

8th International Conference

LIMITS – BORDERS – BOUNDARIES / GRENZEN

PHILOSOPHICAL, POLITICAL and CULTURAL ASPECTS

2nd - 8th of August 2019

Adult education centre Springe, near Hanover

Conference languages: German and English

The topic of 'borders' is acute in recent times, because large groups of refugees from the political, social and economic conflict areas of our world are – often under life-threatening difficulties – trying to overcome the borders, seas, walls and fences to get to wealthy and democratic countries.

In almost all areas of life and society – health, education, habitation, ecology, economy, art, etc. – boundaries play a central role. In addition to that the German term "Grenze", as alluded to by the title of this conference, translates to a variety of different meanings: boundary, limit, border. "Grenzen" can be natural or constructed by humans, they can be limits of understanding and of insight, boundaries of language and dialogue, limits of tolerance and acceptance, individual or collective boundaries, internal and external borders.

This conference is held by three organizations: The "Philosophisch-Politische Akademie" (PPA), the "Society for the Furtherance of Critical Philosophy" (SFCP) and the "Gesellschaft für Sokratisches Philosophieren" (GSP). We cooperate with "Philosophiemagazin" as our media partner. The conference is meant to be understood first and foremost as a *conference of citizens*. This is to not only practitioners of politics and philosophy, socially active groups or institutional bearers of responsibility, but also the open public. It offers opportunities to communicate in many ways and from different angles about the range of meaning and significance of "Grenzen". We have established our task to make a contribution to the best possible extensive and rational elucidation of the topic, which also gives room for controversial statements.

To keep barriers of participation and communication as low as possible, we are trying to establish conditions, in which participation is also possible for participants who are not native speakers of English or German, or not so confident with the two main languages of the conference.

The conference consists of three thematically connected, but independent parts. You sign up for each part independently.

PART A – SOCRATIC DIALOGUES

Part A will be held **from Friday evening, 2nd of August, to Sunday lunchtime, 4th of August**. Here we offer the possibility for all participants to philosophically discuss the topic of borders, boundaries and limits in *Socratic Dialogues*. Socratic Dialogues in the newer form, established by the philosopher Leonard Nelson, are an approved method for subject-oriented clarification in a respectful group discussion. Previous philosophical knowledge is not required, since the discussions develop from concrete experiences of the participants. Each of the discussion groups will be led by two moderators schooled in this method, who will generally speak a third language besides English and German. Obstacles of communication that go back to language competence can be overcome through mutual support in Socratic Dialogues.

ANNIVERSARY OF GSP AND AWARD CEREMONY

Within Part A of the conference, on **Saturday evening, 3rd of August**, the 25th anniversary of the "Gesellschaft für Sokratisches Philosophieren" will be celebrated, which includes the award ceremony for the Essay Competition on philosophical aspects of the Socratic Dialogue (<http://philosophisch-politische-akademie.de/essay>).

PART B – LIMITS, BORDERS, BOUNDARIES / GRENZEN

LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS

The **integral part** of the conference will be **Part B**, held from **Sunday evening, 4th of August, to Wednesday lunchtime, 7th of August**. In lectures and workshops the different philosophical, political and cultural aspects of the problematic topic of borders, boundaries and limits will be looked at from different angles. As a frame for discussion we have selected **three subject areas**.

PHILOSOPHY– DIALOGUE – EDUCATION

In line with the philosophical and dialogical history of our organizations the subject area of "**Philosophy, Dialogue, Education**" takes up a vital part in the conference. Since Immanuel Kant's attempts to determine in his Critiques the boundaries of reason, since his credo of "Enlightenment as man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage" a sceptic, either reactionarily or progressively orientated counter-movement against supposedly excessive standards of rationality, and critical of Enlightenment and universalization, has emerged. It is expressed not least in language criticism or ideology criticism, be it feminist, neo-structuralist or postmodern critique of rationality-based or socially established power structures.

But also, independently of this fundamental critique, philosophical struggles towards Enlightenment, attempts at education and dialogue meet with limits of realization. In trying to overcome boundaries of communication between different milieus and cultures, as well as uneven distribution of educational opportunities, institutions and their agents struggle with the limitations of their power. On the other hand, this may enable them to acknowledge and seize their potentials effectively.

We want to discuss these topics in lectures that are as open as possible, offer ways of interactive participation and address the controversial positions in a clear and constructive manner. Workshops will offer opportunities to experiment with methods aimed at participation. This principle of lively exchange is also applied to the following two subject areas.

POLITICS – SOCIETY - CIVILIZATION

The second subject area of "**Politics, Society, Civilization**" addresses borders, boundaries and limits in their political and social dimensions. The PPA and the SFCP, which have already been active in Germany and from Great Britain against politics hostile to man, and active for an ethical and social direction in civilian society since the time of National Socialism, feel committed to this as well.

An emotional insecurity in large parts of our society goes alongside recent internationalization and globalization of economics and politics, world-wide migration movements and challenges to the cosmopolitan human, in short: "Entgrenzung" – the dissolution of borders, boundaries and limits. It shows itself in the desire for fencing-off, for securing the own living space and for "Heimat" – a sense of home. Boundaries and borders which were previously open for more or less good

economic, political or cultural reasons, are re-erected or closed to reduce or stop the (uncontrolled) penetration of the strange into our world. The "Willkommenskultur", welcoming culture, is challenged by an "Abgrenzungskultur", an "enclosing culture".

In addition to that, there is distrust in parts of society towards large associations of nations like the European Union whose regulations crossing national and regional borders appear to local inhabitants as patronizing. Ethnic or regional groups strive for sovereignty and fight for a separation from superordinate political units (as seen in the conflict between Catalonia and Spain). Furthermore, we conceive warlike battles against unpleasant liberation movements on behalf of dictatorlike leaders (e.g. Bashar al-Assad in Syria) or the illegal annexation of neighbouring border areas (see Russia-Ukraine conflict). In human history this is not new, but especially disastrous nowadays because of technological armament.

There are also the no less important borders that run through society. Borders, which are erected and held up through the respective political systems and affect the uneven distribution of rights of liberty and participation. This phenomenon can be spotted in many parts of society, for example in politics of house building. All too often architectural plans act in strengthening separation within population, separating for example wealth and poverty, age and youth or different levels of education.

"Empörte Bürger" – outraged citizens – lose trust in democratic governments where politics prove to be unable or powerless to get rid of these inequalities. One wonders if democracy has reached its limits. Some already believe to live in a 'post-democratic' age, which needs to be tackled with entirely new forms of politics. If for instance 'care for the self (Foucault) could be a source for political activism, can be disputed.

MAN – EXISTENCE – CULTURE

The third subject area of "**Man, Existence, Culture**" considers the conditions of existence and meaning of human life. Here, the necessity of limits for human life can be plainly seen, be they limitations of life span, of self-fulfilment, or boundaries of feasibility. This makes it all the more important to maintain a reasonable relationship to these limitations, neither to stand in too great an awe before them, nor to suppress the thought of them. Having to deal with mortality, new ways of technological self-optimization and genetic manipulation, digitalization increasingly reaching into every area of life, artistic creativity, religious spirituality, human existence between hopes and fears – those and similar topics invite intense discussions.

For example, one could contrast the expressiveness of art, music, literature, metaphors, imagery and narratives, to the maybe more restricted expressiveness of scientific language-games or philosophic logical argumentation. Or, one could analyse the problematics of personal identity in facing the progression of technological possibilities to intervene in the human body and every-day life.

Questions of the good life or human flourishing, which experience a renaissance in our times of acceleration, increasing flexibilization of living and working conditions, as well as dire perspectives of the future, also fit into this subject area, since they make up a big part of "philosophical practice".

PART C – INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM

DIALOGICAL PRACTICE AND DIALOGICAL PHILOSOPHISING

The **7th International Colloquium "Dialogical Practice and Dialogical Philosophising"**, which makes up **Part C** of the conference, is **held from Wednesday afternoon, 7th of August to Thursday lunchtime, 8th of August**. This colloquium takes place once a year, every time in a different European country (last year in Cambridge, UK), and brings philosophical and dialogical practitioners together to engage in an exchange about their approaches and methods. In planning the schedule, we assume that we will have two short presentations from participants of previous colloquia, which will be followed by several rounds of discussion. Interested participants, who are active in this field, can already contact us to enquire about the conditions of participation.

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CONDITIONS AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

There are no restrictions to **participation in Parts A and B** of the conference. Our close connection to the conference and training centre of the adult education centre Springe near Hanover enables us to keep the prices for full board (overnight stay and meals) as low as possible. In addition to that we offer reduced prices (e.g. for students and people with low income), as well as further financial support at request.

If you seized the opportunity for a "conversation among friends", as Socrates did in the market place of Athens or as Plato did in his Academy, we as the planning team of the conference would be very pleased. Please register using the registration form on our website:

<http://philosophisch-politische-akademie.de/conference-2019.html>.

You can address informal enquiries to the following email address:

conference-2019@philosophisch-politische-akademie.de.

We would be pleased to receive **workshop offers**. Use the form on our website to tell us about your ideas.

COST OF PARTICIPATION (registration until 31st of May 2019)

The costs of participation (participation fee + meals/board + overnight stay/lodging) are:

	Part A	Part B	Part C
Single room	180/ 160	250/ 225	80/ 70
Single room (reduced)	140/ 125	200/ 180	70/ 60
Double room	150/ 135	210/ 190	65/ 50
Double room (reduced)	110/ 90	160/ 140	50/ 40
Boarding without lodging	110/ 90	160/ 140	40/ 30
Boarding without lodging (reduced)	70/ 60	110/ 90	30/ 20

You can get ca. 10 per cent reduction if you register before 15th of May 2019 (please refer to the prices marked in red).

On behalf of the conference's planning team

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