



Conserveries mémorielles

Revue transdisciplinaire

#7 | 2010

Seuils, Thresholds, Soglitudes

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Édition électronique

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/cm/512>

ISBN : 978-2-8218-0270-4

ISSN : 1718-5556

Éditeur :

IHTP - Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, CELAT

Référence électronique

Tatjana Barazon, « 'Soglitude'- introducing a method of thinking thresholds », *Conserveries mémorielles* [En ligne], #7 | 2010, mis en ligne le 10 avril 2010, consulté le 02 mai 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/cm/512>

Ce document a été généré automatiquement le 2 mai 2019.



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'Soglitude'- introducing a method of thinking thresholds

Tatjana Barazon

"It's a poor sort of memory that only works
backwards", the Queen remarked.
Lewis Carroll, Alice Through the Looking Glass

The invention of a word

- 1 The word 'soglitude' is derived from the Italian word for threshold 'soglia', the 'g' therefore remains silent in pronunciation. By introducing the letter 'g' into the solitary state of human condition, we introduce a natural opening toward the other, another human, another state of mind, a change in scenery or perception of color. Soglitude therefore breaks open the isolation in which human condition often understands itself. Thinking thresholds means being open to change, creation and evolution and springs from the respectful consideration of difference as the natural state of things.
- 2 The threshold has a binding and a separating character. It refers here to the ambiguous state of every single perception. Human perception depends on many functions, the chemical or the psychological to name but two, but what we learn from introducing thresholds in our way of thinking is that every point of view is important to the knowledge of the whole, which by the way, can never be known completely. If we give priority to one point of view, be it the 'scientific', the 'psychological' or the 'political' or 'social', the consequences may be terrible and end in war or tyranny. Philosophy is not sheltered from absolutist viewpoints, and even has been dominated by them many times. As in science, fashionable thoughts or charismatic figures can sometimes erase other perspectives and drive the whole discipline into dead ends. To keep us from falling into those dogmatic traps, we want to offer another way of thinking that will not exclude the psychological from the scientific or the mathematical from the philosophical, or the emotional from the neuronal point of view. The idea of the threshold thinking is the co-

existence of all points of view like Leibniz' monads that reflect the world each one in its own way. Of course, we can't focus on all these perspectives at once, and must therefore allow a change and an adjustment from one point of view to the other. Soglitude has thus an ethical dimension and lives through opening toward other states. The 'soglitary' state gives rise to a philosophical state that tends toward the other whatever its shape or nature, and considers it with respect and serenity. Thinking thresholds keeps the mind from considering or even obeying to a unique idea, and therefore is entirely devoted to the multitude of perspectives. Threshold thinking means accepting differences, observing things from a multitude of points of view and never restricting thought to one opinion or any certainty of knowledge.

- 3 The momentary retreat from a never ever ending flow gives us the illusion of a stopping of time and therefore of a threshold in thought. We consider a thing differently, we notice details we have not seen before, and even see ourselves in a different light. This interruption becomes the philosophical state in itself, as it is the reflecting moment, the contemplation, that lets the world emerge in front of our mind in all its richness and variety. The soglitude allows us to be open to other perspectives and gives rise to a thinking process that springs from and lives through the multiple points of view our reality is made of.
- 4 Partly inspired by Henri Bergson's *élan vital*, soglitude tends toward life, which means toward a new viewpoint on the possibilities that we are facing. It is precisely the desire to understand life as evolution and permanent creation that situates us on a threshold in every instant. As we mostly seem to notice change after it occurred, we are unable to put our finger on the change itself but we rather name it from other factors. A thing that is now different from when we last saw or touched it, has changed. But when exactly the change occurs, we are unable to tell. In the moment in which we move from hate to love, from pain to joy, in the 'stream of consciousness' as William James called it, the change is not abrupt but rather continuous. We move fluently from one state to the next, as reality before our eyes never bears holes or incoherencies.¹ To fill in any possible incoherent moment or even to complete our field of vision, we operate a filling-in process that allows our view to be complete even on its edges, where the vision is not sharp (see Firth 2007: 41). The constant moving of our eyes completes our visual scene, as every occurring change attracts the eye to the edge of the visual field. We do not perceive the perceptive thresholds we cross every instant in order to be in a coherent reality. The threshold is nevertheless our fundamental nature, the capacity that allows us to perceive movement and change as a fluent and acceptable reality that we participate in. We bind and separate reality to make it a coherent whole.
- 5 "Every thought we have of a given fact is, strictly speaking, unique, and only bears a resemblance of kind with our other thoughts of the same fact. When the identical fact recurs, we *must* think of it in a fresh manner; see it under a somewhat different angle, apprehend it in different relations from those in which it last appeared." (James, 1890: 233)
- 6 This is where the threshold lies. Always binding and separating, building up the flux of events in a continuous manner, the stream of thought described by William James is not made of ruptures, but flowing smoothly and melting one event into the next. Every time we have a new thought, even if it is about something we have seen many times, it is a new perspective, a new moment in the constant flow of things.

- 7 As we can also read in Bergson, *La pensée et le mouvant*², to consider a conscience without memory would mean that there is the possibility of going through two identical moments, but conscience always keeps the remembrance of a past state. Whereas Bergson defends that a conscience that could have two identical moments would die and be born again without interruption, we can think of current research avenues in neuroscience in which the very idea of memory as storage of events is questioned. If one can never go back to an anterior state exactly the same way or even reproduce an identical conscious state, the memory we have of ourselves and of everything that happens to us would be a permanent creation or re-invention.³ If we cannot experience the same state twice, it might also be impossible to reproduce any given state artificially, and there lies the difficulty of a scientific approach to consciousness. If one can study brain states on a neuronal level, the re-creation of those states might not be possible, as consciousness is permanently evolving and it is impossible to isolate one state without jeopardizing the whole history of the consciousness. Bergson and James seem to agree on this point. Actually, as we often read in Bergson, "conscience is coextensive to life" (Bergson, 1999: 13), which means that we cannot isolate the object from the subject when it comes to consciousness. As Thomas Nagel states in his famous article 'What is it like to be bat?'⁴, subjective experience can never be reached, as it can never be recreated in exactly the same way without taking life and personal evolution out of the equation. The stream of thought is continuous and unique, as William James explains in *Principles of Psychology*. What James calls *fringe*⁵, and what we find in Bergson's writings under the name of *frange*,⁶ can easily compare to the threshold idea. There is an underlying connection of our perceptions that links them together.
- 8 Bergson questions the existence of separate events when he analyzes the nature of memory versus consciousness. He describes an afternoon spent with friends where they had a picnic, a walk and many conversations. As it is quite impossible to determine where one event ended and the next one began, the link between memory and consciousness cannot be a random connection of events. Bergson defends that there are so many arrangements possible that it is far too much work for the memory to rearrange them in all the possible combinations and store them somewhere. He then develops his theory of 'le souvenir du présent' that consists in a mirror image of every perception, sensation, event that we experience. The experience of our everyday life is twofold: one is actually experienced and one is instantly remembered, or reflected. As we always experience the world and its reality as a whole, there are no fractions, no instants that could be separated and reconnected again. According to Bergson, the function of living and remembering go side by side in our perception. This is the way he explains the phenomenon of the *déjà-vu*. Sometimes we get overwhelmed, and the confusion leads us to consider something that is "present in its matter, but has the shape of the past" (Bergson, 1993: 137).
- 9 The threshold in perception unfolds in between the lived experience (*le vécu, das Erlebnis*) and the perceived experience that becomes the image of our *vécu*. We won't remember things we didn't experience, and we will not have any experience without the imprint of memory that goes with it. At least, those are the arguments proposed by Bergson. When we turn to modern neuroscience, the ideas on memory are not so clear⁷. For the 'threshold thinking' introduction, we should stress that perception and memory are sometimes considered on the same level, but sometimes also as two distinct functions. Perception is concentrated on what is actually happening, and memory is the virtual

counterpart of those events. The latter creates the illusion of a present fact when we are perfectly aware of its absence.

- 10 When we name a threshold in our perceptive experience, it is not necessarily a moment where something is perceived, like the threshold of pain, or when a reaction is provoked as the term is used in psychology or medicine. The use of the term here, and the reason why we call it 'soglitude', lies in a more global sense of moving from one state to the next, from one perception to another, from one emotional state to the next or from one perspective of the outside world to the inside, from an actual event to a remembered one. The threshold names the passing, the evolving, in one word, the change. The threshold is the function of stabilizing the world in its numerous changes, and our sense of self. Thereby the threshold seems the appropriate term, as we sense ourselves, and the world in which we evolve, as moving and coming to a halt, and moving again. This threshold awareness never is aware of an actual threshold but of a flow of events, we spend our time binding and separating, creating a continuous perception of the world where there might be only chaos, and most of all, we try to constitute a logical interaction of all our sensations with the events that occur. We cannot create the whole reality, or should we question the existence of objective facts because of the discoveries of creation in the brain? Another threshold must be detected here, where the objective becomes subjective. There is participation in an event that we did not create - like an earthquake - but where we still create our perception of it that will vary, not only for each individual perception, but also in time, when our own focus changes from the actual event to its perception.

Liminary definitions

- 11 The threshold separates and binds two separate spaces of a different nature. In its simplest definition, the threshold separates the entrance of a house from the exterior, and at the same time opens the private space of the home to the public space of the street. It is the in-between state that allows a differentiation of an outside and an inside. It designates the space we never really touch, where we don't dwell, the space that takes us to another place. The place where a man hesitates when he does not dare to enter, as in Kafka's *The trial*, where the peasant stays in front of the threshold of a door only to find out that it was there only for him (Didi-Huberman 1992: 187).
- 12 Thanks to the threshold, we acquire an awareness of the difference. We could state that without thresholds, there is no possible distinction between two things, spaces or states.
- 13 The usual definitions of the liminary state in anthropology see the threshold as a transitory moment, a passage that leads to something else, primarily a new status in society. The ritual process defines a state on the margin of a primary state. The liminality is defined as something exceptional, the 'soglitary' state on the contrary designates the fundamental state of our identity, as well as our ethical and perceptive condition. We are constantly on the threshold, as we never stop changing, making links and getting lost again momentarily.
- 14 The threshold is considered as a part of the door and the rituals associated with it are therefore understood as physical rites directly associated with the entrance, the departure and the awaiting. (Van Gennep, 1908: 25). Van Gennep speaks of rites that happen on the threshold as transition rites.⁸ It is the whole house in its materiality that gives the threshold significance with its own symbolic. Entering, passing, hesitating: the

threshold holds within itself the transition that makes somebody who crosses the threshold familiar to a former strange environment.

- 15 We can find examples of those thresholds in Victor Turner's exotic places and his descriptions of rites of passage in African tribes (Turner: 1969). A rite is liminary when the person becomes somebody new, a child becomes a young warrior, or when a married couple joins their lives. Those rites are thresholds in themselves because they differentiate states, one that precedes the ritual, one that follows it, but most of all the in-between state that designates no state in particular. During the ritual, the person is neither in its former state, nor has he moved on to the next one. In this undetermined moment, the person is literally on the threshold. Only, in anthropology of rituals, this state is exceptional and should soon be overcome and lead to a more stable state, the 'real' state or the state where the threshold ritual will take him.
- 16 The idea of soglitude does not express the threshold as a moment we have to pass, but more as the fundamental act that makes us what we are. We are *in* and *on* a threshold with our own identity, the reality we perceive and our interaction with others. There is no "real" state, no "real" life, no "real" time we should attain, we are always in our own threshold state that moves us from one state to the next and gives us the illusion of stability at the same time.
- 17 This apparent paradox will appear as the leitmotiv through this whole issue. We move but think we stay in the same place, as we learn in the Alice books, "to move to another place we would have to move twice as fast"⁹. The apparent constancy of reality and our changing within it seems to create stability. And even current brain research shows that our stabilization lies within our perception of change¹⁰, it is indeed an interaction between stillness and movement that allows us to evolve in the world.
- 18 Threshold is thus the concept in which the dilemma between permanence and change is fundamentally concentrated. The threshold stays on the border of constantly changing worlds, and might also become the image of home, where we can come back to for a little while before we follow the stream again. We take a deep breath on the threshold and stop before we face the reality once again. The article dedicated to the different spaces of the house shows this in a most poetic and inspiring manner. **Joana Duarte Bernardes**¹¹ takes us on a journey from the threshold of the house to the attic, and into the cellar. From the basement to the roof, the house is in itself the guardian of memories and the place where we rest only for a moment, in order to be thrown into the flow again, to leave the house and discover new elements that will be created and then forgotten, in a dialectic movement between coming home and fleeing, searching for a momentary rest and knowing that the house itself is but a threshold.
- 19 This pause is of course an illusion, as even the temporary retraction from reality is integrated in the changing of events. Our perceptual landscape asks for a new adjustment in mind and feeling.
- 20 In the contribution of **Anxo Fernandez Ocampo** we read the link between the symbolic threshold to the material binding and separating nature of the threshold of the house itself. The threshold not only is the place where fundamental codes are inscribed, where the sense of home and departing becomes clear, it also shows how we need such liminal places as doors and doorsteps to protect our homes, and welcome guests. Anxo takes us on a fascinating field work to a village in Galicia where translating cultures becomes obvious in the numerous passages a house contains. Like in Joana's text, we learn about

the house, but this time the threshold becomes material and therefore the occasion for actual rites of passage.

- 21 **Aurélie Maurin** also studies the material threshold but in her contribution, it is the educational institutions that provide thresholds for numerous rites of passage. It is not the home of the adolescent that really makes his life evolve, it is at school, in the yards, on the stairs, the hallways and other thresholds that young people meet, fight, greet each other, hug and by those rites succeed in creating their identities. Through an analysis on the concept of the 'informal', Aurélie introduces the search for real places of passage that lend the adolescent the possibility to create their personalities far from the 'formal' environment where teachers have an eye on them. The material nature of the threshold gives rise to personal interactions. The young people look for actual places that are not clearly defined and they might choose them because they reflect their own indetermination and transitory state.

Conceptual genesis

- 22 The concept of 'threshold' applied to the philosophical indetermination emerged from my doctoral dissertation on the theme of creation. Introducing the term 'creation' in philosophy bears a fundamental difficulty, as the term is first a theological one. Creation means throwing the idea of something new out of a causality chain because there is no known cause to something that is created. As the creation of something can never be considered complete, we can only identify the emergence of a new state in the world. This new state is connected to a previous one and the new state but remains linked to the one that occurred a moment before or even to every previous moment.
- 23 The threshold can be understood in the time frame, and is therefore something like the interruption of time by reflection. The instant is the eternal present where time seems to stop but as we are always living in a present moment, it is at the same time remaining and vanishing. When we consider a perspective of the world, we feel that we put our own point of view on otherwise known facts. When we supposedly take our attention away from the world to reflect on it, it is nothing but another moment in the flux of events, but can be sensed as an interruption of the flow because the mind takes a moment to put things in a new perspective. We switch our attention from concentrating on one event to another moment where we reflect on things and are aware of the flow. The point of view varies and with it our perception of time.
- 24 We have the impression of being somebody else when we cannot recall past events or feelings. To what extent can we recover the perception of being the same person? This state can be defined as the identity threshold that takes us from one state to the next without interruption and makes us consider a liminary state that perdures within this changing process.
- 25 The threshold thinking method or soglitude therefore welcomes the possibilities into a point of view that is constantly changing. We can thereby try to define a blurred zone where one state becomes another, and in this in-between state we can never succeed to define precisely, we find ourselves constantly, always on the verge of something new. If we did not have the capacity to build an imperceptible bridge from one moment to the next, we would have a perception of non-being, of falling into our own negation. And as we always build the reality as a flow, the negation only comes into perception by

reflection. On the threshold of every state, there is the possibility of everything that is not, and our choice takes us fluently from one step to the next without noticing ruptures or breaks in reality.

- 26 As we can hardly start thinking in an empty space, the negation comes in a second movement, like a fringe, around the thought applied to an object. Its negation goes with it everywhere, through every change. Every object, or thought content is eternally on the threshold of its own negation, meaning everything it is not (ever) or in any given state. Like for the theory of motion, every particular position is a particular motion (even rest), every thought object is on the verge of its own other, its own negation, without ever falling into it. The thought dynamics live on the threshold of affirmation and negation, and create there the possibilities of a reality in motion. The threshold term emerges from there, on the border of being and non-being, the limit never anything crosses in our daily life. Thresholds are our fundamental nature and show us how fluent things are and how reality moves from one state to the next, by a creation that our brain makes for a large part itself.
- 27 The argument lives thanks to the exchange between possibilities that make the created state possible, as every given state is one of all possible states. We can never make sense of an accomplished state or give the privilege to one state above the others. All our thought categories are nothing but temporary illusions of an arrested development that in fact goes on and on, and just seems sometimes slow enough to make it possible for us to apply names to things, and to call a chair a chair without having to be afraid that it will lose its entirety while we speak.
- 28 The threshold concept is so important in thought, and generally in all scientific or artistic or even ethical procedures, as it makes a very simple fact its foundation: the constant change in perspectives and points of view that is too often neglected in systems of knowledge.

The narrative of the self

- 29 Reading Henri Bergson could help us in thinking the virtual 'I'. As the master conscience is opposed to the servant's conscience in Hegel's system, in Bergson or Husserl, we also find a twofold I on many occasions. There seems to be a recurring necessity to split the self into two (or more) entities, or even identities. One is usually the active one, and the other one the reflective one. One is the 'I' of action, that faces the everyday challenges, and the other one is the moral 'I', the one that questions the first about its actions and their moral foundations, religious or political beliefs, educational or other issues. There seems to be the desire to split our self into entities that have different functions or abilities. The self that goes out into the world and makes experiences is in Hegel's sense the 'servant conscience', the one that is obeying a 'master', to whom it inevitably returns. The master conscience asks the servant about the morality of his actions. Did he become better? Are his actions in harmony with his religious or moral beliefs?
- 30 This master conscience bears an obvious resemblance to the Freudian superego. But the master conscience is not the unconscious side of the self as in Freud's theory, here it is nothing but conscious. But still, when the servant goes out, where does the master stay?
- 31 The schizophrenic nature of philosophy - and also often of psychology - shows a reluctance to accept the permanent flow of things that change. Not only in visual

perception but also on a personal level. The whole identity idea reveals that mankind tends toward a fixed reality. When we talk about identity we always hear something like 'similarity' or 'staying the same'. The word identity indeed refers to the sameness but should not mean a fixed or rigid sameness that has to be maintained, or put into a box, or in a museum. Identity is ever changing and undergoes a great peril if it is arrested or fixed permanently on any given state. Every architectural prowess comes from creating something new, from realizing an idea, from moving forward, away from preservation and toward creation. The desire to keep something that already exists only prevents identity from building itself. Personal identity is constant change, as is also the identity of a nation or of a people. The difficulty does not lie in the definition of that identity but in the willingness to follow the change. When we try to initiate a method of thinking thresholds, we mean to encourage the development of this openness toward creative thinking and adjusting reality to perception, and perception to reality. When we think in terms of 'soglitude', there is not one state that prevails but we rather invoke the constantly evolving nature of things.

- 32 The self needs constant change in order to become itself. Edmund Husserl looked for a scientific foundation of consciousness and tried to achieve that through his phenomenological method. This method consisted in the suspension of judgment in order to allow the state or thing or object the possibility to emerge in its true nature, without the embarrassment of quality or color or any psychological undertone the conscience might add to it. Without the stain of psychological or temporary experience, Husserl was hoping to find the thing itself right before his mind's eye. This method called 'epoché', borrowed from the Ancient Greek skeptic philosophers called the Pyrrhonians, seems humanly impossible, as every experience is caught in precisely the psychological and temporary judgments that constitute the nature of every experience. But to extract the experience purely would mean, according to Husserl, having a clean look at consciousness itself with nothing in it, like looking at a mirror and just seeing the mirror (Husserl, 1986: 141).
- 33 This phenomenological desire meets instantly its own limitations. As Husserl's teacher Franz Brentano said "Every consciousness is consciousness of something". Virtually controlling consciousness means again that there are two of them: one that acts, and one that thinks. Brentano's phrase puts a big question mark on the possibility of 'extracting' pure consciousness, or to put it more clearly, 'reducing' mental states to brain states. The intentionality of consciousness, meaning that it is always directed at something makes it difficult or impossible to speak of something like 'pure' consciousness. The desire to explain consciousness in a scientific way means to extract it from its contents. And this is certainly another way to create another dualism, as separating consciousness from its content might not be possible, and would not bring philosophy any further. What Husserl intended was to depict the moment when an object becomes an intentional act, and this is where his thought is interesting. On the threshold of the objective and the subjective, we can locate something that becomes intentional, where the meaning of an event is aimed at. When we see a drawing that could have two meanings, like the famous rabbit-duck in Wittgenstein or a picture that can be viewed as a vase or a couple kissing, we experience this switch from one perspective to the other.¹² On the border of the two different perceptions of the same thing, Husserl tried to detect the formation of intentional meaning. At one time the pure act happens, and the content only fills in later.

- 34 This idea has an obvious threshold quality, but introduces at the same time a new separation in thought. When we suppose that there is a meaning that completes our perception of an object, we suppose perception as a quality that can even work if there is nothing to perceive. But as we can never be sure of that, the threshold that Husserl detected does not lead to pure consciousness or to a science of consciousness but to the necessity of acknowledging the interaction between all the points of view on the world. If we give priority to one of them, we fall into a certain kind of absolutism. Like the hypothesis that there are only neuronal states of the mind says at the same time that the animistic hypothesis would be the other option. If we act as if we had to choose among different radical points of view, not only do we fail to grasp reality according to our vital predispositions, we also risk falling into thought traps. As alternatives that need to be chosen like political parties or football teams only harm the thought development because they lock the thought process up and every discussion becomes a test if you still apply to the dogma in question.
- 35 The new materialism lies in the desire to explain everything by applying a cellular or microscopic lens to facts that need to be in fact on our human scale. The observation of the very small can hardly equal a state that includes so many other factors. What science can analyze in a laboratory must be projected into our everyday experience. And what is true for cells might well be true for the whole body, but we can't leave our daily experience out of all the factors that a lab cannot recreate completely. This is mostly true for consciousness, as we can never isolate consciousness from what a conscience perceives.
- 36 The cells, synapses and neurons can help us understand mental states but can hardly be taken as a replacement for understanding emotions, or memory or color perception. In a case study, Oliver Sacks describes Mr. I who has lost his perception of color completely after an accident. (Sacks, 1995: 1). He does not only see the world in "dirty shades of grey" as he calls it, but he also sees the world as constantly moving. A chaotic unstable world manifests in front of him. The most terrible aspect of this complete color-blindness is that his memory of color got lost as well. He cannot recreate the mental image of red for example, because he cannot perceive it anymore. This perceptive loss is linked to memory because memory and perception are not separate. When we remember something, it is always in connection to what is perceived presently. If the perceptive functions are altered, the whole personal history is changed immediately. **Israel Rosenfield** talks about this phenomenon in a relation to stabilizing reality and also our sense of self that is permanently recreated.
- 37 We shall not forget that human perception lies within life and that consciousness is coextensive to life, as Bergson so brilliantly pointed out. A brain in itself has no meaning, it needs the body in which it can exist and the reality system that comes with the body image.¹³
- 38 The new dualism can be detected in the fact that the self is no longer questioned in its traditional twofold state where one is acting and the other reflecting, but becomes more 'scientific' by including medical discoveries that tend to 'reduce' emotions and all kinds of mental states to synaptic junctions and electric links in the brain.¹⁴
- 39 This new way of "eluding" dualism by reducing every state to a cellular fact does not offer a very attractive option to the philosopher. What happened to the moral questions? What happened to the aesthetic feeling, or to any other feeling for that matter? Where did the

split self go that asked the other about his actions? As the brain is in itself indifferent to any intellectual or aesthetic content as we can read in Douglas Hofstadter (2000: 92) for instance, we face a new dilemma with this so-called progress. Fortunately, the recent discoveries on mirror neurons offer an attractive perspective, we might have sympathy and feeling for the pain of others installed in our neurons (see Rizzolatti and C. Sinigaglia 2008).

- 40 Patricia Churchland even called it the future of philosophy where thinking would be exhaustively explained in a way that metaphysics would be made obsolete and become another part of medicine (Churchland, 1998, 1994). This idea is surprising, as brain research has always been a valuable part of medicine, and has never included the destruction of thought until now. Reflecting on discoveries does not mean that there is a twofold state, only that we have different ways to cope with reality that we need to process in order to find our way in the world. To have what she calls mind/brain would, according to her, save philosophy from any animistic or religious thought, as the brain and the mind would be the same. But in my view, this is another way of engaging in radical thought. To have an alternative at the beginning that is not really working (mind or brain), will not be solved by choosing one of them or even reducing one to the other.
- 41 We face here an obvious lack of threshold thinking where one point of view should prevail. This argumentation leaves the human factor out, and although brain research and neuroscience contributes a great deal to our knowledge of perception, it should not be the only source of information. The material aspect of the brain has never been a viable option to explain consciousness exhaustively as it necessarily takes life out of the equation. The observation of cells, membranes, neurons and brain areas does not work on the scale of our daily experience. As all medical science, the discoveries in this domain should only be used in a greater scheme, where all the other points of view must also be considered. One can't study a brain in a vat, as a famous hypothesis suggested¹⁵. The brain is, as Bergson argued, mainly the organ of choice and orientation in space, and it needs the space and the body and the changing reality around it to be functional.
- 42 In a sense, the materialistic approach in neuroscience is similar to Husserl's idea of a pure consciousness: disconnected from any moral judgment, the perception of the world would be automatic and reveal the true nature of the world. But we must invoke Bergson here who stated that this whole endeavor emerged from a logical mistake. Mixing up the mind and the brain where one takes the place of the other is impossible because the brain mirrors the function of "repérage dans l'espace" and will indeed endanger consciousness when damaged but will not be able to replace or exhaustively account for conscious experience. Bergson does not solve the problem but with his idea that what is real becomes possible retroactively, and that consciousness might be clipped to the brain like a coat to a nail, we could think that reductionism will never be a solution. Ernst Mach may offer a possible option where the parallelism is invoked, where nothing is ever physical or psychological, but always is both.¹⁶
- 43 To help us think the dilemma we can therefore draw on threshold thinking where the self is neither two- nor manifold. There is not one self that goes out shopping and the other one that stays at home and asks the first one what he bought. The self and its consciousness are caught up in a dialectic interaction with everything. And if we ever have the illusion of stability it is the only way for us to cope with the changing chaotic reality we live in. In order to make experiences, like meeting the other or sensing time passing on a trip, the I must turn itself inside out. Which means it must become the

experience itself. We concentrate on something we do, and we do not know that we are concentrating on it. When reading or writing or watching a movie, we don't reflect on it at the same time, if we are absorbed by the activity. When concentration lapses, we become aware of the situation again. This changing in attention to our daily actions is mostly illustrated when an action has become so familiar that it is automatic. When we leave the house and turn the key, we often find ourselves returning, doubting that we really locked the door. This phenomenon happens because consciousness is no longer concentrated on the action, as it has become totally automatic. Consciousness does not need to pay attention to this reflex action that has become so familiar with its own repetition that it does not need concentration anymore. In order to reclaim our attention, something needs to change in the repetition. Schrödinger mentions this argument to explain how consciousness needs change to catch our attention. When everything is always exactly the same, even fractures of reality, like the locking of the house door, can become unconscious, and the consciousness only returns to it, when we are afraid we did not lock the door properly, or when on our usual path to work, suddenly there is construction on this part of the street. (Schrödinger, 1990: 159). The perceptual processes can become automatic by repetition, and Schrödinger suggests that our nervous functions might also have become automatic by repetition. Breathing and digesting might as well happen without the concurring of our consciousness because they don't need our attention anymore. But wouldn't that suggest that at one point all those functions have been conscious?

- 44 When Bergson talks about automatic behavior, he says that conscience retracts itself from the event of the action when it becomes a known fact by repetition.¹⁷ In this observation we find that consciousness is indeed necessary when we learn something new or when we start a new deed. When we concentrate on the fact so much that we are not conscious of this concentration itself we have become one with the event and have thus turned our self into the action.

The daily hero

- 45 This process of becoming one with the action is best illustrated in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, where the whole narrative process lies in the changing of perspectives. The self is in turns the author, the characters in the book, or the reader himself. The reading experience reveals how the self can be fractured without being harmed. The unity lies within the tendency outwards, the switching from a personal point of view to the action itself. The reading experience throws the reader back into his own daily life by mirroring the daily facts described in *Ulysses*, having undergone an unfolding of the sheer possibility of experience. In a fundamental way, the self literally goes out of himself. The I must annul itself in front of the world, only to become itself again every time it reflects on the experience. This recovering of the self forms the necessary threshold where our daily experience dwells. Every time we dive into action we must do it completely. Even without our concurring we are in the experience when we concentrate on something, we never live and reflect on it at exactly the same time. Which leads us to the dilemma of memory and perception. It is but always the same self that stays true to itself the whole time even if experience alienates it temporarily, like Alice through the looking-glass, the I stays firmly aground even if it can dissipate and maybe even just because of it. The self can disappear but not dissolve in the whole of the world.

- 46 The whole is in a way only the idea, the projection contained in every elementary particle. As Leibniz described the universe, there is no need to travel far, as everything is contained in the mirror image of every simple object. The traveling concentrates our search for a home, our desire to rest somewhere, to stop the time. When our home loses this quality for us, if the country the house is set in does not allow us to identify ourselves with it, when the history is too painful, and has not been overcome, the scars are still open, and the country seems to be something like a wasteland. As Wim Wenders shows in his movies, mostly in *Kings of the road*, a film of 1976 where two men, Robert and Bruno look for a home and find it on the road. The split Germany has numerous scars that leave the sensitive inhabitant with the desire to find a place they can call home. For Bruno, it is the truck in which he lives, and travels from one old cinema to the next to repair broken projectors. In **Isabelle Singer's** contribution, we read about the threshold as a moving line, where the search for stillness is countered by the salvation of the never ending quest. "It works fine to be alone", Bruno says, and he still takes Robert in, the guy who fails in his attempt to end his life by driving his car into a river. To rest would mean to give up, as the constant motion brings them together, and separates them again, still moving in a last sequence where the truck and the train cross paths.
- 47 In **Stephanie Polsky's** article, we learn about the state of Germany's pre-war ambiance, with Walter Benjamin's thoughts on Heroic Suicide. In the final years of his life, Walter Benjamin's critical project was centered on locating a threshold between Paris of the nineteenth century and Berlin of the twentieth that would reveal an affinity between two ages, which together set the parameters of modernity itself. He associated the rise of fascist terror with a breakdown of the threshold that separated the living from the dead. Benjamin became fascinated with charting the social narrative of the future dead, whether they existed in a celebrated state as it was the case with heroic suicide or as tragic disposable bodies that national socialism would eventually excise by deeming them unworthy of life. This analysis shows where the lack of thresholds in thought can lead to, all at once on a political level and in the development of thought. When suicide is considered the only escape and even called "heroic", the human condition gives in and abandons its autonomy to a unique thought. Often the mind cannot escape the tyranny and has to reply with an equally destructive thought.
- 48 In **Joseph Belletante's** article, the hero is not confronted with a terrible dilemma but rather has to face everyday life in a heroic manner. The modern day hero as shown in the television series is not shown as an exceptional being who is able to do things normal people wouldn't do, but on the contrary becomes the hero of his own life by dealing with everyday facts. The distance between hero and spectator is reduced, as the characters we watch in those shows become mirror images of our own lives and struggles. The daily experience can be watched on a virtually daily basis as heroes like *Ally McBeal* or the group of *Friends* make our own solitudes easier to bear. The television series gives us the opportunity of projecting our own story into the one we see evolving in the fragmented story that deploys itself in episodes. Like fractions of our own life, we follow the adventures of people who become almost like friends. **Joseph Belletante's** contribution shows a way of breaking free from this fundamental solitude by interacting virtually with images of a story.
- 49 The everyday life becomes the truly heroic. This celebration of everyday life is illustrated in *Ulysses*, where the seemingly unimportant facts put together create the story of life and turn everyone into a hero. The reader is confronted with the narrative of the self because

the style of *Ulysses* confronts the reader with his own perceptions, sensations and memories. When reading *Ulysses*, it is easy to replace Stephen's, Bloom's or Molly's thoughts with our own and have a fresh perspective on how we face our life. The philosophical importance of James Joyce's work lies in this dialectic process he engages in with his reader.

- 50 The identification with the hero is not to be confused with the desire to be like him or to accomplish what he accomplishes, but it rather lies in the familiarity of the experience. We don't look for character traits that are similar to our own, but we rather follow the story, and gain a little confidence for our own life. **Nour Dados** "unfolds the surface of the photograph" and tells us about the relationship between photographs and actual memory of events. By questioning the significance of what is shown in a photo, Nour follows the fold of a picture that conceals and reveals a hidden meaning. The threshold in the photograph is this dilemma between the present moment and the moment that we are transported to when we look at the picture. Where does our memory unfold, on this in-between surface that shows us a glimpse of the past and creates a new one at the same time? By folding the surface, we never quite reach the threshold, but catch a feeling of this undetermined nature between the gaze, the perception and the memory. Her paper draws on Benjamin, Sontag, Deleuze and Wittgenstein in an attempt to unfold the significance of a remembered moment that becomes a whole new aspect of reality through its own transformations.
- 51 When pictures or stories told in television series show us the space in between, where we constantly try to define ourselves, we are reminded of Walter Benjamin's definition of the threshold: the threshold is a zone. It needs to be distinguished from the 'border' as the threshold is about change, passage, the flow of events. Samuel Weber takes the definition Benjamin gives of the threshold to explain that the word threshold does not do justice to the term in the way Benjamin uses it. Benjamin says "The *Schwelle* must be radically distinguished from the limit or border [*Grenze*]. *Schwelle* is a zone. Change [*Wandel*], passage, flooding lie in the word 'swelling' (*schwellen*)."¹⁸ (quoted in Weber, 2008: 232-233). Weber states that Benjamin's usage of the word threshold calls for a new definition of the notion of place. The place is no longer delimitation or containment, but breaks open the distinction between inside and outside. Movement is no longer the changing of place, says Weber, but the container is in itself caught up in a movement, a tension. Benjamin's definition of a threshold will serve as a reading of the nineteenth century Paris. The theatre is an example of such a swelling site. It is "a zone of indefinite expansion and inflation reaching out to others on whose response it depends" (Weber, 2008: 236). When Benjamin claims the threshold nature of places, we find the in between nature of the encounter in Martin Buber's thought.
- 52 Where the place calls out for a response in the other, Buber sees the encounter in itself as a meeting in-between. In *I and Thou*, the relationship is to be found in neither of the two constituent parts but in their meeting, halfway. More precisely, the threshold unfolds in the desire of the two parts, where the meeting really occurs. The threshold signifies the indetermination, the lack of certitude and the refusal of a fixed or rigid reality. When one employs his whole being toward the encounter of his Thou and implies in this Thou the being of the whole universe he will find the in-between that one cannot search for, says Buber. (Buber, 2006: 119) The solitude is overcome when we throw ourselves into the world completely, and thereby become, in a way, our You¹⁸. That way, we abandon ourselves completely to the experience of the world and the mirror breaks and lets us

into a world we do not comprehend, but without being affected by its chaotic nature. Like Alice, we become this world and evolve in it, mostly unharmed by its transformations, as we evolve in harmony with them. Like the characters in *Ulysses*, we turn ourselves inside out and become the experience; sensations, perceptions and memories create together our own story. The whole creation is restored by this small flight, where once there was nothing now is the whole world. The responsibility of the harmony in all possible worlds is bestowed on us. In Jewish Kabala, man restores this harmony by his actions and his interactions with others. When Alice enters the mirror world, she leaves her world behind her but preserves it at the same time; the points of view coexist because there is no other time, only a different perception of time passing slower or faster depending on the adopted viewpoint. We have a perspective on the world without ever forgetting that there is a multitude of other perspectives, hidden by precisely the one we adopt, but that don't disappear completely. The next moment, when the angle has changed, we are aware of the multiple viewpoints that the world has to offer.

Turning the self inside out

- 53 The narrative of the self is vacillating on the border of self-awareness, where the self becomes the “hero” of his own life, and the unfolding of the self in its own story. If we introduce Hegelian dialectics in this process, the thoughts about experience of the self become more concrete. Where the experience takes place, the self disappears momentarily, and the experience itself takes its place, the self is exteriorized (*entäußert*)¹⁹ in the experience. The author who describes the perceptive threshold by turning the self inside out in this alienation process is James Joyce. In *Ulysses*, the place disappears into the experience. We can't insist enough on the Hegelian proximity that lies within Joyce's narrative. The particular point of view of each character melts into the experience in such a way that the reader often fails to realize exactly which point of view is considered. This mixing up of viewpoints shows how the self gets into the experience and dissolves in it temporarily, only to find momentary self-awareness again. This becoming one with experience reduces the gap between the world and the manner in which the world is experienced. As the self creates its own narrative by switching from one point of view to the other, the story that he tells about himself becomes in turns an objective state of the world and a subjective perception of the world.
- 54 Joyce turns the inside experience toward the outside by multiplying the points of view and letting them communicate in the mind of the reader. The experience is diffracted into many characters that live an ordinary day, a June 16th 1904. All these characters are penetrated by the mind of the reader who imperceptibly moves from Stephen to Bloom to Molly, sometimes without even noticing it.²⁰ Passing from one fictional consciousness to another is not obvious and can give the reader the impression of being all the characters at once. This way, he can recreate while reading his own everyday experience thanks to the multiplication of perspectives. Here, the reader is not asked to identify with one character or another, but he relives through his reading the auto-narrative experience of his own life. The characters and their experiences appear like a paradigm of an exteriorized experience the individual makes his. The reading experience becomes the narrative activity when he finds his own experience again, the reader plunges into his daily life with a new outlook, a new perspective.

- 55 *Ulysses* is fundamental to the idea of 'soglitude' because he shows an alternative to the twofold self we addressed earlier. The self becomes himself through change, through adopting different viewpoints. It is not the Cartesian self that fixes itself in reality by thinking. On the contrary, it is this unfolding into experience and the recovery of the self-awareness in a second movement that constitutes the creation of what we call self. It is first a movement outwards and then a momentary return. What Joyce adds to Hegelian dialectics is the fiction.²¹ The self does not only live in this constant movement inwards and outwards, but also through the communication he establishes with its own experience, and the way he tells it to himself and to others. The auto-narration is an important part of this self-creation, as is shown already by Bergson's discoveries about perception and memory going side by side. The way we live and the way we perceive the world becomes our own narrative. Alice tells her whole adventures to herself, and this certainly explains why she remains relatively sane in an upside down world. When the communication within ourselves is intact, the relation to the world is always put in perspective, and the coherence of the narration is permanently tested when there is an inner voice that tells the story.
- 56 The idea of a self that is created by its own everyday experience and does not stay confined inside his own world but goes out into the experience itself might go against the Cartesian tradition that states that the 'I' creates itself by its own thoughts. We can identify in the threshold thinking a certain relation to Leibniz and the unfolding of the monad, only in Leibniz' system, the whole evolution is predetermined. In the soglitude, we don't want to state such a direction, as it is indeed impossible to prove if the events that happen are predetermined or not. What we also find in Joyce is the desire of the self to unfold into the world and return to himself in a second movement. We will find the Hegelian inspiration also in Goethe, and maybe even more strongly, when we will try to elucidate the temporary aspect of the threshold thinking.
- 57 For now, we can phrase the question of the self in a new way, and maybe even question the necessity of a twofold I. The double aspect of the self where one is contemplating and the other one acting might not be needed in the sense of a logical development because it needs to be in constant evolution. The self must undergo numerous changes in order to become, but these changes do not necessarily have a goal, and will not produce the self at some point. The I is in fact nothing but these changes.

Points of view

- 58 The passage from within to an outside defines a liminary state through the possibility of exchange. The passage leads to an encounter with the world and with the other. The idea of soglitude springs from dynamics, transformation, becoming and the border of two incompatible states happening at the same time. Most of all, the threshold thinking method lies in the possibility of changing viewpoints between one state and another. The 'soglitude' takes its inspiration from the multiple perspectives of the world that vary constantly. The viewpoint is a recurring theme in the contributions to this issue. **Aurélien Maurin** talks about the adolescent's point of view that shuns the eye of the adult. In **Sylvie Castets'** text, we learn about the variation of the viewpoint on the threshold of contemplation. Works of art represent thresholds in a double sense. They question the surface of representation to become the place of presentation. Becoming other involves here the passage from the spectator to the painter who often uses the canvas as a means

to represent himself and the threshold is not only on the painted surface but takes the spectator on a journey. From Masaccio, a fifteenth century Italian painter, all through the performance of the Stalker group, the threshold is not only on the painting or in the work of art as a representation, it is the work of art itself that is the threshold. Separating the space of representation from the space in which we move, the threshold becomes itself a moving image of transformation.

- 59 On a logical level, the **Jason Carter's** article explains the philosophical foundation of the notion of threshold. Always on the verge of the other, a notion is never devoid of its boundaries. Every definition is in relation to its negation, and thereby to another space to which it refers. Jason Carter explains the logical foundations of Hegel's dialectics with its origins in Aristotle. What Jason calls conceptual accompaniment signifies the double nature of the threshold of binding and separating that always refers to something that is not strictly contained in the definition. This suppleness of thought creates the whole dialectic of Hegel's system and turns it into an opening. The negation is not only what is not, it is also everything a concept could be and therefore opens to all its possibilities. The concept always lies on the border of its own definition and exceeds its boundaries.
- 60 The point of view and its variations come up again in **Marcin Stawiarski's** contribution on the works of British contemporary author Gabriel Josipovici. First, the symbolic importance of liminary spaces is stressed in indetermination and unaccomplished states. It is the narrative technique itself that becomes a threshold, when the author becomes in turn narrator and a character of the book. The characters themselves are constantly changing and rewriting their own story. Inspired by Karlheinz Stockhausen's music and Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades, **Marcin Stawiarski** takes the reader from one moving space to another, like in Japanese homes where walls are made of paper, and can be rearranged at ease.
- 61 Among the references concerning the changing of perspective, we shall include Edmund Husserl and his idea of "retention". Every instant of our perception contains something of the previous one therefore it is never something totally new that appears in front of our mind's eye. Each moment also has a "fringe" around the attention we concentrate on one particular event. The threshold allows us to formulate the binding and separating of different viewpoints, but it also gives a fundamental importance to the way separate events are connected. Something we referred to earlier in William James' work, we find again in Husserl when he takes into account the conceptual movement the mind takes around an object in order to have the idea, or intention as Husserl calls it, of the object. We learn from this tendency toward a global view, that every perception has a contour, an accompaniment that shows the way to another perspective, to a new way of seeing the thing or event in question. We always consider something from a certain angle, but we are perfectly aware of the fact that there are other perspectives on this same thing (Husserl, 1980: 304).
- 62 When the focus is not sharp, the contour appears, and we even have difficulty focusing directly on an object as it can become blurred or disappear altogether as in the episode where Alice tries to focus on an object on a shelf and the moment she looks at it, it vanishes, whereas all the other shelves seem full. "The shop seemed to be full of all manner of curious things - but the oddest part of it all was that, whenever she looked hard at any shelf, to make out exactly what it had on it, that particular shelf was always empty, though the others round it were crowded as full as they could hold" (Carroll, 2001: 211). In a note to this passage, Martin Gardner adds that this difficulty of looking straight

at something has been compared to the impossibility of pinning down the precise location of an electron in its path around the nucleus of an atom. As the eye moves with something that is slightly outside the field of vision, we can never see it clearly (Ibid: 211). In a single perception, there is not only a multiplicity of other viewpoints that are hidden by the one that is adopted there is also the difficulty of identifying exactly what it is we see.

- 63 In Nelson Goodman, we read about a 'puzzle about perception'. In his book *Ways of Worldmaking*, Goodman presents the relationship between art, science and perception in surprising similarities. Each system is linked to another by imagination bridges, that we often fail to notice. When a professor looks at his audience, he can fail to notice a particular person in this audience, although he states that he had looked at everyone in the room. But the general picture of an event can hide particular aspects, although they actually appear in it. (Goodman, 1978: 71).
- 64 Our different points of view melt into one where all the other perspectives have not disappeared completely but are only hidden by the one that is chosen at the present time. If we had an absolute point of view, it would be what Thomas Nagel referred to as the 'view from nowhere', a perspective that the universe would have on itself and include the angle of everyone in it, like Leibniz' monads that have a complete view of the universe in their own specific way (Nagel, 1993: 152 f.).
- 65 In Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of perception*, we read about the modification of points of view with technical means, for example with glasses that do not invert the retinal image and thus give the impression to live 'upside down' (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 282). The image that hits the retina is not the accurate reality the body moves in. The person learns to adjust his movements to the new environment. In order to wash his hands, he needs to invert the coordination of his movements. Merleau-Ponty analyzes the importance of differentiating the different viewpoints. For the intellectualist for instance, there is no relativity of the viewpoint of up and down²², as they are not relative but absolute. The orientation in space could then only be observed from *nowhere* (Merleau-Ponty, 1945:286). From an absolute point of view, up and down are therefore not opposites and the intellectualist cannot adopt one particular view because each perspective would be equal to another. The personal experience and the importance of a particular point of view that is included in a whole that we can never grasp with our perception is nevertheless determinant for the threshold thinking, because we need to acknowledge that everyone has its own particular perspective on the world, and only that way, the possibilities that are inherent to every single moment become apparent.²³

Time of the threshold

When to the moment I shall say
 "Linger awhile! So fair thou art!"
 Then mayst thou fetter me straightway,
 Then to the abyss will I depart!
 Then may the solemn death-bell sound,
 Then from thy service thou art free,
 The index then may cease its round,
 And time be never more for me! (Goethe, 2005: 1700-1710)

- 66 The permanence of the perfection of an instant was for Faust the sign of an accomplished life. When he will be able to ask the instant to remain, he would be ready to die because it

would mean that he has succeeded to live his life to the fullest. As a man who despairs in pure knowledge he asks Mephistopheles to show him what life can be like. It is in order to experience the joy of life that Faust accepts the pact with the devil and is ready to give up his soul if the devil succeeds in making him love life.

- 67 The instant, real or represented, appears to us like a photograph, a reality frozen for eternity. The perfection of a child's face, of a moment spent in good company, of a picture, a color or a tree makes us believe in perfect moments, moments that stop the time. They are so wonderful that we want to tell them "Bide here! You are so beautiful" as Faust described to Mephistopheles the perfection of the joy of life. If we want to make the happiness last, we have reached the highest point of pleasure.
- 68 Or haven't we? It seems to be quite the contrary. When the beauty of an instant makes us let it go lightly, confident that the next one will be just as wonderful, if not better, we might not have reached the romantic goal depicted by Goethe's Faust, but we are closer to a stoic ideal in harmony with time. The time that passes, that flows differently depending on our mood. Heidegger described boredom as prolonging the time unbearably (Heidegger, 1992: 190 f.). On the other hand, slowing down every moment when we are late for an appointment can make us more efficient and precise and even gain time. Time is our fundamental frame, and it is our task to find the right rhythm to live in accordance with it (Bergson, 1999b: 5).
- 69 If we seize the moment in an Epicurean way, if we succeed in living the present moment exactly the way it is, we have found happiness. The absence of passions, as the Stoics called it, is harmony with the event that happens and the way we react to it. This does not mean that we should refuse to act and accept fatality in a helpless way, but it is this constant search of harmony between the event and our reaction to it that constitutes our free will. Often events happen without our concurring, we can be sister or mother-in-law without having made any decision in that sense. Between fatality and action, another breach opens and makes us think an accordance that is certainly never reached but always desired.
- 70 Even if we might think the instant is a figure of time, as it is the illusion of a fixed moment that made us invent the camera, the instant might well rather be a figure of eternity. We pursue the ideal of seizing and keeping a happy moment for fear there might not be another one. But what we can learn from threshold thinking, is that this state "in-between" is something we don't even have to try to keep as we are constantly in it anyway. No matter what the "next" instant will be like, we are in it constantly. Regrets about past instants concentrate on the content of the instant that appears better than another but the instant in his pure nature is always present, always on the threshold of a new one.
- 71 The instant can be immobilized, the *Augenblick*²⁴ that Kierkegaard speaks of. The eternity contained in the moment depicts the despair in the lack of possibilities and turns the moment into the stopping of time because it is where eternity and time meet (Kierkegaard, 1990: 253). Wanting to keep a moment can provoke terrible pain because when we try to cling to something that fades away, great despair will take a hold on us. The moment is a figure of threshold thinking because it is eternally present and eternally passing at the same time. The paradox of a permanent state that passes is at the core of our life. As the desire to keep the moment might appear as supreme happiness but is at the same time a preference to die instead of moving on to the next moment. This is how

we understand why Faust says that he is ready to die once he will feel the desire to make the moment stay. The perfect moment cannot stay, when we understand the moment as a figure of time, it can only bring disappointment, because the perfect moment can only be the last one, where there will be no new one.

- 72 We need to examine what it is we are trying to keep when we want the moment to remain. What is here and now is the present, and this permanent state of the present moment does not keep us from distinguishing between one moment and another. The distinction of present (*das Gegenwärtige*) and the now (*das Jetzt*) stresses an opposition, like a strain on the relation to time we need to stand up against (*gegen*). The now is maintained, as the French indicates with *maintenant*.
- 73 Eugène Minkowski stresses the difference between the present and actuality. The instant stops duration and could not contain change, the moment is in relation to change as in can be compared to another moment that precedes or follows. The present is different from the 'present moment' because the present tense is made of many events that build together our actuality (*die Gegenwart*). Minkowski says that the present has duration in itself. It cannot be defined precisely, it has borders but these limits are fluent, supple. The present can be 'the present moment' as well as 'today' or 'the present era'. All these forms of present imbricate one into the other and still say subordinate to the lived present (*le présent vécu*) (Minkowski, 1995: 32)

Alice, a constant on the threshold

“‘Come, there’s no use in crying like that!’ said Alice to herself rather sharply. ‘I advise you leave off this minute!’ She generally gave herself very good advice (though she very seldom followed it), and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears into her eyes; and once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing against herself, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people” (Carroll, 2001:18).

- 74 Alice is not afraid of change, and even crosses the border of the mirror fearlessly, confident that she will find herself again on the other side. This confidence and strong identity we will try to explain here with the threshold theme.
- 75 Alice talks to herself the whole story long. She reassures herself, scolds herself, gives herself advice and is even happy that no one (else) is around when she ventures to say complicated words. This auto-narration might save her from becoming crazy and at the same time allows her to hold on to her identity. She undergoes dramatic changes. At the beginning of the story, she falls into a hole and then has to endure changes of size that make her grow long and lean after tasting a cake and then become a minuscule little girl because she wants to have access to a hidden garden. But she stays the same through all those dramatic changes, and is not even affected by her trip through the mirror. She does not explode or become her own anti-matter. She does not enter the mirror out of vanity, like Narcissus, but out of curiosity. And this never questioned audacity might save her from all the harm she might encounter. She remains a constant that changes in an imperceptible way, and always according to the circumstances. She never fits perfectly into either world, and therefore moves freely from one to the other.
- 76 In **Antonio Ochoa’s** text, the different points of view are examined in the works of Angela Carter. This contemporary British writer explored the ambiguity of existential states. The

status of the in-between can be found on the border of human identity, where issues of morals and beauty eventually question the irreversible passing of time and the human desire to control it. Angela Carter was also fascinated by the Alice stories as it shows how borders can be crossed and identities lost and found again. In **Antonio Ochoa's** text it is the transformation that is questioned. The writings of Angela Carter explore the ambiguity of existential states where objects or subjects are not confined to a defined identity. Carter uses cultural symbols to explore what she calls the «subterranean» areas of human experience. She sees this as a way to access the primary impulses and desires that secretly move our conscious behavior. The importance of ambiguity is the possibility of contact with different states or spaces of being. In Angela Carter's writings the importance of limits and thresholds, whether these are mirrors or characters, reflect Carter's preoccupation with the interconnection between different modes of existence. The mirror theme is recurrent here as it shows a passage to a different world as well as our own identity, different everytime we look into the mirror.

- 77 The mirror as border and passage to another place emerges in the text of **Mylène Durand**, a poetess herself, that describes the world of two Quebecois poets Saint-Denys Garneau and Marie Uguay who struggled their whole lives with pain and found in the mirror a wonderland that made them look at brighter possibilities, a land of transformations and borders, where life becomes bearable when the everyday fight seems too difficult. The threshold is here the sign of victory over pain and through poetry and the activity of writing in these in-between spaces that they try to explore. The poets catch a glimpse of hope, a path toward life, on the threshold state that always leaves the passage open.
- 78 Alice is the symbol of the passing through time in the work of **Sophie Gosselin** and **David Gé Bartoli** who explore a new way of thinking history and memory by looking at the clock from profile. What they call 'infraphysique' shows a path through time where new art forms and new ways of thinking are explored. Time does not have to be chronological, it can open to numerous understandings of time and perception that show a different way of repetition and combining of known events. In the work they present here, 'mémoire vive', we can catch a glimpse of a way to think time that is on the border of an artistic and a philosophical approach to knowledge and perception. A way to think thresholds in a creative manner, always surprising and inspiring, Sophie and David try to initiate a new understanding of passage.
- 79 In **Jean-Paul Galibert's** essay on the border of solitude, we read about the poetic significance of the border. His text questions the threshold and asks if we can really remain on the border, as the threshold signifies the fundamental loneliness that we can never be saved from. The threshold is dramatic here, and assigns the individual to its own place. But the borders are also moving and we can reach out for the other who is always with us in this fundamental solitude.
- 80 In **Sheng-Mei Ma's** 'Death Rehearsal', the threshold is the border of the bearable. In an exploration of a particular painful experience, this essay takes the reader to the borders of unknown dramatic events.
- 81 **Sandrine Lascaux** takes us on a trip to the images of the soul, moving grey shades that ask questions about our choices and fears.
- 82 Those poetic journeys will conclude this issue on soglitude, and open at the same time toward a next issue that will be dedicated to poetry and theatre, literature and film. This time, we introduce a method into threshold thinking by offering a large variety of

domains where the passage, transformation and change offer new perspectives. We want to offer the reader a first exploration of the threshold and remind him that the threshold is our home, a home that is always here for us, yet always changing. Always offering a new outlook on a reality we create by unfolding into it.

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NOTES

1. Let's think here of the brilliant scene in Woody Allen's *Deconstructing Harry* (1997) when the character played by Robin Williams suddenly slips out of focus while shooting a scene. The character really is out of focus as the other characters don't see him clearly whereas everything else stays perfectly clear. Woody Allen makes this superb idea of course a psychological problem of the person that asks for medical help, and tries to find psychological reasons for his blurredness. This experiment shows how absurd it would be for us to face a sudden change of focus or a blurred focus in an otherwise familiar environment.

2. "Prenez le sentiment le plus simple, supposez-le constant, absorbez en lui la personnalité tout entière : la conscience qui accompagne ce sentiment ne pourra rester identique à elle-même pendant deux moments consécutifs, puisque le moment suivant contient toujours, en sus du précédent, le souvenir que celui-ci lui a laissé. Une conscience qui aurait deux moments identiques serait une conscience sans mémoire. Elle périrait et renaîtrait donc sans cesse" (Bergson, 1999b: 183).
3. See Rosenfield, 1994.
4. In Hofstadter and Dennett 2000: 391.
5. "Let us use the words psychic overtone, suffusion, or fringe to designate the influence of a faint brain-process upon our thought, as it makes it aware of relations and objects but dimly perceived." (James, 1890: 258)
6. "Tout au plus certains souvenirs confus, sans rapport à la situation présente, débordent-ils les images utilement associées, dessinant autour d'elles une frange moins éclairée qui va se perdre dans une immense zone obscure" (Bergson, 1994: 90).
7. *Hating Bergson*- a book project on the absence of Bergson's thoughts in neuroscience I am working on.
8. "Je propose en conséquence de nommer rites préliminaires les rites de séparation du monde antérieur, rites liminaires les rites exécutés pendant le stade de marge, et rites postliminaires les rites d'agrégation au monde nouveau. » (Van Genep, 1908 : 27)
9. "Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!" (Carroll, 2001: 174)
10. See the contribution to this issue of **Israel Rosenfield** on how the brain stabilizes the world with colors.
11. The names of the contributors to the present issue appear in **bold** in this article.
12. See **Nour Dados'** contribution for the 'rabbit-duck' in Wittgenstein and the changing perspectives on the threshold of perception.
13. On this subject see Israel Rosenfield in *The strange, familiar and forgotten*.
14. See Patricia Churchland or Daniel Dennett for this view on things, where we can read that "the mind IS the brain" (Dennett, 1991: 33).
15. Hilary Putnam's 'Brain in a vat' experiment where a mad scientist takes the brain out of the skull and puts it into a vat and connects it to a supercomputer that would provide all the stimuli a brain would normally receive. This experiment should prove that we can never know if our experiences are real. When we examine the importance of the body image, we cannot conclude from this experiment that our reality is altogether an illusion, as we need a body to interact with it. (See Rosenfield, 1992: 139)
16. See footnote 21.
17. "il me paraît donc vraisemblable que la conscience, originellement immanente à tout ce qui vit, s'endort là où il n'y a plus de mouvement spontané, et s'exalte quand la vie appuie vers l'activité libre. Chacun de nous a d'ailleurs pu vérifier cette loi sur lui-même. Qu'arrive-t-il quand une de nos actions cesse d'être spontanée pour devenir automatique ? La conscience s'en retire" (Bergson, 1993: 11).
18. Or Thou, the common translation of the term in Martin Buber's text. Hilary Putnam (2008) criticizes this translation in *Jewish Thought as a Guide to Life*. He argues that translation the German "Du" as "Thou" takes the whole idea of Buber's work into another dimension. As the ancient word for "You" gives it an unwanted metaphysical connotation. Buber actually refers to You as the person we know, love and address as You.
19. This temporary loss of self explains the translation of the German *Entäußerung* by "alienation", namely in texts inspired by Marx.
20. "The traditional novel is dominated by the point of view of the omniscient author who penetrates the soul of the characters, explains them, defines them and judges them [...], the

“dramatic” technique eliminates this continuous presence of the author and substitutes to his point of view the one of the characters and of the events themselves.” (Eco, 1965: 221, personal translation).

21. For a Hegelian interpretation of Joyce, see Sheldon Brivic, *The Veil of Signs*. “The idea that the self is formed by a movement outward followed by a movement inward, and even the idea that it consists of these movements, were available to Joyce in the famous preface to Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* [...] it is just this unrest that is the self.” (Brivic, 1991: 54)

22. About upwards and downwards, we read in Ernst Mach that the temporal sense of our perceptions seems to be more important than the spatial sense. He says that the order of words is more important to our comprehension than the way in which space is oriented (Mach, 1991: 201). The anachronism of cause and effect that happens frequently in a temporary reversed order shows that we cannot trust a unilateral arrow of time. Mach’s thoughts seem to fit well into the soglitude approach, as he states that the analysis of a fact should never focus on the physiological or the physical exclusively but concentrates in fact on the same phenomenon from different viewpoints. Every scientific analysis is therefore a question of points of view, what Mach called the parallelism principle of the physical and the psychological (Mach, 1991: 50).

23. In *The view from nowhere*, Thomas Nagel develops the implications of an objective self. We should include our subjective point of view in the somewhat objective point of view of the universe. The movement toward objectivity creates a fissure inside the self that needs to see the world at the same time from his own point of view and from nowhere (Nagel, 1993 : 105).

24. *Augenblick*: moment, literally “glance of the eye”

RÉSUMÉS

‘Soglitude’ is an invitation to acknowledge the existence of thresholds in thought. A threshold in thought designates the indetermination, the passage, the evolution of every state the world is in. The creation we add to it, and the objectivity we suppose, on the border of those two ideas lies our perceptive threshold. No state will ever be permanent, and in order to stress the temporary, fluent character of the world and our perception of it, we want to introduce a new suitable method to think change and transformation, when we acknowledge our own threshold nature. The contributions gathered in this special issue come from various disciplines: anthropology, philosophy, critical theory, film studies, political science, literature and history. The variety of these insights shows the resonance of the idea of threshold in every category of thought. We hope to enlarge the notion in further issues on physics and chemistry, as well as mathematics. The articles in this issue introduce the method of threshold thinking by showing the importance of the in-between, of the changing of perspective in their respective domain. The ‘Documents’ section named INTERSTICES, includes a selection of poems, two essays, a philosophical-artistic project called ‘infraphysique’, a performance on thresholds in the soul, and a dialogue with Israel Rosenfield. This issue presents a kaleidoscope of possible threshold thinking and hopes to initiate new ways of looking at things.

For every change that occurs in reality there is a subjective counterpart in our perception and this needs to be acknowledged as such. What we name objective is reflected in our own personal perception in its own personal manner, in such a way that the objectivity of an event might altogether be questioned. The absolute point of view, the view from “nowhere”, could well be the projection that causes dogmatism. By introducing the method of thinking thresholds into a

system, be it philosophical, artistic or scientific, it tends to free itself from rigid or fixed models and accepts change and development as the fundamental nature of things. Thinking thresholds as a method of thought progress cannot be done in a single process and therefore asks for participation in its proper nature. The soglitude springs namely from the acceptance of a multitude of points of view, as it is shown by the numerous contributions we present in this issue 'Seuils, Thresholds, Soglitudes' of *Conserveries mémorielles*.

INDEX

Keywords : change, memory, mirror, narrative, perception, point of view, self, soglitude, threshold

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est docteur en philosophie et a soutenu sa thèse *Création et participation : le monde au seuil de l'être* en 2003 à Paris IV- Sorbonne. Elle a traduit *La vie de Jésus* de G.W.F. Hegel (Vrin, 2009) en collaboration avec Ari Simhon, avec qui elle travaille, ainsi qu'avec Jean-Marie Lardic, sur une autre traduction de Hegel *Les leçons de la Logique (1817)*. Elle s'intéresse à la question de la réception de la pensée de Bergson dans la phénoménologie et les neurosciences (<http://hatingbergson.blogspot.com/>), thème sur lequel elle prépare un livre. Elle a longtemps collaboré au quotidien autrichien *Salzburger Nachrichten* en s'occupant de la section philosophie du journal. Aujourd'hui, elle s'intéresse surtout au développement de la pensée des seuils, la « Soglitude », dont le présent numéro de *Conserveries Mémorielles* sera le premier volet.