

Note to our guests and readers:

Our common language is English. It is the language that most of us understand (more or less) and that gives us the opportunity to exchange our ideas. However, since very few of us are native speakers, we often fight for words. The summaries of our guest evenings are prepared by the sisters who moderated these evenings. We make these summaries available uncensored to give our readers an impression of the issues that concern us. Since we unfortunately lack the resources to have all of our sisters' texts edited professionally, we apologize to the readers for any language deficits. We hope that the summary of our guest evening themes, regardless of their linguistic presentation, will spark your interest in visiting us on one of our guest evenings.

The theme of the guest evening:

“New Horizons - approaching a moving target...”

Let us start with two sentences from Tennessee Williams:

“I was once asked why I travel so much, and I said, ‘Because it’s harder to hit a moving target!’”
and
“There is a time for departure even when there’s no certain place to go.”

For Freemasons their Lodge name is a very important thing! It characterizes the group. It is description and objective - all in one.

In many cases it refers to the place where the lodge is located. In former times lodges call themselves like the taverns where the lodge members had their meetings. Later in addition to this old naming conventions lodges gave themselves names of masonic ideals or famous people that have a special relation to freemasonry.

Our name is “New Horizons”. A horizon is not a location where we can be, sit, drink and meet. It is located far away from our reachability... and in each moment it is far away even if we try to approach it... more than this: the more we approach it the more will it retreat from us.

What do we know about a horizon. First, it is a line in the landscape that separates earth and sky. But it is also a border between the area, the world, that we can see with our eyes and a world that is behind -an unknown world. The goal ‘to approach the horizon’ is a very flexible goal. As soon as we have discovered what was invisible and unknown before, we broaden the horizon anew and create a new limiting line – and again, there will be a world behind the new horizon. But the world that we have discovered becomes bigger. The earliest experience of people by watching the horizon was that there is a border between what we can see and what is still invisible and unknown. But the horizon in this sense was discovered fully first in the 18th century.

In the Middle Ages the interpretation of horizon as the end of our visible world was not common among the people. The first time we can find the word horizon in a German text is in the 15th century and a bit later in a text written by Albrecht Dürer who used it to explain some perspective issues and rules of measurement. The word was used in technical and scientific context mostly as a part of a mathematic construction -an element to describe dimensions of a space.

Horizontal lines were also used by seamen for navigation but not as the word “horizon”. In German language we know the word Kimm(e)--- but it is the same: it is the line between sea and sky. Horizons appeared in paintings first in the late 15th century. Paintings in the first part of the 15th century were without perspective.

It took about 300 years more that people developed from this technical understanding of horizon an understanding of horizon in its figurative sense. In the late 17th century people started to say that somebody who was not well-educated has a narrow/ limited horizon. They also started to say that travelling expands the horizon or it expands new horizons. Remember that the 17th and 18th century was the time when Europeans started to travel in order to expand their horizons.

Goethe wrote in his diary during his journey through Italy – in German “Italienische Reise”- in 1787 that he has been on a ship surrounded by water and sky, and between water and sky was this horizontal line. He wrote that this mathematic element of the horizontal line was falling together with the experience of the limitedness of our perception of the world. He wrote further: "if you have never been surrounded by the sea you do not have any idea of the world and especially of your relation to the world. It is this simple line that gives me completely new thoughts”.

Goethe and all the people of his century did not only travel in horizontal extent, they also climbed church towers in order to have a better view of the landscapes and the horizon. In former times people were standing at the bottom of a church looking up at the great buildings that have been built for God. Now people climbed the towers in order to look down and to have an overview of the world.

Once again: we are talking about the 17th and 18th century, the Age of Enlightenment. The experience of the horizon was the experience of a limited world and knowledge but in the Age of Enlightenment the experience of limited knowledge induced the hope that there is something behind our current limits and that it must be possible to discover the unknown world. To realize a limit was for the philosopher Hegel de facto to overstep it.

After all we can say that horizon became a metaphor, a linguistic image, a symbol for our limited view and our limited mind that we can overstep – if we want to do.

Conclusion in our discussion with the guests:

As long as we keep the same position our horizon will be unchanged. We are not forced to stand up, go on a journey and discover the visible world. We don't have to do it, but we can. We can approach this limiting line of our perceptual experience and while we are approaching the horizon of our well-known world we will open up new horizons. With every step that we go today we overstep the yesterday's limits looking forward to future challenges on our way to new horizons.

There is a short poem from Schiller: “Willst du ins Unendliche schreiten, geh nur im Endlichen nach allen Seiten“. The translation could be: If you want to progress to the endlessness, just go within the limited space in all directions

There is no strict separation between the ‘limited’ within our circle or horizon and the ‘unlimited’ behind our limits. Our limits are a kind of perception, anyway. So... let us try out how far we will get