸ ἑκκαίδεκα ἐτῶν εἰς εἴκοσι, τὸν μακρότατον χρόνον ἀφωρισμένον, κόρῳ δὲ ἀπὸ τριάκοντα μέχρι τῶν πέντε καὶ τριάκοντα.

the time [*horos*] of marriage for a girl is from sixteen until twenty years of age, the longest determined [*aphōrismenon*] time, and for a boy from thirty until thirty-five.³⁷

34 Ar.*Phys.*219b20.

35 LS: 1255.

36 Ibid.261a34.

37 Pl.*Laws.*785b.

Herodotus also uses the same word (in dialect) when he has Solon give the limit (*horos*) of human life as seventy years (ἐἰς γὰρ ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτεα οὖρον τῆς ζῆς ἀνθρώπῳ προτίθημι).³⁸ In English, we are able to pose this temporal aspect in similar terms, such as in the phrase, 'for the term of his natural life.' This term would seem to open up a determined space, describing as it does both the limits to either side as well as the monotonous time within. In all these examples, the time within is marked as common, characterised as identical or of a standard nature, comprehensively delimited for procreation, life or incarceration.

All these examples, nonetheless, reveal that the *horos* does not itself define time. On the contrary, it would appear to open up the possibility of bounded time, more often than not to be followed by determinative limits, such as 'from sixteen years of age until twenty' (ἀπὸ ἑκκαίδεκα ἐτῶν εἰς εἴκοσι). If the number of years or determinate boundaries of one type or another are required to give the limits on top of the temporal boundary itself, what kind of definition would the *horos* give to time beyond its arithmetical calculation? Is the *horos* the material form that opens up the potentiality of measuring time, that which we actually sense when we feel time passing, or a material, lithic substitute for the absence of an actual, tangible sense? Perhaps the *horos* is the equivalent on the level of the singular life, to the general conception of the horizon as the determination of a shared existence, as *that within whose limits we live*? Does the simple noun correspond to the particular, while its verbal form corresponds to all being under the vault of the heavens?

The question that should be posed, then, is how the *horos* was supposed to maintain or enforce itself as boundary, as place or (im) position between? This question of the maintenance or force of place presents us with the problem as to whether the past inscription of the *horos* is recognised in the present. There can be no doubt that the *horos*, even now as we read it in classical texts and see it in the museums, raises the question of time and perhaps all the more so now that the materiality of the terminus is increasingly indecipherable for us on account of the wear and tear, the scars of time passed. How is time supposed to fill out the space between two limits, when the *horos* leaves neither room nor space but on the contrary is itself already filled with brute matter? How can a concrete, spatial relation be forged between stone and time, if not in a relation of substitution?

38 Hdt.1.32.2.

The form of the letter provides epigraphists with a *terminus post quem* or a *terminus ad quem*. But in the *horos*, it is exactly the letter (H) that perplexes the indisputable determination of such *termini*. These *termini* are supposed to constrict the possibility of the archaeological object's extension in time to a space between an *ad* (or an *ante*) and a *post*; between a *before* and an *after*. The question of dating, which lingers with the *horos* in the absence of the inscription or in the presence of an archaic letter, is not merely accidental to the *horos*. The marking of the boundary and the materiality of definition cannot be sufficiently comprehended as a spatial metaphor of drawing up limits or of limiting extension. And yet we have seen enough examples that should make it evident that the *horos* was *placed*, that it was 'given' a determined site, that first of all it takes place substituting stone for the boundary and then substituting the letters of the inscription for the stone. The substitution of one thing for another or deferring of the original meaning in matter seems to be a movement that is natural to *horos*, whether the originary meaning is coincident with matter, inscribed upon the land, read on stone or written in the soul. We might say that the *horos* takes place as stone, but remains by raising the problem of the substitutability of temporal limits and spatial boundaries.

Geologic Time

Contemporary concepts of time might be helplessly indebted to Aristotle. However, it is Aristotle interpreted by Ibn Sina that has most significantly changed our conception of universal time experienced on earth, that is the longer, geologic timescale. In geology, time is immediately associated with rocks, rock strata and the contents of rocks. It does not seem too much of a stretch to state that here time is identified with and by rocks, and an assemblage of rocks is what allows geologists and archaeologists to presuppose the existence of temporal continuity, whether this allows for catastrophism or not. It is rocks as writing, 'stratigraphy,' that provides not just a tool but the content of measurement with which a definition of time can be isolated and temporal definition construed.

In al-Kindi's book *On the Definitions* (*Fi hudud al-ashya'*), as well as in Ibn Sina's larger *Book of Definitions* (*Kitab al-hudud*), the word employed to translate the Greek, or more particularly Aristotelian term *horos* is the

Arabic *hadd*. As Kennedy-Day puts it, Ibn Sina 'explicitly indicates his debt to Aristotle in the *Topics* in his technical definition of *hadd*.'

The definition of definition [*hadd*] is what the wise man (Aristotle) mentions in the book, *Topics*: it is a *statement indicating (pointing to) the quiddity (mahiyya) of a thing*, that is, regarding the perfection of its essential existence. It (definition) is what is obtained from its proximate definition and its differentia (*fasl*).³⁹

The word *hadd* is an astonishingly apposite translation for the *horos*. The lexicon entry gives its principal meanings in limiting terms: 'hindrance, impediment, boundary, frontier,' and so forth, but it also comes to mean the restrictive ordinances or statutes of Allah.

Before assuming its philosophical meanings, the word *hadd* follows a semantic evolution comparable to that of the Greek words that it translates, ὁρισμός and ὅρος. From its meaning of "limit" it passes to that of "delimitation" or "definition", and from that of "furthest limit" or "extremity" to that of "extreme" or "term" in logic. In order to avoid any ambiguity between the two meanings, modern Arab authors who study mediaeval philosophy often follow *hadd*, in the sense "definition", with the word *ta'rif* parenthesis, since one of the uses of *ta'rif* is in fact "definition", although its meaning includes both description and name.⁴⁰

In the term *hadd*, this implicitly deontological sense of the *horos* is made explicit, 'in theology, *hadd* in the meaning of limit, limitation, is an indication of the finiteness which is a necessary attribute of all created beings but incompatible with Allah.'

Ibn al-'Arabî says that differentiation (*tafriqa*) is the root of all things. This is because through the process of differentiation limits (*huddud*) are set between things, and except for the limits knowledge would be impossible.⁴¹

In Ibn Sina, the difference between definition and the definition of definition concerns the essential being of a thing. *Horos* differs from *horismos* by antinomy; where the *horos* is *hadd*, the definition *horismos* cannot be separated from its essence, it is the thing itself. But does this mean that it is identical to the thing or a representation of the thing in

39 Kennedy-Day (2004) 51, 102.

40 Gibb (1979–2005) 'Hadd.'

41 Bashier (2004) 87.

speech? Al-Farabi provided a definition of definition as ‘a signification (*dalla*) of the essence of a thing,’ saying of definition that it is used ‘in signifying (*dalala*) how to distinguish a thing,’ but also that ‘it is considered that there is no difference between a thing and its definition.’⁴² This is what Aristotle meant by stating that the *horos* is the word that as *logos* means the essence, τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, of a thing: *horos* is the divisive signification that unites the explanation, *logos*, with its essence, *ousia*. The *horismos* is this as activity. Essence enters as the divisive factor between *horos* and *horismos*, and yet, as Aristotle put it, *ousia* is the only definition or main term (*horos*). This ambiguity or ambivalence of the *horos* is exactly what joins it (συνάπτει) to the essence or being of a thing (οὐσία).

The big difference in translation is, however, the absence of the lithic in the Arabic *hadd*. Here definition is abstracted from the material, it might be materialised in a barrier, but it is not essentially identified with stone. Nonetheless, the lithic is never far away. In Arabic, *ousia* is translated as *jawhar*, and by Gibb *jawhar* is translated into English as ‘substance.’

Jawhar [...] (the Arabic word is derived from Persian *gawhar*, Pahlawi *gor*, which has already the meaning of substance, although both in Pahlawi and in Arabic, it can mean also jewel) is the common translation of οὐσία, one of the fundamental terms of Aristotelian philosophy. “Substance” in a general sense may be said to signify the real, that which exists in reality, *al-mawdjud bi ‘l-hakika*.⁴³

The idea of ‘reality’ is basically foreign to the Greek language, though if it is to be found anywhere, it is most certainly not in the word *ousia*. Even translating the word *hypostasis* as ‘reality’ is more than a stretch. Reality for the Ancient Greeks does not seem to be related either to being or to ‘things’ (the πραγματικότητα of modern Greek is a loan word coined in 1787, and inspired by the French *réalité*.⁴⁴)

According to the entry on *jawhar*, we learn that there is one point upon which the Arabic philosophers ‘go beyond their master’ Aristotle, for whom being is predicated analogically, that is by degrees.⁴⁵ For the

42 Kennedy-Day (2004) 50–51.

43 Gibb (1979–2005) *Djawhar*.

44 Babinotis (2010) 1148.

45 Lane (1968) 475.

Arabic philosophers, however, there is a supreme being and intellect, that is, Allah, the principle of otherness; he is the Real, Justice, Truth (*Haqq*).⁴⁶ In order to be translated into this context, the essence of being (τὸ τί ᾗν εἶναι) is itself divided, between what is here in the material world, and this essence as the *Real*, that is to say, Allah. In Arabic, then, we cannot help but recognise that what is substantial in definition and what is defined as substance consistently points to what it is to be (τὸ τί ᾗν εἶναι), the definition as signifying the Real which is God, Justice, Truth, *Haqq*.

This 'reality' is, however, also coincicative of *Jawhar*, 'any kind of jewel, precious stone, or gem [...] any stone from which is extracted, or elicited, anything by which one may profit.'⁴⁷ This is what I mean when I say that the lithic is never far away. The rock is more significant for Ibn Sina than it may immediately seem, and Ibn Sina's absorption with rocks affects the very definition of the future and the past. Alchemy, obviously, is derivative of a fascination with rocks or minerals and their potentially combinative and explosive relation with one another. And while Ibn Sina does expound the different healing properties of rocks, it is another aspect of his work that has come to play a significant part in the lithic drama of the earth, or at least the human interpretation of this drama.

Ibn Sina is known as the first to read into the rocks a story of earthly history, now known as stratigraphy, the writing of the rock strata. The idea is that we can read time into rocks by taking the deeper rock layers (strata) to represent time periods far in the past and the strata closer to the earth's surface to represent periods of time closer to the present. In geology, this is known as the Law of the Superposition of Strata, and it is a principle fundamental to the measurements that comprise the geologic timescale. The following is Ibn Sina's account of the principle of superposition.

It is also possible that the sea may have happened to flow little by little over the land consisting of both plain and mountain and then have ebbed away from it. It is possible that each time the land was exposed by the ebbing of the sea a layer was left, since we see that some mountains appear to have been piled up layer by layer, and it is therefore likely that

46 Cf. Gutas (1998).

47 Lane (1968) 475.

the clay from which they were formed was itself at one time arranged in layers. One layer was formed first; then, at a different period, a further layer was formed and piled (upon the first, and so on). Over each layer there spread a substance of different material, which formed a partition between it and the next layer (perhaps implying unconformity); but when petrification took place something occurred to the partition which caused it to break up and disintegrate from between the layers [...] As to the beginning of the sea, its clay is either sedimentary or primeval, the latter not being sedimentary. It is probable that the sedimentary clay was formed by the disintegration of the strata of mountains. Such is the formation of mountains.⁴⁸

This theory was adopted later and generated what we now call the geologic timescale. George Sarton in his *History of Science* stated that the translation of Ibn Sina's *Mineralia* (elaborated upon by Alfred Sareshal) 'was an important source of geological knowledge,' especially concerning the formation of mountains and rock strata.⁴⁹ Toulmin and Goodfield add that our understanding of the past is 'no longer restricted within the time-barrier of earlier ages, this is due above all to the patience, industry and originality of those men who, between 1750 and 1850, created a new and vastly extended timescale, anchored in the rock strata and fossils of the Earth's crust.'⁵⁰

How time is measured in the geosciences provides the framework for multiple fields of study, from a cosmological reconstruction of the history of the earth to understanding extinction events and predicting climatic rates and processes. Although there are different conceptualisations of time in the geosciences, the stratigraphic record continues to be the most important method of measurement, or 'clock.' Here, information is contained within the layers, or strata, and can be used to reconstruct the history of the earth. The underlying principle to this method is that of superposition. This method of dating is often accompanied by biostratigraphy, the use of paleontological, fossil, content found within the stratigraphic record, correlating spatially separate and potentially very distant strata and providing something of a cross-reference between strata in order to come up with a relative age for each stratigraphic

48 Ibn Sina (translation and source unattributed) quoted by Munim al-Rawi in Al-Hassan (2001) 414. However, Alfred of Sareshal's *De Mineralibus* also comprises some of Ibn Sina's earlier tractate, see Sarton (1931) 515.

49 Sarton (1931) 515.

50 Toulmin (1982) 141.

unit. A biozone, delimited by biohorizons, where divisions are made according to the first and last appearance of a fossil taxon, is described both spatially and temporally, where the occurrence that is the deepest down coincides with the occurrence that is furthest in the past. Even in the geosciences, space and time work together as a temporal duality.

It is interesting to note that we see something that quite closely resembles Aristotle's conceptualisation of the 'now,' a temporally specific point that is bound on either side but that contributes as an inseparable part to a continuum. Here, we have the biozone, bounded by biohorizons and contributing to the idea of continuous sedimentation, and when added up these layers of sedimentation become the spatial representation of the temporal continuum. 'A boundary horizon corresponds to a geological moment—the moment when the horizon was deposited. The interval between two successive physical boundaries is thus the embodiment of an inferred interval of time, or "age".'⁵¹ The word choice here, of the 'horizon,' cognate of *horos* (verbal *horizo*, and neuter participle of the verb to be *-on*) suggests to me that accidents are rarely devoid of meaning and that the history of a word remains embedded even after it has long been forgotten. The horizon in stratigraphy can be constituted of stone (lithohorizon) of fossils (biohorizons), there are (in this context seemingly synonymous) marker horizons, there are also event horizons. The word 'horizon' here functions simply to draw attention to an alteration in rock layers whose uniformity allows the geologist to abstract a determinate interpretation. This is the *horos* in its *primaeval* form, natural mark and marker of nature, but still read by us.

However, to bring us back to earth (or perhaps the opposite), in the words of Aubrey, 'should boundary definitions take full precedence in chronostratigraphy?'⁵² How can boundaries (and this is a direct echo of Aristotle) be defined? Must a time boundary be instantaneous, or can it last for several centuries or millennia? For most geological boundaries the transforming event can last a long time, which makes giving a particular date of change very difficult, and it is always possible that not everything changed so that the boundary is not an absolute but a relative boundary, perhaps including some species while excluding others. Ager addresses this problem, in discussing the relation between

51 Aubrey (2009) 94.

52 Ibid.

sedimentation and 'breaks' in sedimentation. For example, if a column of earth is taken, not only can different layers be observed but breaks within those layers, and if another column of earth is taken from the other side of the globe, one might expect to find a vaguely similar column given that significant change tends to happen on an earth-wide scale. However, this is not necessarily the case. What was merely a thin layer in the one column might appear as several feet in the other. Continuous sedimentation is interpreted as meaning continuous without significant breaks. 'But what is significant?', asks Ager, 'Obviously there are plenty of unconformities where the break is obvious, such as the splendid unconformity between the Upper Cretaceous and the Precambrian of the Bohemian Massif.'⁵³ As studies continue to be buried in ever more detail, more breaks become apparent. It would appear that the geologic record has as much difficulty in designating and verifying 'continuous sedimentation' as Aristotle had in proving the continuity of time.

These discrepancies pose a problem in the definition of a particular period of geological time because time appears to be relative to place but also relative temporally. Ager's response is to reformulate the stratigraphic record not in terms of layers of sedimentation but in terms of gaps interspersed with layers of sedimentation, where 'gaps predominate,' 'lithologies are all diachronous' and 'fossils migrate into the area from elsewhere' and then out again. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari, 'stratification in general is the entire system of the judgement of God (but the earth, or the body without organs, constantly eludes that judgement, flees and becomes destratified, decoded, deterritorialized).'⁵⁴ Ager uses slightly more mundane language to describe the relation between breaks and sediment.

Perhaps the best way to convey this attitude is to remember a child's definition of a net as a lot of holes tied together with string. The stratigraphical record is a lot of holes tied together with sediment.⁵⁵

Diachronous, rather than synchronous, measurement allows for flows, reiterations and intra-actions in the fossil record. So that evolution is no longer visualised as an arrow, or a climb upwards on the pyramid of being. Instead, we have infiltration and movement and flux, as

⁵³ Ager (1973) 28.

⁵⁴ Deleuze and Guattari (2014) 46.

⁵⁵ Ager (1973) 34.

well as interruptions and one-way streets. As Ager puts it, 'this may be called the Phenomenon of the Gap Being More Important than the Record.'⁵⁶ On the one hand, the problem of the inconsistency between the gap and the continuum, outlined by Ager, has since resolved into relative time, with biostratigraphy and stratigraphy working together.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the concept of geological time is being increasingly funnelled into attempts to delineate absolute time through technological advances providing continuous and anchored methods of measuring time (radiometric, astrochronology, dendrochronology). The first is measured according to rocks that provide both the material basis for the continuum and for the gap. The second is measured as measurement abstracted from the material (or the attempt to do so): that is numerically.

Chronostratigraphic ages and numerical ages thus differ in a fundamental way. One refers to a duration, the other to a discrete stratigraphic horizon. They also differ in their stability. Once a chronostratigraphic unit has been defined by physically fixed boundaries, its true duration remains unchanged. In contrast, numerical ages may vary considerably, even in measurements on the same material, let alone in different samples measured in different laboratories with different tools [...] For this reason numerical ages are often explicitly characterized by method, whether radio-isotopic, astronomical, or estimated.⁵⁸

These methods of measuring absolute time are integrated, or synchronised, in order to construct a geologic timescale unfettered to the inconsistencies of the material. However, where the stratigraphic record is bordered, bounded or limited by the origin of the earth and the present—that is, it covers the last 4.54 million years—the astrochronological record goes back 50 million years (and no further because of chaos). How on earth can any kind of isochroneity be established between things (beings, organisms, objects) that are simultaneously spatially and temporally distant? When they are literally worlds away, how can different strata share isochronous biohorizons?

To restate the obvious, duration is an interval of time between two moments, i.e., two points in time. It follows that any consideration of time involves three parameters, a proximal point, an interval, and a

56 Ibid.

57 see *Stratigraphy and Timescales* Montenari (2016).

58 Aubrey (2009) 96.

distal point. The greatest duration for Earth sciences is 4.54 billion years, from the time of the formation of the solar system to the time of today. Intermediate points in this 4.54 billion years temporal continuum are necessary to comprehensively describe Earth history.⁵⁹

There is something reassuringly banal about the fact that something posed as one of the great *aporias* of ancient philosophy is here treated as something that can be taken for granted. The assumption here that Aristotle's definition of time is not only correct but self-evident evades the interruption into the continuum of time of gaps, hiatuses, *stasis* or quantum discontinuity. All those gaps in the stratigraphic record that confounded Ager, what are they made of? Did nothing happen? Are they marks of an absence of change? Were they felt or sensed as a lapse in time at that time? It might be possible to say what this missing time in the stratigraphic record is composed of though that is not the same as knowing what it was when it went wherever, whenever that was. Does it not seem peculiar that a theory of geologic time is so dependent upon lapses or indeterminate breaks in time? On this at least it appears that the geologic timescale is, perhaps not based upon, but at least metaphorically and terminologically indebted to Aristotle's description of time as continuum interrupted by the sensation of movement or lapse thereof, forming a line marked by a series of points.

Although the tendency to resist metaphor in the sciences is strong, Gould states the difficulty of conceptualising time as so extreme that it can only be grasped metaphorically.

An abstract, intellectual understanding of deep time comes easily enough—I know how many zeroes to place after the 10 when I mean billions. Getting it into the gut is quite another matter. Deep time is so alien that we can only comprehend it as a metaphor.⁶⁰

Perhaps this is why descriptions of space, linear and circular, always arise whenever a new definition of time is attempted. Or what if time itself can only ever be taken as a metaphor, matter carried over spatial temporality, as Aristotle would seem to suggest when he says that it is 'of change'? Metaphor functions by drawing out similarities that might not otherwise be apparent. My suggestion is therefore that there is a

59 Ibid.

60 Gould (1987) 3.

deep conceptual relationship between our 'feeling' of time and our experience of solidity. The metaphor might be described by a phrase, such as 'all that is solid melts into air.' What if there is only floating time, and any attempt to bring time down to earth, to fix it to a particular point in time must of necessity employ metaphor? Given that stratigraphy is the act of reading what was never written, geologic time reads as poetry. For example, as Aubrey states, a 'chronostratigraphic boundary itself is comparable to a datum: a point in the rock (no thickness) that represents a point in time (no duration).'⁶¹

In response to the common belief that contemporary science is divorced from ancient mythical belief systems, Gould elaborates a series of metaphors used to envision time both within the biblical tradition and in antiquity, of the arrow, the cycle and the line, that have supported subsequent forays, scientific and literary, into conceptualising the passage of time. He argues that these metaphors are so deeply instilled in the psyche of researchers that they are fundamental even to the geological formulations of deep time. The result is that the founding theories of the geologic timescale (Hutton, Lyell) were primarily based upon these metaphors, and only secondarily based upon a familiarity with rocks. These scientific elaborations upon geologic time, 'deep time' as Gould says, might be called philosophy, metaphor, or organising principle, 'but one thing they are surely not—they are not simple inductions from observed facts of the natural world.'⁶²

Concerning these metaphors that remain latent in the interstices of the project of modern science, Eliade argues that the linear version of history, with its overtones of progress and linear evolution, has more recently been invested with a rehabilitation of earlier, prehistoric cyclical versions of time, marked by periodic oscillations and fluctuations. While the theory of the linear progress of history may be attributed to the Middle Ages, the linear theory of time is as we saw much older and is also intricately linked with the notion of cyclical time.⁶³ Eliade highly valued the reappearance of cyclical theories in contemporary thought, obviously derived from archaic fertility myths (such as the Orphic myths, the reversion of the Dao, the repeated creation of the Enuma Elish, and

61 Aubrey (2009) 93.

62 Gould (1987) 9.

63 Eliade (1959) 145.

many more), since 'the formulation, in modern terms, of an archaic myth betrays at least the desire to find a meaning and a transhistorical justification for historical events.'⁶⁴ I agree with Gould when he says that deep time 'imposed a vision of reality rooted in ancient traditions of Western thought, as much as it reflected a new understanding of rocks, fossils, and strata.'⁶⁵ That said, I would rephrase the statement to include other traditions, in particular the Arabic philosophical tradition, as well as stressing that the vision of reality was firmly based upon a much older understanding of rocks, without which the notion of reality itself would not have been definable.

Horos, even in its stony presence, comprises a notion of the cyclical. The *horos*, as the definition of a thing, is also in a sense the reality or essence of a thing; it draws up the boundaries of a thing, defining it from and in reference to other things that are close but are not it. The limit of a thing is therefore its beginning, but it is also its end; *Horos* might also be translated as the limit in the sense of an 'end' or 'aim' towards which something drives. And that is a problem, because once things become metaphorical there is always the risk of determinism intervening in the guise of the supernatural or the divine, which is not necessarily the opposite of what is real.

Another boundary that disassembles the metaphorical presence of the *horos* on a universal scale can be found in Ibn 'Arabī's conception of the *barzakh*. As with *horos*, so here, *barzakh* is expressed in a relation of similarity with the 'now,' 'the now (*al-an*) is like a partition (*barzakh*).'⁶⁶ This *al-an*, 'now,' is a 'moment' or 'presence' that is given as the only real part of imaginary time, a moment that can also be expressed in the phrase 'Day of Event' or 'Day of Breath,' or in the single letter, *alif*, the initial vowel of the name of Allah. All letters (and this also holds for the world at large) can be broken down into this single letter and built up from it, though it does not break down into them.

Time is a circumstance for an event just like meanings for letters, and space is not like a circumstance, so it is not like a letter. Time is confined through division by "now" and does not necessarily require the existence of objects, but space can not be comprehended without objects (that

64 Ibid. 147.

65 Gould (1987) 10.

66 Yousef (2008) 68.

occupy it), so it is a kind of (ontological) “home” (for what is created in it).⁶⁷

Barzakh is a ‘boundary’ that is inclusive ‘in the sense that things participate in the limit not that the limit constitutes the final part of a thing.’⁶⁸ As the very possibility of defining, the *barzakh*, like *horos*, resists further definition in so far as it presents a common limit to all things. It is the separation between two things (definition) as well as the separating factor (that which defines) ‘become manifest as one in entity.’⁶⁹

So the reality about the *barzakh* is that within it there can be no *barzakh*. It is that which meets what is between the two by its very essence. If it were to meet one of the two with a face that is other than the face with which it meets the other, then there would have to be within itself, between its two faces, a *barzakh* that differentiates between the two faces so that the two do not meet together. If there is no such *barzakh*, then the face with which it meets one of the two affairs between which it stands is identical with the face with which it meets the other.⁷⁰

In an echo of the boundaries of stratigraphy, the *barzakh* is ‘between-between, a station between this and that, not one of them, but the totality of the two.’⁷¹ Ibn ‘Arabî puts it simply, ‘the true *barzakh* is that which meets one of the things between which it separates with the very face with which it meets the other[...] It is in its essence identical to everything it meets.’⁷² This reflective otherness is essential to any notion of a boundary; no boundary can be double, and yet it remains the essence of duplicity. It is division, but undivided, and as such it remains as the common term or boundary of either side, even when either side have nothing in common beyond this boundary. The *barzakh* defines by relating what falls to either side of it to what is other to it, it is not a limit that draws something to an end, but a limit that defines by unifying relations between Other and its other. As Bashier states, the closest, as well as affectionate and unifying of all ‘relations is one between Other (*khilâf*) and its other, from which it is differentiated. [...] Affection (*mawadda*) between differentiated things prevents each of them from

67 Ibid. 181.

68 Bashier (2004) 86. *Ar.Met.1022a*. tr. Ross.

69 Bashier (2004) 87.

70 Chittick (1998) 334–335.

71 Ibid. 333.

72 Bashier (2004) 87.

wanting the disappearance of its other from existence.’⁷³ The *barzakh* cannot be differentiated in thought; it is not entirely logical. Thinking about it is said to be comparable to threading a camel through the eye of a needle. In the canonical tradition of the Qu’ran *barzakh* is also the intermediate state between death and resurrection. It is the grave, in a temporal and spatial sense, where the dead linger for the time between death and judgement.⁷⁴ The experience of arriving at the boundary, *barzakh*, is described by Ibn ‘Arabî in two comparable states, that of the ‘greater death’ which occurs to a person after death, and that of the ‘lesser death’ occurring to someone during sleep.

Do you not see that, when he is transferred to the *barzakh* through the greater death or the lesser death, he sees in the lesser death affairs that he was considering rationally impossible in the state of wakefulness? Yet, in the *barzakh*, he perceives them as sensory things, just as, in the state of wakefulness, he perceives that to which his sensation is connected, so he does not deny it. Despite the fact that his rational faculty proves to him that a certain affair cannot have being [*wujud*], he sees it existent in the *barzakh*. There is no doubt that it is an affair of being [*wujud*] to which sensation becomes connected in the *barzakh*.⁷⁵

The sensation that is located here realises the possibility of a presence, which Ibn ‘Arabî calls the ‘presence of the imagination,’ this presence is other than that of perception. But that does not mean the *barzakh* cannot be conceived, imagined or real. It is no doubt the confrontation itself where what is logical meets what is imagined, and the boundary between the two is expressed by the *barzakh*, a boundary that exactly bounds upon the ‘Real,’ *Jawhar*. *Jawhar* is the stone, but it is also *Allah*.

Indefinite Human Time

Are we forced time and again to return to Aristotle as the originator of the myth of the returning circle of time? If the ‘now’ is, according to Aristotle, the determination or definition of time, but time is not without movement—that is, it is nothing other than indeterminateness—the ‘now’ is either not a part of time or time is both indeterminate and

⁷³ Ibid. 88.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 88. (Qu’ran 23:100)

⁷⁵ Chittick (1998) 337.

determinate, with and without definition. This is the problem of the limits of time inherited from Aristotle's conception of movement as something indefinite (*aoriston ti*).⁷⁶ Here, Aristotle is responding to the theories of the pre-Socratics that nothing can come into or pass out of existence.

οὔτε γὰρ τὸ ὄν γίνεσθαι (εἶναι γὰρ ἤδη), ἔκ τε μὴ ὄντος οὐδὲν ἂν γενέσθαι· ὑποκεῖσθαι γάρ τι δεῖ.

[F]or what is could not come to be, since it is already, and from what is not nothing could come into being, since something must form a substrate.⁷⁷

What remains in time is movement, as what is both same and other to time. If time is sense and consciousness according to determination, movement is necessary as the indeterminate continuity of time that is not sensed, that is not felt. In Book II of the *Physics* Aristotle had thus defined movement as *aorist*—'indeterminate,' literally 'unbounded,' *aoriston*, 'without *horos*' since 'when movement is determined, it ceases' (ὅταν γὰρ ὀρίσθῃ, παύεται). Or, as Heidegger explains, 'Being-there is being-there-completed in its place, limit. If it is moved, it is something that changes its site; it is such a thing that is no determinate place.'⁷⁸

What is the significance, in light of this, of the verb-form in Ancient Greek that poses a challenge to the Latinate tense system, the *aorist*? Because of the 'primitive' nature of its stem the aorist is believed to be the oldest Greek tense, and indeed requests to the deity are usually phrased in the aorist. Does this mean undefinability precedes definition, temporally speaking, that is verbally? The fact that its name is the *a*-privative-*horos* tends to lead toward definitions of this supposed tense via negative determination, 'without limit,' 'without time,' in variations on the theme of the occurrence as simple and undivided. However, that is not to say that it never happened or happened 'once for all,' 'final,' or 'completed.'

In fact, the aorist can imply that an event is in the past, without actually belonging to the past itself. The verb form can be used in association with other tenses to denote present or future events (hence its use in

⁷⁶ Ar.*Phys.*201b23.

⁷⁷ Ar.*Phys.*191a27–33.

⁷⁸ Heidegger (2009) 215.

proverbs or gnomic sayings). As one study suggested, the aorist is punctiliar because it ‘simply refers to the action itself without specifying whether the action is unique, repeated, ingressive, instantaneous, past, or accomplished.’⁷⁹ Therefore the aorist has been defined not as a tense but an *aspect*, rendering it a matter of perception, or a sense for the moment. It is, in short the tense of the verb that most lends itself to sensing time beyond movement.

One article on the ‘abused’ aorist’s exegetical function decries the semantic interpretation that would take the aorist’s punctiliar aspect to imply that the action of the verb is a point. Insisting instead on taking the name of this supposed tense literally, Stagg states ‘the aorist draws no boundaries.’⁸⁰ The ‘punctiliar,’ or ‘snap-shot action’ of the aorist belongs to the writer’s presentation, not to the action of the verb itself. In *Revelations*, creation is described in the aorist, which is certainly not to say that it is a single act, nor a completed one; ‘that the aorist here covers a semantic situation which in itself is not punctiliar but clearly linear is as normal an aoristic usage as can be found. The aorist is simply a-oristic.’⁸¹ Creation is indeterminate, neither a point nor a line. It is definitely a matter of interpretation, whether creation was something that happened or continues to happen. Whatever it is, it is neither momentary, nor a simple action, nor limited to the past. ‘The main point [!] is that it cannot represent action as progressive,’ or completed, thus the ‘life eternal’ is manifested every hour, in ‘every word’ and ‘every deed.’⁸² Mirroring creation in speech, the aorist is not a historical singularity, or definite occasion, but nor is it just one step in the linear march toward organised systems (*cosmos*).

The aorist ‘represents the action denoted by it indefinitely.’⁸³ The distinction that must be drawn up is that between the form of the verb and the action it describes. This is more than a simple difference of syntax and semantics—it is not the act that is punctiliar, it is the verb, ‘the tense stems indicate the point of view from which the action or state is regarded.’⁸⁴ But where is this spectral point if we are talking about

79 Carson (1984) 70.

80 Stagg (1972) 222–231.

81 Ibid. 228. *Rev.* 4.11.

82 καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, John 1:2, ζῶν αἰώνιον ἔδωκεν ὁ θεὸς ἡμῖν, 5:11. Stagg (1972) 225.

83 Stagg (1972) 229–231.

84 Ibid. 230.

indeterminateness? If movement is defined as 'indeterminateness,' the question remains how we are able to define something in the absence of determination itself.

Obviously, the problem is the 'point of view' or perception. When it comes to the aorist, it all depends on one's point of view, as Aristotle himself suggested when he stated that we feel the movement of time, we sense it. In the other tenses, one's point of view is defined by temporal relation to the verb at hand, whether one is involved in the action of the verb (present continuous), placed after the action of the verb (past perfect), before it (future/conditional) and so forth. But with the aorist, one's temporal relation is not at stake, that is, one's position is as actor or acted upon without further elaboration as to this temporal position (the determining factor for translation is therefore the context itself). If there is any verb that represents floating time, it is the aorist. The aorist is punctiliar, but it is not instantaneous; as Stagg says, the aorist 'presents' an action, 'of whatever nature, without respect to its nature' and the action itself is thus represented in the negative (*a-oriston*).⁸⁵ The aorist is change itself, only partly abstracted from nature, and undetermined because when it is determined, it stops.

What really matters is the position of making this indetermination present: *horos*. Movement, like the aorist, requires something else to transform it into time. According to Aristotle, nature is movement ἐν δυνάμει, in potentiality. And we should have sensed this contradiction, between nature and (human) time, with the first *horos*, the boundary or term from which the human marker has been obviated. The *horos* names itself so that determinateness, boundaries, definitions and so forth might be 'natural,' inscribed in nature, an already prescribed limit that leaves us free to go about the task of (re)definition.

We require the potentiality of the *horos* to determine even its negation; in which case the *horos* becomes exactly this, our 'point of view.' So, the *horos*, in the absence of the negating *a-* is what? Non-movement? A point, *stigmē*? Our bondage to our brief moment in time or the stigmata of mortal beings? *Horos* would appear to put in question the exclusivity of a linear boundary and the point of transgression. The opposition is not limited to that between *horos* and *aorist* but between the whole order of organic and nonorganic movement and this singular stone's immovability. But

85 Stagg (1972) 231.

the opposition is also there between our determination of ourselves in contrast to nature, inorganic and organic. Or is it the matter that marks our lapse of consciousness and the indeterminate 'continuity' of time? Levinas expresses the position as existential: 'the value of images for philosophy lies in their position between two times and their ambiguity. Philosophy discovers, beyond the enchanted rock on which it stands, all its possibles swarming about it.'⁸⁶

Prometheus Unbound

Do the structures of language reflect a preconceived conceptual chronology or do the words we use modify our ability to recognise limits and agencies within or outside of time? The demiurge might be timeless or beyond time but does that mean that any consciousness of divinity also becomes extraneous to time? To reframe the problem from a secular position, is human reason capable of structuring a conception of time from any perspective but that of the human? Are we trapped within thought processes that constantly reenvision time as an object of human thought despite epistemological advances or is there some way to escape the narcissism of human subjectivity when it comes to observing the sublimity of creation and the motion of the spheres?

There is a very similar structure of oppositions and play of metaphor undergirding the conceptual diagnosis of our age as the 'Anthropocene.' As DeLoughrey states, in 'recognising the history, present, and future of apocalypse, universalized temporality becomes parochialized and characterized by ruptures and an experience of "now-time," a marked shift from chronology to simultaneity.'⁸⁷ We have attributed the age with our name, and it is thus the name of the *anthropos* that presents the boundary of time. We are the 'now.' At once divisive and nominative, the Anthropocene reinstates humans as the determiners of time, this time not simply as subjects who sense time but rather as a major geomorphic force. As both dominators and denominators we are now masters of time, we make our own time. This hubristic denomination of an age should alert us to the true nature of the problem. The problem is only inadvertently given as the human use of natural resources, excavating

⁸⁶ Levinas (1987) 13.

⁸⁷ DeLoughrey (2019) 133.

and burning fossil fuels, mass deforestation, the enormous scale of chemical detritus we leave in our wake. The Anthropocene obviously points to all this and critiques it. But the deeper significance of the Anthropocene is the reinforcement of the egoism of humanity. The Anthropocene might be treated as a symptom of a more than material presence upon earth, where the 'diagnostic of the Anthropocene proposes a new geological epoch that designates humans as a collective being capable of geomorphic force, shaping Earth systems on a par with inhuman forces.'⁸⁸ The problem will be whether the attribution of the name, or rather our name, to an epoch serves to vindicate rather than hinder such egoism.

The scientific designation that poses the Anthropocene as the name of an entire age obfuscates the fact that we are not actually in control of the forces of nature; we are not in control of geomorphic forces nor should we be, and our continuing egoism in placing ourselves above 'nature' can only lead to our own destruction (in soul if not in body). More than anything the title 'Anthropocene' assumes a 'we,' a general humanity of actors who are in no way the 'we' who are in effective control of the detritus we leave in our wake. We might name names, but they should know already and that hasn't stopped them so far, on the contrary it has only spurred them on to greater acts of hubris.

But perhaps we can look at it from a different perspective. Rather than taking the human as a force that changes time, that insinuates itself as the lord and master of the nonhuman, we could think of this determination of the Anthropocene as a remineralisation of the human, putting us on a par with rocks. However, studies show that human activity is 'the most important geomorphic agent acting on the surface of the modern Earth, a conclusion that evokes several nontrivial consequences. It should be made clear, however, that anthropogenic and natural rates of erosion embody somewhat dissimilar measures of continental denudation.'⁸⁹ We might be a geomorphic agent, but we are not acting in any way similar or equivalent to the nonhuman forces that preceded us. If anything, the name of the Anthropocene is a pretence that permits us to reconfigure ourselves petromorphically, the scientific version of Adam and Eve's earthly and ostic origins. As Yusuff states, this 'immersion

88 Yusuff (2013) 779.

89 Wilkinson (2005) 163.

of humanity into geologic time suggests both a remineralisation of the origins of the human and a shift in the human timescale from biological life course to that of epoch and species–life.⁹⁰ So which is it to be? Does the designation of the Anthropocene iterate human mastery over nature or does it reinvest us as mineral beings?

This passage back into mineralisation echoes the earlier mineralisation from the previous domination of soft tissue, 500 million years ago when bones emerged in organic bodies. De Landa describes it as ‘if the mineral world that had served as a substratum for the emergence of biological creatures was reasserting itself, confirming that geology, far from having been left behind as a primitive stage of the earth’s evolution, fully coexisted with the soft, gelatinous newcomers.’⁹¹ In her *Allegories of the Anthropocene*, DeLoughrey describes the discourse of the Anthropocene as invigorating a ‘geological turn whereby anthropogenic sediment becomes a sign of deep history, evidence of human minerality where the excavation of the “geos” reveals the “bios” and a merger between the human and the nonhuman nature.’⁹² For DeLoughrey the Anthropocene also serves to restructure the belief systems of the past, such as that in developmental, technological progress. Given the fact that the new age is marked by a destabilisation of the elements, that essentially poses an existential threat to the previous pleasantly beneficial age of climatic stability of the Holocene, she suggests that this engenders a reinterpretation and revelation ‘the enlightenment narrative of progress’ as myth. She is probably using the word ‘myth’ in much the same way that Adorno and Horkheimer used the word in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to argue that a return of barbarism within advanced civilisation was possible.⁹³ Myth, of course, need not have this overtone of the barbaric/civilisation divide. Or, if it does, that divide itself should be the first item of study when investigating myths of civilisation. I would argue that the Anthropocene itself, as a concept, could be equally subjected to this critique, as myth.

Frodeman raises the possibility that a restructuring of thought might alleviate us of the burden of traditional methods of consumption.

90 Yusuff (2013) 779.

91 Delanda 26.

92 DeLoughrey (2019) 133.

93 Adorno and Horkheimer (1997) 44.

The problems facing society today require us to question the intellectual taxonomy that has trained us to think ever more deeply within the same old ruts. Reordering the categories of our thinking and our institutions—even more, learning to think across categories—will help us create new conceptual and social spaces for addressing our environmental challenges.⁹⁴

The call to break down the categories, to reconfigure the system, to spread out and dissolve all boundaries uses exactly the same language that got us here in the first place. The drive to transgress, break free, to exceed present limits, and to extend the limits of human thought and technology is the same as that which framed the scientific revolution. In the words of Bacon, what was desirable was ‘the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible.’⁹⁵ In a similar vein, Latour claims that the time has come to ‘develop *more*, not *less*’ and in order to do so we must do away with ‘the limits of the notion of limits.’⁹⁶ Not only are we forced to face our existence in a timescale that explodes our minds but Latour also tells us that accepting the paradigm of the Anthropocene is to accept that we are exiting the human drama and entering one on a planetary scale. Hence, all attempts at revolution are behind us since ‘we have already crossed a few of the nine “planetary boundaries” considered by some scientists as the ultimate barrier not to overstep!’⁹⁷ Latour implies with irony that the Anthropocene brings in a new era of self-satisfied scientism, in which multiple disciplines collude in order to coerce us into obedience. The drama that science maintains is that of humankind’s emancipation from Nature and ‘the thrusting-forward arrow of time—Progress—characterized by its juvenile enthusiasm, risk taking, frontier spirit, optimism, and indifference to the past.’⁹⁸ While I agree with his critique of the Anthropocene as scientific megalomania, I think his resultant faith in technologies and political ecology as a force of intervention is not only theoretically dubious but also maintaining and giving power to exactly the same megalomania that characterises the Anthropocene. We might be able to observe the ‘molecular machinery of soil bacteria,’

94 Frodeman (2003) 3.

95 Quoted in Neyrat (2019) 98.

96 Ibid. 95.

97 Latour (2014) 1.

98 Latour (2011) 21.

but that has not stopped us from doing our utmost to kill as much of it as possible with the use of agrochemicals.⁹⁹

We live in an age where new technologies are created to confront new threats. The problem is that the new technologies and their demand on natural resources are so often the cause themselves of threats, such as deforestation, mineral depletion and contamination through mining, not to mention horrendously abusive labour conditions. It would appear that the solution is as much a problem as the cause. Perhaps this novelty that seems to be so desirable, in both thought, technologies and institutions, is itself the rut that we are trained to think with as well as believe in. It would appear that the designation of the massive boundary of the Anthropocene, separating us off from the Holocene that most of my friends were born in coincides or even permits the dissolution of boundaries elsewhere. Frodeman argues that this new age dissolves hard borders, so that 'processes flow across disciplinary boundaries. Life becomes lithic (e.g. limestone), while tectonics influences patterns of evolution. To put it differently, the terms "Earth sciences" and "environmental sciences" today represent a distinction without a difference.'¹⁰⁰

It would appear that we live in an age where distinctions are breaking down, where flows and assemblages are transforming our world from one formed of categorical differences to one where technological interconnectedness and the rhizomatics of domination interrupt such autarchic desires as self-control and self-limitation.¹⁰¹ That's not to say that life on earth is composed of entirely distinct, separate organisms, rather 'a sum of relatively independent species of flora and fauna with sometimes shifting or porous boundaries between them.'

Geology appears to be the core, even the substrate or bedrock, providing the junction for what was formerly thought distinct and separate. Frodeman continues his diagnostic with a prescription for the academy: 'To effectively grapple with our environmental challenges we must cross the boundaries that have separated the humanistic and scientific part of geology.'¹⁰² Scientific facts cannot in isolation address the dead-end street that science has created, he says, so we must

99 Ibid. 21.

100 Frodeman (2003) 4

101 Deleuze and Guattari (2014) 55. 'Rhizomatics of Domination', see Mikulak (2007).

102 Frodeman (2003) 4.

‘redefine the conceptual space of the Earth sciences.’ The crux of the problem is ‘philosophical and spiritual in nature.’ While he surely does not mean it in this sense, I think it is not incorrect to interpolate into this diagnosis that natural spirit or the spirit of nature is lacking from scientific discourse. That the spirit of nature is to be found, as Frodeman suggests, in a nexus of scientific debate, democratic institutions, and humanitarian virtues, seems to me to reinstate power in the mire of the same old ruts.¹⁰³ As was the case with Latour, we see an advocacy for change acting in the name of restoring the current systems and holders of power, albeit in a slightly different guise.

And yet, a limit is seen, floating around the edges, determinable within the bounds of the sciences, perhaps as the bounds of science: ‘The Earth sciences are becoming the sciences of limit,’ states Frodeman.¹⁰⁴ ‘The scarcity we are facing will not be a matter of running up against purely physical boundaries. Scarcity in the twenty-first century will combine physical limits with a complex range of cultural factors,’ these include everything from economics to theology.¹⁰⁵ The Earth sciences pose an ‘ontological disruption,’ the limit breaking into our everyday excursions from the pub to the supermarket, something like an earthquake opening up great chasms in the road and drawing up distinctions between the various exorbitant, consumptive activities we engage in on a daily basis and the enormity of geologic life. The Earth sciences are once again rising up as a soothsayer of catastrophism, as the old gods of the earth rumble in discontent below while the sea god creeps formidably closer and the god of fire wreaks havoc upon the land. However the Earth sciences do not call them ‘gods,’ they call them ‘natural processes’ disturbed and unbalanced by human activity, though that does not seem to explain the way these forces rage. But no, the absence of gods in the sciences is what has allowed science to progress in its mechanistic interpretations. At base I agree with Frodeman; we are confronted with a problem of limits, rather an absence of limits in contemporary scientific, technological and governmental development, in social and behavioural determinism too. It is this problem that the diagnostic of the Anthropocene should draw our attention to.

¹⁰³ Frodeman (2003) 8.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 16.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Neyrat, in *The Unconstructable Earth*, also brings our attention to the presence of limits in the discourse of the Anthropocene. Modern belief still has its consequences, he says, by 'believing that science had emancipated us from nature, we have believed in the existence of the Great Divide between us and the rest of the world.'¹⁰⁶ Neyrat quotes Hans Jonas's characterisation of the contemporary human as the 'definitively unbound Prometheus,' where he also calls for 'concerning ourselves with limits.'¹⁰⁷ Neyrat also criticises Latour for arguing against the existence of these limits or essentially the limit that divides humans from their environment. For Latour, the absence of limits does not mean only that we are one with nature but rather that all of nature has been anthropomorphised such that we have the ability, perhaps according to Latour the necessity, to totally remaster the environment in such a way as it suits us; 'more attachments, more mastery, more interventions.'¹⁰⁸ He gives the example of terraforming, which would be the opposite of recognising these limits.

Neyrat uses the word 'myth' to discuss the Anthropocene, but he does so with caution.¹⁰⁹ As the former section suggested, the word 'myth' in addressing geological timescales would not be inappropriate, based as they are upon archaic structures of belief that indeed required systems of mythical belief to support them. The Anthropocene is the 'myth,' the story that elaborates the mythology of human mastery and human dominance over nature, where the role played by today's humans is not unlike the role human beings play in the Promethean myth. And just like the Promethean myth, the intercedence of Zeus, father of gods and men is required as a heteronomous source of permission and legitimation for subsequent human activity. As Neyrat puts it, 'with the anthropocene, our winded postmodernity seems to have acquired a new breath and a means for resuscitating a grand narrative that [...] plunges us into the most distant past.'¹¹⁰

The grand narrative of the Anthropocene seems to justify an overwhelming dissolution of boundaries. More often than not these

¹⁰⁶ Neyrat (2019) 92.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 93.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 34–35.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 35.

boundaries pertain to the individual rather than states and corporations, as movement between corporations, banks and state systems of power is definitely becoming more fluid. Biotechnological control and surveillance of individuals is already being justified by necessities claimed to have been instigated by climate change. Similarly most environmental concessions are forced upon individuals rather than the corporations largely responsible for aggressively rapacious forms of resource extraction and use or the large stakeholders in such firms. With the Anthropocene, boundaries dissolve, and nature becomes subsumed into aggressively despotic human nature, or a few limited examples thereof.

Nonetheless, limits arise again and again in human discourse, and here specifically the consideration of the human relation to the nonhuman should recall us to our own limits and boundaries. While many boundaries are internal, or at least linguistic, they are also substantially present in our relations with the world around us, framing those relations, whether in transgression or symbiosis. Perhaps there are only absolute limits in nature, the limits that are even today becoming evident because once transgressed they produce unpredictable and perilous disequilibrium in the natural systems that support not only human but all organic and nonorganic life. Mining, an attack upon the deep sedimentary deposits of the earth is as destructive as deforestation, and personal technologies, such as phones and computers, are based upon the ongoing extraction of increasingly rare metals. Biotechnologies, along with genetic modification of plants, animals and humans, consistently cross the boundaries of what it means to be a plant, animal or human. And as these technologies show, there is always a price to pay, even if that is simply the ensuing dependence upon the industry that created you, or made you as you are. The resulting catastrophes of wildfires, pesticide poisoning, the disappearance of heirloom plant varieties, the human epidemic of allergies and pharmaceutical dependence are all as a result from human intervention claimed in the name of science, to improve upon natural processes and what we cannot help but recognise as natural limits, from the earth's crust to human skin.

Walter Benjamin's notion of similitude arrives via a redemptive theory of language where the principle has long been lost to the past (whether it ever *was* remains an issue in Benjamin's evolutionary messianism). Any similarity in word or letter can only act as a reminder/remainder

or a brief moment of recognition of what language as such could have been or was. It is thus exactly what is lost that can be a subject not of knowledge but of recognition, something that ‘flashes up’ in the instant of similitude: ‘The past can be seized only as an image that flashes up at the moment of its recognizability, and is never seen again.’¹¹¹ This illuminated image draws Benjamin’s gaze beyond the horizon whereby ‘allusion to the astrological sphere may supply a first reference point for an understanding of the concept of nonsensuous similarity.’¹¹² Not just because the form that similarity takes in recognition is that of a flash but because there is a very real possibility that the star you happen to admire tonight has ceased to exist many thousands of years before. In which case, how can we ever solidify our relation with the whole as anything but in loss, of the lost returning as a memory, an instance of eternity in the midst of life’s brevity? What are stars but rocks reflecting light at a distance, exceeding extension and measurable by time? Is there a correspondence between human beings’ tendency to place stones upon the land as marks of memory and the overwhelming eternity of rocks in the sky?

Since we are now standing in the place of the third term of astrological measurements, οἱ τρεῖς ὅροι, we must be forgiven for extrapolating without the hindrance of atmospheric pressure.¹¹³ The definition of the ‘now’ has a ‘non-sensuous similarity’ with *horos*, in all its determinations, boundary and mark, letter and word, definition and stone. Or to put it otherwise, the ‘now’ is *horos* exactly because the singularity of identification is impossible. There is no opposite of the ‘now’; it is not opposed to continuity even though in the vulgar concept of time it is the single moment, the exception that proves the rule. Just as there is no opposite of *horos* since once we start determining what is *a-horos*, we must have placed a limit from which to begin. It is a point that takes place at a certain distance from time. The point is that with the *horos*, this limit is none other than the raising of the question of definition. In conclusion, we can begin again with Aristotle’s definition that time begins as a sense or, to rid this sense of its intentionality (*dianoia*), as a feeling for what is other than time, that is for something else that falls in between the ‘now’ that is past and the ‘now’ that is to come.

111 Benjamin in Löwy (2005) 390–391.

112 Benjamin (2005) 721.

113 LS: 1256 (IV.4).



Fig. 6. Gravestones. Photograph by M. Goutsourela, 2013. Rights belong to the Kerameikos Museum, Athens. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/ Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development (H.O.C.R.E.D.).



Fig. 6a. ΗΟΡΟΣ ΜΝΗΜΑΤΟΣ, in Lalonde (1991) [I 7462].



Fig. 6b. ΗΟΡΟΣ ΣΗΜΑΤΟΣ, in Lalonde (1991) [I 2528].

6. Geophilia Entombed or the Boundary of a Woman's Mind

ὁ ὄρος — metaph. [...] *the boundary* of a woman's mind, [...] *memorial stone or pillar*.¹

Were women marginalised in Ancient Greek society? Was this a norm for the archaic period as well as the Classical? Are there traces in the Greek corpus of a system of matriarchy belonging to the late Neolithic, Iron and Bronze Ages? Are later seventeenth- to nineteenth-century AD interpretations as much to blame for the tone of misogyny that dominates scholarship of the ancient world as they are responsible for manipulating the primary sources into reflecting their own beliefs, rather than clarifying the beliefs of the time? Given the filtration of our sources through the monotheisms of Islam and Christianity followed by the fundamentalist hegemony of the scientific revolution, can we even trust what we read in order to weave some kind of a web to trace us through the truth of what it meant to be a woman in the fledgling Greek *polis*? The intervention of masculine hegemony between then and now as affecting the way we read the city may also have had the effect of obliterating any original documents that may have enlightened us as to the thoughts, the lives and the preoccupations of women. Or, if intervening misogyny is not to blame, then what were women doing—were they sleeping, were they so engrossed with providing a genetic inheritance that they forgot to supply us with an intellectual one?

This chapter will not answer these questions. But that does not mean we must not ask, perched as we are upon the boundaries of Greek thought trying to follow through with all these *aporias*. The archaeology of the *horos* might be traced via the cultic and into the philosophy and

1 LS: 1255–1256.

economics of the Athenian *polis*, but it has to go through women in order to arrive there. One of the basic appearances of the *horos* is as a marker of graves, and as a swathe of texts from archaeological remains to tragic theatre make clear, this realm remained the monopoly of women. Whether a preoccupation with the realm of death was an act of subjugation or whether it reveals the significant power that women held over the existential reality of the society's population depends on how willing the reader is to find an alternative model of freedom to our highly politicised, biologically determined, publicly limited freedoms of today. Here I present a discussion of boundaries and attempt, through something like a game of Go, to place women in relation to these boundaries, on this side, on the other or anywhere in between.

We have already witnessed the possibility that the *horos* described a face-to-face relation, a divisive mark that demands the bonds of hospitality and transgression in friendship alone, where either side embraces the very limit they share, the otherness they have in common or the definition of being whose immediacy is interrupted only by the definition itself. Then again, we have seen *horos* erupt into the continuum of time, as both time's limit and definition and as 'what it was to be' (*to ti en einai*). In all of these, the spatiality of the *horos* is related to a transgression of boundaries and to what is past as what is no longer but nonetheless provides the substratum for being present.

This substratum or what underlies is the topic of this chapter. It might be the earth, or the place of the feminine, that provides the substrate for existence. But it also might be what is past, done, gone and buried. The past of the *horos*, whether it is dead and buried, implicated in those who laid the boundaries or continues to be read in museums today, raises the question of the authority of the mark. Is the *horos* a sign, an intermediary mark drawing up the definitions between subterranean powers and the active imagination of human beings? Where does the *horos* get the power to define and determine from? Is it in us who read or from the dead who placed the stones and drew up the boundaries, or is the power essential to stone itself, emitted from the depths of the earth? In Ancient Greek society how someone was buried was as much the realm of women as was childbirth. And if anyone can be said to have spoken up for what lies underneath, it was Antigone. But there's plenty of time before Antigone enters the stage. In the meantime, there's another boundary to consider.

The Female Boundary

The Liddell and Scott lexicon provides us with a metaphorical example of the use of the word *horos* said to mean ‘the boundary of a woman’s mind.’ It is taken from Aeschylus’s tragedy, the *Agamemnon*, which tells of the hero’s bloody fate at the hands of his unfaithful wife Clytemnestra upon returning home after ten years from the victory over Troia. Spoken by the chorus of old men, and after condemning Clytemnestra’s extramarital affair with Aegisthus, they discuss the possibility of news of the return of Agamemnon. Here I quote several stanzas with a typical translation to provide the context. I then follow with a brief criticism and alternative translation that dramatically changes the meaning of the word *horos* in this context, which should prove the lexicon’s entry here as entirely mistaken.

έν γυναικός αίχμᾱ πρέπει
 πρό τοῦ φανέντος χάριν ξυναινέσαι.—
 πιθανός ἄγαν ὁ θῆλυς ὅρος ἐπινέμεται
 ταχύπορος· ἀλλά ταχύμορον
 γυναικογήρυτον ὄλλυται κλέος.²

It seems that a woman in temper
 grants consent to what is pleasing before it is apparent.-
 Too easily persuaded, the woman’s boundary [*horos*] is encroached upon
 swiftly, but swift-dying
 perishes rumour proclaimed by a woman.

This sexually conservative reading obfuscates the libidinal overtones of these lines and seems to require a special manoeuvre in the translation of *aichmai* as ‘temper,’ rather than ‘spear.’ Another singular appearance is the *gunaikogureton* (γυναικογήρυτον) implied to be connected with *guros*, circle, as in ‘what goes around,’ something, I suppose, like how rumour ‘gets around.’ But I suggest the implication is to the word *gorutos* (γωρύτος), ‘bow-case or quiver,’ so the *gunaiko-gorutos*, would be the woman’s quiver, the place where euphemistically speaking ‘arrows’ are put. Presumably a spear is in this case a particularly well-endowed ‘arrow,’ hence her easy persuadability. In this alternate reading, a woman gives consent to the pleasure of a spear, her easily persuaded

2 Aesch.Ag.483–487

boundary is broken, and the good name of her quiver dies. The 'female boundary' (*thēlys horos*) can then be interpreted as none other than the hymen. The subsequent lines play around the idea of a woman's consent, an interpretation that, if anything, is apt given the sexual basis of the tragedy and the old men's censure of Clytemnestra's sexual exploits.

And yet the lexicon described this instance as not only 'metaphorical' but also 'the boundary of a woman's mind.' It must be asked what a woman's mind has to do with it? And why is this particular meaning of the *horos* and this alone 'metaphorical'? All the other meanings suggested in the lexicon were unmediated identification but not this one. Woman yet again provides fertile ground for the exception of non-identity. No doubt this could be turned to her advantage. Nonetheless it is also interesting to note the shift towards the metaphorical the closer you get to the hymen.

There is another reference given by the lexicon for the same sense of the 'woman's boundary', again from Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*. But this time it is Cassandra, and the boundaries are questionable; they are the boundaries of her prophetic method, the origin of which is posed in terms of possession by the chorus: πόθεν ὄρους ἔχεις θεσπεσίας ὁδοῦ /κακορρήμονας; 'Whence have you the *horoi* of the ill-omened prophetic way?'³ I have purposefully failed to provide a translation for *horos* as I think the ambiguity here is telling. Are these landmarks along the way to prophesy? Or is it the origin of the terms of the art that is being put into question? It is a question of method and knowledge as well as claiming possession (*horous echeis*). Cassandra, at this point, is literally possessed by her art. She is looking into the future at the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, as well as her own murder. It must be said that these 'boundaries' are if anything excessively expansive, and not at all suited to the senses of 'boundary of a woman's mind.' On the one hand we have the *horos* as 'hymen,' on the other, as the terms along the prophetic way. Either way there is nothing to suggest the metaphorically limiting implication of the definition of the boundary of a woman's mind. Perhaps what we are dealing with, then, is not the boundary of the ancient woman's mind, but the boundary of the nineteenth-century male mind, that is, the mental barriers of sirs

3 Aesch.Ag.1154.

Liddell and Scott when it came to addressing women's subjectivity as the purveyor of truth, not to mention women's sexual parts.

That the 'female boundary' (*thēlys horos*) should be none other than the hymen certainly agrees with the significance the ancient city placed upon virginity and the passage from the semi-sacred role of the virgin to that of the married woman; and yet in Greek 'hymen' as membrane is linked to the uterus, the stomach lining. Hymen is the god of marriages, and variations of the word signify marriage and the marriage song, all dancing around while obscuring the whole point of the matter (which of course is never whole, nor a point). It was plausible for a male physician to argue that the physical membrane of the hymen did not even exist in women.⁴ But perhaps male ignorance about women's bodies was not so significant, given the segregation of the two realms of reproductive or domestic life and political or civic life. At least it may not have mattered until the political started to intrude into the private, subjecting both the woman and the household to a series of legal and religious interventions that focused upon limiting and controlling the sexual, as well as reproductive, activity of a young woman.

The obsessive compulsion to control women's sexuality and reproductive potential was strictly orchestrated within the institutional structures of the city-state. In her analysis of the role of rituals performed for the goddess Artemis, Cole suggests that state institutions introduced the presence of state boundaries into the lives of the people by mirroring biological boundaries in the transition from girlhood to womanhood. The goddess Artemis was often worshipped on geographical margins, close to territorial frontiers. 'The rites of young women at these sites marked important transitions in the female life-cycle, but signified more than the individual female's safe passage across a personal biological boundary. The community as a whole depended on ritual activities undertaken in border areas.'⁵ The festival calendar required that both girls and young women perform public ceremonies at remote sanctuaries, such as at Brauron. Cole argues that these dedications and rituals demonstrate 'the centrality of women's religious role and the crucial part played by their offerings in securing the well-being and survival of the *polis*,' while the 'sacred space on a border defined the limits of a city's territory

4 Keuls (1993) 143 and Merchant (1990) 161.

5 Susan Cole, 'Domesticating Artemis' in Blundell and Williamson (1998) 27.

and protected the transitional area that divided one community from another.⁶

The traditional claim is that sanctuaries were placed on boundaries 'as markers of territorial sovereignty'; however, I could venture another interpretation, given that many sanctuaries stretch back to the time preceding the institution of the *polis*, they may not have marked territorial boundaries at all, certainly not those of the city-state. Or if they did mark boundaries, maybe they did so in homage to the boundary itself, rather than as a mark of possession and dominance. Certainly, in the case of Artemis, the masculine dominance that inhered to the *polis* seems not only anachronistic but also antithetic to the older, more fearsome character of the goddess. That these sanctuaries and rituals were later adopted and reconfigured, as an apparatus beneficial to the propaganda of the *polis* should not be excluded. A reconstitution of the religious character of border zones in order to reinforce social and political dominance was certainly a possibility.

The idea that the security of the city's women mirrors that of the city's borders is a metaphor that could appear intrinsic to ancient political and religious thought. 'There was a recognisable correspondence between the vulnerability of a city's women and the vulnerability of a city's borders,' states Cole, where intrusion and violation on a border, especially one of ritual significance 'was a sign of ritual failure and indicated that the security of the *polis* was threatened by a war with its neighbours.'⁷ Not only was 'lack of respect for the boundaries of another community' expressed in myth by 'lack of respect for the integrity of its women,' but it was also used as the basis for justifying violent acts of retaliation between states.⁸ However, what if the metaphor worked the other way around? Rather than the sexual vulnerability of women representing the vulnerability of the state and therefore requiring the ritual activities of the women in order to secure the state, what if the vulnerability of borders was depicted in rituals of femininity in order to represent women as vulnerable and insecure? To pacify a potential enemy is a much surer tactic than simply disarming them.

If we consider the Artemis rituals from this inverted perspective, the situation as it stands becomes much more interesting. One example

6 Ibid.

7 Blundell and Williamson (1998) 28.

8 Ibid.

that became stock standard propaganda in the expansionist policy of imperial Athens was that of the Lemnian incursion at Brauron, which was then used as a significant part of the rationalisation for the violent Athenian attack on Lemnos as described by Herodotos.⁹ The claim that girls and young women (particularly virgins) were at risk during the festivals and rituals on borders supported a nexus of ideas featuring the masculine assertion for control and domination, over the territory and its borders, as well as over its women (regardless of social standing, girl, mother, slave, etc). An assault upon territorial boundaries (*horoi*) was akin to the violation of the woman, the breaking of her *horos*, and these two ideas were mythically connected and reinforced through ritual performance. The subsequent mythical parity between the 'female boundary' and state boundaries, between the sexual control of women and the security of the *polis* emphasised how an entire community could suffer from untoward sexual license amongst the female population of the city. In contemporary analysis, women are often attributed marginal roles in the Ancient Greek city, and while on the one hand that is absolutely true, there they are dancing on the boundary, it almost seems too obvious, like hiding it in the open. Their marginalisation (as is the case with most minorities) plays a central role in the preservation of the constitution of the state. In religious festivals and liturgies, women literally put their *horos* on the line in support of the state.

My question, then, is whether these women were willingly acting for the benefit of the *polis* or whether these activities were in some way coerced. Were women putting their sexuality on the line in order to consciously reinforce the dominant political and religious framework of the city, or was the control of their sexuality a method of limiting the rebellious force of a considerable part of the population? We know that there was a certain degree of resistance amongst women in the face of the polity of men: Both Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusai* and his *Lysistrata* paint an image of women who are anything but passive in the face of the claim to male dominance in the socio-political and economic sphere. The men go off to war, redirecting state and private funds into these exploits abroad, only to return carrying stolen arms and stolen, foreign broads in their arms. No wonder in Aristophanes' comedies, women are willing to go to great ends to change their economic and social conditions, not

9 Hdt.6.137–140.

to mention the great heroines of tragedy who revolt against the various systems of power they are trapped within. Clytemnestra murders her husband in retribution for what she sees as the criminal sacrifice of her daughter, Medea also responds murderously upon her male children when faced by the abandonment of Jason, Helen simply walks out of the institution of marriage, and Antigone in her refusal to accept 'the way things are' is far from alone in standing up and resisting the status quo. Elektra is in the minority as contributing to the founding myth of a judicial system that reinforces the status quo. Everybody else seems to revolt against it. Might these be representative, not of women as willing contributors to the dominant political power, but as active participants in ongoing social dissent?

In the *Republic*, Plato claims to bring women into the machinations of the state. He permits them to engage in the sphere that was, according to the actual Greek polity, exclusively male. Given mental proficiency and reproductive ability, he grants them equality in some measure to the guardians of his mythical constitution.¹⁰ Perhaps Socrates was aware of how dangerous a force women could be if they remained on the other side of politics. In Ancient Greece the other side is exactly where it is said that women were, the other side of the door, indoors where they belonged.

The household constituted the nonpublic sphere within which the female was subsumed and which therefore defined her. Because the good at which the household aimed was a lesser good than that which was the end of the *polis*, the wife-mother achieved only the limited goodness of the 'naturally ruled,' a goodness different in kind from that of the naturally ruling.¹¹

But that does not mean that the realm of the household was in itself lesser than the public realm. The word *economics* comes from household management, and we know, from the Homeric epics as from archaeology, that the household in the Bronze Age was the main productive and economic organisation, before cities developed and took over this role.¹² And if women were excluded from public life, they nonetheless

10 Elshtain (1993) 32.

11 Elshtain (1993) 45–46.

12 Austin and Vidal-Naquet (1980) 36–47.

remained essential, providing the preconditions upon which public life rests.

The assumption that participation in a particular form of representational government and free-market economics is the front door to social freedom and wholly constitutes public life is today so taken for granted that it actually starts to seem like inter-generational indoctrination. The question, however, should be whether social and political 'equality' within a system structured upon inequality is even desirable given the inherently corrupt constitution of the economy, politics, the law and the private sector. In any case, later legislation took Plato at his word and refigured the state such that it absorbs women within it, along with the requirement that women be subject to the laws, the economic system and the state's constitution even if that means performing roles as perniciously violent as those that were once directed against them. Meanwhile, the ability to even imagine any other form of organisation be that kinship, communitarian, communal or whatever, is becoming increasingly more difficult.

Is this absorption of women into the public realm, even if not entirely, what began to happen in the fifth century that changed the perception of women? For example, the earlier Bronze Age myth of the murder of Agamemnon is attributed to Aegisthus, while the classical *polis* put the weapon in the hands of his wife Clytemnestra. Why this shift in responsibility? Is this a demonisation and denigration of the woman who demands control within her household? Or is it a warning of what women do when they are unchecked and beyond the power of their husbands? That the role of women in myth elucidates the unconscious tensions, ambiguities and fears dominant in society seems obvious to us today.¹³ However, a further question poses itself, especially given observations of contemporary media and the distortions of stories and facts to maintain corporate interests: to what degree were the representations of women purposeful? Or, who was controlling the images, attitudes and opinions portrayed, if anyone? And, consequently, what was gained by the renovation and potential modification of ancient myths as they were staged within the democratic *polis*?

The Ancient Greek *polis* was not so naïve that it did not reconfigure the facts in order to represent the city and its actions to its own benefit,

13 Gould (1980) 55.

nor was it unwilling to manipulate public opinion in order to maintain the status quo, as the great demagogues Perikles and Alcibiades are testament. The funeral oration of Perikles is definitely a fine piece of political propaganda, not to mention Alcibiades justification of the Sicilian expedition.¹⁴ Another fine piece of propaganda may well have been the manipulation of the worship of Dionysus into a city cult and Artemis and girls' rituals celebrating the crossing over into womanhood into festivals securing state power. So, if these publicly sanctioned forms of speech, entertainment and ritual were performed in order to cover over an alternative world-view, what was that other perspective and why was it so threatening to the continuation of male hegemony?

I suggest (and this is merely suggestion, for the reasons outlined above concerning lack of evidence) that it was not only an attitude but an entire system of relations that threatened the behemoth of state authority, not necessarily exclusively matriarchal, though it certainly had room within for the generative power of birth and the degenerative power of death. In stark contrast to the civic representations of Artemis as protecting territorial borders, was Artemis as Mother Goddess, *Thesmophore*, goddess of childbirth and protector of the ancient laws or customs (*thesmoi*).¹⁵ The Mother Goddess is well accounted for in statuesque form from the Palaeolithic until the Iron Age and is linked with matriarchy or at least the worship of a fertility goddess or the 'great mother'.¹⁶ The problem is that although we have plenty of cultural artefacts that suggest that an overwhelming significance held to the mother goddess, any traces of this worship within the historical period are deeply contested and heavily overlaid with the values of later patriarchally organised, economically constituted societies (that is to say state centralised, non-household economics). That said Benigni does succeed in deploying a plethora of evidential finds, so that it seems that this worship is coming to air, despite the incongruence of present socio-economic conditions.¹⁷

14 Basically the entirety of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* and Herodotos' *Anabasis* can be read as state propaganda. The orators also generally engaged in some form of truth-twisting to the benefit of their cause, e.g., on the funding of martial affairs, the theoretic fund and public versus private wealth, in Austin and Vidal-Naquet (1980) 340–358.

15 Detienne (1977) 79–81.

16 See Benigni (2013).

17 Ibid. 1–22.

The dominant cosmology of the classical era that has come down to us is one of mythical, cyclically patricidal, inherited power, where the feminine elements seem to feature only as the exceptions that prove the rule.¹⁸ That said, I do not doubt that mythological narratives had at least two sources of dispersal, and therefore there are at least two versions of the same myth, although there are normally many more. There was the dominant, authoritative narrative deployed by men in the service of political and social allegiances (for example, Telemachos's dismissal of his mother Penelope with the statement that 'myth is the province of men').¹⁹ But there were also the mythical cycles told by women, such as myths sung to pass the time while working, myths told to educate and entertain children and sing them to sleep, myths used to illustrate conversation during hours of leisure, bathing and dining, perhaps accounting for some of the less distributed versions of myth (such as that of Helen's duplicate following Paris to Troia, while the real Helen passed the war partying in Northern Africa).

The overwhelming presence of women in Greek myth should alert us to the fact that patriarchally dominant society never succeeded, if it ever aimed to do so, at obliterating the powerful position of women both in the family and in the community. Many women feature in the mythological canon of Greece, from the well-known goddesses of the first generations of the gods on into the Olympians (Aphrodite, Demeter, Hera, Athena, Artemis, etc.) and the lesser divinities as well as the plethora of nymphs and local deities, including a number of divine female collectives, (the Graces, the Muses, the Fates, the Pleiades). There was no lack of the female in the Greek mythological corpus. But there are also the mortal women famed for their misbehaviour or good behaviour, such as Clytemnestra, Helen, Hecuba, Medea and Penelope. Women from this class also extend over generations, such as Iphigeneia, Elektra, Hermione, Cassandra. For the most part they are from ruling families or that failing of the priestly caste (Chryseis, Briseis). As Blundell states, 'Royalty was one of the bits of traditional social baggage that Greek myth carried with it into the later ages.'²⁰ There are also the female monsters, whose purpose seems wholly to threaten and chastise

18 Ibid. 35.

19 Hom.*Od.*1.356–9

20 Blundell (1995) 17.

the little boys and girls into doing the right thing (Gorgons, Medusa, Sphinx, Furies: Erinyes/Eumenides). There are also plenty of examples of choruses of women within Greek theatre, where women *en masse* were not always represented straightforwardly either as victim or threat.

Symbolic associations of women, or the mythological female, put women on the side of the unbounded, men with the bounded, women with nature and reproduction, men with law and order. Although in the so-called *Pythagorean Table of Oppositions*, Aristotle aligns the unlimited, *apeiron* (ἄπειρον) with the feminine side, against limit (πέρας) on the masculine, we can certainly understand this opposition as having the opposite effect socially.²¹ As Anne Carson argues, the fact that women were considered to be unbounded is perhaps enough to implicate them in the maintenance of common, social boundaries.²² Zeitlin states that the 'boundaries of women's bodies are perceived as more fluid, more permeable, more open to affect and entry from outside, less easily controlled by intellectual and rational means,' and for this reason, as can be seen on stage, women were perceived within the *polis* as a physical and cultural instability.²³

That women were passive may also have been an idea promoted within the city, but it was certainly not apparent upon the city's stages or within the city's myths. An example featuring the culture hero Herakles, a woman's arts and the *horos* appears in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, where Herakles, drawing up the location, *horizei*, for altars and woodland sanctuaries, in the worship of Zeus (ἐνθα πατρώω Διὶ /βωμοὺς ὀρίζει τεμενίαν τε φυλλάδα) receives the poisoned garment from his wife Dianeira.²⁴ That this hero of masculine strength withstood the twelve labours, facing off beasts and monsters, only to die at the soft touch of cloth from the hands of a woman, is telling of the power that adhered to women in Greek society. That power might not be very pleasant, but it is there all the same. It is a power that threatens because it is unbounded, falling beyond the bounds of civic authority, identifying women with everything that men are not.

21 Ar.Met.986a24. In these dichotomies evil, *kakon*, is also on the side of women, exemplified by Pandora. See also Carson (2000) xxxiv.

22 Carson (2000) 153.

23 Zeitlin in Winkler and Zeitlin (1990) 65.

24 Soph.Trach.743.

The dichotomy aligning men with civilisation and women with nature that was so popular during the enlightenment may find its origin within the Greek *polis* and even continues today to be a favourite mythology both of those supporting the hegemony of certain political forms and those desiring a return to wildness and a unity with nature. As Blundell states:

Prominent among these is the identification of women with the wildness of nature- that is, with whatever exists beyond the boundaries of an ordered civilisation. It is generally assumed that it is women's capacity for child-bearing, and hence their alignment with natural forces beyond male control, that prompts these commonly envisaged relationships with trees, plants, springs, birds, and so on.²⁵

This nature symbolism operates within a nature versus culture model, a dichotomy presumably disseminated by men to demobilise women and women's power to the margins of society (for example the man-eating maenads in Euripides' *Bacchae*). However, this interpretation is presumably as much a result of the propaganda of the classical period as it is our own contemporary conventions still at work.

Considering that most social and economic powers today are based upon the use and abuse of natural resources, and the surplus of profit created by wage inequalities between workers and executives, that women should be separating themselves from the 'forces of nature' and relocating themselves within the workforce, whether as workers or executives, obviously does a great deal to maintain these already existing cycles of natural and labour resource extraction and profiteering. So, if women have also moved over to the side of law, capital and polity, who is left to speak up for the unbounded?

Authority's Attire: Body, Tomb, Sign

Conceptualise the *horos* as a simple lithic confrontation or even an apperceptive, perpendicular arrangement, outlining boundaries run horizontally in closure or are left open, the stone's upper façade points towards the heavens, its base planted firmly in the ground. The *horos* is buried, at least partly. Does it also transversally gesture below? If so,

25 Blundell (1995) 18.

the *horos* stands upon another boundary, the boundary that stands as a point of disjuncture and therefore also conjuncture between those in the 'now' and those below, inscribed within the earth, those who live no longer, the worm-feeders. The eruption of the *horos* in the continuum of time was also phantasmagoric, haunting the conceptual world of memory with an inscription of stone. *Horos* was a sign no less real for all its ghostliness; it was the material representation of the dead. The living engrave stones, and this is a reciprocal relation; sooner or later, the stones engrave us. In this grave subjectification we can catch a glimpse of what was at stake in the *horos* from the first. *Horos* was also inscribed upon gravestones, and this inscription separated the material world of the living from the spectral realm of the dead, a distinction that might be spooky and even petrifying but is not for all that unearthly.

They may not be the earliest examples of *horoi*, but the funerary *horoi* are at once plenteous and have the advantage of an additional inscription which serves to mark them out as different from other *horoi*. Some funerary *horoi* have been found during the excavations of the Athenian *agora*, even though burial ceased to be practised there from the end of the seventh century BC.²⁶ There are some special cases of burial until the end of the sixth century, largely limited to certain family plots. It is assumed that these were aristocratic families whose traditional tomb was maintained while the larger populace was excluded to burial sites elsewhere. This theory is supported by the high-quality pottery discovered in these tombs. The latest of the graves are those of two infants placed in the ancestral burial ground at the end of the seventh or beginning of the sixth century. In the absence of further information, one can only attribute the archaic extension of the spirit of death in the *agora* (such as the cult of the heroised dead) to proverbial idiosyncrasy, old habits die hard.²⁷ The majority of later classical funerary *horoi* have been found in the Kerameikos cemetery.

The lettering of the funerary *horoi* is rough and for the most part epigraphists propose only a vague date up until the third century BC. They are marked by six main inscriptional variations:

26 Lalonde (1991) 16–18; Thompson (1972) 10, 19.

27 Thompson (1972) 119.

ὄρος τοῦ δεῖνος
 ὄρος μνήματος (μνημάτων, μνημείου)
 ὄρος σήματος
 ὄρος θήκης (θηκῶν)
 ὄρος χωρίου
 ὄρος χωρίου μνήματος

Each gravestone is inscribed first with *horos*, and then presented in the genitive there is a choice of inscriptions: a name (for example, *Xsanthio*, *Helikēs*), a memorial or remembrance (*mnēma*), a sign (*sēma*), a receptacle (*thēkē*) which could be either the grave as such or the receptive earth, or ground (*chōriou*), or even the determined place, as the place of memorial (*chōriou mnēmatos*).²⁸ Today, it would be more usual that a memorial (*mnēma*, the neuter noun of memory) of the name of the dead stand in its own right, where the name inscribed in stone is already in memory of the dead. It appears that the ancillary demarcation of the *horos* was, however, often necessary. It seems to me that the inscription of the word *horos* draws attention to the monument itself, rather than to whom the monument was there to serve, or what it was there to do. Perhaps the second word of the inscription served this second function. It is almost as if we were to go into a cemetery and the gravestones were all inscribed with the word 'gravestone of Jane Smith,' for example. Our gravestones tend to leave this word to context, but it is still there. A gravestone might read 'in the memory of,' but what is elided is 'this is a gravestone in the memory of.' So, in a way common usage today is not so different to the ancient inscription; except that they did not elide the reference to the monument, the memorial as object of memory.

The words *horos mnēmatos* and *horos sēmatos* offer an indulgent range of opportunities for translation, though I find it difficult to feel satisfied with any one in particular as conveying what was fully intended in the name of the dead. I could suggest another meaning for the *horos* and translate the first as 'gravestone in the memory of'; that would certainly be easier to understand, though not necessarily true to the original. The second part of the inscription, with the word for sign, *sēma*, is trickier. The lexicon glosses over the possibility of a more complex meaning by simply saying that *sēma* can also mean 'sign by which a grave is known.'

28 For examples, see IG I³ 1139; IG I³ 1138; IG I³ 1132; IG I³ 1134; IG II² 2587; IG II² 2594. Cf. Lalonde (1991).

But with the word *horos* this would be doubling up, something like the ‘gravestone that is the sign of a grave.’ Presumably not. Suffice it to say here that regardless of how we translate *horos* (term, limit, mark, boundary, and so forth), the real question the grave should pose is how memory and the sign stand in relation to the *horos*. In this question all the remaining genitives of the above clauses are brought into the same relation of correspondence.

Socrates claimed that there was a linguistic similarity between the tomb and the sign. In the *Cratylus*, he gives us a (dubious but interesting) etymology that would describe a relation between the grave or tomb, the body and the sign: ‘are you talking about the body?’ asks Socrates (τὸ σῶμα λέγεις;).

καὶ γὰρ σῆμά τινές φασιν αὐτὸ εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς, ὡς τεθαμμένης ἐν τῷ νῦν παρόντι: καὶ διότι αὐτὸ τούτῳ σημαίνει ἃ ἂν σημαίνη ἡ ψυχὴ, καὶ ταύτῃ ‘σῆμα’ ὀρθῶς καλεῖσθαι. δοκοῦσι μέντοι μοι μάλιστα θέσθαι οἱ ἅμφι Ὀρφέα τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα, ὡς δίκην διδούσης τῆς ψυχῆς ὧν δὴ ἔνεκα δίδωσιν, τοῦτον δὲ περίβολον ἔχειν, ἵνα σώζηται, δεσμοτηρίου εἰκόνα: εἶναι οὖν τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦτο, ὥσπερ αὐτὸ ὀνομάζεται, ἕως ἂν ἐκτείσῃ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα, τὸ ‘σῶμα,’ καὶ οὐδὲν δεῖν παράγειν οὐδ’ ἐν γράμμα.²⁹

For some say it [the body, *sōma*] is the tomb [*sēma*] of the soul, their notion being that the soul is buried in the present ‘now’; and also because by this it signifies [*sēmainei*] whatever the soul wants to signify, therefore it is correctly called ‘sign’ [*sēma*]. However it seems to me that it is more likely that the Orphics established this name, as the soul has a penalty to pay, on account of which it has a cage, to keep it safe, that is like a prison: and this is, just as it is named, and until it pays up in full, the ‘safe’ [*sōma*] of the soul, and it is not even necessary to change a letter.

This proximity of the sign, body and tomb is also brought up in the *Gorgias*, where the scholia attribute the idea both to a Pythagorean scholar, Philolaus, and to the mystical Orphic religion.³⁰ Derrida almost quotes the sentiment exactly when investigating Hegelian semiology; he states that the ‘tomb is the life of the body as the sign of death.’³¹ In Socrates’ explanation the convergence between sign and tomb is explained by the soul’s ‘burial’ in the present ‘now.’ One cannot help but expect to find

29 Pl.*Crat.*400b-c.

30 Pl.*Grg.*493a.

31 Derrida (1984) 82.

the *horos* floating around here somewhere, and yet it remains unwritten, uninscribed within the text, materialised only as the gravestone marked out and defining in the interstices between all these words.

Etymology aside, what is the sign's relation to death? A sign unites a concept and a sensory perception, signified and signifier, however memory is the production of signs, according to Derrida, and is also thought itself: 'The body of the sign thus becomes the monument in which the soul will be enclosed, preserved, maintained, kept in maintenance, present, signified.'³² In his study of gravestones, Sallis states that 'stone comes from a past that has never been present, a past unassimilable to the order of time in which things come and go in the human world.'³³ He continues, 'that nonbelonging of stone is precisely what qualifies it to mark and hence memorialize such comings and goings, births and deaths. As if stone were a sensible image of timelessness, the ideal material on which to inscribe marks capable of visibly memorializing into an indefinite future one who is dead and gone.'³⁴ The tomb is the sign of the dead, but it does not belong to the dead. It is the sign of the living, and the living investment in the dead. This is the beginning of what I call the economics of death. This sign that is both the monument of life-in-death and death-in-life, the 'sepulchre of the soul' and the 'hard text of stones covered with inscription,' is given by Hegel as the 'pyramid,' or as Derrida argues the 'semaphore' of the sign or the signifier of signification itself.³⁵ However,—and this is where a long history of women's rights resolve into a preoccupation with death—Antigone is desperate, and for her, any hole in the ground will perform the task, any covering of dust, as long as it is accompanied by the appropriate wailing, the dirge of the dead.³⁶ But it is not merely the funeral rites of her brother that Antigone demands, it is the immortality of the soul that she is fighting for, the maintenance of the sign and the continuity of its meaning within the entire system of semiotics that the burial of the dead is part of.

Antigone's infamy, in Sophocles' tragedy, is her obeisance to what she defines as the binding precedent of the unwritten and unfailing laws

32 Ibid.

33 Sallis (1994) 26.

34 Ibid. 26.

35 Derrida (1984) 83

36 Alexiou (2002).

that dictate the burial and mourning of the dead. The King, Creon, has decreed that Antigone's brother's corpse go unburied as a punishment for his belligerent claim to the throne. The problem that resounds, not only in the case of the disputed authenticity of the king and the dictates of burial customs, is that of authority. But in this case the question is not who has the authority to control, the authority of power; it is rather an oddly spectral authority, the jurisdiction of women, the mourning and ritualised burial of the dead. When it comes to the obeisance of unwritten laws, Antigone declares the authentic primacy of unwritten customs by means of negation, which does not mean that they are word-of-mouth or in some way give precedence to speech. On the contrary, that they are read despite being unwritten seems to be where the real issue lies, that is the serious issue for mourners and murderers alike of what to do with the body.

Antigone explains the origin of the laws by drawing attention to the gods who she claims did *not* authorise Creon's edict barring the sacred duty to bury the dead, because they already stand as authorities for the opposite.

οὐ γάρ τί μοι Ζεὺς ἦν ὁ κηρύξας τάδε,
οὐδ' ἡ ξύννοικος τῶν κάτω θεῶν Δίκη
τοιούσδ' ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὥρισεν νόμους.
οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον ὥοιμην τὰ σὰ
κηρύγμαθ', ὥστ' ἄγραπτα κάσφαλῇ θεῶν
νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητὸν ὄνθ' ὑπερδραμεῖν.³⁷

Zeus was not the herald who gave me that [edict], nor did Justice, who lives with the gods below, determine (*hōrisen*) such laws amongst men. Nor did I believe that your decrees were so forceful, that the unwritten and steadfast laws of the gods could be overcome by a mortal.

The verb used is that of the *horos*, *horizō*; Creon's laws or customs (*nomima*) are not 'determined' or 'circumscribed' by the gods. In contrast, the laws that Antigone does recognise are placed within the horizon of men by the gods. A subterranean Justice earths them and presumably that is where their authority resides, in the earth, which is why the burial (earth to earth) of the brother belongs to their jurisdiction. But it is also a matter of time, for Antigone's customs remain in the

37 Soph.*Ant.* 450–455.

present as a prescription whose origin belongs to the indeterminate past, or in Antigone's own words, οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε κἀχθές, ἀλλ' αἰεί ποτε/ ζῆ ταῦτα, κοῦδεις οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου 'φάνη, these customs are 'not something of now or yesterday, but live forever, and no one knows from whence they appeared.'³⁸ Here she seems to echo the chorus who asked Cassandra in the *Agamemnon* from where she had the *horoi* of divination. It is this indeterminate origin that makes these customs so secure, but it is also the fact that they are unwritten (*agrapta*). Perhaps it is not Antigone who needs these unwritten customs or laws to support her act but the unwritten laws that require Antigone's act: by marking out the grave, the sign of the burial gives form to the unwritten laws. There is no division between the laws themselves and their enactment; the enactment is the 'writing' or 'sign' (*horos mnēmatos/sēmatos*) upon the earth of the continued presence of the laws. This earthly enactment might be the only form these laws ever take. It could be that the laws require the sign of the grave in order to be read at all.

Death's Legal Signature

Antigone's authenticity, raising her up to the level of the legislator and giving her the strength to stand in opposition to legal power, is maintained by her 'right' to death's sign, a mark of authorship that she embraces in the absence of her brother by inscribing with the earth and upon the body of her brother those 'unwritten laws.' As Derrida states, 'the tomb is the life of the body as the sign of death.'³⁹ The tomb and sign of the dead is the 'written signature' that in the case of Antigone claims her presence in the past of her brother. The sign that Antigone writes upon her brother's body may be her own responsibility, but what remains, i.e. the grave (*horos*), cannot be claimed as hers, nor even her brother's. Both authors are eclipsed by the divine origin of the laws themselves, whether it was his tomb or her sign. The signature implies, as Derrida states,

the actual or empirical nonpresence of the signer. But, it will be claimed, the signature also marks and retains his having-been present in a past

³⁸ Soph.*Ant.* 456–457.

³⁹ Derrida (1984) 82.

now or present [*maintenant*] which will remain a future *now* or present [*maintenant*], this in general *maintenant*, in the transcendental form of presentness.⁴⁰

Antigone's claim is exactly that her sign breaks into the 'now' of human laws, interrupts them with the silent eternity of the grave, breaking into state-sanctified memory. This is why Creon must object to the burial, not because he wishes to punish Antigone (and Ismene) by deferring the materialisation of their memory of their brother, but because the burial of the brother inevitably becomes a memorial also of dissent and civil-war that contraindicates Creon's reformation of the city after *stasis*. Part and parcel of his post-war authority is the denigration of those who fought on the other side and the commemoration of martial heroes on his side. Similarly, Perikles funeral oration was as fundamental in instituting the concept of Athenian citizenship as it was in memorialising the dead.⁴¹

Antigone's signature is a demand addressed to others to remember the laws of the dead, and in doing so, they must 'read what was never written.'⁴² It is a trope common to poetry that the act of writing tricks death. Horace says in his odes, 'I shall not wholly die' (*non omnis moriar*) and this is because his poems live on. This statement that puts off the fulfilment of death is explicitly in relation to what has been written, which remains a part of the author, even beyond the grave. Antigone stands somewhere near here, and her deed risks all because it (whether intentionally or not) rewrites the accepted history of the city. In the words of Benjamin: 'Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.'⁴³ For Creon, outlaws of the state are punished by legal means, on account of Antigone's act both the laws that permit such punishment and the history that defines her brother as outlaw come into question. In the Machiavellian book of power, this is not acceptable. Every system that is built upon the control and manipulation of its population engages in the twofold denigration and active eradication of dissent.

40 Derrida (1988) 20.

41 Thuc. 2.34–46.

42 Benjamin (2005) 722.

43 Benjamin in Löwy (2005) 42.

Agamben's argument that law is the sphere of signatures holds for the law of the state where the signature defers responsibility to a past that can in fact always be rewritten and retracted. Authority depends upon the unremarked past of dissent, the glorification of its heroes and mastery over the sign. The theory of signatures in alchemy is based upon the notion that similarities in form and language are not coincidental and that the signature draws attention to a relation between things, their powers, their forms and how we read them: 'Signatures, which according to the theory of signs should appear as signifiers, always already slide into the position of the signified, so that *signum* and *signatum* exchange roles and seem to enter into a zone of undecidability.'⁴⁴ Adoption of the theory of signatures into the law allows the law to extend beyond the secular domain into theology. A signature does not merely express a semiotic relationship between sign and signifier, 'rather, it is what—persisting in this relation without coinciding with it—displaces and moves into another domain, thus positioning it in a new network of pragmatic and hermeneutic relations.'⁴⁵ In short, whoever controls the signatures is in control.

Diogenes Laertius provides an explanation of the definition of *horos* and the subsequent definition of *hypographe*, which in Greek is literally 'written under' or 'underwritten' (and now means 'signature'), but here is probably used in terms of logic, meaning 'description.' In legal terms, it is also the 'accusation' or 'statement of liability.'

Ὅρος δέ ἐστιν, ὡς φησιν Ἀντίπατρος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περὶ ὄρων, λόγος κατ' ἀνάλυσιν ἀπαρτιζόντως ἐκφερόμενος, ἥ, ὡς Χρύσιππος ἐν τῷ Περὶ ὄρων, ἰδίου ἀπόδοσις. ὑπογραφή δέ ἐστι λόγος τυπωδῶς εἰσάγων εἰς τὰ πράγματα, ἥ ὄρος ἀπλούστερον τὴν τοῦ ὄρου δύναμιν προσενηγεμένος.⁴⁶

A definition [*horos*] is, as Antipater said in his first book *On Definitions* [*horoi*], a phrase [*logos*], which according to analysis corresponds to what is said; or, according to Chrysippus in his book *On Definitions* [*horoi*], is the explanation of the word itself. Description [*hypographē*] is a phrase [*logos*] introducing the matters in outline, or a definition [*horos*] that deals with the authority [*dynamis*] of the definition [*horos*] in a simpler form.

⁴⁴ Agamben (2009) 37.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 40.

⁴⁶ Diog. Vit. Phil. 7.60.9.

Although the translation I offer here is not definitive, it is evident that in the Greek a nexus of terms is brought together. Unfortunately, all these terms, *horos*, *logos*, *hypographē*, *dynamis* vary quite significantly in meaning from any exact English counterpart. 'Description' here differs from *horos* insofar as it is definition in outline with recourse to the authority of the sign. The underwritten in Ancient Greek is thus already a synonym for the authority or power (*dynamis*) of a word or term (*horos*). The signature introduces the notion of authority but whether that is in speech or writing is unclear, despite the *hypographē*. As Agamben states, the sign 'signifies because it carries a signature that necessarily predetermines its interpretation and distributes its use and efficacy according to rules.'⁴⁷ As with the signed artwork, or the stamped coin (*signare* in Latin also means to stamp a coin), the signature denotes authority (who has money has power), authenticity, or a complex network of relations of authority. Thus, the signature denotes more than a relation between whoever signs and what is signed; it decides at its base what words mean.

Does this mean that the *horos* has authority implicated within it, without raising that authority as a question? No doubt this is what was significant about the *horos* all along, that the authority or power to describe boundaries, or the potential to define and determine was always already inherent and remains a power that fails to point elsewhere to some external authority. But that does not mean it is not subject to questioning. If we ask of the *horos*, like the chorus to Cassandra, from whence it has the *dynamis*, the power and potentiality to define, bound, determine and limit, it might answer thus: 'HOROS.' Does it say *horos*, or do we read *horos*? Of course, stones cannot speak. But we can read the word *horos*, or that failing the fact that the stone is placed on the boundary, in which case the *horos* insistently points back to us, the ones inscribing or even the ones doing the reading. So, the answer must be that the *horos* has no power to bind and define unless we attribute it this power. But then, to echo the chorus, from where do we have this power? That is for another time, or, in Antigone's words, it is 'not of now or yesterday, but always forever.'

And so, Antigone's act can be disputed not only within the text but outside of it as well, in the text of power relations that is alive and

47 Agamben (2009) 64.

well today, and that continues to bolster new readings of the *Antigone* in order to support new authorities, systems and new relations. Her insolence is not merely that she disobeys the edict of the king; the real insubordination lies with the fact that she challenges our hermeneutic position about what law really means or how law should be read. She takes us back to the ground of definition, where the customs and laws are defined. The play poses, even despite itself, the question concerning the authority of these definitions, it asks who the author is that defines the laws. Both Antigone and Creon claim to have insight into the real authorship and power of law, and on the boundary in dispute, the no man's land between the two where nothing is sacred, we see the problem brought into definition, the *aporia* at the heart of the law, or the *aporia* that brings us up short of following the law to the letter. Because they cannot both be right, can they?

The 'sign' of the grave of her brother is for Antigone the sign of justice, a subterranean justice, while for the king it is the sign of her revolt. But more than this, Antigone's act suggests that the grave itself must be read as the unwritten laws themselves, and that here the identification between law, written sign and deed should coalesce in a single interpretation, indisputable because although not legally signed, it is nonetheless read in the sacred laws of burial and mourning.

Foucault states that 'everything would be manifest and immediately knowable if the hermeneutics of resemblance and the semiology of signatures coincided without the slightest parallax.'⁴⁸ This gap is essentially that between semiology and hermeneutics. The gravestone does not fill in this gap, despite its solidity, but it does remind us that the body of habitation, and the 'dark space' of the dead amongst the living bears a certain similarity. Here, we can read Antigone as trying to situate herself in this gap. Her signature, which is really the entire system of those unwritten laws that she in both deed and speech is attempting to give expression to, is supposed to be and is read by the chorus, even though the authority of her own interpretation is constantly slipping away in favour of Creon's. The chorus, however, finds themselves in a dilemma, the only position true to form in the entire play.⁴⁹ They at least recognise the *aporia* in the text. They cannot say one way or the other

48 Foucault (2008) 33.

49 *Soph.Ant.*278, 681, 724.

which is the right interpretation of Antigone's act, at least up until a point.

Ambiguity rests with the grave itself, which necessarily evades an absolute identification with a name or any kind of authority, and becomes a matter of deep time versus present time. The sign, *horos*, is only that of memory, *mnēmatos*, and is associated with the name of the dead only so long as the living hold him and his place of burial in mind. The grave belongs to the dead only so long as he and his site of burial remain in living memory. While the deed of burial itself might be Antigone's signature, the sign itself has meaning only so long as it is read. In this case the grave and sign refer back to the initial problem of the *horos*; how is it to be read? Is it word or stone, and how can it be both? But the sign of the grave does not cease to be supported by *horos*, just as the stone lies under the chisel. It is appropriate that it is on the boundary between signature and interpretation that the *horos*, the gravestone comes, solidifying what remains of the 'unwritten laws' and putting into question any kind of possession particular to one time or another. With typical candour, Antigone asks, 'And yet how could I have gained greater glory than by placing my brother in his grave?'⁵⁰ The grave maintains the always in the 'now,' but if the 'unwritten laws' dictate burial, and the act of burial is the power of these laws in the 'now,' then the grave itself (*read: horos*) stands as the mark that also interrupts the continuity of any kind of law.

The unwritten laws that Antigone invokes would seem to have traversed the 'now'—a definition that interrupts into indeterminacy. And yet Antigone's insistence would suggest that there is only one way that these laws remain so secure, by giving definition to them in the form of a grave (*horos sēmatos*). Hence her repetitive need to act, to follow her responsibility to mark out the dead as buried until the laws are visible upon the body as earth, or written into the land as grave. As laws, they are unwritten, *agrapta*, but they must be read all the same. Likewise, the chorus is unwilling to speak about them, though they know them, until the laws themselves are recognised or read. In the words of Nietzsche, 'it is true knowledge, insight into the terrible truth, which outweighs every motive for action' until what is sacred about these laws becomes apparent in another's act (Antigone's, or with the ethical support of

50 Soph.*Ant.*502.

Teiresias, or with the help of Haemon as in Euripides' version), the sacred determination through which they make themselves known.⁵¹

These laws are perhaps none other than the limits of political power, the boundaries of secular power, (especially as defined by Creon) beyond which is the realm of the sacred and anyone who transgresses these boundaries without the appropriate ritual is none other than *homo sacer*, cursed to an unbounded death. Hence, as a figure of politics, as Butler suggests, Antigone, 'points somewhere else, not to politics as a question of representation but to that political possibility that emerges when the limits to representation and representability are exposed.'⁵² But I would respond that once beyond the realm of these limits, there is no political possibility, and any attempt to politicise this region becomes tyranny, like Creon, the totalitarian ruler who can accept no limits to his kingdom. The will to draw attention to these limits is not political naivety on the part of the *Antigone*; on the contrary, it can be read as playing with the exposure and transgression of limits of the political institutions of the classical *polis*, which can be interpreted in turn as providing the framework for Creon's authoritarian rule. It is these limits that the city's legislature repeatedly attempts to drown out or flood with novel proscriptions and seemingly petty legislations upon the body politic, as well as the woman's body (which is purposefully excluded from the body politic).

According to Butler, 'the Hegelian legacy of *Antigone* interpretation appears to assume the separability of kinship and the state, even as it posits an essential relation between them.'⁵³ In Hegel's reading, the binary between kinship and state suggests the existence of a boundary distinguishing a system structured by bonds of loyalty to the household from the duty of the citizen to the state, it is 'the limit at which the self-contained Family' breaks up and goes beyond itself.⁵⁴ For Hegel, the *Antigone* stands first and foremost as a conflict over the boundaries between the laws of the Gods and the laws of the *polis*, between the divine law and the human law. This interpretation has now been realised (*aufheben*) and Hegel's separation seems to be the basis for

51 Nietzsche (1999) 40.

52 Butler (2000) 2.

53 Ibid. 5.

54 Hegel (1977) 275.

the crisis between private and public power today, especially in social welfare states where welfare and policing take on the dual role of carer and punisher (Mummy/Daddy), while the family's role/rule breaks off abruptly when a child comes of age, becoming a legal citizen, leaving family life flailing with the sudden negation.

This is our inheritance, not from Sophocles so much as from later interpretations of Sophocles. For Sophocles, the separation between kinship and the state is just another in a series of boundaries that are overstepped, both by Antigone and by Creon. As Butler points out, Antigone and Creon are chiasmatically related. Their language, their mode of argument, the laws and ethics for which they stand, resemble that of the other, but diametrically. Both Antigone and Creon transgress kinship norms in their relations with one another, while Antigone transgresses gender norms and Creon the norms of political leadership.

Readings of the *Antigone* that attempt to stress the ethical or sexual aspects of the play tend, whether they mean to or not, to place Antigone on the other side of politics, beyond the realm of the political. For example, Lacan's fascination with Antigone turns her into some kind of resuscitated virgin goddess of pure desire, while reviling her mother Jocasta as harbouring impure lust, and thus reiterating typical binaries of womanhood and down-playing the political reading of the play.⁵⁵ According to Irigaray, this version of Antigone is seductive precisely because she is beyond the political. 'It suits a great many people to say that women are not in government because they do not want to govern' states Irigaray, 'But Antigone governs as far as she is permitted.'⁵⁶ Irigaray's reading of Antigone seems to call for a new conception of the civic realm in which female sexuality is taken into account, as if a different kind of political power, a Creon more well-disposed towards the unwritten laws perhaps would arrest the tragic outcome of the play.

It might be seductive to simply invert the power relations and replace Creon with Antigone. This would automatically suggest that Antigone's position was initially the weaker of the two. But as we know from the end of the play, it is Antigone who emerges victorious, dead admittedly but triumphant. The strangest thing about the *Antigone* is how the tyrant

55 Miriam Leonard 'Lacan, Irigaray, and Beyond: Antigones and the Politics of Psychoanalysis' in Zajko and Leonard (2006) 130–134.

56 Irigaray (1994) 68.

Creon suddenly accedes to the recommendations of the chorus and goes off to free Antigone and bury her brother. But too late; the plot is in free-fall and the suicides, of Antigone, Haemon and his mother Eurydice, flow.⁵⁷ But Creon, having only just seen his mistake and changed his mind, suffers all the more for his wrongs, which also takes away the *Schadenfreude* we the audience might have felt witnessing his sufferings. The moral of the story, though ancient Athens was not what you'd call a moralistic place, all the same, the moral of the story might be that tyrants, or their democratic understudies must listen not only to the old men (the senate) but also to their Antigones (disenfranchised youth), if they are to successfully rule.

Does this mean Antigone, and with her the women of the city, should be included within the institutions of power in order to 'give them a voice' or does it mean that a smart tyrant will include women in order to suppress the possibility of dissent coming from the margins of society? While individuals may contribute to increased dissatisfaction in the structures of political authority, the alternation of sex within the same structures of power will not magically transform the political system into a more inclusive one. On the contrary, the more inclusively a political power presents itself, the more exclusive are its methods, until we arrive at a system where there is no conceivable valid alternative of political power beyond neoliberal corporate capitalist representative democracy. And anybody thinking otherwise is branded a fool, a dreamer or a terrorist.

Antigone, with her seemingly innocent obsession with her brother, her claim to follow the unwritten laws and her death wish, could be all three. Her act and her rebellious speech in the face of Creon's edicts refusing burial rites to her brother interrupt, if nothing else, the continuous flow of legal hegemony. Antigone asserts her responsibility for her insubordination three-fold; in the symbolic deed of burying her brother, by refusing to obey Creon's edict against it, and then testifying to her refusal to obey. Thus, as Judith Butler states, her claim 'becomes an act that reiterates the act it affirms, extending the act of insubordination by performing its avowal in language.'⁵⁸ In doing so, Butler argues, Antigone appropriates the voice of authority even while

57 Creon's about face begins and the suicides follow immediately, *Soph.Ant.* 1099.

58 Butler (2000) 10.

she refuses to assimilate her own acts to that same authority. She can do so only because she claims that she is following an alternative system of justice and has the language to do so having the privilege to be born into the royal house. Her defiance of the latter and reverence of the former is indicated in her authorial iteration of those unwritten laws, which she signs three times upon the body of her brother. This maintenance of the grave is by definition the sign and signature of her double act, her insubordination against the laws of Creon, and her self-proclaimed obedience to those other laws.

Economics of Death

Maybe the *Antigone* is a cipher for whatever interpretation most benefits the reader: for Hegel the play represents the separation between traditional kinship and later political systems, while the character of Antigone represents the nexus of the feminine (passive, unconscious, disobedience and guilt); for Lacan, the character of Antigone is pure desire; for Loraux she stands for the possibility of the politicisation of desire; for Irigaray, Antigone is the sexual difference of the unconscious; for Morales, she is rising up against gender discrimination; for me, the play draws attention to all those boundaries, in words and stones.⁵⁹ Underneath this cipher, Antigone is woman idealised such that she is whatever we want her to be. She moves at our bidding, changes sides with our whims. Here she is the other of masculine power, there she stands for universal ethics; here she supports the incestuous heredity of the royal bloodline, there she is revolutionary spirit; here she is subservient to the unwritten laws, there she is subversive femininity rising up.

Antigone might ask of this manipulation of herself and the play, 'is nothing sacred anymore?' and she would surely get a firm negative. The theatre is no longer an act of worship, a set of rituals presented in the name of Dionysus, the great trilogy of tragedy that followed the procession of the phallus through the city, and preceded the comedy that was, at least for Aristophanes, the institutionalised satire about the Athenian

59 For a discussion on these interpretations, see Leonard in Zajko and Leonard (2006) 122ff. Irigaray on interpretations to suit the day (1994) 68. For Antigone as the symbol of challenging gender norms, see Morales (2020).

demos. That is where the *Antigone* was originally situated, and perhaps it is worth refiguring the play in its original setting, if only because our interpretations have become so saturated with contemporary biases, beliefs and political allegiances that to read something truly other into the play is becoming more and more difficult.⁶⁰ Which also means that the play is becoming less threatening, doing nothing other than reinforcing our present values. That said, how challenging the play was to its original audience remains an intriguing matter for speculation.

I mention the social and political setting of the play's performance to point out where Sophocles' inspiration was embedded and to what he would have been responding, opening to debate topics that the play's audience would have felt moved by or at least implicated in. Given that the *horos* stood as the boundary separating tribal regions or private lands, it can be seen to be intimately involved in drawing up the boundaries of kinship, especially in its role as marker of grave in the name of the dead. That both death and kinship rituals underwent significant change during this time, from the end of the archaic into the beginning of the classical periods, should alert us to a shift in significance of the *horos* as well. Within the classical period the *horos* becomes a tool for marking the boundaries of the Athenian market-place, abandoning its exclusive use in the sacred and the natural. The following will describe these shifting allegiances and existential alterations.

That the *Antigone* represents a conflict between a previous system based upon the ties of kinship (founded upon relations between wealthy and powerful households of royalty) and the institutions of the democratic *polis* is, I think, beyond doubt, particularly given the aristocratic leanings of its author.⁶¹ That said, the dramatic festival was not an autonomous product of the author; it was a collective production in which, as Longo states, 'the concepts of artistic autonomy, of creative spontaneity, of the author's personality so dear to bourgeois aesthetics, must be radically reframed, when speaking of Greek theatre, by considerations of the complex institutional and social conditions within which the processes of literary production in fact took place.'⁶² Longo

60 Osborne 'Competitive Festivals and the Polis: A Context for Dramatic Festivals at Athens' in Rhodes (2004) 18ff.

61 Rhodes (2003) 104ff.

62 Oddone Longo, 'The Theatre of the Polis' in Winkler and Zeitlin (1990) 15.

has also argued that the 'dramatic spectacle was one of the rituals that deliberately aimed at maintaining social identity and reinforcing the cohesion of the group' but that does not mean that there was exclusive agreement about the topics presented on stage.⁶³ No doubt the audience would have comprised both champions and critics of the democracy.

The theatre might also have comprised some women, whose presence in the democratic institutions was notably absent, though nonetheless essential and whose interactions with male citizens cannot have escaped have some effect upon those institutions. Loraux states that tragedy was the main genre that, 'as a civic institution, delighted in blurring the formal frontier between masculine and feminine and freed women's deaths from the banalities to which they were restricted by private mourning.'⁶⁴ It also allowed women to orchestrate the deaths of others, even if unintentionally. If only few women actually were permitted to attend the theatre I am not sure that this would help them much. The idea that tragedy allowed women to take death into their own hands is particularly interesting given the fact that death was already in their hands, insofar as it was the women in charge of the funeral rites. It would be very intriguing to read the unfortunately mostly lost Euripidean version of the same myth, given that Euripides was a little more sympathetic to the democratic system of the classical city or at least had a sense of humour about the shortfalls of citizen rule. It would be even more interesting still if Aristophanes had written a comic version.

That Antigone is the heroine of the previous system of aristocratic, inherited rule is, however, not without its problems. While she is the daughter of wealth, and her ancestry is (on both sides) descended from the royal household, she is however of the cursed house of Thebes, the mythic alter-ego of Athens, much as Sparta was the city's political alter-ego, though the representation of an enemy sympathetically was definitely within the scope of tragedy (*The Trojan Women*, *The Persians*).⁶⁵

63 Longo in Winkler and Zeitlin (1990) 16.

64 Loraux (1991) 3.

65 Antigone states of herself that she is the sole survivor of the royal house of Thebes (apparently forgetting her sister and her surviving brother). The chorus compare her noble lineage and fate to Danae et al. Soph. *Ant.* 940ff. On Thebes as 'the negative model to Athens' Froma Zeitlin 'Thebes: Theatre of Self and Society in Athenian Drama' in Winkler and Zeitlin (1990) 131.

As Zeitlin states, 'for the tragic poets Thebes represents the paradigm of the closed system that vigorously protects its psychological, social, and political boundaries.'⁶⁶ This over-protection of boundaries can be seen to be the downfall of the house of Thebes, given the cyclical incestuous tendency that finally brings it to its end. Antigone was the immediate offspring of incest, a big taboo for the Greeks given its saturation in myth, and she was also the descendant of a throne inherited by patricide and tainted by rape. She was unmarried, despite her age, a more serious transgression of the city's laws than may at first seem apparent. Meanwhile in the name of family bonds, she disregarded the distinction between sides of internecine war in her bid to bury the city's assailant. In her very person Antigone appears to break the boundaries in many directions, and for the original audience these original transgressions (but not 'sins' as they are forced upon her rather than enacted by her) are what make her a tragic, rather than heroic, character.

Irigaray describes Antigone's stand as a call to respect the 'economy of the cosmic order.' Antigone 'reminds us that the earthly order is not a pure social power, that it must be founded upon the economy of the cosmic order, upon respect for the procreation of living beings, on attention to maternal ancestry, to its gods, its rights, its organization.'⁶⁷ This cosmic order is also a matter of time. Aristotle's *horos*, the 'now,' linking past and future and permitting the continuum of time in tragedy must be maintained in the presence of the grave. For Thebes, burial or the lack thereof is a central problem that interrupts the proper flow of time (think of Oedipus as he searches for a place to die in the *Oedipus at Colonus*). Zeitlin suggests that the issue of the proper place of burial, under the earth and outside the city, problematises the very notion of time, where 'inside and outside, above and below, are factors that come to determine the most important boundary of all, that between before and after.'⁶⁸ Burial keeps time in joint, but has failed in Thebes so that 'no future time opens out in Thebes.' Antigone is both the end of the line and the recurring point; she is, as her name suggests, 'anti-generation,' or 'in place of the parent.' And in the *Antigone*, this distortion of time is played out, where 'the linear advance of the narrative events turn out in the

66 Zeitlin in Winkler and Zeitlin (1990) 148.

67 Irigaray (1994) 69.

68 Zeitlin in Winkler and Zeitlin (1990) 152.

end to be circular.⁶⁹ In contrast, the healthy burial and ritual mourning of the dead comes to exemplify a harmonious cosmic economy because in the common entombment of family members, the household of death acts as a reminder of the continuation of the shared household of the living.

Because the economy of death has broken down in the household of Oedipus, for Antigone the grave becomes a desirable site, a site of reunification that in a sense conjures up bonds formed in the womb. The most cogent and challenging interpretation of Antigone's will to provide her brother's burial rites is the shift from attributing Antigone with some kind of incestuous obsession with her brother, when she should be thinking of her husband, to putting the stress on the matrix of generation that is shared in common between sister and brother. Antigone seeks to live out some kind of eternal return in order to feel at one with the family that she has lost. This interpretation offers an alternative reading that might not be what Sophocles had in mind, but it does provide the *Antigone* with an eternal significance, beyond quarrels over state boundaries and one that does link her to some kind of 'cosmic order.'

Antigone clearly invokes the ground for her absolute obligation to bury her brother in their joint standing for, as well as having in common a space of co-generation not simultaneously with each other, as in the case of twins, but as a space of sharing that defines a primary ethical order of co-being, that is about connectivity and co-response-ability (Ettinger's term) and not the solitary, celibate individuality of the phallic order. Invoked, but waiting to be *heard* in Antigone's pathos, is this feminist heresy: that the condition of being humanly generated and born is an ethical ground *ab initio*, a form of linking, an already trans-subjectivity conceived as primordially, irreducibly relational—in a form that appears transgressive to a phallic autism when its archaic foundations are activated and invoked politically, ethically, aesthetically, symbolically as the basis for human thought and action.⁷⁰

The gravestone is also an ethical marker of responsibility and care for the other, a mark of death shared within the family tomb, all the more significant if the matrilineal origin was also shared.

69 Ibid.

70 Griselda Pollock 'Beyond Oedipus: Feminist Thought, Psychoanalysis, and Mythical Figurations of the Feminine' in Zajko and Leonard (2006) 104.

What is at stake is not merely a distinction between two sets of laws, such as the Hegelian dichotomy of kinship versus politics. Burial is a marker that indicates how one is mourned; it is a very tangible sign of household allegiance, of love and friendship. The relation of hospitality itself drives toward this sign, since burial ceremonies appear repeatedly in classical literature as the highest duty that one undertakes both for friends involved in the relation of *philoxenia* and family (for example the importance of Achilles mourning Patroklos, and the funeral games that always follow upon the death of a respected warrior in the Homeric epics). Although in *Antigone's* case it is her immediate kin who requires burial, the problem is then inverted. By the time *Antigone* is facing her own death it is also she who is in need of and refused the rituals of burial. Both of these refusals are suffered by *Antigone* as a woman. To deny burial to a man is an insult to the women of his family who would lay out the body, adorn it and mourn. To deny burial to a woman is an insult to the woman whose rightful place is to be concealed, as when alive, within the familial folds of the household. Hence the challenge that the *Antigone* poses is also directed towards the place and function of women in relation to death.

In Athens, the economy of death belonged to the household, the *oikos*. The death of a woman was a private matter, something to be kept within the household. The death of women in tragedy is the opposite, often murder, more often suicide, these deaths are spectacular and out in the open. While they were no doubt exciting to watch, they mostly had the effect of reinforcing the need for maintaining the privacy of the women within the household. At least the period subsequent to Sophocles saw no women's uprising to prove otherwise. Plato stresses the self-willed nature of this privacy of women, when he states in the *Laws*, 'accustomed as they are to live in concealment and darkness, if one would drag them into the light, they would resist with all their might and be far stronger than the lawgiver.'⁷¹ This dark concealment suggests that women were already entombed within the household. And, as Keuls shows, the symbolism of marriage was saturated with the same symbolism and rituals as those of death.⁷² 'One of the motivations

⁷¹ Pl.*Laws* 781c. quoted in Keuls (1993) 128.

⁷² See for example, the nuptial vessel used as a tombstone and deceased women dressed as brides on funerary monuments, on pages 131, 136, 151 in Keuls (1993).

behind the strong drive toward the continuation of the hearth, or *oikos*, was the desire to maintain the ancestral tombs, and to have one's own tomb cultivated by future generations.⁷³ The place of women in Ancient Greece, from marriage on was always on the side of death, and the household was intricately linked with burial rites and the maintenance of the tombs of the dead.

Keuls states that the preparation of bodies for burial 'a kind of reverse birth, was performed by women.'⁷⁴ The importance of burial seems to be a theme of some significance to Sophocles. Obviously, it is one of the topics, if not the main topic, in his *Antigone*, but it is also of key import in the *Ajax* and *the Seven Against Thebes*. I argue that it is the significance of burial rites that was Sophocles' main focus, perhaps on account of a barrage of laws that were brought in controlling the orchestration of such rituals and limiting them.⁷⁵

The connection between women and death finds its acme in the monument of the Leokorion, the monument erected in honour of the myth of the sacrifice of the three daughters of Leos, situated in the corner of the ancient Athenian *agora* right beside the *horos* that marked the *agora's* limits.⁷⁶ The theory that this continued to be a site of the sacrifice of women within the classical *polis* (during the plague years 430–429) might be discordant with what most people would prefer to think of as founding democratic institutions and bloodless accountancy, though it does seem evident that in one way or another the ancient city was fundamentally structured around the use or abuse of virgins. This might be considered one amongst many institutionalising discoveries experimented with in order to subjugate and obliterate the gestational powers of women in favour of the autistic productivity of the market.⁷⁷

Perhaps it is in this economic light that we should consider the second burial that takes place in Sophocles' tragedy, that of Antigone herself. Hers is a living burial, buried alive and provided with the victuals of life in death. It is also brought into direct relief with marriage. As a virgin promised in marriage to Haemon, the son of Creon, her fate

73 Ibid. 150.

74 Ibid. 149.

75 Discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

76 Keuls (1993) 137.

77 See Keuls on ancient biology, e.g. (1993) 142–147.

is reversed and, in her own words, she becomes the bride of death (ἀλλ' Ἀχέροντι νυμφεύσω) a result that she almost seems to glorify in.⁷⁸ She greets her tomb with the ecstasy of a bride: ὦ τύμβος, ὦ νυμφεῖον, ὦ κατασκαφῆς/ οἴκησις αἰείφρουρος, 'Oh Tomb, oh bridal-chamber, oh deep-dug eternal prison-house.'⁷⁹ The tomb thus doubles up and reinforces the proximity that already existed in the social mores of Athens between the bridal chamber (*numpheion*), the household (*oikēsis*) and the tomb (*tymbos*):⁸⁰ This burial ordered by Creon also signifies his transgression of the laws of the dead as well as the household bonds of *xenia*. Even the chorus find that the situation has gone beyond all limits, νῦν δ' ἤδη 'γὼ καὐτὸς θεσμῶν/ ἔξω φέρομαι τάδ' ὀρῶν ἴσχειν δ', 'But now, witnessing this, I too am carried beyond the bounds of loyalty.'⁸¹ Creon furnishes Antigone with victuals as if he is giving her a place to stay, a temporary residence, when he is actually burying her alive in an unmarked tomb. Creon did not have Antigone stoned, but he did hide her behind stone.

Her grave doubles as her home where the stone that Creon uses to block up the cave is a parody both of a door (that she will never open) and of a tombstone, his sign, this time, of her living-death. The stone is a door that accepts her entry but refuses her exit. It signifies her entrance into his own familial customs, a twisted rendition of the future that was to be but never will be, in which she was to become part of his household, more than a guest, married to his own son. And yet in the cave, he provides for her. She is neither daughter nor guest; she is, rather, condemned to living and dying in a house that will strip her of her familial connection to her own household, by depriving her of her family tomb. She is henceforth homeless, a stranger (*metikos*) even in death.

ἔμπας ξυμμάρτυρας ὕμμ' ἐπικτῶμαι,
οἷα φίλων ἄκλαυτος, οἷσις νόμοις
πρὸς ἔργμα τυμβόχωστον ἔρχομαι τάφου ποταινίου·
ἰὼ δύστανος, βροτοῖς οὔτε νεκροῖς κυροῦσα
μέτοικος οὐ ζῶσιν, οὐ θανοῦσιν.

78 *Soph.Ant.* 815.

79 *Ibid.* 891–900.

80 *Ibid.* 892. Also, 1069.

81 *Soph.Ant.* 800. Trans. Jebb.

you, at least, will bear me witness how unwept by loved ones, and by what laws I go to the rock-closed prison of my unheard-of tomb! Ah, misery! I have no home among men or with the shades, no home with the living or with the dead.⁸²

Her tomb is 'new' (*potaniou*), not the family tomb that her royal descent had promised her, and in a repetition of her brother's fate her death must go unmourned. For Antigone, what is 'homely' (οἶκησις) about her tomb is exactly the fact that she is not at home anywhere else, not just because her family are all dead (if not buried), but also because family, household, mourning and burial are a complex that must be enacted together in order for them to hold firm. Because these have been deprived her, she thinks of herself as a guest and stranger.

Her tomb is in fact no proper tomb, not only because she enters it alive provided for with the victuals that are to keep her alive, but also because she must go unwept. Similarly, the result of her unmourned burial is that she goes to her death as a stranger; she might be welcomed in Hades, but, unlike her parents, whom she washed and dressed with her own hands and poured offerings at their graves (ἐπεὶ θανόντας αὐτόχειρ ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ/ ἔλουσα κάκóσμησα κάπιτυμβίους/ χοᾶς ἔδωκα), she will never be at home there because of her lack of burial rites.⁸³ The gravestone not only takes shape in the gift of grief but as a demand made upon the living both to mourn and to die. The gravestone underlines and draws attention to the singularity of the repetitive alterity of death, a rupture that reduces all differences to a common limit.

The funeral rituals glorified in the Homeric epics were not limited to a family affair, and the archaic as well as classical city was strongly influenced by the prototypes of myth. Before Solon decreed a limit to the expression of grief over the tombs of non-family members (and the very fact that he thought this necessary would suggest it was a significant part of ritual grief) mourning was an extended matter for friends and loved ones. This is not a description of familial obligations within a nuclear family. It is not even limited to bonds of blood; it is extended within the obligations of *philoxenia*.

82 Soph.*Ant.* 845–852. tr. Richard Jebb.

83 Ibid. 891–900. tr. Richard Jebb.

A Stranger Tomb

Relationships of *xenia* would no doubt have formed a major, if not the major factor in inter-tribal, inter-household, and then later inter-city relations as well as in their dissolution (for example the Trojan war commenced because Paris had broken the rules of *xenia* by abducting his host's wife). *Philoxenia* is not, even if it once was, the essential factor in politics, but this is not the point.⁸⁴ *Philoxenia* in its ancient form was not merely a matter of being friendly to strangers, or being well mannered and behaving oneself in another's home. It can be defined along much more sombre terms, as care of the other not only unto death, but beyond it as well.

In what appears to be a *hapax legomenon* in Homer, the initiation of a relation of hospitality is expressed with the otherwise apparently formulaic ἀρχὴν ξεινοσύνης προσκηδέος.⁸⁵ To translate the meaning of the phrase, while leaving aside its syntax, would be something like 'the initiation and principle of care for the foreigner/friend until death.' And beyond death as well, for the *kēdos* (κῆδος) is the funeral ceremony. The word preceded by the relative *pros-* is said to express the notion of 'bringing into an alliance' or creating a relation of kinship. So, the word that describes being in a relation of kinship literally already has the funeral rites implied within it. The principle (*archē*) is that of *xenia*, where *philoxenia* begins with a mutual relation that promises care for the dead. At its simplest, the verb *kēdō* (κῆδω) means simply 'to care' extending then to 'mourning.' So, this relation of caring with those who are not blood relatives, who are strangers in the Greek sense of the word (*xenos*) means that one accepts responsibility for the life of the other as well as undertaking to perform the rites required and outlined by all those 'unwritten laws' of the dead. But the noun *κηδοσύνη*, *kēdosynē*, means 'yearning,' so while the cognate verb *κηδεύω* (*kēdeuō*) is 'to tend to the dead, bury,' it also has the additional undertone of desire. Along with the rituals in the name of the dead there is also the living intensification of the bond of hospitality through the marriage ceremony; hence *kēdeuo* (κηδεύω) also means 'to ally oneself in marriage,' again bringing to mind the correspondence between death and marriage.

⁸⁴ Seaford (2003) 18–19.

⁸⁵ Hom. *Od.* 21.35. Hesychius defines this as τῆς τὴν οἰκειότητα ἐμποιούσης. The more succinct ξενίην συνεθέκατο appears more frequently.

Here, then, a complex of love, grief and ritual meet in a single relation. And since both grave and boundary are marked by the *horos*, the beginning of the relationship with the stranger is bound to find its fulfilment in the same place, when crossing a boundary in friendship. This relation finds its expression, in what must have been the signature representation of burial rites and mourning, toward the end of the *Iliad* with the triple events of Achilles mourning for Patroklos, his vengeance upon Hector, the funeral games of Patroklos and the return and dressing of Hector's corpse. After Hector's death, 'they put him on the carved bed, and stood singers beside him, leaders of laments, who lamented in grievous song, and the women wailed. And white-armed Andromache began their wailing.'⁸⁶

Lament, as Alexiou has illustrated, was essential to funeral rites within the Homeric epics and obviously was such a big deal for the society that it attracted all sorts of legislation limiting its practice within the classical city.⁸⁷ In the *Iliad*, Achilles is said to grieve for Patroklos with so much passion that he is heard by his mother in the depths of the sea, he covers himself with ash and tears out his hair.⁸⁸ Homeric lament must be understood as being intrinsically linked with burial, dressing of the dead, funeral games, all as necessary privileges due to the dead. Since these acts are constantly reinforced by the retelling of these burial rites immersed within myth, the actualisation of the rites within the household and the society creates 'the substantial unity of myth and ritual,' and this is what Benveniste calls the 'potency of the sacred act.'⁸⁹

The interesting thing here is that this care unto death does not cease with death. The host or guest is not off the hook once the other dies; the care extends through the death rituals, burial and into grief and mourning and intergenerationally, in the maintenance of the tomb as well as in the inherited relation of *xenia* (one also plays host to the guest's children and grandchildren). A good example in the literature of this extension of the bonds of hospitality beyond the bounds of death is in Euripides' tragedy, *Alkestis*, which revolves around Herakles' reception as a guest, *xenos*, into the house of Admetos. Admetos is in mourning

86 Hom.*Il.* 24.720f.

87 Alexiou (2002) on heroic lament, 55; on legislation limiting lament, 14.

88 Hom.*Il.*24.513–514.

89 Cf. Agamben (2007) 22, 69.

for the death of his wife, Alkestis, and rather than revealing his grief to his guest, he tells the 'true lie' that she was a stranger who has died, in order to receive his guest with goodwill untainted by grief. The word for stranger, *othneios* (ὀθνείος), provides the pun and stands in opposition to someone who is a relation in the sense that they are 'of the household,' *oikeios*.⁹⁰ Strictly speaking Admetos tells no lie; it is literally true, his wife Alkestis is not of his house. She was from another household, introduced into the household of her husband upon marriage and then deeply involved in the generation of a new family, but she did not cease to be a stranger. On account of this white lie, Herakles accepts the hospitality and starts drinking and carousing, but it is not long before he learns the truth that it is in fact a woman of the house who has died. Herakles then confronts his host and accosts him for depriving him of the right to grieve and allowing him, albeit unwittingly, to offend the customs of grief: ἐγὼ δὲ σοῖς κακοῖσιν ἡξίουν/ἐγγυὺς παρεστῶς ἐξετάζεσθαι φίλος, 'but I should show my worth as a friend in your grief, and stand right beside you in proof of my friendship.'⁹¹

By welcoming Herakles into his house and not implicating him in his grief, Admetos betrays the pledge (ἐγγυὺς) of hospitality which should first and foremost be in the immediacy of giving and receiving, even or especially when this gift takes the form of grief. Therefore, Herakles' accusation is directed at the core of the hosts' claim to have granted hospitality, for all of the value or worth of the relationship is located exactly in this ἐγγυὺς παρεστῶς, 'being present beside.'

But it is more than a matter of presence, because while it is easy to recognise the offer of hospitality as a gift, in this ἐγγυὺς παρεστῶς there is encrypted a further indebtedness in which both host and guest are enshrouded: on the one hand we see the stranger assigning liability to the host for not recognising his guest's *value* (ἡξίουν, 'I was worthy'), on the other hand the very nature of *xenia* is to hold the guest safe, this is the security (ἐγγυος, ἐγγύη) the bond that hospitality offers. One might, as Derrida says, call the guest a voluntary hostage, and yet this does not exclude the possibility that the host is just as much hostage to the guest by whom he is temporarily substituted as master of the

90 Eur.*Alk.*530.

91 Ibid. 1010.

house.⁹² In Greek, it is linguistically impossible to tell the host (*xenos*) apart from the guest (*xenos*), and the demand to substitute the one for the other is thus already inscribed in their names. The moment a relation of hospitality arises, a certain substitutability of the one for the other is supposed. And this substitutability of guest/host, rather than the exchange of gifts, is what makes *philoxenia* essentially a kinship economy.

The precedence of the *xenia* relation, even before an exchange of gifts shows that the economy of *philoxenia* is usually conceived of the wrong way around. That is, that the host gives the gift of hospitality, whereas in fact he is in the position of receiving it, in his reception of the presence of the other. Thus, the host receives the guest and the two are bound in a mutual relationship of strangeness, but estrangement from themselves, as they must share a name that simultaneously describes their bond and relation, *xenos/xenia*. Tending to one another's death is one, but not the final, act implicated in the *xenia* relation. The reception of the stranger as present includes making him a gift of the *pathemata*, the emotional involvement, of the host. In this doubling of the gift of hospitality, where reception is granted in the person of both host and guest, all the worth of the stranger-come-guest is in the proximity of presence, which as the resolution of dialectic of self and other cannot be evaded. In the receipt of this gift, host and guest become properly 'akin' (ἐγγύς).

Hospitality outlives the individual, enacted in death but also inherited in turn by descendants. While the relation is not written in blood, its inheritance is. It is, as Derrida states, a familial or genealogical pact that 'is not only a question of the link between birth and nationality; it is not only the question of the citizenship offered to someone who had none previously but of the right granted to the foreigner as such, to the foreigner remaining a foreigner, and to his or her relatives, to the family, to the descendants.'⁹³ The security or pledge follows the bloodline, while the relationship of *xenia* administers to the stranger as stranger, remaining in the house temporarily but as if he were a member of the family and no guest. That the guest's stay is temporary is the one sure factor that permits the host to defer to the guest. And yet the 'substitution' of guest for host reflects back upon the host, whose

92 'Hostipitality,' in Derrida (2002) 376; 'Word of Welcome,' in Derrida (1999) 57.

93 Derrida (2000) 23.

stay in the house is also subject to temporal limits. Both guest and host are bound to forfeit inhabitance; the difference is merely a matter of time. Thus, in the *oikos* that bears witness to the stranger, there is an enactment of the final *oikēsis*. It is not so much that the stranger places himself, his life and death, into the security of the host, whereupon the host takes upon himself the role of protector, custodian or caretaker. Rather, the guest stands as the marker for the host's future, in promise of reciprocal hospitality, by honouring the other's name from afar, in the proliferation of familial, social and economic ties through marriage as well as in mourning. In this sense the host is indebted to the guest first and can only repay the debt by putting himself on the line as stranger, as 'security' for needing security. The pledge in the person of the substitutability of the guest/host is dependent upon the principal of possession, of homely possession and the household as something that can be said to belong to the host rather than the guest.

Death in ancient Athens was not experienced as a private affair, and yet the nature of death is that it is irrevocably one's own and no else's. In this sense the uniqueness of the death ritual as a part of *xenia* also remains appropriate (and for this reason not entirely appropriable) as a proper beginning (*archē*) to give expression to what is uncommonly strange about the end.⁹⁴ Levinas described the problem of possession as resting with the feminine, that the house 'is possessed because it already and henceforth is *hospitable for its owner*. This refers us to its essential interiority, and to the inhabitant that inhabits it *before every inhabitant, the welcoming one par excellence, welcoming in itself—the feminine being*.'⁹⁵ Gestation or the womb, therefore, is the first experience of *philoxenia*, as well as the endogenous metaphor of the earth, where the problem of what is proper comes into being as self and the fracturing of self from place; the matrix of codependent, shared mortality and the origin of the debt of life. Heidegger states that 'mortals are they who can experience death as death. Animals cannot do this,' in fact 'nature' as a whole cannot.⁹⁶ Even Derrida reckons on this distinction, stating that animals may perish, but they 'can never properly die.'⁹⁷ Here death is twisted

94 Derrida (1993) 22.

95 Levinas (1969) 157.

96 Heidegger (1971) 107.

97 Derrida (1993) 35.

to be some kind of odd human privilege, the last chance to separate us from everything else, the entirety of the nonhuman.

Is this why the *Antigone* retains such power even today, because it stages the dissolution of a deeply indebted relation between the conceptualisation of matter, language and death that binds humans together in mutual responsibility and care for the other? Herakles' platitude in the *Alkestis*, βροτοῖς ἅπασι καθανεῖν ὀφείλεται, 'for all mankind the debt of death is due,' and Antigone's preoccupation with death εἰ δὲ τοῦ χρόνου /πρόσθεν θανοῦμαι, κέρδος αὐτ' ἐγὼ λέγω, 'if I die before my time, still I say that is profit,' both frame death in economic terms.⁹⁸ How can death be considered cause for debt or profit? Is it because we owe ourselves to the earth in dying, but where's the profit in that? Is it because giving to the dead represents the gift in an absolute sense? Is grief a gift, from the giving of which one can gain no return?

Archaic death practices do suggest that reciprocity was a driving force in providing the dead with gifts. The dead were believed to be able to reciprocate.⁹⁹ They could always come back as a presence of pollution and disaster. Conversely, if tended well the dead might return with assistance and as beneficial presence to the living. Love might be the most beautiful form of the pure gift, but it is clouded by the presence of the other who can always reciprocate, giving love for love; it does not command the same degree of selflessness as the gift of mourning. It is by virtue of the rites of burial that, as Levinas says, 'the death of the other is the first death,' since 'it is for the death of the other that I am responsible, to the point of including myself in death. This may be phrased in a more acceptable proposition: "I am responsible for the other insofar as he is mortal."' ¹⁰⁰ The responsibility for mourning the other is at the heart of kinship relationships and is essential to understanding ancient cultural practices related to death.

If we consider hospitality in the light of mourning, it is impossible to consign it, after Mauss, to the archaic precedent of a 'gift economy,' even if, with Herman we modify this as a 'debt economy' whose

98 Soph.*Ant.*460.

99 Josine Blok 'Solon's Funerary Laws: Questions of Authenticity and Function' in Blok and Lardinois (2006) 236–237.

100 Levinas (2000) 38–40. Cf. Derrida (1993) 38.

system is one of 'alternating disequilibrium' aiming at accumulation for de-accumulation.¹⁰¹ Gift-exchange, as Ricoeur recognised 'is neither an ancestor nor a competitor of—nor a substitute for—such commercial exchanges.'¹⁰² On the contrary, commodity-exchange occupies the site of gift-exchange, and gradually forces gift-exchange into the margins that its victor abandoned. Today calculative rationality and evaluative exchange is so firmly invested within our social practices that it is profoundly difficult to imagine how a community could function in their absence.

101 Herman (1987) 10; Cf. Mauss (1967); Lévi-Strauss (1987); Derrida (1982) 2.

102 Ricoeur (2007) 235.



Fig. 7. ΟΡΟΣ ΚΕΡΑΜΕΙΚΟΥ 'Oros of the Kerameikos' (4th c BC). Found outside the archaeological site in the area between Hippias Kolonos and Plato's Academy. [I 322] Photograph by M. Goutsourela, 2013. Rights belong to the Kerameikos Museum, Athens. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/ Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development (H.O.C.R.E.D.).

7. Solon's Petromorphic Biopolitics

ὁ ὄρος-*decision of a magistrate [...] standard, measure [...] end, aim.*¹

ἐγὼ δὲ τούτων ὥσπερ ἐν μεταχμίῳ
ὄρος κατέστην.

*I stood between them like a horos in no man's land.*²

Solon brought Athens out of a situation of *stasis*, or so he claims. In order to appreciate the further implications of Solon's intervention into the Athenian *polis*, the word '*stasis*' should be understood in both its political, and physical sense. That Athens was caught up in civil war (*stasis*) provides the justification for the intervention of legal reforms instituted by Solon. However, that a stable state of equilibrium where the equal strength of opposing forces cancels one another out (*stasis*) is not economically profitable or beneficial to expansionist political and imperial policies should be the key lesson learnt and adopted into the normal, everyday functioning and theoretical constructs of the city-state. To put it otherwise, deconstructing *stasis* becomes the main tenet of economic, political power.

Solon is often championed as the liberator of the poor, introducing the basic legislative structures that would eventually bring about notions of equality and freedom in the Athenian state. That this was not the case at all and that this is a reconstruction developed to the benefit of the later constitutional powers, keeping Solon on their side, is certainly possible. Solonic Athens is not normally understood as the beginning of a gradual institutionalised breakdown of human relations, but that does

1 LS: 1256.

2 Ar.Ath.12.5

not mean it was not. As an economic and legal project sometimes called 'oligarchy,' other times 'democracy,' the city of Athens used multiple resources in its creation of a mythological political heritage: the myth of autochthony is one example and Solon may well be another. Although the name changed, with the numerical fluctuation of those present in the spaces of public decision-making, the structures that supported these systems remained the same, and have largely remained the same since. Law, economics, the dissemination of information and knowledge discourses from the natural sciences to the human sciences, all enforced limits that kept humans at an increasing distance from other humans and ensured the domination of some over the many, be this through rhetoric, demagoguery, legislative authority or the implementation of novel laws.

The ancient polis well deserves its fame, because here, perhaps exclusively at that time throughout the world humans had developed a political and philosophical justification and methodology for human autarchy and the domination of the human over the nonhuman. This permitted the almost total eclipse of the nonhuman in the intellectual and emotional life of the human. Humans were separated from all other beings, both practically and legally. And while the definition of the human might have been officially inclusive, in a practical sense the citizen was the active autonomous subject, responsible and dominant over excluded others, from women, children, slaves, sometimes foreigners, to animals, plants and land, as well as anything else falling in between these categories.

The development of the *polis* as an institution connected speech (*parrhesia*, freedom of speech of its citizens) with exchange (market-based valuation of goods, animals and people as objects to be bought and sold). And it did so under the umbrella of a politically organised community of consenting mature males of a particular mythically-based ethnicity and caste not only coinciding but providing the basis for the exclusion of other models of organisation, including religious, sexual, cultural and ecological. Rather than celebrating the Ancient Greek state as the origins of 'democratic' systems of government we should condemn it as the cause of the institutionalised conspiracy between economic interests, elite classes and political and legal structures of control over and against the animistic interactivity and cohabitation of all beings within the cosmic order.

In this chapter, I will provide a number of examples of the changes that occurred under the legislative authority of Solon restricting the movement of women in particular and their activity as the primary economic actors. I also refer to laws that intervened within the household, destabilising it and making it an area subject to the laws of the state, isolating it as the 'private sphere' as opposed to the 'public'; such as the law that recognised the frequency of the sexual act as constituting the basis of legally binding marriage, and laws that regulated the outcome of sexual reproduction. Human biological processes are made the subject of law, not just culturally organised by religious or ritual activities as they were previously, but legally and economically mediated by the state. Economic and biological productivity are defined as something that can be organised by the state and not left up to nature, instinct or mutual relations of communal life. With Solon's reforms, law becomes proscriptive, discriminatory and deeply invasive, and it could be argued has remained so since.

Is Solon's legacy not a legal code disseminating equality, but in fact the active desecration of former kinship relations, and in their place the institution of intrusive and aggressive policies that permit public bodies to increasingly encroach upon the private life of the family and the individual? Solon's reforms can be understood first and foremost as a problem of limits. Here I argue that Solon's reforms opened up a new set of relations between the human being, the human body and the earth, a relation that instigated a principle of unlimited productivity and use both of the body and of the earth for economic processes and purposes. Foucault argued that the analysis of power must take into account not only discursive practices but also how the materiality of the body is regulated through its movements and 'according to a system of constraints and privations obligations and prohibitions.'³ Something analogous can be understood as happening here. The body of women, men and children is being used as the text of the law, through which law communicates itself. Merchant investigated how women lost ground in the sphere of production and reproduction during the transition to early modern capitalism.⁴ Here I present the argument that it is possible to see a similar recasting of women's activities as early as the sixth century

3 Foucault (1991) 11.

4 Merchant (1990) 149ff.

BC. Not only was the development of an economic system of exchange coincident with the elision of the value of women's roles and bodies for and within the common space of the community, but it was also coincident with the development of autocratic systems of legislation and the shift to centralised government.

Market-based economic exchange and city-state institutions were founded upon the domination of novel notions of production over earlier systems of household production and reproduction. Foucault shows 'how the deployments of power are directly connected to the body—to bodies, functions, physiological processes, sensations, and pleasure.'⁵ Following Foucault, this analysis seeks to make visible the systems of power in which the biological and the historical are 'bound together in an increasingly complex fashion in accordance with the development of [ancient] technologies of power that take life as their objective.'⁶ The political use of the human body, both in a passive and active capacity as well as the reproductive capacity is subjected to the laws of the centralised state, so that reproduction also reproduces the enforcement of law. And as children are born into socio-politically constituted spaces, the laws become naturalised, passing from generation to generation the governed life comes to be taken for granted as part of the biological landscape, as much as of the political.

The language used during Solon's legal transformations is significant and casts his reforms as deeply involved with the breaking and making of limits, or determinations. Solon casts himself both as abolishing the ancient *horoi* and the customs bound to them, and presents himself as a new *horos* standing amongst the Athenian people.

In Bed with the Law

Up until now we've been balancing upon the boundary without actually assuming the position and certainly without having crossed over to one side or the other. Why? For fear of what lies on either side? Or is it because this is the very position/non-position from which differences are decided and definition given? The question that will draw this archaic example of a stone to a close is; what became of the *horos* in the politics

5 Foucault (1978) 152.

6 Ibid.

of the state and what were the economic repercussions of politicising the *horos*? The following laws referred to should all be thought of as intervening in the most basic functions of human social and biological life. They should also be thought of as potentially modified in practise, instituted in fact just not by Solon, or as not quite the same as the actual laws in effect.⁷ The exact nature of the laws that are here discussed, and their implementation in the archaic *polis* is not always known, though their retention in the writings of classical authors suggests that they were in one way or another politically useful even if for later times and other authors.⁸ That we today base our concepts of government upon those of Ancient Greece, should alert us to the ongoing presence of these kinds of interventions and their insidious character particularly given the fact that for the most part the Greek *polis* is celebrated as privileging 'freedom,' 'equality,' and 'justice,' rather than the oppressive legislative control and surveillance of social and biological functions, as we see here.

To begin with, the demonstration of mourning rituals was quickly clamped down on by Solon. Whether this was to the disadvantage of aristocrats or women or a heartless attack upon the dead remains unclear. Aristocrats doubtless exhibited grander funerals and could have been seen as presenting a threat to the state, while women are said to have been disorderly during such times, and so a crackdown on their expressions of grief would serve to remind them of their social propriety.⁹ It seems to me that both these explanations miss the more sinister aspect of Solon's laws restricting mourning. Plutarch tells us that, amongst his reforms, Solon enacted a law restricting demonstrative mourning at funerals.

ἐπέστησε δὲ καὶ ταῖς ἐξόδοις τῶν γυναικῶν καὶ τοῖς πένθεσι καὶ
ταῖς ἑορταῖς νόμον ἀπείργοντα τὸ ἄτακτον καὶ ἀκόλαστον [...] ἀμυχὰς δὲ κοπτομένων καὶ τὸ θρηνεῖν πεποιημένα καὶ τὸ κωκύειν

7 Ruschenbusch's collection of Solonic laws remains the main compendium of fragments, and he discusses the plausibility of Plutarch's version, see Ruschenbusch (1966) 31–42. However, on the accuracy of the laws collected by Ruschenbusch, see Adele Scafuro 'Identifying Solonian Laws' in Blok and Lardinois (2006) 175–176.

8 For a discussion on the probability of Solon's laws, see Harris (2006) 3ff; and on the political motivation for altering Solon's verses, see Lardinois 'Have We Solon's Verses?' in Blok, J. and A. Lardinois (2006) 15–38.

9 'Women were apt to flock to the funerals and graves of people outside their own family.' Shapiro (1991) 630; 'the task of mourning the dead fell chiefly to the women, whose displays of grief, unless checked, might amount to a social nuisance.' Garland (1989) 5.

ἄλλον ἐν ταφαῖς ἐτέρων ἀφεῖλεν. ἐναγίζειν δὲ βοῦν οὐκ εἶασεν, οὐδὲ συντιθέναι πλέον ἱματίων τριῶν, οὐδ' ἐπ' ἀλλότρια μνήματα βαδίζειν χωρὶς ἐκκομιδῆς. ὧν τὰ πλεῖστα καὶ τοῖς ἡμετέροις νόμοις ἀπηγόρευται: πρόσκειται δὲ τοῖς ἡμετέροις ζημιοῦσθαι τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα ποιοῦντας ὑπὸ τῶν γυναικονόμων, ὡς ἀνάνδρους καὶ γυναικώδεσι τοῖς περὶ τὰ πένθη πάθεσι καὶ ἀμαρτήμασιν ἐνεχομένους.

He also subjected the public appearances of the women, their mourning and their festivals, to a law which did away with disorder and licence [...] Laceration of the flesh by mourners, and the use of set lamentations, and the bewailing of any one at the funeral ceremonies of another, he forbade. The sacrifice of an ox at the grave was not permitted, nor the burial with the dead of more than three changes of raiment, nor the visiting of other tombs than those of their own family, except at the time of interment. Most of these practices are also forbidden by our laws, but ours contain the additional proviso that such offenders shall be punished by the board of censors for women, because they indulge in unmanly and effeminate extravagances of sorrow when they mourn.¹⁰

Plutarch would have us believe that Solon enacted a whole spate of laws that restricted the movement and expression of women in public, the exhibition of grief, given the importance funeral rituals held in the lives of women, must have been chief one amongst them. On Attic and Athenian funerary plaques and vases, detailed pictures of lament are found of women acting as professional mourners, so evidence suggests that mourning was the traditional role of women.¹¹ However, the last sentence of Plutarch could also suggest the earlier involvement of men, which was however no longer condoned; by the time legislation was laid restricting mourning, lament was considered the role of women, otherwise men who indulged in what were deemed excessive forms of grief would not be required to be sent to the women's council.¹²

If, as argued in the previous chapter, women were caught up in a structure of ancient law that bound together responsibility and care for

10 Plut.*Sol.*21.4–5. tr. Rackham.

11 Horst-Warhaft (1992) 103, 113–114; Alexiou (2002) 6.

12 For men lamenting, see Creon lamenting the death of his son, *Antigone* (1261–1346), Theseus mourning the death of Phaedra, *Hippolytus* (811–873), Orestes, Electra and the chorus singing a kommos for Agamemnon in the *Choephoroi*, and the *kommos* that ends the Persians. Webster (1970) 114, 127; Arnott (1989) 34; Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 86–91.

the dead with an economics of kinship rather than exchange, then the restricting of funeral rites and rituals may have gone to the heart of such a social structure. It is significant, here, that women should bear both the burden and the responsibility for representing grief in the community, and that expressions of grief were a communal, and not merely a private matter. The dead continued to belong to kin after burial, whether in a good sense 'as tomb cult kept kin and group allegiance alive' or in a bad sense, as death was a 'source of pollution, which, if not properly handled, could cause various disasters.'¹³ For these reasons, Blok states, 'the early funerary laws reveal a common purpose, albeit with differences in details: they regulated the relations between the living and the dead. They did so in three ways: they regulated behaviour at various stages of the funeral, they restricted the (value of) goods put into the grave, and they regulated the sacrifices at the tomb.'¹⁴ Mourning and the expression of loss was one of the most significant activities in the archaic community and one which, as the city develops into an economically productive state, above all else suffered restrictions and was limited. I suggest that these restrictions reduced the arena in which goods and actions were exempted from the economy, or went out of circulation, in order to raise the political to the main organising structure of economic affairs, and eventually permitted the exponential expansion of the economic and the administration of the realm of productivity.

There is without doubt truth to Denise Ackermann's suggestion that Solon's restrictions on, particularly women's, ritual mourning and lamentation were politically motivated: 'traditionally lament was expressed by pulling hair, lacerating cheeks and beating breasts. Such behaviour could amount to a social menace and disturb the public order. Although Solon did not do away with these gestures entirely, he restricted them.'¹⁵ That funerals stirred up feelings that were not easily quashed or channelled into useful political or economic activities is surely one among the reasons motivating the reforms. But that it is merely a question of the political preference for 'order, not chaos, cooperation not vengeance,' is I think a serious oversight as to the insidious nature

13 Josine Blok 'Solon's Funerary Laws: Questions of Authenticity and Function' in Blok and Lardinois (2006) 230.

14 Ibid.

15 Ackermann, 'Lamenting Tragedy from "the Other Side"' in Cochrane (2000) 213–241.

of policy reforms within states when they begin to intrude into and censor culturally and religiously sanctioned behaviour.¹⁶ Lament was indeed tamed by the state, though this is not something that happened overnight. But what was the political danger that appeared to adhere to mourning? What exactly was the core of the problem? Why mourning practices posed a political challenge to the status quo remains a matter of conjecture. I can only suggest that mourning rituals, and the focus upon the household that came with it as the main locale of ritual performance, challenged on the one hand the political dominance of the public sphere and on the other the drive to economic profit, where mourning meant the cessation or interruption of economic activities.

It is clear, however, that the political reforms of Solon were also motivated by the political advantage of controlling the different gender roles expressed within the city. Many of the reforms were undoubtedly sexually discriminative; though as regards mourning it is disputable whether the effect was the restriction of one sex more than the other. As I argue, however, this stress on the restriction of certain sexual activities and the suppression of particular social expressions of sexuality were not ends in themselves. Rather, the aim was (and still is) to modify and even curtail the social power of the different sexes in order to promulgate an alternative economics that was reliant upon productivity and profiteering taking precedence over other affiliations and identities. Henceforth, and in spite of its etymology, economics was not a household affair, it no longer came within the purview of women, and the exteriorising of economic effectively raised productivity into the arena of the state. All this was done under the auspices and often the nomenclature of the traditional religious institutions of the city, which were the main authorities and the centralised state apparatus of laws, procedures and offices, there to organise and 'oversee an increasingly monetized form of sacred wealth.'¹⁷

With Solon law enters the bedroom and I doubt this presence heightened libido. He ensures the legal imperative that an heiress be approached with sexual intent by her husband 'at least three times a month,' he publishes laws on prostitution and adultery, prohibits dowries amongst the lower classes, bans pederasty among slaves, and he limits a woman's

16 Ibid.

17 Bubelis (2016) 5.

excursion beyond the house at night with the qualification that she travel by lighted wagon and carry no more than three cloaks and a quantity of victuals to the value of one obol.¹⁸ It is easy to read into these restrictions a policy that was intended to do no more than reduce a woman's (and a slave's) role in public affairs. However, given the gradual rise of market-based policies and productions over the last two thousand odd years, as well as the ongoing legislative attacks upon individual legal, social and economic autonomy all the while accompanied by a parallel discourse championing sexual freedoms, I think it is permissible to interpret Solon's laws as the beginning of a chronic manipulation of public and sexual discourse while negotiating new forms of political and economic control. As obvious as this may appear to me today, I work however under a dimmed light of interpretation, as the effects and reactions to such evidently sex-oriented legislation are still not commented upon in the literature, no doubt for good reason: either the laws had the desired effect, or unable to be properly enforced they remained a weak spot in the new regime.

As much as we might wish such debates were resolved or simply not an issue, these laws, regardless of their subsequent validity and enforceability, must not be permitted to recede into the background when we consider the novelty of the Solonian city-state. They are foundational for the democracy, as much at least as are Solon's economic and representative reforms. And yet, given the impossibility of privileging any one interpretation unreservedly over another, these laws will not be engaged with in order to present any steadfast image of the sexual relations in the ancient city and the question of the body's place in these reforms will remain for the moment as a tantalising morsel for later consumption. Instead, I will break with the typical categorisation of these reforms in order to bring a certain economic silhouette into outline, a boundary that might resonate with the previous chapters and draw us into a complex of questions, that far from being conclusive will actually provide the profile for a new method of questioning and provide the basis for the explosion of Athens onto the economic scene.

18 ἐξιέναι μὲν ἱματίων τριῶν μὴ πλέον ἔχουσας, μὴδὲ βρωτὸν ἢ ποτὸν πλείονος ἢ ὀβολοῦ φερομένην, μὴδὲ κἀνήτα πηχυαίου μείζονα, μὴδὲ νύκτωρ πορεύεσθαι πλὴν ἀμάξῃ κομιζομένην λύχνου προφαίνοντος. *Plut.Sol.*20–24.

Reframing Biological Boundaries

According to Aristotle's account, Solon resolved a state of civil war, *stasis*, in the city of Athens that had broken out between the aristocrats, or landed gentry and the rest of the population, including presumably, the disenfranchised poor.¹⁹ As Aristotle presents him, Solon, in the grand tradition of political and legislative authority, did not belong to the latter party.

ἦν δ' ὁ Σόλων τῇ μὲν φύσει καὶ τῇ δόξῃ τῶν πρώτων, τῇ δ' οὐσίᾳ καὶ τοῖς πράγμασι τῶν μέσων.²⁰

Solon was in his nature and in reputation of the first rank, but in wealth and position belonged to the middle classes.

He was, as Plutarch says, 'a man of the people and of the middle rank' (δημοτικὸς ὢν καὶ μέσος).²¹ Solon is most famed for a reappraisal of representation based upon property in order to construct a class-system that, as the representative democratic myth goes, enfranchised a larger proportion of the populous while leaving the holding of offices within the jurisdiction of the wealthy. Although the labouring class was granted perhaps a degree of power by their permission to act as jury-members in the courts of law, the new system did not bring about the redistribution of property and universal equality that Plutarch suggests the lower class had hoped for (γῆς ἀναδασμὸν οὐκ ἐποίησεν ἐλπίσασιν αὐτοῖς, οὐδὲ παντάπασιν).²² Aristotle also describes the people's hopes for a redistribution of land,

καὶ πάλιν δ' ἐτέρωθί που λέγει περὶ τῶν διανείμασθαι τὴν γῆν βουλομένων: "οἱ δ' ἐφ' ἀρπαγαῖσιν ἦλθον, ἐλπίδ' εἶχον ἀφνεάν, κάδοκουν ἕκαστος αὐτῶν ὄλβον εὐρήσειν πολύν,

And again in a different place he says about those who wish to divide up the land: They that came on plunder bent, were filled with over-lavish hope, each and all imagining that they would find abundant wealth.²³

19 For debate on these divisions and Solon's institution of the festival *Genesia*, see Bubelis (2016) 6; 92f.

20 *Ar.Ath.* 5.3.

21 *Plut.Sol.* 16.2.

22 *Ibid.* 16.1; *Ar.Ath.* 12.3.

23 *Ar. Ath.* 12.3 trans. H Rackham.

Stripping away the moralistic justification against a universal redistribution of land to all equally, Solon's refusal can be seen explicitly to support the maintenance of wealth and power in the hands of the wealthy and the powerful. As his own poem explains he cast this refusal to rule over the wealthy in reapportioning the land as his own refusal to act as king (*tyrannos*). The implication being, in the style of advanced propaganda, that he followed the peoples will, rather than his own, and as with election promises unfulfilled in the aftermath of an election, claimed to have done exactly what he promised he would do.

ἃ μὲν γὰρ εἶπα, σὺν θεοῖσιν ἦνυσσα,
 ἄλλα δ' οὐ μάτην ἔερδον, οὐδέ μοι τυραννίδος
 ἀνδάνει βία τι ῥέζειν, οὐδὲ πειρίρας χθονὸς
 πατρίδος κακοῖσιν ἐσθλοὺς ἰσομοιρίαν ἔχειν.

for the things I promised, those by heaven's aid I did,
 And much else, no idle exploits; nothing did it please my mind
 By tyrannic force to compass, nor that in our fatherland
 Good and bad men should have equal portion in her fertile soil.²⁴

The relative virtues and vices of the reforms' revolutionary potential are not at issue. What is significant here is that there remains a sinister edge to the method Solon adopted in his legislation, a suspicious presentiment of later alloys of power that is not merely that of the legislator come sovereign in a 'state of exception' who exiles himself perforce once he has brought about a new state of legal hegemony. But there is also the use of the message, that is, his own poems, to distort both the views of his opposition and the actions the legislator performed, but I will look at the poetry later.

Solon organised the representative rights of each man in accordance with a system of proportion that differed from the former constitution as well as the expectations and claims of the different classes:

λέγεται δὲ καὶ φωνή τις αὐτοῦ περιφερομένη πρότερον, εἰπόντος
 ὡς τὸ ἴσον πόλεμον οὐ ποιεῖ, καὶ τοῖς κτηματικοῖς ἀρέσκειν καὶ τοῖς
 ἀκτήμοσι, τῶν μὲν ἀξία καὶ ἀρετῇ, τῶν δὲ μέτρῳ καὶ ἀριθμῷ τὸ ἴσον
 ἔξειν προσδοκόντων.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Plut.Sol.14.2.

It is also said that a certain utterance of his which was current before his election, to the effect that ‘equality bred no war,’ pleased both the men in possession of land and those without land; the former expecting to have equality based on worth and excellence, the latter on measure and number.

And yet Solon offered a third option that satisfied neither party and which can be said to be the democratic principle of his reforms, where equality is measured neither according to aristocratic principles (value and virtue, *axia kai aretē*) nor *in utero* communist principles (measure and number, *metro kai arithmo*). He introduced a proportionate mean—he is himself after all described as *mesos*—based upon produce, or, more precisely income. Aristotle states that he divided the population into four classes, just as they had been previously divided, and he made the dividing measure economic (τιμήματι διεῖλεν εἰς τέτταρα τέλη, καθάπερ διήρητο καὶ πρότερον),²⁶

ἐκάστοις ἀνάλογον τῷ μεγέθει τοῦ τιμήματος ἀποδιδούς τὴν ἀρχήν²⁷

giving to each a position [*archē*] analogous to the size of the payment [*timēmatos*].

It should be no surprise, then, that one of his first enactments was to augment the value of the measures and weights of coinage to the percentile, bringing weights into correspondence with the currency (ἐποίησε δὲ καὶ σταθμὰ πρὸς τὸ νόμισμα, τρεῖς καὶ ἐξήκοντα μνᾶς τὸ τάλαντον ἀγούσας, καὶ ἐπιδιενεμήθησαν αἱ τρεῖς μναῖ τῷ στατηρί καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις σταθμοῖς).²⁸ On the one hand, then, he brought law into the bedroom, but on the other he made the economic and productive capacity of each man the principle of his claim to political representation and office-holding potential. What is evident in Solon is how the market, through market values and measures, not only provided the means but also became the means and method of political activity. Henceforth, it can be said even today that there is no such thing as pure political power, there is only economic power activated within the legal constitution of the *polis*.

²⁶ Ar.Ath. 7.3.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.10.

How, then, do what I call Solon's 'bedroom policies' correspond to this economic reform of the political, or his politico-economic reform? Here an answer is already implicated. Productivity, both biological and economic, comes under civic protection.

For the most part the bedroom policies as they are recounted by Plutarch orient sexual activity towards the exclusive outcome of producing children. In Ancient Greek, it is worth noting, the word for 'interest' (money to be repaid at a rate for the use of money lent, or for delaying the repayment of a debt) in Greek is *tokos* (τόκος), and the word also means 'childbirth'; as well as the 'children' themselves.²⁹ In what sense childbirth and children are transformed into profit is perhaps not entirely savoury. Of course, we have no idea how accurate Plutarch's rendition is.³⁰ But we have to deal with something, and the mere fact that these laws were possible even as thought experiments is significant enough.

For example, the law that in the case of sexual dysfunction of some sort or in the case that the husband cannot perform at all entitles an heiress to 'consort' (ὕπὸ τῶν ἑγγιστα τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ὀπύεσθαι), not necessarily to remarry, but to have sexual relations with another kinsman. This law condones exogamous sexual relations but only in the case that a woman is wealthy enough to support the habit. The law also limited her choice of partner from blood relations of the husband, as Plutarch states, 'that her offspring may be of his family and lineage.'³¹ So the legally prescribed production of children appears to be the main aim of such a law, and certainly not the satisfaction of woman's pleasure. Age was also a theme of law, insofar as marriage was condoned only between a man and a woman within the fertile years of age: the law did 'not tolerate untimely and unseemly intercourse, nor sex that has no result or aim' (οὐδὲ περιοπτέον ἁώρους καὶ ἀχαρίτους ἐπιπλοκάς καὶ μηδὲν ἔργον γαμήλιον ἐχούσας μηδὲ τέλος).³² Indeed, forcible removal seemed to be within the bounds of the law, as it is stated that

29 Seaford (2003) 218.

30 That marriage became a predominantly economic affair, see Michael Leese 'An Economic Perspective on Marriage Alliances in Ancient Greece' in Kehoe and McGinn (2017) 32–45.

31 Plut.Sol.20.2–3.

32 Plut.Sol.20.5.

if a young man is discovered living with an elderly woman, he will be removed and given to a younger, more fertile woman.³³

εἰς τοῦτο δὲ συντελεῖ καὶ τὸ τὴν νύμφην τῷ νυμφίῳ συγκαθεύρηνυσθαι μήλου κυδωνίου κατατραγοῦσαν, καὶ τὸ τρις ἐκάστου μηνὸς ἐντυγχάνειν πάντως τῇ ἐπικλήρῳ τὸν λαβόντα. καὶ γὰρ εἰ μὴ γένοιντο παῖδες, ἀλλὰ τιμὴ τις ἀνδρὸς αὕτη πρὸς σῶφρονα γυναῖκα.³⁴

Conformable to this, also, is that the bride must devour a quince and then be confined with the bridegroom; and that at least three times a month the husband of an heiress shall have intercourse with her without fail. For even in the case that this doesn't produce children, this is the price a man should pay to a chaste wife.

Not eating the quince was probably not a punishable act. There were also varying fines given for rape, depending upon how it was performed; for example an adulterer caught in the act could be killed, and the rape of a free woman resulted in a fine of one hundred drachmas, while the same conducted through persuasion was twenty drachmas.³⁵ What appears to me to be the most extreme law is, however, presented as an aside, for 'no man is allowed to sell a daughter or a sister, unless upon intercourse it is discovered that she was not a virgin,' in which case sell away!—(ἔτι δ' οὔτε θυγατέρας πωλεῖν οὔτ' ἀδελφὰς δίδωσι, πλὴν ἂν μὴ λάβῃ παρθένον ἀνδρὶ συγγεγεννημένην).³⁶ Such a law, with such high stakes, would certainly have the effect of limiting the activities of girls and young women, sexual or otherwise.

And to reinforce this novel situation that puts so much focus upon production and reproduction Solon enacts a law holding a father responsible for the lack of productivity of his son: he 'enacted a law that no son who had not been taught a trade should be compelled to support his father.'³⁷ The state has entered the household fully, to the extent that the basic indebtedness and obligation of care of one's parents, that correspondence in the archaic family between birth and death, between the shared womb and the shared tomb, has become optional, or at least

33 Ibid. 20.4.

34 Ibid. 20.3

35 Ibid. 23.1.

36 Ibid. 23.2.

37 Ibid. 22.1.

not obligatory for all. He also instituted a policy that sons born out of wedlock need not support their fathers.

ἐξ ἑταίρας γενομένοις ἐπάναγκες εἶναι τοὺς πατέρας τρέφειν. ὁ γὰρ ἐν γάμῳ παρορῶν τὸ καλὸν οὐ τέκνων ἔνεκα δῆλός ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ἡδονῆς ἀγόμενος γυναῖκα, τὸν τε μισθὸν ἀπέχει, καὶ παρρησίαν αὐτῷ πρὸς τοὺς γενομένους οὐκ ἀπολέλοιπεν, οἷς αὐτὸ τὸ γενέσθαι πεποίηκεν ὄνειδος.

He relieved the sons who were born out of wedlock [from a prostitute] from the necessity of supporting their fathers at all. For he that avoids the honourable state of marriage, clearly takes a woman to himself not for the sake of children, but of pleasure; and he has his reward, in that he robs himself of all right to upbraid his sons for neglecting him, since he has made their very existence a reproach to them.³⁸

The result is, of course, a policy that denigrates pleasure and seeks to ensure the productivity of its citizens (men and women alike) and the utmost economic potential of the city as a whole. The supreme legislative council is for the first time not merely permitted but commanded to manage the economic usefulness or serviceability of its citizens: καὶ τὴν ἐξ Ἀρείου πάγου βουλὴν ἑταξενέπισκοπεῖν ὅθεν ἕκαστος ἔχει τὰ ἐπιτήδεια, καὶ τοὺς ἀργοὺς κολάζειν, 'and he ordered the council of the Areiopagus to examine into every man's means of livelihood, and punish those who had no occupation.'³⁹ These laws might be said to be an archaic version of the capitalist welfare state, where the status quo is maintained, supporting the wealthy classes, while subjecting the labouring classes to legislative controls and supervision. The reason given for the necessity of the productive 'examination,' the management and surveillance of the labourers, is that farming is longer sustainable and that those in the city must go by force into trade. What punishment meant for the slackers in practical terms is not made explicit. Later, the Athenians had recourse to the silver mines in much the same way as the twentieth century had work camps, perhaps they were sent there.

It is in this light that we should read Solon's restriction against mourning rituals, since mourning, the expression of loss as such, is in principle non-productive. With Solon we have a political and

38 Plut.*Sol.* 22.4.trans. Rackham.

39 Ibid. 22.3

economic climate that is increasingly forcing its gaze toward gain and the productive and reproductive procedures that such a directive requires. Mourning intervenes into such procedures by introducing non-productive, non-evaluative activity that is inherently opposed to the reproductive processes of city life. Mourning is shared; production is self-interested. Mourning is without value, work generates value. Mourning and the ritual care for the dead is not primarily political but that does not mean that it is not radical or does not have significant political consequences.

And then above and beyond all this, mourning breaks into (by bringing into definition) the continuity of a functional and hence utilisable measurement of time. In contradistinction, the very last law that Plutarch credits to Solon is the introduction of a new measure of time, in his attempt to regulate the anomaly of the month (τοῦ μηνὸς τὴν ἀνωμαλίαν) in relation to the sun and the moon.⁴⁰ Benigni, in her collation of studies into calendar and rituals, draws an outline of a feminine precedent of the calendar based upon regenerative cycles influenced by the rotations of the heavenly body of Venus.⁴¹ I can only speculate upon the matter, but it is possible that the decrees introduced during this period impacted upon or deviated from an earlier feminine concept of time measurement.

My Boundary, My Choice

Solon claims to have succeeded in bringing about the end of *stasis*. That he used the situation of *stasis* as justification to bring in a whole spate of laws is not impossible. That his reforms changed the definitions, the limits and boundaries of the political and economic realm of Athens both materially and in the social imaginary of the city seems obvious, but how he did this and what changes were wrought will be the topic of this section. It must also be asked what measures he brought in under cover of his reforms and whether his *seisactheia* corresponds to the potentially metaphorical appearance of the *horos* in his poetry. Solon provides an

40 Plut.*Sol.*25.3.

41 On the associations between the worship of Venus and the cosmology of the sacred feminine, including archaeoastronomy and ritual calendars that reflect the cycles of Venus, see Benigni (2013) 1–48. Also, Barbara Carter ‘The Astronomy of the Nights of Venus’ and ‘The Eight Year Cycle of Venus’ in Benigni (2013) 83–96.

image of himself as raising the boundary-stones (ὄρους ἀνεῖλον), but whether this was an actual act of his where material stones were torn from the ground, or whether he meant to denote the removal of certain more nebulous limits or distinctions that separated the people, is up for debate. In a way it does not matter because under the auspices of the *horoi* what Solon really achieved was to alter the warp and weft of the social fabric of Athens, changing the relations between its citizens and noncitizens, or excluded others, as well as between the people and the land. Solon does this by explicitly assuming the position of authority in the middle. In his poetry he states that he stood as a *horos*, as both an end and a principle of the law, but also as the marker of boundaries and determinations as well.

Ἐγὼ δὲ τούτων ὥσπερ ἐν μεταχμίῳ
ὄρος κατέστην.⁴²

I stood between them like a boundary-stone (*horos*) in no-man's land.

This place of authority was in the middle of the people, he says, neither in support of one side or the other, no friend to any, on the contrary he presents himself as standing alone in the centre with the spears of the people pointing at himself. His claim or right to occupy this position is put figuratively by his appropriation of the place of the *horos*. Solon's use of metaphor when he assumes for himself the position of the *horos* accomplishes this manipulation in a particular way. By placing himself in no-mans'-land, *metaichmion*, literally the 'place between spears,' he subjects himself to the violence of the Athenian city, divided, but suddenly no longer distinguished into two camps mediated as the populous is by his presence.⁴³ Instead, the image transforms the division into a single hostile force that Solon's self-sacrificial assumption of the position in the midst confronts with the solid determination of stone, or *horos*.

What must be assumed in Solon's assumption of the position of the *horos* is that the *horos* in the archaic period before Solon's reforms bore a certain significance, such that this statement, even metaphorically, was comprehensible to all. *Horoï* must have been commonly known

42 Ar.Ath.12.5.

43 I agree with Loraux's etymology as discussed in Martin, Blok (2006) 165.

and visible as actual stone, or at the very least frequently employed as a metaphorical trope. As the previous chapters have shown, there were various forms of the *horos* extant throughout Attica, though the exact nature of any pre-Solonian *horoi* is unknown. Nonetheless they do appear in the Homeric epics a couple of times both as boundary-markers on the field of battle and as similes taken from agrarian life.⁴⁴ That said, the epics are hardly saturated with *horoi*, the references are few, could be later interpolations and hardly justify the use of the *horos* by Solon as a marker of a common metaphorical, poetic vocabulary.

Solon's reform as a composite achievement is known to us through his poetry. The other reference to the *horoi* appears in the longest remaining fragment of Solon's poetry, given to us both in Plutarch and Aristotle. It is worth quoting the poem in full, as a number of coincidences in terminology (between *horoi*, mother earth, time and freedom) become evident and require further discussion.

ἐγὼ δὲ τῶν μὲν οὔνεκα ξυνήγαγον
 δῆμον, τί τούτων πρὶν τυχεῖν ἐπαυσάμην;
 συμμαρτυροῖη ταῦτ' ἂν ἐν δίκῃ Χρόνου
 μήτηρ μεγίστη δαιμόνων Ὀλυμπίων
 ἄριστα, Γῇ μέλαινα, τῆς ἐγὼ ποτε
 ὄρους ἀνεῖλον πολλαχῇ πεπηγότας,
 πρόσθεν δὲ δουλεύουσα, νῦν ἐλευθέρα.
 πολλοὺς δ' Ἀθήνας, πατρίδ' εἰς θεόκτιτον,
 ἀνήγαγον πραθέντας, ἄλλον ἐκδίκως,
 ἄλλον δικάως, τοὺς δ' ἀναγκαίης ὑπὸ
 χρειοῦς φυγόντας, γλῶσσαν οὐκέτ' Ἀττικὴν
 ἰέντας, ὡς ἂν πολλαχῇ πλανωμένους;
 τοὺς δ' ἐνθάδ' αὐτοῦ δουλίην ἀεικέα
 ἔχοντας, ἦθη δεσποτῶν τρομευμένους,
 ἐλευθέρους ἔθηκα. ταῦτα μὲν κράτει
 νομοῦ βίην τε καὶ δίκην συναρμόσας
 ἔρεξα καὶ διῆλθον ὡς ὑπεσχόμην.
 θεσμοὺς δ' ὁμοίως τῷ κακῷ τε κάγαθῷ,
 εὐθεΐαν εἰς ἕκαστον ἀρμόσας δίκην,
 ἔγραψα. κέντρον δ' ἄλλος ὡς ἐγὼ λαβών,
 κακοφραδῆς τε καὶ φιλοκτῆμων ἀνὴρ,
 οὐκ ἂν κατέσχε δῆμον. εἰ γὰρ ἤθελον
 ἂ τοῖς ἐναντίοισιν ἦνδανεν τότε,

44 Discussed in Chapter Three.

αὔθις δ' ἄ τοῖσιν οὔτεροι φρασαίατο,
 πολλῶν ἂν ἀνδρῶν ἥδ' ἐξηρώθη πόλις.
 τῶν οὐνεκ' ἀλκὴν πάντοθεν ποιούμενος
 ὥς ἐν κυσὶν πολλῇσιν ἐστράφην λύκος.

But what did I leave unachieved, of all/The ends for which I did unite the people?/Whereof before the judgement-seat of Time/The mighty mother of the Olympian gods, /Black Earth, would best bear witness, for 'twas I/Removed her many boundary-posts [*horous*] implanted:/Ere then she was a slave, but now is free./And many sold away I did bring home/To god-built Athens, this one sold unjustly,/That other justly; others that had fled/From dire constraint of need, uttering no more/Their Attic tongue, so widely had they wandered,/And others suffering base slavery/Even here, trembling before their masters' humors,/I did set free. These deeds I make prevail,/Adjusting might and right to fit together,/And did accomplish even as I had promised./And rules of law alike for base and noble,/Fitting straight justice unto each man's case,/I drafted. Had another than myself/Taken the goad, unwise and covetous,/He'd not have held the people! Had I willed/Now that pleased one of the opposing parties,/And then whatever the other party bade them,/The city had been bereft of many men./Wherefore I stood at guard on every side,/A wolf at bay among a pack of hounds!⁴⁵

That the word *horos* in Solon's poetry refers to security-markers, rather than boundary-stones, as indicators of a debt or mortgage upon the land, is the interpretation given within the descriptions of both Aristotle and Plutarch.⁴⁶ On this interpretation, the *seisachtheia* is understood as being related to the removal of the *horoi* from the land, and the cancellation of debts.⁴⁷ Finley argued that Solon's reforms abolished debt-bondage, the practice of lending on the security of the body, and this remained the largely accepted interpretation of the passage used to explain the actual state of affairs before and after Solon's reforms.⁴⁸

In this interpretation, Solon appears as the champion of the poor peasants, 'in some fashion he lifted the encumbrances that were squeezing the small Attic farmers off their land.'⁴⁹ However, that *horoi*

45 Ar.Ath.12.4–5. tr. Rackham. Also in Plut.Sol.15.

46 Ar.Ath.2.2,4.4,6.1,9.1 Plut.Sol. 13.4,15.2.

47 For terminology and the difference between, 'enslavement for debt' and debt 'bondage,' see Harris (2002) 415–416.

48 Finley (1981) 62–66, 117–118, 122, 157, 166.

49 Ibid. 63.

were security-markers was not, as we have seen, the normal use either of the word or the stone as marker until the fourth century BC (or 363/2 to be exact). Before this period *horoi* were boundary markers of one sort or another, proscribing entrance to the Athenian *agora*, describing the borders of temple lands, or placed upon roads to outline the edge of counties, or of course, gravestones.⁵⁰ To ascribe the pre-Solonic *horoi* the same function as they developed within the fourth century, that is, roughly two centuries later, is, if anything, anachronistic. There is, as Harris states 'an insurmountable objection to this interpretation: the word *horos* in early Greek literature always means boundary marker,' or as has been investigated here, a number of variations on the theme.⁵¹ That the pre-Solonic *horoi* were mortgage-markers in the same capacity as the later use can be ruled out. That there were *horoi* placed upon the land as boundary markers that also signified in some figurative or metaphorical sense a kind of relational bond between land and freedom is nonetheless possible.

Harris ventures that a literal reading of the poem must be ruled out, since Solon could not have actually torn out the boundary-stones, as their removal was considered a serious crime (as seen in Chapter Three). In which case Harris suggests a metaphorical reading. Here the suggestion is that there were boundaries separating the population into the divisions of civil war or *stasis*, and it is these metaphorical boundaries that Solon did away with. The language that is used is figurative, then, so not about land at all, nor about debt or freedom, purely about *stasis*. The argument is persuasive, especially given Solon's other comparison to himself as a *horos* that stands between spears, as on the dividing line of a battle.⁵² It would appear, then, that the appearance of the *horos* in both these cases acts as a metaphor for the activities of Solon, the first in eradicating the differences or divisions that kept the people apart in a state of *stasis*, the second as representing the role of Solon as 'putting himself on the line' insofar as he became the legal mediator or the 'in between man.'

It must be acknowledged that poetry was an acceptable means of disseminating information about the political, legal and economic reorganisation in Attica, otherwise someone in such a position of

50 Jeffreys, IG ii (2)2654.

51 Harris (1997) 104.

52 Ibid. 105–108.

power would not have used the poetic form, whether it meant that the reforms slipped into an epic sensibility on account of their poetic form, or whether this gave them a religious legitimacy remains a question. Nonetheless, that poetry, or as Martin argues, 'the aesthetic' had a social role in Athens is convincing.⁵³

Perhaps the importance of rhetoric for later demagogues also suggests the continuation of the importance of form in the political life of the *polis*. Just because the poetry is ancient and the *polis* is still in its early days does not mean that method by which the message was transmitted must have been naïve. Putting something modern in verse might have been the best way of naturalising radical content in a form that was tested by time and endowed the content with a formal validity.

Poetry, by giving voice to a common experience, through implication, metaphor and an embedded audience, has the potential of creating social cohesion and control in a way that the enforcement of legislation cannot. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle says that poetry is manipulative, 'for something that goes on in circles tricks the ears, and the audience suffer emotion just as most people do with prophets' (φενακίζει γὰρ τὸ κύκλῳ πολὺ ὄν, καὶ πάσχουσιν οἱ ἀκροαταὶ ὅπερ οἱ πολλοὶ παρὰ τοῖς μάντεσιν).⁵⁴ In comparison to today, we might say that government control over media outlets creates a soft platform of social and political manipulation and ideological, indeed even intellectual conformity. Of Solon we can make one generalisation, that everything can take the form of poetry—philosophy, morals, exhortations and rebukes to others, justifications of his own actions, even his actual legal policies are said to have been transferred through epic poetry. Should this fact alone not suggest that for Solon philosophy, morals, rebukes and laws are inseparable from poetic form? Plutarch explains that Solon's poetry began as a worthless diversion, κατ' ἀρχὰς μὲν εἰς οὐδὲν ἄξιον σπουδῆς, ἀλλὰ παίζων, 'he was playing a game with no serious value.'

ὕστερον δὲ καὶ γνώμας ἐνέτεινε φιλοσόφους καὶ τῶν πολιτικῶν πολλὰ συγκατέπλεκε τοῖς ποιήμασιν, οὐχ ἱστορίας ἔνεκεν καὶ μνήμης, ἀλλ' ἀπολογισμούς τε τῶν πεπραγμένων ἔχοντα καὶ προτροπὰς ἐνιαχοῦ καὶ νοουθεσίας καὶ ἐπιπλήξεις πρὸς τοὺς Ἀθηναίους.

53 Richard Martin 'Solon in Noman's Land' in Blok (2006) 157.

54 *Ar.Rhet.* 3.5.4.

Then later, he put philosophic maxims into verse, and interwove many political teachings in his poems, not simply to record and transmit them, but because they contained justifications of his acts, and sometimes exhortations, admonitions, and rebukes for the Athenians.⁵⁵

It is instructive as to how removed from the pre-Solonic setting Plutarch must have been to believe that poetry was little more than a diversion, rather than the necessary form of radical political and religious change. It should stand as a case in point that we might be dealing with something in Solon that is considerably different, even for the periods immediately following, to what we have come to view as the distinction between law, politics, economy, and aesthetics.

Presumably, however, he did not eradicate the state of *stasis* with his poetic use of metaphor. So, what exactly did he do that 'freed' the earth and 'brought the people together'? If we do not need to explain Solon's reforms as a new system of land tenure or mortgage repayments, Solon's use of the figure of the *horos* to explain his reforms is open to speculation, whether metaphorically or actually. Ober offers one solution, that the *horoi* may well have been boundary markers between counties or communities, and the retraction of these may have contributed to an idea of a unified state, or 'asserting the conceptual unity of a "divinely founded homeland",' though his consequent assertion that they were in any way symbolic of 'asserting the freedom and base-line equality of the Athenians' is I think doubtful.⁵⁶ Or if they were it was purely symbolic, with little actual reality of equality 'on the ground,' as Solon himself makes clear in his resistance to the equal redistribution of land.

Harris suggests the *seisachtheia* was more likely the abolition of a fixed, feudal tithe placed upon peasant landowners to secure their protection by the lord of the area. Examples taken from Homeric epics and Hesiod imply that the lords provided both protection and a certain glory to the area in exchange for money or gifts.⁵⁷ Such a reform would weaken these lordly households, and make them to some degree at least subservient to the *polis*: 'This corresponded to Solon's attempt to strengthen the powers of the elected officials and the formal institutions operating in

55 Plut.*Sol.*3.3. trans. Bernadotte Perrin.

56 Josiah Ober 'facts on the Ground in Ancient Athens' in Blok (2006) 451.

57 see Harris (1997) 108–109.

the center of Attica in Athens.⁵⁸ While it makes sense that Solon's aims were therefore to obliterate the cause of instability in the region between feuding households in regional areas, it does not take away from the fact that he did so by reducing the economic predominance of these regional households in favour of a centralised legal and religious *polis* authority underscored by a penal code that enforced a centralised economic system. The authority of his reforms was thus based both upon the alteration of a previous economy of tithe systems and the institution of economic penalties (such as those for rape) and economic restrictions (such as the eradication of the dowry), such that the *polis* itself became the main edifice of (sacred) economic activity, with the power to give and to take away.

The reference to the *horoi*, in Solon's poem, regardless of whether it refers to actual stones lifted, or metaphorical boundaries raised, serves to show us that Solon is engaged in an act of redefinition. His reforms have to do with redrawing the limits, the definitions and distinctions of the city, as well as obliterating old definitions, distinctions, determinations and limits. As Ober says, 'in seeking to instantiate a new political/ethical order in Athens in 594, Solon confronted various facts on the ground. Prominent among these, not least in terms of their presumptive materiality and groundedness, were *horoi*.'⁵⁹ That these *horoi* are metaphorical is as speculative as is their presence as rocks. That said, the archaeological record does not show an abundance of archaic age *horoi* thrown into waste dumps, or acting as filling for walls in the classical period. But that does not mean they were not there.

As has been discussed in previous chapters, the *horoi* although they are often recognisable in the archaeological record on account of the inscription of the word *HOPOS*, need not necessarily have been inscribed in order to be recognisable as a *horos*. In which case they might have just been appropriately placed rocks, that, as has again been discussed in Chapters One and Two, were read as *horoi* nonetheless because the boundaries they signified or marked were already known to the local population. However we read his removal and assumption of the *horoi*, Solon is the manipulator of markers and markets. Perhaps it is not necessary to choose between a socio-economic reading of Solon's

58 Ibid. 111.

59 Ober in Blok and Lardinois (2006) 446.

seisachtheia and a religious and political reading, because the definition between these different aspects of the city was exactly what was called into question and reframed by Solon's metaphorical or actual dealings with the *horoi*.

Maybe the removal of the *horoi* had the effect of changing the sites of exchange, bringing them in to the centre of the city; then again, maybe it changed the allegiances between counties allowing marriages and other alliances or prohibiting them; maybe it opened up the property market, allowing Athenians to buy, sell and rent land; maybe it changed the relations between the small landholders and the regional authorities; maybe it caused a massive centralisation of legal, economic, religious and social authority in the *polis*. That Solon's law reform was a catalyst for secularisation is not an argument held to here. That his reforms had an effect upon later efforts at secularisation I do not doubt. However, if Solon's reforms must be interpreted as some kind of forerunner spurring novel institutions within the Athenian *polis* into the future, I believe that catalyst is his economic policies rather than his legal ones: or rather, his legal policies were framed in such a way that they were for the most part enacted economically or had a significant economic impact.

Alienable Earth

That these reforms negatively affected or destabilised the household as the primary site of economic production within the city was perhaps paralleled with the maintenance of a religious economy as the principal site of the accumulation of capital.⁶⁰ That the democracy developed out of a predominantly religious system could explain the continuing import of the city's cults and ritual practices within the fifth century and the sacral administration of the fourth. The myth of Athenian autochthony for example provided the Athenians with their exclusive notions of citizenship, with the Parthenon and the Erechtheum as spatial representations of this myth. Among Solon's reforms, the reorganising of religious festivals and the cultic calendar is no small matter—for example the importance he placed on the festival of the Genesia was likely to have simultaneously put more focus upon the city cult while

⁶⁰ On property and sacred offices, or the relation between state and cult, see Bubelis (2016).

retracting from other regional cults.⁶¹ 'Hence the reorganisation of the Genesia from private cults of the dead into a *polis*-cult with a fixed date in the calendar. The Genesia as *polis*-festival only makes sense if it subsumed the former commemoration of the dead by *groups*, such as phratries or extensive families.'⁶²

After Solon's law and into the classical period, the *polis* enforced all laws related to sacred affairs, since 'parallel to such exclusive power of the management of resources, the classical *polis* also possessed an absolute judicial authority such as would be necessary for the sacred treasurers to exercise the fullest control possible.'⁶³ The religious sector particularly within the city thus coincided, as Bubelis argues, with economic control, or rather even though there were analogous offices held both within the religious and political sector, it appeared to be the norm that the political offices were the ones that organised the funding of cultic practices and temple maintenance.

How Solon's reforms actually changed the landscape of the political and religious performance and the social imaginary of the city is not entirely clear. The main problem is that the exact nature of the situation that preceded his reforms is unknown, though it has engendered plenty of speculation, which, given the political predisposition of the speculators should only make us more suspect in believing these later interpretations from the classical period until now.

For example, there has been a strong tendency to romanticise Solon as the forefather of the democracy, as well as his reforms as the catalyst of secular politics. The implied assumptions are indicative of the position from which the interpreters come to the original texts, for example, the democracy was a site of freedom and equality, organised and originating in a patriarchy; rather than an exclusive politico-religious organisation that benefitted the few, designated as masculine adults of substance and a particular ethnicity and dependent upon the non-remunerative labour of women and slaves and the religiously sanctified use of children to support the cultic institutions and boundaries of the state. It might be worth reconsidering Solon's reforms from this perspective, especially as regards the importance placed upon freedom, both of the population and in regards to the land.

61 Bubelis (2016).

62 Blok in Blok and Lardinois (2006) 235.

63 Bubelis (2016) 12.

κύριος δὲ γενόμενος τῶν πραγμάτων Σόλων τόν τε δῆμον ἠλευθέρωσε καὶ ἐν τῷ παρόντι καὶ εἰς τὸ μέλλον, κωλύσας δανεῖζειν ἐπὶ τοῖς σώμασιν, καὶ νόμους ἔθηκε καὶ χρεῶν ἀποκοπὰς ἐποίησε, καὶ τῶν ιδίων καὶ τῶν δημοσίων, ἃς σεισάχθειαν καλοῦσιν, ὡς ἀποσεισάμενοι τὸ βάρος.⁶⁴

Solon having become lord of everything freed the populous both in the present time and for the future, by prohibiting loans secured on their bodies, and he laid down laws, and enacted cancellations of debts, both private and public, known as the *seisachtheia*, because the men shook off their burden.

Conventionally, as was said to begin with, the *seisachtheia* was perceived as describing a new relation between citizen and land. According to Finley, this was the eradication of the situation in which a citizen was enslaved on account of failing to repay a debt.⁶⁵ But the relation might be considerably different if Harris's alternative reading holds. In which case it might be worth asking whether the above quote meant that freedom was entitled to the citizen as the very meaning of the word 'citizen,' as it became later; or if freedom held to the land, in so far as a citizen was 'free' who owned land without indebtedness. Perhaps a free citizen designated anyone who owned land, as was the case in the classical period, where land ownership becomes a requirement of being a citizen. But in neither of these cases is the land itself 'free.'

Meanwhile Solon explicitly states that he 'freed' the black earth (πρόσθεν δὲ δουλεύουσα, νῦν ἔλευθέρα) but we know that he did not make the earth free in the sense of being freely available, or open on the free market, or free to acquire or dispose of. The reference to the earth's colour, 'black' (*melaina*), could possibly be in reference to the boundaries of Attica, where the ephebes went to perform their military service.⁶⁶ Why the boundary markers of the furthest regions of Attica would be implicated in this reference, is however entirely hypothetical: perhaps he permitted exchange to be conducted with other cities, opening up the boundaries of the region to increased interactions with other cities, and thereby expanding markets? Perhaps he allowed the use of lands that were previously thought to be beyond the realms of agriculture?

64 Ar.Ath.6.1.

65 'The Alienability of Land in Ancient Greece' in Finley (2000) 153–160.

66 See Vidal-Naquet (1986) 106f.

Finley suggests that the alienation of land in Greece was one of the most important changes in Athenian law, impacting what it meant both to be a citizen but also how property came to be subject to buying and selling. Finley proposed that the above lines of Solon be taken implying a means by which men could take out loans by placing themselves as security, as opposed to the later custom when they could offer property or land as a kind of mortgage.⁶⁷ As Harris states, 'in this arrangement the debtor pledges an object in his possession as security for a loan. If the debtor defaults on the loan, the creditor has the right to seize the security, over which he thereby acquires the rights of ownership.'⁶⁸ This is distinct to enslavement for debt, where a man who could not repay his loan would be sold into slavery until such a time as the debt was paid off. The situation of debt-bondage differs from enslavement insofar as the man retained his status as a freeman, meaning he could potentially be freed again, whereas a slave was a slave for life (unless his owner decided to grant him freedom).

And yet, as Solon's reforms suggest there must be considerable doubt about whether, given that a man might be sold into slavery and sent abroad, the subsequent release from enslavement could actually be achieved. According to Plutarch's interpretation the body of the debtor was 'reserved' as a security (ἐγγύς) for the loan; as he puts it, they were χρέα λαμβάνοντες ἐπὶ τοῖς σώμασι, 'contracting debts on [the security of] their bodies.'⁶⁹ The subtleties of the situation before Solon depend upon a comparison of different texts from varying periods and places and are a problem that has not been entirely resolved, nor is there any unreservedly conclusive argument that Solon effectively prohibited this situation.⁷⁰ Before Solon, it appears to be the case that it was impossible to acquire land except through inheritance. This explains why Solon changed the inheritance laws, to keep what he designates as unwanted miscreants and illegitimate sons from land ownership. If this was a way to keep objectionable elements of the society from access to land ownership, even after Solon's reforms, land could not have been available as a property open to exchange, because they could simply have bought into what inheritance refused them.

67 Finley (2000) 153–160.

68 Harris (2006) 255.

69 Plut.*Sol.*13.4–5.

70 But see Harris (2006) 249ff.

So, we end up again at the reading of Solon's poem as metaphorical—that the earth was metaphorically, not literally, freed. When he addresses the subject of the earth, Solon alludes to this subterranean power as a mother of the Olympians, at once witness to Solon's law and former slave (συμμαρτυροίη ταῦτ' ἂν ἐν δίκη Χρόνου/μήτηρ μεγίστη δαιμόνων Ὀλυμπίων/ἄριστα, Γῇ μέλαινα, [...] πρόσθεν δὲ δουλεύουσα, νῦν ἐλευθέρα). There is a correlation here with the *Antigone* of Sophocles.⁷¹ Antigone, repudiating the decrees of Creon, invoked subterranean Justice (*Dikē*) and Zeus; Solon reiterating the justice of his laws invokes Time (*Chronos*) and Earth (*Gē*). In both cases a subterranean force is invoked, even though the two instances appear in every respect to be opposite. Antigone opposes the predominance of the laws of the city, Solon establishes them; Antigone covers her brother's corpse with a handful of earth, Solon limits burial rituals and expressions of mourning; Antigone upholds the laws of the gods, Solon reforms the legal relations between men and women. There is one other significant contradiction; Antigone stated that Creon's decrees were not determined by the gods, implying that the eternal laws of honouring the dead and mourning had been determined by the gods, and she used the verbal form of the *horos*. Solon, on the other hand states that he has removed the *horoi* and freed the earth from its slavish determinations. Solon might be said to have achieved what Creon mishandled. Solon, in the divinely inspired form of poetry, related how through his actions he had the earth on his side, taking this mother of all positions to stabilise his own otherwise volatile and precarious position as the giver of laws.

In this sense, Solon's call to the earth as witness is an expert work of publicity, turning the potential criticism of him as a tyrant disobeying the ancestral, subterranean laws to his advantage. The fact that his reforms were thus advertised through poetry also reinforces their sanctity, stressing the reverence for the gods even while doing the work of men. The pre-Solonic *horoi* may well be actual, material markers. And yet, there is no evidence in the archaeological record of any *horoi* that can be said to belong to the period during which Solon instituted his reforms. We therefore have no idea what these *horoi* actually were, whether metaphorical or material, except by assuming they bore a certain resemblance with other later examples within the classical era of

71 Sophocles' *Antigone* was discussed in the previous chapter.

Athens. Were they inscribed or were they mere stones? Were they even stone?

Essentially, an alternative has already been suggested. For we saw the *horos* erected upon the grave of the dead, supplemented with the inscription *sēmatos*, which in a liberal translation could be read the 'limit of the sign.' Therefore, the limit of the sign coincides with the marker of the tomb. On top of this we've also confronted the problem of deciphering exactly what, or who this marker is. Obviously, it is the stone itself, but it is also the inscription, and whoever it was who demarcated the site as (re)markable, be it Antigone or the body of her dead brother, not to mention those 'unwritten laws' prescribing burial and mourning. The legal restrictions that limited the gifts the living offered to the dead broke into the reciprocal relation between the living and the dead and as it were cemented the separation between the living and the dead. As Blok concludes,

offerings to the dead, like those to the gods and heroes, would create a relation of reciprocity and exchange with the recipients. This must have been the attitude the early lawgivers wanted to restrict: the limitations on grave goods and sacrifices to the dead cut down the degree to which the dead had to reciprocate these gifts and had to act on behalf of the living.⁷²

So *xenia* and death rituals are inherently related and posed a challenge to the development of the *polis* as an autonomous structure of economic and legal authority. And yet, what is most interesting in the debate is a relation often lost in the finer details between body and land. For, whatever the situation before Solon, it is significant that in the light of the later usage of the security-markers it was interpreted that when it came to debt a *horos* was placed upon the land to signify that the body of a man was in some way put into a condition of suspension. In this condition the payment of debt was deferred by holding the body as pledge for the land, inverting the former state in which the land was held as a pledge for the loan, and suggesting a certain substitutability between land, body and *horos*.

The question is that, if the debt was incurred ἐπὶ τοῖς σώμασι, 'upon the bodies,' why would this be represented with a *horos* placed upon the land? What is the relation between the debt and the body on

72 Blok in Blok and Lardinois (2006) 237.

the one hand, and its representation of *horos* and land? Further, is it correct to view the *horos* as a type of representation or signification, a 'sign' upon the land of a body burdened by debt? Does this not already suggest to us the nexus of ideas that adhered to the tomb as *horos sēmatos*, the sign of the dead? Is the relative correspondence between debt and *horos* that of signified and sign, or have we lost the actual relation that these four terms were supposed to describe by assuming a system of signification?

The *horos* would appear to consolidate stone, living and dead in a single term. In this sense the *horos* never functioned as a signifier, hence the addition of the sign in the genitive. It is the boundary, the stolidly material boundary that gives definition to either side, be this guest-host, letter-word, before-after, living-dead and so forth. And, it would appear, it shares this site with the body that remains and is yet different between life and death. It is worth noting another coincidence that refers us back again to the previous chapter and implies the collusion between the relation of *xenia*, and all these different ways of being indebted in the mark and the *horos*. Before Herakles was received as a guest in the house of Admetos, this household was the most unusual case of a god having fallen into debt-bondage.⁷³ In the prologue, Apollo tells how he came to work for Admetos. After Zeus killed his son Asklepius with his thunderbolt, in retaliation Apollo killed the Cyclops who forged the thunderbolt. In compensation for this murder, Zeus commanded that Apollo be enslaved in the house of Admetos, in order to pay off his debt to Zeus for his blood-guilt.

Is this what the pre-Solonian *horoi* marked then; that the body is the limit and that the incurrence of debt, which is also the pledge of increase, of production/reproduction, and of return and repayment finds its limit, finds its *horos*, in the body? Were these markers of the fact that we each of us are our (re)productive limit, we describe the boundary of our input/output, the boundary of our economic value is prescribed by the body? Perhaps. In any case, whatever the situation was in regards to this limit, it was prohibited by Solon.

After Solon, the traditional definitions where different customs and meanings collide were suspended. And the earth that he claimed was enslaved was made free. Men were free from their relations as defined

73 As discussed in the previous chapter.

by the earth, or a relation of *xenia* with other men; they were also henceforth free from the indebtedness to the great mother, as well as all those other women who believed that their role as primary producer had been eclipsed. Men were then free to work, to produce, to borrow, to repay and everyone, women, men and children alike were all freely subjected to the laws and economic penalties imposed upon them by the state—now that Solon had removed the limits (*horoi*). Is there, or was there once, an inherent relation between the human body and the earth? Just as men were henceforth free to engage in their transactions without the threatening limits of traditional customs, was the earth also free to be worked? Was there in pre-Solonian times a corresponding limit upon men's use of the land as upon the use of their own bodies? Did Solon do away with some very material limits that described a common boundary of 'use' between man and land?

It is feasible to imagine a time when the relation with the earth was modified by a structure of beliefs in which its utility in the productive life of humans was limited. As much as it might appear that it is the earth that is the subject of liberation in his poem, it is more likely that it was actually the relation between a man's body and the earth that becomes not the subject of liberation but the object of possession. Each (free Athenian) man, henceforth, was the indubitable possessor of his own body, his own land, any beings that inhabited that land, and he was consequently responsible for the productivity of all.

Death to the Speculator

If appropriation is death to the speculator, how does the masochistic potentiality of the *horos* resonate upon whomsoever would aspire to claim the boundary in his own name?

ΗΟΡΟΣ ΕΙΜΙ ΤΕΣ ΑΓΟΡΑΣ read the stones, 'I AM THE BOUNDARY OF THE MARKET,' and presumably the work of the market was limited to the confines of these boundaries. Not only did these boundaries signify who was to enter within the area, but they also restricted what would escape. In the classical period the *agora*, the 'market-place,' became the site of exchange of goods and of words. Here values could be discussed and challenged without posing a risk to daily life dependent upon the stability of such values. Well and good, but the

boundaries did not hold. Socrates escaped the boundaries, raising his questions of the value of words and concepts well beyond the secure confines of the Athenian *agora*. He might have been put to death for it, but the borders had been broken; at least the matter of the boundary did not mean what it meant before.

The transgression and violation of boundaries are not necessarily a call to obliterate boundaries as such. Boundaries might be removed only to be displaced and imposed elsewhere, just as, when we approach the horizon, a further horizon opens up at a distance before us. Even Solon could not evade the necessity of placing new boundaries. His supreme act of hubris is that he believed he could be the one and common boundary for all (Ἐγὼ δὲ τούτων ὥσπερ ἐν μεταίχμιῳ / ὄρος κατέστην).⁷⁴ Solon's claim, and I do not mean necessarily the historical man but the absent signifier of the force of the law, is that opposition can be mediated by men, that men have the power to mediate what before was determined by gods or 'unwritten laws' mutually inscribed by the community as a whole, including women and children, the memory of the dead but presumably also the nonhuman as it imposes restrictions or interacts within the world shared with humans. In contrast, the Law asserts that there are no boundaries in nature beyond our control to mark, choose and enforce, and that human or more particularly masculine authority is master over the living, the dead, animals, plants, stones and whatever else comes within his dominion. By adopting the site and name of the *horos*, Solon presents this position of authority as neutral ground. Ironically, Solon recognised exactly the problem of this claim to neutrality, since if anyone else claimed this position it would put into question the very essence of his own position, his authority, his laws.

Positions of power are rarely appropriated for the sake of the common weal, and Solon's reforms should come under scrutiny as to what more subtle changes were brought about and to the benefit of whom. Solon himself, in his poetry, is acutely self-deprecatory; he asserts to never have claimed power for himself, and moreover, after instituting his reforms, he absents himself. After the laws were posited, they came under scrutiny, and Solon was subjected to a barrage of questions as to their applicability under different conditions:

74 Ar.Ath.12.5

ἐπειδὴ προσιόντες αὐτῷ περὶ τῶν νόμων ἠνώχλουν, τὰ μὲν ἐπιτιμῶντες τὰ δὲ ἀνακρίνοντες, βουλόμενος μήτε ταῦτα κινεῖν, μήτ' ἀπεχθάνεσθαι παρῶν, ἀποδημίαν ἐποιήσατο κατ' ἐμπορίαν ἅμα καὶ θεωρίαν εἰς Αἴγυπτον, εἰπὼν ὡς οὐχ ἥξει δέκα ἐτῶν, οὐ γὰρ οἶεσθαι δίκαιον εἶναι τοὺς νόμους ἐξηγεῖσθαι παρῶν, ἀλλ' ἕκαστον τὰ γεγραμμένα ποιεῖν.⁷⁵

Because people kept annoying him about his laws, questioning here and criticising there, and as he did not wish either to change them or by his presence to become hateful, he went abroad to Egypt, at once both for the purpose of trade and to see the wonders, saying that he would not come back for ten years, as he did not believe it was right for him to stay and explain his laws, but for each to act in accordance to what was written.

Was this absence necessary in order to hinder attempts at further legal reform or modifications of his laws as he suggests, or is his absence the necessary displacement of the authority of the law? The law is always forced to confront the limits of its authority. As Agamben acknowledges, the 'paradox of sovereignty consists in the fact the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the judicial order.'⁷⁶ What this means is that 'the sovereign, having the validity of the law, legally places himself outside the law.' Solon's absence becomes the absent origin essential to the maintenance of the law, the heteronomous authority that cannot be questioned because the origin of law is always elsewhere. Solon stands as the sovereign figure reassuring through his exception that there is 'nothing outside the law.'⁷⁷

In a way Solon is the precedent, the legislative basis of this paradoxical state of exception in the law. As Agamben suggests, it is worth reflecting upon the topology implicit in the paradox of the legal reformer, 'since the degree to which sovereignty marks the limit (in the double sense of end and principle) of the judicial order will become clear only once the structure of the paradox is grasped.'⁷⁸ Hence, the name 'Solon' is attached to the law, which thereby gains in sanctity and authenticity, regardless of whether it was actually coined by him. In a way the name 'Solon' becomes the necessary signifier for the authority of law, all the more potent when the particularities and historical accuracies of his acts

⁷⁵ *Ar.Ath.* 11.1–2.

⁷⁶ Agamben (1998) 15.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 15.

are withdrawn. Before the name of Solon was absented, he claimed for himself the position of authority, on the boundary between men, the neutral ground of the *horos* from which he could ensure the immutability of his legislative reforms.

Ironically, before absenting himself from the city, he decreed that no other man could ever again claim the *horos* for himself, positing the law that no man was to remain neutral in a situation of *stasis*, that every citizen had to choose one side or another—with the exception, of course, of himself. Again, we could ask if this *horos* that Solon identifies with himself is metaphorical. Given that the claim of the law to inhabit neutral ground is still observed and has considerable, actual effect, the metaphor, if it was one, has no lack of material consequences. Can these be traced back to a material basis that the law has abstracted in order to claim the position? Is there any meaningful origin that matters but the material? The word itself, '*horos*,' is material, and its meaning is indivisible from the word, type-set on this page or inscribed upon stone. Is the read word, thought word, the spoken word any less material than the senses required to read it, with eyes moving, synapses firing, tongue forming and lips contorting? The *horos* is never fully abstracted from its material or its place. So, Solon placing himself bodily as a security and pledge between and against the restive population becomes the *horos*, the definition of the material foundation of the law, or the body of the law, his body and person belongs to the people as an investment and intervention. The task of the withdrawal of this bodily imposition is to keep the dogs at bay, separated when it comes to their disagreements but joined in one new polity. But no man can embody the foundation of authority absolutely. Despite what he says, man is not as solid as stone.

With the reforms of Solon, relations amongst the populous as a whole, between men and women, between parents and children, and finally between land and body became a subject of political economics. Perhaps metaphorically, perhaps actually, the removal of the *horoi* had ensured this. Is the result the expansion of economic limits or their abstraction, that is the removal of earlier limitations? Is the tendency toward an ever-expanding market paralleled by new economic determinations that make everything a potential object of exchange? If so, the problem that this expansion of the economic caused in the

early classical society might be what prompted the placement of the *horos* markers of the *agora*. This may well be why the Athenian *polis* instituted a market with clearly defined boundaries, in order to keep the behemoth of free-market economic exchange within discreet terms, within human limits.

Do we mourn the dead alone, or do we also mourn the breakdown of our relations with nonhumans? It might be obvious to some that we mourn (with) animals, but what about our experience of loss of other things: an old house destroyed to make a car-park, a mountain valley dug up and sacrificed for a swathe of tourist villas, the draining of a swamp (swimming pools included), the ancient birthing tree cut down to make way for another highway, a faithful pair of shoes that finally gave up the ghost. The interventions and mediations that have arisen between us and the things to hand put us out of touch with the common boundaries of our interaction and the shared experience of living in a world where emotional investments are not limited to marriage vows or blood relations.

Nonetheless, we experience feelings of loss with the world around us as it changes and morphs into a world full of things and places and people that at first appear foreign and often antipathetic. In our ability to mourn the past and its inhabitants, of all walks of life and nonlife, organic and inorganic, human and nonhuman, we can make out the traces of a material embeddedness of language and thought, a non-mediated relation with the matter of meaning. George Steiner refers to a Kabbalistic speculation 'about a day on which words will "shake off the burden of having to mean" and will be only themselves, blank and replete as stone.'⁷⁹ Perhaps this is the reverse side of what Solon's *seisachtheia* ('shaking off the burdens') described. Perhaps in the *seisachtheia* matter shook off the burden of meaning. In any case we do know that from the end of the sixth century the language of the Greeks began to take a turn toward the speculative. Thales is the champion of economic speculation, and the story of his monopoly of the olive presses reveals that in form speculation is inherent to philosophical thought, while the result (increased profits) is foreign and undesirable.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Steiner (1998) 313.

⁸⁰ Ar.Pol.1259a.

After Solon's reforms, even words would be required to serve different purposes in different conditions; the classical era witnesses the gradual formalisation of a legal vocabulary, an economic one, a technical philosophical lexicon. How did this influence the *horos* and its swathe of meanings? To what degree was the material presence of the *horos* fractured throughout the classical period? It might still have implied a nexus of meaning and matter, however its use becomes increasingly context specific until within the fourth century it splinters into matter on the one hand and meaning on the other, signifying debt in its material form and philosophical term in its immaterial form. This could be said to be the logical conclusion of all those other meanings transposed and translated into the legalese of the democratic *polis*. The Athenians might be said to have had no particular terminology for law, economics and commerce, continuing to use a language largely inherited from earlier social conditions. And yet the adoption of this language may simultaneously have caused the linguistic eclipse of prior social conditions.

What was initiated by Solon was nothing short of a linguistic coup. It was not only the law, politics and economics that began to spread its tentacles throughout the region of Attica, but the economically enforced transformation and appropriation of language that supported his economic and legal reforms. Solon shakes up language: this language engendered a politico-religious, legal structure that insinuated itself into aspects of life that were hitherto unregulated by anything but those unwritten laws Antigone so desperately defended.

This coup worked by creating a new vocabulary within the epic structures of the old. Solon's poetry brought the novelty of his laws into relation with age-old, revered terms and determinations (*horoi*), all the while filtering in a new responsibility for the self and the other, for one's own and others' property, a new basis for production and reproduction, a new economy prescribed within a system that structured *polis* life into (increasingly more) distinct categories of possession. Above and beyond the separation of the dead and the living, we have all those new limits placed upon the family, denigrated in favour of the increasingly legal categories of the individual as woman, man, child, foreigner, slave.

Solon removed the *horoi* from the *polis*, but do the material limits remain to be read in the nature of the stone? In the absence of traditional *horoi* and in the absence of material limits, the work of politics, law and economics is supposed to be autonomous, but does this make it also automatic? It might continue in its own time, unwriting, rewriting, buying, selling, producing, trading, speaking, condemning, interpreting interminably in a process that has no natural end in sight. But has the *agora*, the market-place extended its boundaries so widely and furtively that it has obliterated every trace of our authorship in the materialisation of limits? Is the definition of the loss of such limits the final word and then also the common term or the grounding determination by means of which the presence of the stone can be read again in the fateful continuation of life?

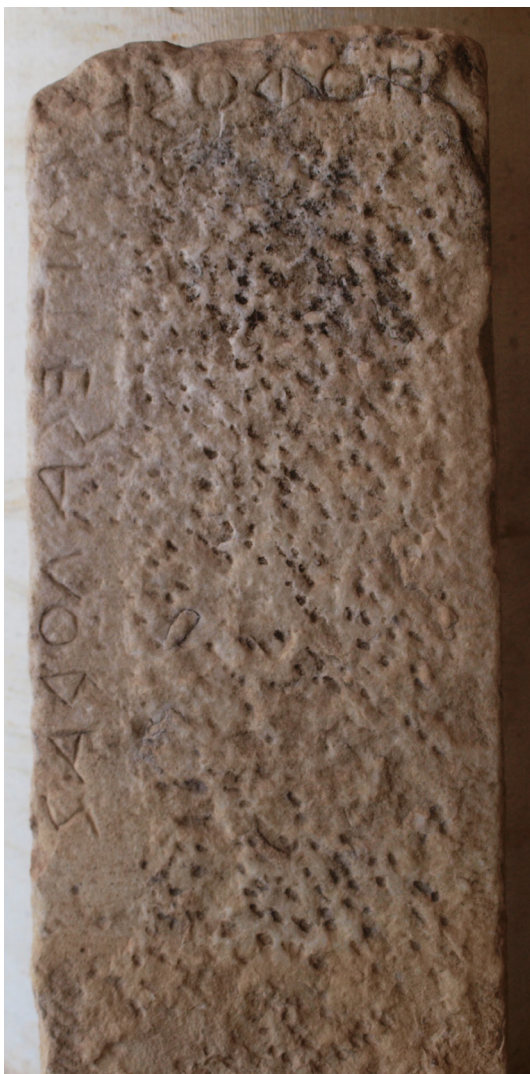


Fig. 8. HOPOS EIMI TEE AGOPAE [retrograde] 'I am the *horos* of the agora.' *Horos* stone discovered in situ in the northeast corner of the Ancient Athenian Agora, by the Tholos. IG I³ 1088 [I 7039] Photograph by M. Goutsourela, 2013. Rights belong to The Athenian Agora Museum © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development (H.O.C.R.E.D.)

8. I Am the Boundary of the Market

If I must read into this work any single aim, it would be that it provides a material foundation for, in Levinas's words, 'interpreting human resistance petromorphically.'¹ To begin with, I have elaborated upon the very real limits to economic growth and progress that have existed and continue to exist in the matter itself, the natural resources we make use of in order to go about the tasks of producing and reproducing. This will already be known to many of my readers, so I hope that this excursion contributes by providing a basis for further resistance to the forces that seek to make use of our common material, ourselves included, to the profit of a few and to the detriment of all. While the limits are no doubt material they are also conceptual and they depend upon us; they are recognised or read into the material itself but always by us, or that failing it is we who have forgotten how to read what the world around us, populated as it is by humans and nonhumans of every walk of life, so adamantly tells us. So, if we listen to stone even today, perhaps we can hear the echo of ancient wisdom and relay it back into our present conditions to help us make a stand, as the stone did so long ago, in an act, this time of disobedience, defiance or noncompliance to work within the tyranny of an economic system that is structured around stripping dignity, pride and soul from us and every aspect of the world, organic and inorganic, human and nonhuman alike: 'I am the boundary of the market,' let us say, 'and this stops here.'

Some fifty years after Solon's reforms and his removal of the *horoi*, a stone calls witness once again to a limit. It announces itself as the economic limit of all transactions, 'I am the boundary of the market,'

1 Levinas (1987) 78.

HOPOΣ EIMI TΕΣ ΑΓΟΡΑΣ. In Ancient Athens the market-place (*agora*) was marked by the *horoi* which were engaged in drawing up the boundaries of this space. These stones mark the boundaries of any verbal and more than verbal exchange and they do this because not everything is exchangeable, not everything in short nothing—neither word nor thing, animal nor human—is essentially reducible to a single exchange value or substitutable by a collection of monetary units. Ascribing nonessential, nonesoteric worth to anything comes at a cost to the human soul. It should come as no surprise, then, that a limit was declared. And yet it was a limit that did not intend to stop these processes, but that took the need for marking limits onto itself in order that the processes could go on beyond such limits. As little as we know about the pre-Solonian *horoi*, we may make one assumption, that not one of them named itself. It is only within the boundaries of the late archaic *polis* that the stone rises up and gives itself a name, that the boundary (transgressed) reasserts itself, that the term enunciates its presence and the limit declares itself a place. In the shadow of the matter of self-proclamation, human works and deeds retire into the machinations of the market's forces because there is an external limit, a limit that takes upon itself the definition of the market. This limit is marginal, yes on the one hand, but it is also central to the *polis*. It frames the city and its work, which becomes increasingly powerful as it engages in the export and import of words, deeds and things, expanding the boundaries of its *agora* exponentially. Until, finally, it is the *agora* that comes to take precedence over the *polis*, Athens becomes an imperial city and philosophy is now taught and sold as a commodity all over the world.

Unlike an earlier boundary-stone inscribed with the words HOPOΣ : ΔΙΟΣ (retrograde) 'Horos of Zeus' (marking the extent of a sanctuary of Zeus), the boundary-stones of the market were not marked as belonging to any particular god.² In contrast, it states that it belongs to the market. Would we be correct, then, in assuming the *agora* was in the league of other sanctuaries? To some degree, perhaps, especially given the fact that at the central point of the *agora* stood the temple to the Olympian Gods among many other shrines and altars. And yet there is something that differentiates this stone from all the others, and that might give us a clue

2 Lalonde (2006).

as to why the *agora* is a space that simultaneously provides a sanctified place for exchange and evaluation and puts into question this very notion of the sacred. The *agora's* use as a place where exchange-value finds its home can be maintained only in the absence of any definitive terms of value. Indeed, when it comes to what is sacred about the *agora*, we are confronted before anything else by the name of its limits.

This *horos* does not merely describe the boundaries of the market; it is also inscribed as giving itself a name. It declares (to us) what it is in the nominative and where it belongs by virtue of the copulative 'I am' (EIMI). Why is the simple word *horos* not sufficient when it comes to the market? Why does this stone, of all stones, assume the task of speaking to us and of giving a name for itself, of telling us what it is and thereby making itself the subject of the market, a subject of belonging which however does not enter into the market, but remains on the edge for us to see before *we* enter? It tells us its name, and its name is 'boundary,' a boundary to be transgressed, and we transgress it. Upon this site where possession is always at issue, where everything is up for sale, the only thing that claims to belong there is the boundary itself, which remains nonetheless both marginal and defining. All the other meanings of the word *horos* are assumed in this single act of self-definition: it is there where we abstract the matter itself as an object of worth, where transgression between what is mine and yours is essential to the everyday functioning of the market, where language itself comes into question, and where time stretches in an eternal present suspended in the deferral of gratification (despite the copulative 'I am'). It is without doubt more than a fortuitous coincidence, this self-appellation of the stone on the margin of the very place where intercourse (*agoreuein*) is embodied by acquisition (*agorazein*).

Archaeological studies suggest that the *agora* was initially the place of social discourse and public speaking (*agoreuein* means 'to speak in public') and indeed the word *agora* on its own can be used to mean a place for public speaking. In any case, although by the classical period the *agora* was chiefly a site devoted to the exchange of goods, the etymological history of the *agora* was resurrected by sophists and philosophers alike occupying the site and putting into question generally assumed conceptions of goods and bads. Socrates himself frequented the *agora*, and in his trial claimed that he spoke nothing more

than the language of the market-place.³ The Stoics also take their name from their tendency to loiter about the stoas of the Hellenistic *agora* and engage in their discussions in this public place. If we accept these later examples as indicative, we could say that the *agora* was a place that was devoted not only to public speaking, but to a common task of definition; where what was discussed but not resolved were questions of meaning and value, the question of the city's common aims, customs and laws. The *agora*, then, was the very site of legal and economic disputation, whether as with Socrates that meant questions raised about the Just and the Good, or with Diogenes the Cynic the ridicule of rife acquisitiveness and the defacement of the value of currency (or any transitory beliefs). The raising of questions as such could take this position because here questions (with or without answers) were at home. For these questions to even be possible there had to be the precedent that the site was not foreclosed to the potential dangers of raising questions: concepts and activities in practice were not already definitive. Definitions as such had to be dubitable and even destroyed, we might say put out of use, in order that new definitions be attributed.

So, within this clearly demarcated area, defined off from the banal duties of everyday life, what was up for grabs was definition itself. In the act of public discourse, intentions, laws and words themselves are in dispute. Outside the *agora* where people go about their lives, language had a determined value, it was used in the courts, the theatres, the assemblies, in both town and country. But within the *agora* this use-value of language as such was put on hold, undetermined as the possibility of conferring new meanings, new standards and new linguistic rules. The *horos* drew up the boundaries of this task of redefinition. It provided the definitive limits within which there are no limits to discourse, intercourse and exchange. Every time we try to define a word or reform a law the very act of definition requires a beginning, a basis or a foundation, a language within which to work. We must use other words to define the one that is at issue, and yet no other word is discreet in itself or absolutely definitive, so that in the process the structure of language itself comes into question, just as we countermand the foundation of Law as such when we consider the formulation and applicability of a new law.

3 Pl.Ap.17C-D.

For this reason, Solon the lawgiver exiled himself so that he would not be called upon to explain or change the laws that he had undersigned. He exiled himself, thus making himself the basis of the law, the absent principle, the unquestionable *archē*. But what Solon did for the political system from afar, the *horos* did to the economy from within. What is exceptional about the *agora* can only be maintained because there is a limit that simultaneously restricts what is exceptional about the *agora* and makes it central to the community. This limit is simultaneously declarative, self-appellating and, significantly, material. It is neither law nor man, it is stone. And as stone it takes on the burden of defining the market-place, drawing up the limits and marginalising matter from the processes of exchange and perhaps giving a taint of the ideal to those processes within.

It is said that this stone provided an outline of an area into which those who had perpetrated unforgivable crimes such as patricide were not permitted to enter.⁴ These men were given the title *atimos*, they were dishonoured and were considered unclean in the ritual sense. Why criminals should thus be exiled from the market-place is a question that can be considered according to a conjunction between what we consider the sacred customs of the ancient world and the economic bias of the modern. That is to say that this extradition of the criminal cannot be explained away as an idiosyncrasy of ancient ritual and religion, unless we accept that the market-place itself is also a site of value for the sacred. But does this mean that the market itself is of sacred value, or that for any notion of value to take place within the market it must of itself have limits? What if, as the civic space closed off for the exclusive purpose of exchange (of words and things) it is deemed sacred insofar as it can be put to no other use? What can be seen is a co-determination between the stone '*horos*' and a boundary of social significance that, in a community without a clear cleft between sacred and secular, describes public spaces. Thus, the market can be understood as a site of holy value, which is however not wholly sacred.

René Girard has argued that traditional sacrifice was performed upon a substitute scapegoat.⁵ In the case of Athens, this stone might be said to offer itself up, by assuming for itself a name that belongs to the

4 And.*Myst.*1.76.

5 Girard (1989).

market (*tēs agoras*, ‘of the agora’) and permitting the boundary to be redefined upon its person. Although it thus becomes the defining subject (*horos eimi*) of the market, and the one object that cannot be subjected to the procedures that it contains, it does not, for all that, sacrifice its base form as stone. In the *horos* of the market, stone, mark and margin all meet at exactly that point where they undertake to separate what is *agora* with what is not: infinite exchange and intercourse within, and whatever is other, whatever is limited, defined and of pre-determined value without. And yet *horos* remains stone, and its inscription must have been written and someone must read into both the inscription and the placement of the stone a meaning that preceded both the position of the boundary and the prohibition of the word. This problem, the materialisation of meaning cannot help but point to whoever it is that is writing and reading.

Somebody is obfuscated by the stone—somebody who took chisel to stone and assumed in this inscriptive work the assertion ‘I am the boundary,’ repeated again every time it was read, every time the boundary was crossed in recognition or defiance of what the stone said and someone entered the *agora*. Somebody drew up this boundary and in so doing permitted its readers to recede into stone. By making the stone the subject of the verb, the stone became an authority for human transgressions as well as limits. That original marker of the *I am horos* was eclipsed by the self-appellating stone, and the human subject returned to the nebulous priority of indefinability, an indeterminate cause that can introduce the work of the *agora* as accident (οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον ἀλλ’ ἄοριστον, λέγω δὲ τὸ κατὰ συμβεβηκός).⁶ Human responsibility is deferred by embedding the work of copulative naming in the soil and allowing the *agora* to go on by itself, unlimited by any more determinate human proscriptions. Nonetheless, we are included in these boundaries because we read and acknowledge a deferral of the limits of our actions. Today we have sacrificed our control of the market’s limits in an infinite deferral of responsibility. We are not beyond the bounds of exchange, but are all bound up in exchange, ‘everywhere in chains’ and continue to be so as long as we let the market determine the limits for itself.

As conceptual as it might sound the problem of limits, or now the absence thereof, is a very real problem and can be seen in how the market

6 Ar.Met.1065a25.

has evolved today, expanding beyond all possible earthly limits, literally beyond earthly limits in more ways than one. Now the wealthy exercise no limits in their hubristic behaviour or their desire for control over and forced compliance of desperate populations. Corporations themselves have become responsible for the same bodies that are instituted to restrict and limit the overweening activities of those corporations: for example, the FDA is funded by pharmaceutical companies, the WHO by vaccine entrepreneurs, MPs in national governments have stocks in the corporations that fund them in turn, mass media outlets receive grants from the companies they're supposed to be reporting upon, banks create the crises they then step in to solve and war is declared to create a market, selling weapons to both sides manufactured by the warmongers themselves. This behemoth of stakeholder capitalism, a kind of debauched ouroboros, is a figment of human imagination. As Aristotle said, money exists by custom and can be withdrawn by custom.⁷ Although it creates its own dependency, both addict and purveyor of toxic substances, nothing stands beside it, or underneath it except us and our willingness to enter into it or let it enter us.

The *horos* is, then, what drives us on to the task of finding limits and of raising the essential questions while simultaneously presupposing itself as the substantial limit that supports this task that had to start somewhere. Are we in a position to reject the market, to resist it? Can we hear an ancient voice calling us back to the matter of meaning? The copulative 'I am' takes the responsibility of its own marker, who merely inscribed what the stone meant to say. Even there where the limit and boundary are in question, deposed only to be replaced in a movement of ever-increasing momentum, where market forces, justice and philosophy work towards new determinations introducing new definitions, even there, on the margins an archaic limit remains, suspended by us and putting us in suspension, while it enforces its solid materiality and reminds us that matter does not cease to matter. Despite all our words and deeds, all those objects bought and sold there is a limit to the deferral of gratification encrypted in us as our nature, a

7 'But as a representation of demand (*chreia*) money exists by social convention. And this is why money has the name *nomisma*, because it exists not by nature but by custom (*nomos*), and it is in our power to change its value and to render it useless (*achrēston*).'
Ar.EN.1133a.

natural end that should stand as a warning that like our rare metals we will be used up. If there are no limits or boundaries in nature, it is then our responsibility and ours alone that could claim to separate us from nature and permit us to abuse it. In doing so, we face no other limit but ourselves, and this limit remains in us as our bond to the material—the knot in the subject—which we may use and abuse freely but whose terminal point is by necessity a return to nature. For the (re)production of words and things will always come up against this, our primeval limit, the intransigence of stone, the brute matter that makes us what we are. As Levinas said, ‘Resistance is neither a human privilege, nor a rock’s, just as radiance does not characterize a day of the month of May more authentically than it does the face of a woman. The meaning precedes the data and illuminates them.’⁸

8 Levinas (1987) 78.

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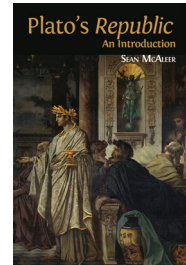
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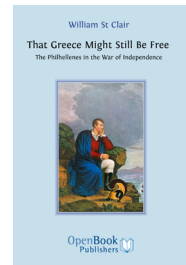


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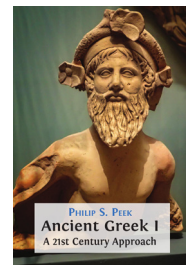


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H O R O S

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THEA POTTER

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