

Which came first, being or the boundary? Approaching the question of the boundary through the work of Martin Heidegger¹

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The concept of the boundary has a peculiar role in the history of philosophy. On one hand, it encapsulates the very activity of philosophy: the activity of de-limiting, of de-fining, a given phenomenon. On the other hand, the question of the boundary is rarely addressed as an explicit question of philosophical inquiry. In my talk, I wish to compensate for this taking my point of departure in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. More specifically and inspired by Heidegger himself, I will interpret his all-important question of being as a question of the boundary. Through this approach, I will outline how the boundary formations dominated by *peras* and what I term the 'distinction' are constitutive to the question of being in Antiquity and in the long period from Latinity to the present, respectively. I will also develop Heidegger's early and late responses to the question of being in terms of the *horizon* and the *event* as two different concepts of the boundary - both of which comes out of his critical dialogue with *peras* and the distinction. In the last part of my talk, I will conclude by outlining a tentative definition of the concept of the boundary as essentially posing a question, the question of the boundary itself.

Keywords: being – boundary – Heidegger – distinction – horizon

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Introduction

The concept of the boundary has a peculiar role in the history of philosophy. On one hand, it encapsulates the very activity of philosophy: the activity of de-limiting, of de-fining, a given phenomenon. On the other hand, there is an overwhelming tendency to attribute philosophical primacy to this phenomenon which the boundary defines rather than to the question of the boundary itself.

Seen from one perspective, the concept of the boundary is omnipresent in philosophy. Plato grounded the very landscape of philosophy drawing the boundary between ideas and phenomena; Aristotle listed the core-concepts of his philosophy as examples of the concept of the boundary;¹ and Kant's critical project was directed at the boundaries of Reason. Throughout, that which lacked boundaries or was entirely un-bounded was at times de-fined as lacking, at times as destructive; or it was considered the very pinnacle of perfection, the infinite. And today, the de-fining activity of the boundary seems to have multiplied as the traditional boundaries defining the binaries of Western thought are being challenged and replaced by philosophies of difference, of networks, of rhizomes, etc.

Seen from another perspective and despite this philosophical omnipresence, the question of the boundary is rarely addressed as an explicit question of philosophical inquiry. This is, for example, testified by the brevity of the mentioned passage in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and by Kant, who only in the very last paragraphs of the *Prolegomena* defines the meaning of *Grenze* (boundary) and *Schranke* (limit)² - the very concepts of the boundaries of reason, which he earlier had been investigating throughout the *1st Critique*. Even today, in an epoch of critical and creative multiplication of boundary concepts, the question of the boundary as a question to its scope, its application, and its ontological and epistemological traits, its essence (or lack thereof), is rarely discussed. There is no history, tradition, or system for categorizing the many boundary concepts, which instead often have interchangeable meanings as they are adopted by individual philosophies or philosophical currents.³ Still and much more

¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, II, 1022a4-22a13.

² Kant, *Prolegomena*, §57 and §59.

³ Good introductions to the complexity and at times unclear terminology regarding the question of the boundary and the many associated concepts (e.g. limit, limen,

Which came first, being or the boundary? Approaching the question of the boundary through the work of Martin Heidegger

frequent, the boundary is taken for granted in its traditional form, shape, and function, in its traditional and almost “natural” figure as a straight line that is to be moved, transcended, or simply applied or represented. This is the line, which Cornelius Castoriadis identifies in the core of the history of philosophy from the Greeks to Hegel. “Despite the risk of one-sidedness, it is illuminating to think the history of the mainstream of philosophy as the elaboration of Reason, homologous to the positing of being as being-determined, or determinacy (*peras, Bestimmtheit*).”⁴

Martin Heidegger seems to be aware of this in his late *Question of Being* (originally titled *Über ‘der Linie’, i.e. Across ‘the Line’*). Here he calls for inquiring into the boundary itself rather than merely transcending it and hereby leaving it fundamentally un-questioned. In a response to Martin Jünger’s call for “crossing the line” of nihilism to overcome it, Heidegger responds: “The attempt to cross the line remains captivated in a form of representation that belongs to the dominion of the oblivion of being. This is why it continues to speak in terms of fundamental metaphysical concepts (Gestalt, value, transcendence).”⁵ Instead, Heidegger states that rather than interpreting *Über ‘der Linie’* as “...across, *trans, meta*. ...the following remarks interpret the ‘über’ only in the meaning of *de, peri*. They treat ‘of the line itself.’”⁶

Still, in the very same text, he testifies to his difficulties of freeing himself from the traditional figure of the boundary, the straight line. “In truth, we can then not even say any longer that “Being” and “man” “be” the same in the sense that they belong together; for in so saying we still let both be for themselves.”⁷ As a result, he ends up writing his all-important concept of being literally crossing it over.

finis, limis, confinium, frontier, terminus, end) can be found in these encyclopedic works.

For a clear overview: “Limite” in *Diccionario de Filosofía*

For a more exclusively philosophical approach: “Grenzbegriff,” “Grenze”, “Grenze, Schranke,” “Grenzsituation” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*.

⁴ Castoriadis, *The Discovery of the Imagination*, p. 183.

⁵ Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, p. 292.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 309.

Furthermore, and despite Heidegger's sensitivity to the question of the boundary and its philosophical significance, he never pursues the question himself. Instead, the multiple and creative boundary related concepts he applies throughout his thought remains secondary to the phenomena, the something, or better the concept of being, they define.

In this talk, I will attempt to make up for this by heeding Heidegger's call for inquiring into the boundary itself and to do so in relation to his own work. More specifically, I will do so by interpreting Heidegger's question of being as a question of the boundary itself. This not only indicates the potential scope, I attribute to this latter question, but will also facilitate a short historic outline of boundary concepts in Western philosophy. More specifically, I will look into two boundary formations that are constitutive to the dominant question of being in Antiquity and in the long period from Latinity till today. The former will be centered around the concept of the boundary as *peras*, while the latter will focus on the concept of what I will call the metaphysical distinction, or simply the distinction. The constitutive difference between these two is how they define and are defined by their socio-historical context. That is, the finite Greek understanding of Cosmos over against the *distinction* between the finite and infinite, or simply by the infinite, in the period from Latinity till Hegel and arguably - through the continued prevalence of the binaries of Modernity - until today. In addition, I will also develop Heidegger's own early and late responses to the question of the boundary in terms of the *horizon* and the *event* - both of which comes out of his critical dialogue with *peras* and the *distinction*.

The Greek *Peras*

The role and function of *peras* in Greek philosophy can be approached through the concept of *ousia*, substance, which Heidegger primarily interprets in its temporal signification as presence, or in *his* own terms as constancy.⁸ Constancy encapsulates the Greek intuition of being as

⁸ "For the Greeks "Being" says *constancy* in a twofold sense: 1. Standing-in-itself as arising and standing forth (*phusis*), 2. But, as such "constantly," that is, enduringly, abiding (*ousia*)." Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, GA 40, 67.

Which came first, being or the boundary? Approaching the question of the boundary through the work of Martin Heidegger

determinate and singular, as constant presence, and it does so as a boundary, as that which limits. "...the having-of-itself wherein the constant holds itself, is the Being of beings; it is what first makes a being be a being as opposed to a nonbeing. For something to take such a stand therefore means for it to attain its limit, to de-limit itself."⁹

Being is here directly identified with the boundary, an identification that is not circumstantial but emphasized repeatedly in Heidegger's reading of Aristotle as for example in *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* where he discusses the concept of *horismos*, of definition (or horizon as will be discussed later): "Ὁρισμός ultimately arises from the fact that the being [Seiende] itself is determined in its being [Sein] as circumscribed by the πέρας. Being means being-completed [Fertigsein]."¹⁰

Importantly, *peras* "is not something that first accrues to a being from outside. Much less some deficiency in the sense of a detrimental restriction."¹¹ *Peras* is intrinsic to being itself. "Πέρασ ...the limit is always what limits, defines, gives footing and stability, that by which and in which something begins and is."¹²

This description of substance as constant presence circumscribed and being-completed by *peras* differs from the interpretation of being as presence as defined by the distinction between the finite and infinite. It is to be associated with a circular and dynamic process of completion, of something coming-to-presence rather than a static a-temporal or universal presence that is kept strictly distinct from the temporal-spatial world.

Analyzing Aristotle, Heidegger exemplifies the Greek interpretation of substance with the coming-to-presence of a statue from iron, from un-differentiated matter.¹³ While this un-differentiated matter represents the fundamental Greek principle of the un-limited, the *apeiron*, the form or idea of the thing is strictly related to *peras*. *Peras* and *apeiron* are not *distinct*. They are intimately interrelated, and it is as such they manifest the coming-to-presence, the coming into being of beings in Greek philosophy.

⁹ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 63.

¹⁰ Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, 11.

¹¹ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 46.

¹² Heidegger, *On the Essence of the Concept of Φύσις*, 206.

¹³ Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics θ 1-3: On The Essence of Actuality of Force*, 118.

It is on this basis that we should understand *peras*' relationship to numerous core concepts in Aristotelian philosophy, which as mentioned are listed in a short passage in *Metaphysics*. In Heidegger's phenomenological reading of Aristotle this relationship becomes particularly evident, because he consistently highlights the *peras* aspect of the concepts, that is, their boundary-related significance. In the following, I will touch upon a number of these concepts in relation to Heidegger's adoption of them into his own philosophy. Having said that, it is beyond this talk to analyze all of these, but the list itself is indicative of the philosophical weight of the question of the boundary in Greek philosophy and hence, by default, also in Western thought.

In the short passage Aristotle explains how *peras* is constitutive to extremity, form (*eidos*), end (*telos*) and as such also praxis and movement, for the sake of which (*οὐ ἔνεκα*), substance, essence, knowledge, things, and beginning (arché).¹⁴ In addition, in his readings of Greek philosophy Heidegger emphasizes the element of *peras* in relation to *horismos* (horizon, definition) as cited above, psyche (*kinein*/movement, *krinein*/decide),¹⁵ *entelechia*,¹⁶ *physis*,¹⁷ *cosmos*,¹⁸ *chaos*,¹⁹ and arguably *aletheia* (truth as un-concealing) and *logos*.²⁰

The Distinction

With Plato "being as *idea* was elevated to a supersensory realm. The chasm, *chorismos*, was torn open between the merely apparent beings here below

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, II, 1022a4-22a13.

¹⁵ Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, 23.

¹⁶ "The highest term that Aristotle used for Being: *entelecheia*, something's holding-(or maintaining)- itself-in-its-completion-(or limit)." Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 63.

¹⁷ Heidegger, *Die Herkunft der Kunst und die Bestimmung des Denkens*, 14.

¹⁸ Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground," 112.

¹⁹ Heidegger, "As When On a Holiday...", 85.

²⁰ It is beyond this talk to develop. However, the relationship between covering and uncovering in *Aletheia* suggests an aspect of differentiation, of boundary. Along this line, Heidegger also attributes an uncovering function to *logos*. See e.g.: *Being and Time*, 56.

Which came first, being or the boundary? Approaching the question of the boundary through the work of Martin Heidegger

and the real Being somewhere up there. Christian doctrine then established itself in this chasm, while at the same time reinterpreting the Below as the created and the Above as the Creator.”²¹

The transition from the Greek *peras* to the *metaphysical* distinction, from Cosmos to the Christian-Modern World happens gradually but is a result of the culmination of Greek ontology in Plato and Aristotle. Here the Greek question of being developed into a clear and articulated response, which came to dominate western philosophy. Instead of the question of being itself, Western philosophy takes its point of departure in Plato’s and Aristotle’s responses to this. Accordingly, the moment of flexion of the Greek Cosmos happens when first and foremost Plato elevates the ideas to the supersensory realm. The ideas become a-temporal beings and the models by which the phenomena are to be measured. That which was the being of beings, becomes a being itself; in fact, it becomes the privileged kind of being. That which really is. Here, the Greek experience of Being as constant presence turns into eternal presence, into a universal model over and against that which is imperfect, that which lacks being. As a result, the finite unity of Cosmos begins to break into two separate worlds of strictly distinct beings. “The difference between a sensuous and a suprasensuous world. This is the *distinction* on which rests what has long been called Western metaphysics.”²²

Once again, it is beyond this talk to make a comprehensive analysis of the question of the boundary as a question of being. Generally, however, what happens is that while the many boundary related concepts in Greek thought aligned with the common circular structure of the finite Cosmos, the strict differentiation required by the metaphysical distinction entailed that the different boundary related concepts come to represent each their *distinct* aspect of the boundary: a closing aspect conceived as *limes*, an aspect of passage or threshold defined as *limen*, and the boundary marking a fullness or completion defined by the concept of *terminus*.²³ In the following, I will discuss these three aspects of the metaphysical distinction.

²¹ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 111.

²² Heidegger, *Dialogue on Language*, 14.

²³ I use the Latin concepts here because Latinity marks a crucial break from Greek thinking according to Heidegger, and because the concepts can be traced up until

Limes

The distinction between the suprasensuous world and the sensuous world, does not happen at once. It happens over time. A first major step is the establishment of the concept of the *limes* as the basic principle of Latinity.²⁴ *Limes* means barrier or fence and refers directly to the borders of the Roman Empire, which were to be kept secure by all costs and which is directly intertwined with Roman mythology. As Umberto Eco writes, "The Latin obsession with the spatial border was born with the myth of foundation. Romulus drew a line of demarcation and killed his brother because he did not respect it. Without the recognition of a border there can be no civitas."²⁵

Eco also explains, how the strong distinction of the *limes* is deeply rooted in Greek rationalism and its inherent logic of causality, which again rests on the logical principles of identity, non-contradiction, and excluded middle - each of which entails the manifestation of clear distinctions.²⁶ Adapting this logic, the distinction also comes to dominate the Roman conception of time and the syntax of the Latin language. "Time also has its borders: it is not reversible. We cannot erase what has been done. It was this principle that would guide the Latin syntax. The direction and order of time, which form a cosmological linearity, become a system of logical subordinations in the *consecutio temporum*. Thought can recognize, align, and look for the facts only if it first finds an order that connects them."²⁷

Inspired by Greek rationalism, *limes*, thus, comes to dominate Roman politics, mythology, language, and thought, even before Christian doctrine established itself in the chasm or distinction between a sensuous and a suprasensuous world. Once that happens, the balanced and self-reliant

today. Having said that and as indicated in the Introduction, they are to be conceived as indicative rather than representative for the multiplicity of notions of the boundary in the epoch.

²⁴ Eco, U., "Weak Thought and the Limits of Interpretation, 37.

²⁵ Ibid., 38.

²⁶ Ibid. 37.

²⁷ Ibid., 38.

Which came first, being or the boundary? Approaching the question of the boundary through the work of Martin Heidegger

Greek world is fully replaced by a world in which order and balance is dependent on the power of a *distinct* and infinite being, be it God or Reason. With Leibniz' principle of sufficient reason, Greek rationalism has become Reason with a capital R as the one and only ground of the being of beings. "The principle now says: Everything is considered as a being when, and only when, it is secured as a calculable ob-ject for representational thought. ...Its greatness consists in that this principle determines what is allowed to pass for an ob-ject of thought, in general, for some kind of being [etwas Seiendes]." ²⁸

Through Reason, all beings are now measured and defined by the distinction not only between the immanent and transcendent but between subject and object and more broadly throughout Modern Western thought and society in shape of its characteristic binaries.

Limen

"Through the threshold [limen] we are received, or otherwise e-liminated. It can direct us to the 'center' or open onto the un-limited, to that which does not have form or measure, 'where' we fatally disappear." ²⁹ *Limen* can be translated with threshold and the openness. It represents an openness that defies definitions, order, and structure. It signifies multi-directionality, undecidedness, and contradiction and is associated with the danger of destruction, of the unlimited. As such, the closure of *limes* and the openness of *limen* encapsulates two contrasting and irreconcilable aspects of the question of the boundary in the epoch of the distinction, an epoch which clearly favors the former over the latter.

Terminus

Terminus is the Latin translation of *horismos*, the Greek concept for definition, which reflects the experience of a world characterized and determined by the finite and circular horizon of the Greek Cosmos. *Horismos* is the limiting circle that circumscribes beings in their being and

²⁸ Heidegger, *The Principle of Ground*, 211.

²⁹ Cacciari, *Place and Limit*, 13.

as such also the limiting circle defining being as such. *Terminus* for its part retains this circumscribing function of completion but should be seen in the light of the philosophical landscape defined by the metaphysical distinction. This comes to fore in Kant's adaption of the *limes* and *terminus* which he translates with *Schranke* and *Grenze*, limit and boundary. The *limes* (*Schranke*) mark a demarcation in the sense of a closing off, of a 'negation', whereas the *terminus* (*Grenze*) is a positive definition. The *limes* closes off in the sense that it marks that something comes to an end, the *terminus* transcends this negation as it positively establishes the position of this something by defining it in relation to something else, which it is not.³⁰ As such, *limes* (limit) and the *terminus* (boundary) have well defined functions in relation to understanding and reason, respectively. The impossibility of intellectual intuition closes the *knowledge* of understanding by means of a *limes*, while the *terminus* opens for reason to move beyond the *limes* of understanding and *think* the impossibility of knowledge this entails. In this sense, *limes* is constitutive to the defining power of the understanding, while *terminus* is constitutive to the reflective power of reason.

Turning towards Heidegger, it can safely be said that, of the three boundary related concepts adhering to the distinction, he flatly rejects *limes* and arguably distances himself from *limen*, at least in his early thinking. What remains is *terminus*, which as mentioned has its direct roots in the Greek *horismos*. In Heidegger's early thought, this will constitute the dominant response to the question of the boundary as epitomized in his definition of Dasein as ecstatico-horizonal,³¹ and time as the *horizon* of any understanding of Being whatsoever.³²

Before moving on, it is, however, important to emphasize the differences between the Greek *horismos*, the Christian-Modern *terminus*, and Heidegger's own concept of the horizon. While all three marks a completion, i.e. the full extent of that which they define, they do so with radical different connotations. *Horismos* rounds off the fullness of a finite

³⁰ Kant, *Prolegomena*, §57 and §59.

³¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 416.

³² *Ibid.*, 19.

Which came first, being or the boundary? Approaching the question of the boundary through the work of Martin Heidegger

being where this rounding off does not entail a relationship to something radically different. The Greek world is complete within the circle of Cosmos. Fast forward to *terminus*, which in Kant rounds off the complete extend of reason by marking what it is not capable of, namely, to be applied to the world of the infinite, the suprasensuous beings (*noumena*). Kant thus establishes the finitude of reason, but it is not a radical finitude that may challenge the metaphysical distinction underpinning reason itself and the primacy of the suprasensuous or infinite beings. It is this challenge, which Heidegger articulates, as he replaces infinity with nothingness. In Heidegger, the horizon opens to and is determined by its own nothingness. As such, the concept of terminus illustrates how the boundary in its many shapes and forms is intrinsically related to its context.

The horizon in Heidegger

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger's move away from the metaphysical distinction, first and foremost, *limes*, is clearly discernable as encapsulated by his rejection of the notion of the subject as a closed unity over against the objects. In fact, to underscore this, as is well-known, he defines the subject, Dasein, as being-in-the-world, thus, using hyphens between each word to avoid any associations to a distinction between Dasein and the world.³³ As Being-in-the-world, Dasein is primordially defined by its openness, an openness that a priori rejects the subject-object distinction.³⁴ It is by way of this primordial openness that Dasein comes up against its boundaries, i.e. the horizons defining it. Accordingly, the rejection of the metaphysical distinction is also crucial in relation to the understanding of the different modes of being of Dasein and their interrelation.

This can be exemplified with the definition of Dasein as care. As such, each element of the care structure is determined by openness rather than closedness: As existence Dasein is always already 'ahead-of-itself'; as facticity Dasein is 'Being-already-in (a world)' while it as fallenness is essentially open as a 'Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world)'.³⁵ Likewise, these elements are not distinct from each other

³³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 78.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 367.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 364.

according to a hierarchy, a causal chain, or as independent modes of being that are to be coupled together.³⁶ In short, the openness of Dasein is constitutive on all levels of the structural whole of *Dasein*.

Still, the openness of Dasein does not entail its lack of closure, of unity or totality. This aspect is the point of departure for Heidegger's analysis of the three modes of temporality in Division Two of *Being and Time*³⁷, and which constitutes the fundamental ontological structure of Dasein. The three temporalities are qualified as the three ecstatico-horizonal modes of being of Dasein: future, past, and present. Each of these respond to the question of the boundary through a specific constellation of openness and closure, which is terminologically indicated by the combination of ecstasis, meaning "outside oneself"/"out + place",³⁸ and the horizon as a rounding off or closure of something.³⁹

In the following, I will shortly outline the structure of the three temporalities highlighting how each of these are inspired by Heidegger's reception of the Aristotelian boundary related concepts.

The futural mode of being of Dasein is its being-towards-death, which underpins Dasein as existence conceived in terms of the care structure as always already ahead-of-itself. Dasein is always already ahead-of-itself towards its end, its death, which ontologically speaking determines its outmost possibility of being. Thus, anticipating its death, its radical nothing as the constitutive possibility that Dasein may not be, Dasein is thrown back upon itself.⁴⁰ Dasein's temporality of the future here corresponds to the Aristotelian *telos* which is not a barrier but marks a completion which Heidegger also interprets as how "τέλος reaches back to that of which it is the end and determines it in its there"⁴¹ It completes by marking a sort of half circle or circular motion reaching back to that which it is the end of. Heidegger's reception differs, however, from Aristotle's as he interprets the completion of the being of Dasein in terms of a radical nothingness. The full

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 276.

³⁸ See: "ecstasy" in *New Oxford American Dictionary* (American English).

³⁹ See also: Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 416.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 437.

⁴¹ Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, 62.

Which came first, being or the boundary? Approaching the question of the boundary through the work of Martin Heidegger

possibility of being of Dasein is not fulfilling any specific potential (such as iron becoming a sculpture) but the questioning of this potential itself. *Telos* as Dasein's death marks the horizon or boundary into which Dasein is gathered in its full potential of being which explicitly is its being nothing.

Confronted with the horizon of its death, Dasein is forced or thrown back upon itself, back upon its facticity, its 'Being-already-in (a world). Facticity is underpinned by the temporal modality of Dasein as already-having-been, that is, by its past. The temporality of the past is experienced in anxiety, where Dasein's experiences the loss of meaning of its entire being, its being-in-the-world. The ground of Dasein here comes forward as a nullity, as a being something that was already there and which can never be fully grasped or explained. Hence, in anxiety Dasein only has the bare experience 'that it is', and nothing else. From this pure nullity of its being, Dasein is thrust upon, projected towards its possibilities.⁴² This means that the nullity of Dasein disclosed in anxiety also discloses the essential circumstances and possibilities which Dasein always already was. The nullity experienced in anxiety is hence also a something, a beginning of its potential being, which is why the temporal mode of the past can be conceived as Heidegger's reception of the Aristotelian *arché*.⁴³ Yet, this conception of *arché* differs from the Aristotelian by its intrinsic nullity, it's an-archic or ungrounded character of being a ground or beginning.⁴⁴

To sum these two steps up: Dasein's temporality of the past complements what we can call the half-circle outlined in in the horizon marked by death. Hence, the two structures form a circular whole. In the nullity of the pure that-it-is, *Dasein* is projected towards its future possibilities and eventually its death against which it is shattered and thrown back upon its nullity.

⁴² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 356.

⁴³ See for example: *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ 1-3: On The Essence of Actuality of Force*, GA 33, 189.

⁴⁴ For a very interesting development of Heidegger's an-archic approach to ontology, see: Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*.

The temporal modality of the present is defined as the “moment of vision”⁴⁵ and is the condition of possibility of the element of the care structure of “Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world)”. In the moment of vision Dasein opens its ‘being-there’, its Da-sein, in a specific situation, in a specific time and place. In accordance with the constitutive nothingness of *Dasein*, this happens as an annihilation of what is ‘there’ in favor of a pure opening of a ‘that it is there’ in a specific temporal-spatial situation. The temporality of the present, thus, compliments Dasein’s experience ‘that it is’ (the temporality of the past) and ‘that it may not be’ (the temporality of the future) with the pure nothing of its ‘that it is there’. As such, Dasein is brought into its full being as being-in-the-world. Accordingly, the moment of vision can be interpreted as *eidōs*, as the silhouetted outlines of a “look,”⁴⁶ capturing the full structure of Dasein’s being, the unity of its three temporalities, its constitutive mode of being-in-the-world. It could, however, also be interpreted as Heidegger’s reception of *aletheia*, as the unconcealment or disclosure of an opening within which beings can come to be.⁴⁷

In either case, this unity is neither a unity between distinct elements nor is it modelled after a logic of linear causality. “Temporality does not first arise through a cumulative sequence of the ecstases, but in each case temporalizes itself in their equiprimordiality.”⁴⁸ As such, they manifest the being of Dasein as being-in-the-world, as extended between its ‘there’ and the horizon of its possible being.

Finally, the subjective potential of actively being-in-the-world, is underpinned by the mode of being of Dasein as resoluteness (*entschlossenheit*).⁴⁹ This is an ontological structure, which can be conceived as Heidegger’s reception of Aristotle’s concept of *krinein*, one of two modes of being of the psyche, of the human being. Resoluteness and *krinein* both have the character of deciding or judging upon something by separating and orientating oneself in the world. This kind of de-cision does not cut off, but opens by gathering or raising (*ausheben*) and holding

⁴⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 388.

⁴⁶ “The Greeks call the look of the thing its *eidōs* or *idea*.” (Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 63).

⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 57. note 1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 378.

⁴⁹ See especially: Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §60.

Which came first, being or the boundary? Approaching the question of the boundary through the work of Martin Heidegger

(tragen) beings in their being⁵⁰ (holding Dasein in its authentic being-in-the-world). The other mode of being of the psyche in Aristotle is *kinein*, movement, or in what arguably becomes temporality in Being and Time.

From the horizon to the event

In the preceding, I have followed a movement from the Greek *peras* and the circumscribing unity of the horizon of Cosmos to the metaphysical distinction and back again to the horizon defining Dasein as temporality. In other words, I began and ended with the horizon of constant presence. It is the event or occurrence of this horizon which Heidegger investigates in his late thought. This is not to be understood in a historical (ontic) sense, but in an ontological one.

The reasoning behind this so-called turn in his approach is Heidegger's realization that he cannot get to the question of being itself through an investigation of a primary being, be this the Greek substance or his own Dasein.⁵¹ This way of questioning presupposes the constant presence of the being of this being. In his early work, Heidegger never questions this constancy, thus, even when he explicitly integrates the past and the future into the being of Dasein, he still interprets the structure of this being as a transcendental structure highlighted by the universal character of the temporalities. In terms of the question of the boundary, he never questions the stability and constant presence of the horizon defining the being of Dasein.⁵²

Vice versa, the entire work of the late Heidegger can be said to be dedicated to investigating the *event* of this horizon and the constant presence of being it constitutes. Hereby this constant presence loses any pretense towards universality. Heidegger's turn entails a movement away from his early transcendental approach to the question of being to an understanding of being as temporal, or better, historical through and through. In terms of the question of the boundary, it entails the completion of its historicization.

⁵⁰ Heidegger, M. Vorlesung: Der Satz vom Grund, 106-07.

⁵¹ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, 60.

⁵² Ibid. 197.

The event

The concept of the event, of appropriation, as *Ereignis* is also translated, marks Heidegger's completion of his temporal or better historical interpretation of being. The event is the dimension which determines and gives meaning to the flow of time as a specific history of being. It is the condition of possibility of the opening of a specific time-space, an (ontological) history. As such, it is both everywhere and nowhere. It is nowhere, concealed, as the historical condition of possibility of something coming to being, and it is everywhere, as the dimension that holds together the meaning and trajectory of the history of being. In this section, I will schematically outline the structure of the event as an answer to the question of the boundary. The structure is complex and is taken up by Heidegger in multiple ways and from different perspectives throughout his late thinking. Hence, the following outline is necessarily lacking in detail. The outline will consist of two steps:

1. The concealed aspect of the event.
2. The partially concealed and partially unconcealed dimension of the event.

The concealed dimension of the event

Terminologically, Heidegger make use of a range of concepts when elaborating on the concept of the event such as fissure,⁵³ dimension,⁵⁴ region,⁵⁵ and between,⁵⁶ hereby also connotating a boundary or something bounded. The concepts should not be understood in their nominal sense. Rather, the event is always attributed a temporal significance of a happening, a historic setting in motion and determining.

As concealed, the event consists of a tripartite structure defined by the interplay between openness and closure, thus, again indicating the underlying but not directly thematized question of the boundary. In the first aspect of the tripartite structure, we find an aspect of indecision

⁵³ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, 220.

⁵⁴ Heidegger, "...Poetically Man Dwells...", 218.

⁵⁵ Heidegger, *On the Essence of Truth*, 144.

⁵⁶ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, 377.

Which came first, being or the boundary? Approaching the question of the boundary through the work of Martin Heidegger

similar to the role and function of the *limen*. "The trembling of this coming to be of the oscillation in the turning of the event is the most concealed essence of being."⁵⁷ In this aspect, any dimension, any possible boundaries, forms and meanings are dissolved only for a new opening, a new dimension, to reappear in the very same moment. The dimension or appropriation is the second aspect and cannot be dissociated from the first. "The fissure is the inner, incalculable splitting open of the *apropriation* i.e., the splitting open of the essential occurrence of being as the center that is needed, that bestows belongingness, and that remains related to the passing by of the god and, at the same time, to the history of mankind."⁵⁸ Importantly, the dimension is not a horizon, it is the condition of possibility of any horizon just as it is the condition of possibility of any boundary, form or meaning, that is of time-space, of history. "The horizon is but the side of that-which-regions turned toward our re-presenting. That-which-regions surrounds us and reveals itself to us as the horizon."⁵⁹ The opening of the dimension, thus, consists in the first and second aspects, and they set the condition of possibility for the third aspect of boundaries, horizons, and meanings of being. None of the three aspects can be conceived *distinct* from each other.

This tripartite structure is found across Heidegger's late thought as he investigates the core structure of the event. For example, we find it in terms of Chaos-(as abyss-ground)-*physis*,⁶⁰ event-time-temporal-spatial playing field,⁶¹ appropriation-time-being⁶², appropriation-saying-language,⁶³ the placeless-place of all presencing⁶⁴, inner recesses-fourfold,⁶⁵ and importantly *apeiron-peras-sending of boundaries*.⁶⁶ The two first parts

⁵⁷ Ibid., 206.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 222

⁵⁹ Heidegger, Conversation On A Country Path About Thinking, 72-73.

⁶⁰ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, 301.

⁶¹ Ibid. 297.

⁶² Heidegger, Time and Being

⁶³ Heidegger, The Way to Language

⁶⁴ Heidegger, The Turning

⁶⁵ Heidegger, The Thing

⁶⁶ Heidegger, M. Anaximander's Saying

constitute the event itself, while the third aspect is predominantly identified with the fourfold or time-space, but also with the being of beings and the horizon. In relation to time-space and the fourfold we find Heidegger's dynamic notion of the coming-to-presence of the history of being, while concepts of being and the horizon is associated with a universal notion of being.

The first and second element are inherently concealed as the temporal or historical dimension gathering and directing time and space and structuring the meaning of the world and things, as well as of tools and of objects. The third element is partially concealed partially unconcealed.

The partially concealed and partially unconcealed dimension of the event

This brings us to the second step of the outline of the structure of the event. Here the dimension holds together the thing and the world as concrete objects of experience gathering and laying forth the continuous manifestation of the event in its full ontological meaningfulness and depth. "History plays out only in the 'between' of the encounter of gods and humans, with this 'between' as the ground of the strife of world and earth; history is nothing other than the eventuation of this 'between'".⁶⁷

The temporal-spatial playing field manifests a living history as also symbolized by the concept of the fourfold consisting of the interplay between mortals, gods, earth, and sky, which are to be understood both in the concrete material sense and as metaphors of the concealed meaning of history. This interplay is explicitly not to be understood as a play between distinct entities or as circumscribed by a defining boundary maintaining its unity. The interplay consists in pure interdependency and interrelationality maintained in place between the world and the thing by the concealed temporal-historical dimension. "Thinging, the thing stays the united four, earth and sky, divinities and mortals, in the simple onefold of their self-unified four-fold."⁶⁸

We can say that Heidegger here completely reverses the articulation of the question of the boundary. It is the inner recess, the concealed dimension, that holds the philosophical landscape together from the center

⁶⁷ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, 377.

⁶⁸ Heidegger, *The Thing*, 176-177.

Which came first, being or the boundary? Approaching the question of the boundary through the work of Martin Heidegger

and out. There are no external boundaries. The bounded figure of limitation, *peras*, which circumscribed the beings and defined them in their being, is now preceded by an inner recess, which holds them in place. "This dimension does not arise from the fact that sky and earth are turned toward one another. Rather, their facing each other itself depends on the dimension."⁶⁹ It is beyond this talk to develop this further, but this holding in place should be understood literally in the sense Heidegger's description of his late thought as topological.⁷⁰

Finally, the whole philosophical landscape, I have here outlined, is only accessible in the particular moments of thought, emotion, or aesthetic experience, in which the horizon of being gives in to the experience of the event. Otherwise, and for the most part, we live within the horizon of a specific epochal manifestation of being, in the world of tools and objects as Heidegger discussed in *Being and Time*.

Concluding remarks

In this talk, I have analyzed the dominant constellations of boundaries in Western philosophy as seen through the work of Martin Heidegger. The analysis is not exhaustive in relation to Heidegger's own work and certainly not in relation to the question of the boundary in Western philosophy as such. However, what I hope to have achieved is demonstrating the import of the question of the boundary as an explicit question of philosophical inquiry. The question of the boundary opens an often-overlooked approach into the very heart of Western philosophy as illustrated here by its interchangeable relation to the question of being in Heidegger. In this

⁶⁹ Heidegger, "...Poetically Man Dwells...", 218.

⁷⁰ Heidegger, Le Thor Seminar 1969, 41.

In this context, it should not be forgotten that Aristotle also defines his concept of place (*topos*) as *peras*. "The place of a thing is the innermost motionless boundary (*peras*) of what contains it" Aristotle, Physics, 212a20-12a21. It is beyond this text to develop the relationship between Heidegger's and Aristotle's concepts of place. However, the innermost motionless boundary of the thing, which nevertheless is not part of the thing itself (form, matter), can arguably be conceived in terms of the event, the dimension, or place in Heidegger – if the notable difference between their respective thought is also taken into consideration.

perspective, Heidegger's question of being is a question of the boundary. Likewise, I have outlined how the question of the boundary is intrinsic to individual thinkers such as Aristotle and Kant and constitutive to a historical or epochal approach to philosophy and even more broadly to a given socio-historic constellation. All this is, of course, only indications or better invitations to further work. In this regard, I will conclude with a tentative response to the question of the ontological and epistemological traits of boundaries, which, as mentioned in the Introduction, remains underdeveloped.

In the short passage in *Metaphysics*, where Aristotle defines the concept of the boundary, he states: "We call a limit the last point of each thing, i.e. the first point beyond which it is not possible to find any part, and the first point within which every part is."⁷¹ Aristotle here conceives the boundary in terms of its relation to a thing. However, it can readily be the boundary of not only things or entities, but also concepts, imaginations, sensations, perceptions and relations as well as time, space, and history. Aristotle seems to imply this as he exemplifies his definition of *peras* with a number of his core concepts, and Heidegger's philosophy attests to the same.

Hereby, it is also indicated that the question of the boundary in this broad sense should not be understood according to any specific figure or manifestation of the boundary such as for example a straight line of demarcation. In fact, the short definition by Aristotle attributes a double and not immediately congruent character to the boundary: it is the first part of something, and the last part where this something is no longer. It is the point of transition between the being and nothing of this something; it marks its identity with itself and its difference from what it is not. It simultaneously defines what this something is in its entirety, and what it is not; how it is separated, and how it relates to something else. In other words, the boundary is essentially end, beginning, and transition in one single constellation. It is the point of both difference and relation, of opening and closure. The essence of the boundary comes forth as intrinsically aporetic, or better 'an-archic' as suggested above. As Massimo

⁷¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, II, 1022a4-6.

Which came first, being or the boundary? Approaching the question of the boundary through the work of Martin Heidegger

Cacciari explains, “there can be no limit that is not both *limen* and *limes* together.”⁷² Shortly put, the essence of the boundary is its own question.

This definition is not merely of a formal or epistemological character. It is also an ontological question – perhaps on par with the question of being, as this talk has suggested. Furthermore, the definition of the boundary is only complete when understood as inseparable from the context it defines and is defined by. Taken simply as the question of opening-closure-relation, the boundary implodes into nothing. The boundary is always the opening-closure-relation of something; a something which it itself would lose its shape, its form, its meaning, without boundaries.

Methodologically, this also has implications. The boundary manifests a question of the definition of something; a question which formally is extremely open. It asks to the given constellation of openness-closure-relation that defines something be it things or concepts, emotions or imaginations, or socio-historic relations in space and time. Furthermore, it entails a critical approach, as no manifestation of the boundary, no answer to the question, may overcome the essential aporia of boundaries themselves. As such, the question of the boundary suggests itself as an approach to not only philosophy but potentially to other fields, just as its function as common denominator across these fields makes it adept for interdisciplinary research.⁷³

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⁷² Cacciari, *Place and Limit*, 13.

⁷³ I have suggested such an approach in relation to a dialogue between philosophy and the inherently interdisciplinary field of border studies. See: Tinning, *Bridging border studies and the limit: the border and the limit*, 2019.

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