

Thresholds

A Journal of Exploratory Research and Analysis

The more interesting changes in life take place at the thresholds of our experience. Something distinctively foreign intrudes into our space of contentment, awakening a sense of urgency we neither recognize nor have the wherewithal to understand. But in time we will, because it has arrived, and our lives are now bound up in this new form of multiplicity. Understanding ourselves in relation to the strangeness of things-to-come challenges us to come to grips with our own development through time, and to consider the role thresholds play in the course of our lives.

Nothing is more sacrosanct than the privilege of firm ground in the territory of language that grants authority to powers of expression. When language is tampered with, we get uncomfortable. When words stop meaning what they used to mean as we grew into them, we get uneasy and disoriented. When the very syntax is ruptured and new logical patterns emerge, structures of normativity are threatened. Similarly, when community-building practices step beyond traditional forms of social interaction, tensions arise in the field of the familiar.

Our first two articles look closely at recent developments in our contemporary “on-line” interface. These developments in how people connect represent challenges to normal social practices, often in subtle exclusionary ways intended to privilege special comrade and insulated privacy within a functional context of social interaction operating outside the norm. What are we to make of these new environments and their oddly foreign ways of connecting? What sense can we make of these “strange” thresholds emerging from the fabric of our own culture?

Questions of identity also pose interesting challenges in regard to thresholds. We offer three articles on identity reflecting distinctly varied pathways for analysis. In the first case, we look to fictional constructions for

perspective on questions of meaning and purpose, and along the way we confront new questions concerning the basic makeup of our lives, including where we might be heading in our development as human beings. In a second case, we look to history, to see what recent humans have allowed themselves to become under social and cultural pressures to conform to political agendas and priorities serving the interests of a privileged group. We look for clues to what went wrong, and for how we might avoid falling into similar patterns in the future. In the third case, we travel a path of theoretical reflection, in this case, philosophical analysis, to explore what it might mean to have an identity in contemporary life, or better, how we might come to think about ourselves differently. In each case, we are introduced to a facet of social construction both foreign and familiar to our own makeup, in which something important is at stake, not only for ourselves, but for cultures-to-come.

These articles direct our attention to the *margins of normalization*, to challenging spaces of multiplicity where questions reveal unthinkable *difference* in the midst of what is unimaginably the *same*. Questions posed in this manner challenge us to think in the *margins of difference*. The goal is to expand our perspective, by revealing silent facets of our surrounding world that are calling for our attention: *thresholds ripe for expanding the scope of life that matters to us*.

Exploratory research and analysis is the key to opening the universe a little more. The contributions to follow offer opportunities for reflective thought and further lines of study regarding phenomena that speak to us from the margins of our personal, human, social, political and institutional involvements. We trust you will enjoy these exploratory excursions into some uncanny regions of our experience! In the process, we invite you to rethink your relation to thresholds.

HONORS PROGRAM COMMUNITY STATEMENT

The Honors Program at CSU Stanislaus is a community of scholars bound together by vital principles of academic openness, integrity, and respect. Through focused study and practice involving exploration and discovery across a variety of disciplines, the Honors Program upholds these principles of scholarly engagement and provides students with the necessary foundations for further research and inquiry.

Our interdisciplinary curriculum is integral to this work, and is intended to facilitate creative understanding of the irreducible complexities of contemporary life and knowledge.

Personal and intellectual honesty and curiosity are essential to this process. So, too, is critical openness to difficult topics and respect for different perspectives, values and disciplines. The Honors Program aims to uphold these virtues in practice, in principle, and in community with one another.

Honors Program Advisory Committee

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