

FROM THE EDITORS

BOUNDLESS BOUNDARIES

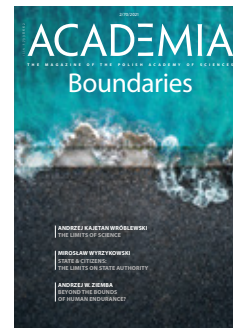
This issue's theme, "Boundaries," (understood as a term, as a concept, as a metaphor) turns out to have especially resonated among researchers from disparate fields of science and research. Why so? Why have they found the notion of boundaries, borders, and limits such fertile ground? We have two hypothetical answers. One goes more or less like this: the world is a complex and multi-elemental structure, a set of myriad smaller and larger elements subject to processes of ordering and scrutiny. It can be imagined as a set of countless subsets, subsets of subsets. Amidst all this complexity, conceptual boundaries make it possible to distinguish individual units and entities, to make out objects and notions, to perceive and understand the overall changes taking place in reality. Such a reductionist approach, based on a hope that studying individual processes will offer insight into the broader rules governing the whole, is applied across many fields of science, although of course its limitations must always be borne in mind. On the other hand, being on a border, finding oneself in a borderline situation, crossing a limit – these are situations that may convey a sense of danger, existential fears, a movement beyond the familiar world, an expedition into the unknown, a rite of passage. Liminality is therefore also an element of our own internal structure, a starting point regulating the relations of the individual with the world, a narrow bridge between nature and culture. It worries and fascinates scholars and artists alike. The Polish writer Zofia Nałkowska (known, indeed, for works including 1935 novel *Granice*, "The Boundary") wrote in her Diary: "the place where reality happens is this physical system of mine, enclosed together with it in a relatively small, leathery contour of shape. It is within this tangle that everything takes place, the past and the future are not contained anywhere else, even the entire present. Not in museums, not in libraries, whose entire existence is contingent upon the observer." This moving passage from Nałkowska is a version of the Renaissance-era analogies between the microcosm and the macrocosm.

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Jeremiasz Falck
(c. 1610–1677),
*Mors ultima
linea rerum*
(Death is the final
boundary of
everything),
1630–1670, PAPER,
copper engraving,
inventory
MNK III-ryc.-47542



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