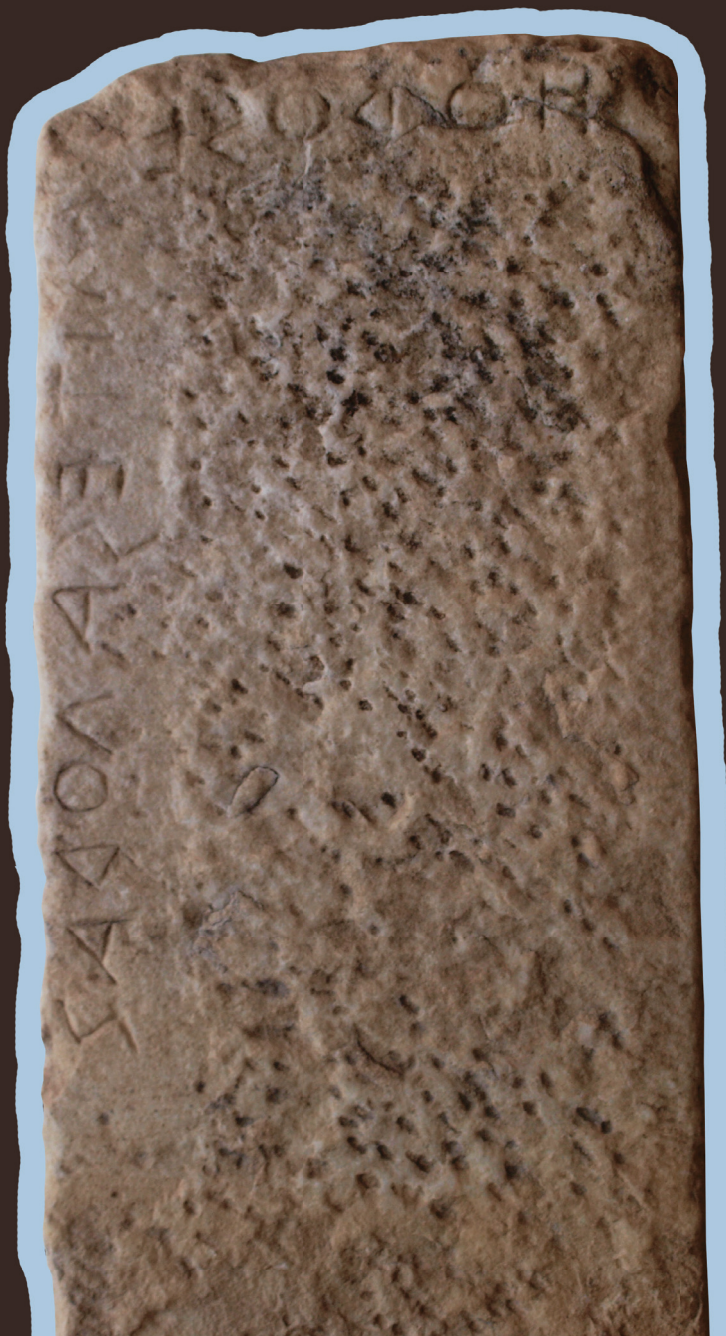


ANCIENT BOUNDARIES AND THE
ECOLOGY OF STONE

H O R O S



THEA
POTTER



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Fig. 1. HOPOS EIMI TES AGOPAS 'I am the *horos* of the *agora*', IG I³ 1087 [I 5510].
Photograph by M. Goutsourela, 2013. Rights belong to The Athenian Agora
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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 TΕΣ 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 $\text{HOPOΣ ΕΙΜΙ ΤΕΣ ΑΓΟΡΑΣ}$, '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, hόρος το τεμένος , IG I³ 1068; hόρος ηιερο 1071, 1075; $\text{hόρος τεμένος Αθηνάας}$ 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 *HOPOΣ*. 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 ἄνερε δηριάσθον
 μέτρ' ἐν χερσὶν ἔχοντες ἐπιξύνω ἐν ἀρούρη,
 ὧ τ' ὀλίγω ἐνὶ χώρῳ ἐρίζητον περὶ ἴσης,
 ὧς 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/οὐροισι). 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 ἀώνια ἄἔθεντο 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 ὄδε εἰρήσθω· μὴ κινεῖτω γῆς ὄρια μηδεὶς μήτε οἰκείου πολίτου γείτονος μήτε ὁμοτέρμοнос ἐπ' ἐσχατίας κεκτημένος ἄλλω ξένω 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*: ὄρος 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,' τὸ τί ἐστὶ (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 ὄρος 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 ὄροι).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, Γῆ μέλαινα, τῆς ἐγώ πότε
 ὄρους ἀνεῖλον πολλαχῆ 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 εὐπορηῆσαι βουλομένοις προὔργου τὸ διαπορηῆσαι καλῶς: ἢ γὰρ ὕστερον εὐπορία λύσις τῶν πρότερον ἀπορουμένων ἐστί, λύειν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγνοοῦντας τὸν δεσμόν, ἀλλ' ἢ τῆς διανοίας ἀπορία δηλοῖ τοῦτο περὶ τοῦ πράγματος: ἢ 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 διαπορηῆσαι πρῶτον ὁμοίους εἶναι τοῖς ποῖ δεῖ βαδίζειν ἀγνοοῦσι, καὶ πρὸς τούτοις οὐδ' εἴ ποτε τὸ ζητούμενον εὔρηκεν ἢ μὴ γινώσκειν:⁴¹

Now for those who wish to find a way to answer problems [*eurōēsai*] it is important to go into the problems thoroughly [*diaporēsai*]; for the subsequent answer [*eurōia*] 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 ὄρος 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 (*hypostasis*) 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 (ἄπλως) 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 ὀρισμούς), 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 γὰρ τι τὸ ζῶον, καὶ ἄνευ κινήσεως οὐκ ἔστιν ὀρίσασθαι, διὸ οὐδ’ ἄνευ τῶν μερῶν ἐχόντων πῶς. οὐ γὰρ πάντως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μέρος ἢ χεῖρ, 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 μείρομαι (*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
γάρ ἐστιν 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 ῥοῆ 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, οἱ, 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 ἔν 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 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, εἰπωμεν πάλιν ὅτι ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ ὄντα πῶς ἐστίν· πάντα γὰρ ἢ αἰσθητὰ τὰ ὄντα ἢ νοητὰ, ἔστι δ' ἡ ἐπιστήμη μὲν τὰ ἐπιστητὰ πῶς, ἢ δ' αἰσθησις τὰ αἰσθητὰ.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 ὡσπερ 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 ὅποιον οὖν 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.

