

Looking for ‘the common’ in the process of learning: Charles S. Peirce’s community of enquiry and Fernand Deligny’s ‘Arachnean’

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Abstract. This article is an attempt to articulate Charles S. Peirce’s ‘community of enquiry’ and the philosophy developed by Fernand Deligny through his long-term work with autistic people. Following Peirce, knowledge is an indefinite, never accomplished, process, increasing with a plurality of voices. Deligny’s perspective allows us to expand the Peircean notion of the community of enquiry and include modes of enquiry beyond the symbolic order. Through notions such as ‘wander lines’, which make visible shared territory without language, and ‘Arachnean’, a network without subjects, Deligny provides a radical conceptual framework for understanding modes of existence and bodily practices beyond the symbolic realm. He proposes the possibility of non-symbolic thought based on indexicality: it is neither speech nor gaze that makes up the common, but shared territory. These two complementary lines of thought provide the philosophical foundation for more-than-human participatory research.

Keywords: community of enquiry; Charles Sanders Peirce; Fernand Deligny; milieu; network; indexicality; neurodivergence; more-than-human

Introduction

The current climate crisis and the growing cleavage between members of the scientist community on one side, so-called “society” on the other side, and other, voiceless, living beings as a background to the discussion is the most poignant lesson telling us that we have missed out ‘the common’ when modelling our institutions of knowledge and their apparatuses. We have also largely neglected the learning part in this, at the expense of the imperative of proving our ideas true. Yet it is through the process of learning, not receiving knowledge, that we get to own problems and make others apt to respond to them, too.

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The main premise of this article is that knowledge production and, specifically, understanding ecosystems and the human place in them can no longer be accomplished by a single human mind abstracted from the body and phenomenologically observable events by way of reasoning based on doubt and mistrust. Charles Sanders Peirce's ideal of the community of enquiry provides us with postulates that are strikingly relevant when we look at them from the position of today's, my own, and the reader's entanglements in the academic world. That the very concept of reality involves an open community is the most radical postulate of all.

Communities of enquiry comprised of both professional researchers and participants from outside academia are not a new thing, especially in environmental humanities where non-humans are considered research partners (see Bastian *et al.* 2018), or in community-based interdisciplinary research projects aimed at gaining understanding of a specific environmental problem by combining natural sciences, arts, humanities and indigenous knowledges.

However, the participatory premise does not guarantee fair representation. This is, I argue, not only due to the persisting epistemological privilege of certain voices, but also because public knowledges are based on epistemic regimes that are tied to language and neurotypical rhetorical patterns. What happens when the community of enquiry includes beings and ways of coming to knowledge that either do not operate with language, or trouble the expectations of symbolic orders?

Participatory research models pose the problem of commensurability and reduction of different modes of enquiry. If some worlds are partly incommensurable, as in Jakob von Uexküll's (2010: 72) example of snail versus human temporality, how can we learn together?

'The common', a notion with which this article engages thoroughly, has gained layers of meaning in philosophy, social and political sciences: from 'the common' as the foundation for social organization, through 'commons' as shared resources accessible to all, to 'commoning' as resistance to neo-liberal orders focused on property and profit-making. My articulation echoes these concepts but follows more strictly the word's common sense. This approach focuses on that which is shared, yet without evoking similarity or universality, as its ground is difference. 'The common' does not belong to the natural order, but is something grown and nurtured together. It is what a relation affords, and, most importantly, it is generative. 'The common' originates in making experience of the world together, in inhabiting the same space. In the context of knowledge-making, it does not imply the same intentions and a single, agreed-upon, naturalized fact as the

result of an enquiry, but intertwined actions driven by curiosity that contribute to making up worlds accessible to all participants in the process.

The discussions on knowledge co-production very rarely deal with what 'the common' is in the process of enquiry. Along with mitigating epistemological privilege through more inclusive practices, it is necessary to understand how 'the common' is created during the learning process, and what research gestures can train our capacity to locate it.

I found insights into these problems in the thought of Fernand Deligny (1913–1996), who, alongside Peirce, became an important companion in my research. While Peirce set up a theoretical frame for the community of enquiry, Deligny's work provides us with its embodied version, developed as a series of situated, lifelong projects, philosophical and practical at the same time. The article formulates what the community of enquiry was in Peirce's thought and brings to light Deligny's philosophy, which, I argue, expands Peirce's notion to include modes of existence beyond the symbolic realm. If subject is constituted through language, as Émile Benveniste (1971) proposed and Deligny seemed to support in his writing, could 'the common' be something beyond the very notion of subjectivity?

Peirce's and Deligny's works have never been interpreted hand in hand before. Firstly, Deligny never referred to Peirce's philosophy. Secondly, the recognition of Deligny's work in the humanities, and in philosophy particularly, has happened only recently, despite Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's important passage on Deligny's 'lines of drift' in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze, Guattari 1987[1980]). Deligny's work on non-symbolic orders and human as species is groundbreaking yet has never been referred to in semiotics.

While the theory of enquiry is one of the most studied themes in Peirce's work (see for example Cooke 2006 on infallibility, or Misak 1991 on Peirce's position on truth), the notion of community of enquiry has not been very popular among Peircean scholars. This is possibly due to the fact that Peirce did not dedicate much of his writing to this problem in an explicit manner, and because the idea was also associated with John Dewey and made its way further to education studies through Dewey's work. Along with the selection of Peirce's passages concerning the community of enquiry translated into Polish, Agnieszka Hensoldt (2009) gives a brief yet comprehensive summary of Peirce's position on this topic in the introduction to the book *Charles Sanders Peirce o nieskończonej wspólnocie badaczy*. Interestingly, Hensoldt is one of the few authors who emphasizes the unlimitedness of the community of enquiry, which she does in the book's title.²

² This can be translated from Polish as 'Charles Sanders Peirce on the infinite community of enquiry'.

Another of these few is Clancy Smith, who traces how the unlimited community of enquiry is interwoven with the theme of Otherness in Peirce's work (Smith 2013). An original perspective is provided by Bernardo Andrade (2022), who identifies three interdependent communities: a community of enquirers for the science of logic, a community of love for the science of ethics, and a community of artists for the science of aesthetics. He argues that Peirce's normative philosophy is grounded in an aesthetic community.

Peirce's work has also been interpreted from the angle of its importance for education (see for example Colapietro 2005), yet the notion of community does not seem to be central there. Some studies that deal with pragmatism more broadly point to the communal aspect of Peirce's thought (De Waal 2022). While investigating the relationship between theory and practice from different pragmatist standpoints, Hensoldt (2018), on the one hand, emphasizes the conservatism of Peirce and, on the other hand, stresses how his philosophy has a much more communal dimension than, for example, William James' perspective.

While Deligny never came up with a notion similar to the community of enquiry, 'the common' is the transverse value both in his life projects and philosophical endeavours. His work has been interpreted by, among others, Sandra Alvarez de Toledo, who edited and introduced the largest collection of his works in French (Deligny 2007); Mich  l Pouteyo from the point of view of the philosophy of education (see for example Moreau, Pouteyo 2021); and Marlon Miguel (2016), who traces a thorough analysis of humanism, milieu and materialism (Miguel 2017) and more recently cinema and image in Deligny's work (Miguel 2022). In the French-speaking tradition, Deligny has been known mainly through his position as educator and his links with the New Wave filmmakers in France. Many articles popularizing his approach as an alternative model for education, special education and psychiatry have appeared in magazines situated at the crossroads of pedagogy, philosophy and politics.

The communal dimension of Peirce's standpoint and Deligny's concern with 'the common' is what links these two seemingly distant thinkers. However, the aim of this paper is not so much to compare Peirce's and Deligny's views, as they expand within different registers and contexts, but to propose them as complementary lines of thought for an ethical and epistemological practice of co-producing knowledge. While learning was neither Peirce's nor Deligny's explicit focus, there are important threads in their respective work that allow us to think about how learning could be creating 'the common'.

The first part of this article is an attempt to summarize Peirce's notion of the community of enquiry. What emerges as Peirce's model of enquiry is based on belief and fallibility. In my reading, his insistence on belief as opposed to doubt,

as well as the claim that we cannot reach absolute certainty, does not reject the existence of truth or correct explanations. He rather proposes that we can perfect enquiry by continuously exposing ourselves to experience in the company of fellow enquirers. Further, I expand on the infinite character of the community, the permeability to others' thought, and Peirce's view of reasoning as made of diverse and interconnected arguments.

The second part of this article starts with an introduction to Deligny's life and philosophy, following the interpretations of Miguel (2017), who traces how milieu theory shaped the invention of 'network' – a support facility accommodating 'maladjusted' children³ and a mode of existence. I go further to explain how the practice of mapping the movement of the autistic children with whom Deligny lived in the Cévennes network contributed to the 'Arachnean', a notion central in his work that evokes non-symbolic orders. Lastly, I refer to 'indexicality', a term originating in Peircean semiotics that Deligny never used, but which seems to resonate with the form that the Arachnean took in his writing. I suggest that Deligny's work not only raises questions that concern the dominance of symbolic orders in the sphere of human interaction but also opens up ways for new understanding of our relations with other living beings.

Between the two parts, I briefly introduce my own research which I modelled on Peirce's notion of community of enquiry, and which focuses on neurodivergent expressions as ways of coming to knowledge. My research participants are residents of a supported-living facility for people labelled as having learning disabilities with whom I have developed a laboratory exploring animal and plant modes of existence through shared artistic practices. Deligny's work is helpful in understanding the incommensurability of symbolic and non-symbolic orders, which is characteristic of our shared learning process, but also, more broadly, of ecosystems that humans cohabit with other species. My articulations of both conceptual frameworks, as well as the practical dispositive in Deligny's case, head towards a better understanding of how more-than-human participatory research could be designed.

1. The Peircean community of enquiry

Peirce devotes much of his work to the process of increasing knowledge, referring frequently to the term 'enquiry'. Grasping the whole concept of enquiry in Peirce's thought allows us to understand better why knowledge-making requires the

³ On the notion of 'maladjusted children' see Miguel's "General introduction" to an edited volume on Deligny's works on cinema and image (Miguel, Vogman 2022: 17).

existence of community. While the contemporary discourse on academia's social relevance tends to treat community-based research as a value and a warranty of an ethical approach, Peirce's work seems to articulate it as a logical and rational premise of cognition.

While Peirce does not give clear-cut definitions of the community of enquiry, this notion can be reconstituted through his anti-Cartesian premise of belief, as opposed to doubt, and the fallibility of belief. He breaks with certainty as the ultimate driving force of enquiry. In the interpretation proposed below, the fallibility of belief leads Peirce to propose that enquiry is a process that implies plurality. If belief is the ground of rationality and a single human mind is fallible, to increase knowledge and get closer to the truth, a community of enquirers must expose themselves to experience with the desire to learn.

1.1. Belief as the premise of enquiry

As early as 1868, Peirce formulated his anti-Cartesian position on cognition in one, suggestive, postulate: "Let us not pretend to doubt in philosophy what we do not doubt in our hearts" (CP 5.254). Reasoning whose purpose is to question all intuitive premises is, to Peirce, a superficial exercise in formalism.

In *Fixation of Belief* Peirce develops the notion of belief as the premise of rationality, opposing it to doubt, which the Cartesian tradition asserted to be the origin of reasoning. Belief is not just a mental state, but points to the idea that habit shapes our actions: "The feeling of believing is a more or less sure indication of there being established in our nature some habit which will determine our actions. Doubt never has such an effect" (CP 5.371). The role of doubt in reasoning is, according to Peirce, to stimulate the enquiry until "it is destroyed". As for belief, it does not directly make us act, "but puts us into such a condition that we shall behave in some certain way, when the occasion arises" (CP 5.373). Doubt, as he phrases it later in *Pragmaticism* (CP 5.417), is an erratic activity that must be settled by a habit. Enquiry, in Peirce's words, is a "struggle to attain a state of belief" (CP 5.374).

In *Some Consequences of Four Incapacities* Peirce, through the semiotic and pragmatic principles, dismisses the possibility of the existence of the incognizable according to which we can only think through signs, and proposes that the real is not given but is a result of mediation. He disagrees with the Cartesian formula that the real is what we, or, rather, individual minds, are certain of. As he writes in *Man, a Sign*, the real is what "information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you" (CP 5.311). According to the 1878 pragmatic maxim, the concepts we use reflect the practical

consequences of our objects of enquiry: "Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearing you conceive the object of your conception to have. Then your conception of those effects is the WHOLE of your conception of the object" (CP 5.422 capitals in the original). Cornelis de Waal (2022: 112) proposes that meaning is for Peirce constituted not by the effects considered sensory impressions, but "the deliberate, self-controlled behaviour that is elicited by the concept".

The pragmatic maxim, I suggest, is at odds with the notion of application, where knowledge produced *in abstracto* is eventually made to fulfil the role of social utility. There is no need for pragmatist concepts to be applied to the objects of enquiry because, by their very nature, they already reflect the practical consequences of the studied facts. Since they are collectively invented and respond to the effects of the studied facts, they do not need to be made into matters of social concern or be used to solve real-life problems.

1.2. Fallibility

Peircean enquiry, with belief as its premise, is imperfect. While our actions are driven by correct judgements in most cases, human disposition is also marked by the tendency to be easily self-satisfied. The problem with intuitive judgement is that it contains both the premise and the conclusion. Once we judge our premise to be accurate, we tend to accept the conclusion too. But what is accepted by the mind, writes Peirce, is not necessarily correct:

It is not in the least the question whether, when the premisses are accepted by the mind, we feel an impulse to accept the conclusion also. It is true that we do generally reason correctly by nature. But that is an accident; the true conclusion would remain true if we had no impulse to accept it; and the false one would remain false, though we could not resist the tendency to believe in it. (CP 5.365)

Fallibility means that no belief can be justified in a conclusive way. Yet it does not oppose the goal of getting closer to the truth, rather the notion of certainty and exactitude:

[...] it is not my purpose to doubt that people can usually *count* with accuracy. Nor does fallibilism say that men cannot attain a sure knowledge of the creations of their own minds. It neither affirms nor denies that. It only says that people cannot attain absolute certainty concerning questions of fact. Numbers are merely a system of names devised by men for the purpose of counting. It is a matter of real fact to say that in a certain room there are two persons. It is a matter of fact to say that each person has two eyes. It is a matter of fact to say that there are four

eyes in the room. But to say that *if* there are two persons and each person has two eyes there *will be* four eyes is not a statement of fact, but a statement about the system of numbers which is our own creation. (CP 1.149, original emphasis)

Peirce's insistence on fallibilism is not a defeatist claim making the whole endeavour of enquiry purposeless. On the contrary, much of his work is dedicated to refining how enquiry can be perfected, despite the human tendency to intellectual self-indulgence that results either in tenacity in maintaining irrelevant judgements or in the exertion of authority. His proposition is twofold and it consists in continuously exposing ourselves to experience in the company of fellow enquirers.

1.3. Experience

Scientific intelligence is an intelligence capable of learning by experience, Peirce writes in his early work (CP 2.227), expanding on this later, saying that nothing new can ever be learned by analysing definitions (CP 5.392). He further explains (CP 5.51) that the action of experience takes place through a series of surprises, as there is nothing to learn from an experiment that turns out just as anticipated.

The effect of experience, Peirce writes (CP 5.366), puts in tension our "hopes and aspirations" for the truth. According to the experimental approach that Peirce favoured, thought and material things do not belong to separate realms. The laboratory equipment used in Lavoisier's method becomes an instrument of thought, while new ideas emerge through the physical action of manipulating matter:

Lavoisier's method was not to read and pray, but to dream that some long and complicated chemical process would have a certain effect, to put it into practice with dull patience, after its inevitable failure, to dream that with some modification it would have another result, and to end by publishing the last dream as a fact: his way was to carry his mind into his laboratory, and literally to make of his alembics and cucurbits instruments of thought, giving a new conception of reasoning as something which was to be done with one's eyes open, in manipulating real things instead of words and fancies. (CP 5.363)

Importantly, the experiment's only purpose is not to prove the truth, but to learn (CP 8.115).

1.4. The community

Peirce finds Cartesian formalism irrational – both its claim of doubt as premise of enquiry and the ability of an individual mind to attain truth through absolute certainty. The community is a remedy to the flaws of the Cartesian philosophy:

But thus to make single individuals absolute judges of truth is most pernicious. [...] In sciences in which men come to agreement, when a theory has been broached it is considered to be on probation until this agreement is reached. After it is reached, the question of certainty becomes an idle one, because there is no one left who doubts it. We individually cannot reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue; we can only seek it, therefore, for the *community* of philosophers. (CP 5.265, original emphasis)

In *The Doctrine of Chances* Peirce proposes that reasoning, of which the essential mode is probability, excludes any limitation in the number of assessed events, experiences, probes, and subjects of enquiry. What is more, the result of enquiry is uncertain if this number is finite. The logic of getting closer to the truth requires an unlimited number of enquirers:

[...] what, without death, would happen to every man, with death must happen to some man. At the same time, death makes the number of our risks, of our inferences, finite, and so makes their mean result uncertain. The very idea of probability and of reasoning rests on the assumption that this number is indefinitely great. We are thus landed in the same difficulty as before, and I can see but one solution of it. It seems to me that we are driven to this, that logicity inexorably requires that our interests shall *not* be limited. They must not stop at our own fate but must embrace the whole community. This community, again, must not be limited, but must extend to all races of beings with whom we can come into immediate or mediate intellectual relation. It must reach, however vaguely, beyond this geological epoch, beyond all bounds. (CP 2.654, original emphasis)

What an intellectual relationship is according to Peirce, deserves a separate discussion, yet what emerges is the notion of plurality of the enquirers' backgrounds and modes of existence.

Hensoldt (2009) traces how the notion of community of enquiry develops in Peirce's thought as an altruistic, social project, and emphasizes its embedding in logic. She notes that Peirce does not consider induction, the essential mode of increasing knowledge, a means of solving the problems of an individual life, which are in their very essence unrepeatable (Hensoldt 2009: 19). Induction, reasoning from particulars to generals, is informative of how the habits are produced, not of the truth. It does not give us knowledge that goes further than our premise, it only brings us closer to the truth (CP 5.354). Hensoldt (2009: 24) writes that such an approximating mode of reasoning is valid only when the knowledge-making project is a continuous, never-ending endeavour, and its subject is multiple.

The Peircean community of enquiry, as Hensoldt (2009: 24–25) observes, is not a gathering of individual thinkers, but a community tied together in the process of semiosis in which different interpretations discord and eventually produce new habits for the whole group. The community of enquiry is open to any member, since every voice is potentially valuable. It is also egalitarian, as all members are considered equally competent. The only condition is being involved in the communal process of semiosis, the fundamental social institution.

The motivation of logical reasoning is the choice to make the community's interest equal or superior to one's own (Hensoldt 2009: 20). Peirce illustrates this with the evocative example of soldiers who would never make individual decisions to get into a life-threatening situation if they did not trust their comrades to do the same (CP 2.654). The belief and the social impulse are the prerequisites to rationality, not the other way round.

From another angle, Clancy Smith (2013: 3) emphasizes that Peircean enquiry is interwoven with the theme of Otherness, where "'Truth' is not the province of any single inquirer, a collective project that not only demands solidarity and an embrace of the Other, but such an extreme form of solidarity-in-Otherness". Reaching truth needs lasting community, working together with the *unlimited Other* (Smith 2013: 25, original emphasis).

In *Methods of Fixing Belief*, Peirce sees social feeling, or the social impulse, as the capacity to be affected by the Others' opinions, which prevents humans from settling their beliefs despite signs of their fallacy. It is not the firmness of our statements and refusal of everything that might cause a change of opinion that leads to the truth, but our permeability to Others' minds (CP 5.378). In *The Law of Mind* Peirce develops thoughts on how ideas circulate and transform within a community: "[...] ideas tend to spread continuously and to affect certain others which stand to them in a peculiar relation of affectability. In this spreading they lose intensity, and especially the power of affecting others, but gain generality and become welded with other ideas" (CP 6.104). In truly anthropological spirit, Peirce writes in *The Methods of Fixing Belief* (CP 5.386) that "a wider sort of social feeling" allows us to legitimize opposing doctrines from "other countries and other ages" and to notice that what we know is partly what we have been brought up to believe in the coincidental flow of our life circumstances. Yet the truth is not relative, it rather emerges through a discussion between different viewpoints. With the metaphor of philosophical method as a cable, Peirce pictures the cable's strength as increasing with the number and interconnectedness of its constituent fibres, no matter how weak they are individually. He favours trust in the variety of arguments over the conclusiveness of one (CP 5.265).

Most importantly, Peirce does not append his musings on enquiry with the notion of community in a utilitarianist manner, to satisfy the postulate that science and philosophy must contribute to the betterment of society. His community of enquiry is the very premise of the concept of reality. The real (not to be confused with the truth), a result of reasoning, emerges through the process of correction, which can happen only in the company of fellow enquirers.

The very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of a definite increase of knowledge. And so those two series of cognition – the real and the unreal – consist of those which, at a time sufficiently future, the community will always continue to re-affirm; and of those which, under the same conditions, will ever after be denied. Now, a proposition whose falsity can never be discovered, and the error of which therefore is absolutely incognizable, contains, upon our principle, absolutely no error. Consequently, that which is thought in these cognitions is the real, as it really is. (CP 5.311, capitals in the original)

The requirement of making knowledge socially relevant *after* it has been produced is characteristic of the academia of our times, where the accountability of science is reduced to the “social” component requested by funding bodies. Because the communal is an element added to the enquiry, “scientists” and “society” cannot but be polarized and trapped in impossible tasks. Scientists are asked to translate untranslatable results for the non-expert public, while local knowledges matter only when they are produced as “citizen science”, they are never science *tout court*. Peirce’s thought takes the communal radically further: it is the condition, not finality, of knowledge-making.

1.5. Learning

While Peirce repeatedly refers to enquiry and scientific method, he explicitly delves into the process of learning in two contexts only: when emphasizing the desire to learn as the main motivation of enquiry, and when developing the concept of continuity.

In his earlier work (CP 1.235) Peirce mentions the pure desire to learn, as opposed to the desire to prove the truth of a definite opinion, or of a general mode of conceiving things. The former gives a foundation for good science, the latter inevitably leads to the adoption of a faulty method. In the *First Rule of Logic* Peirce explains more specifically that the desire to learn allows for necessary, continuous self-correction:

Thus it is that inquiry of every type, fully carried out, has the vital power of self-correction and of growth. This is a property so deeply saturating its inmost nature that it may truly be said that there is but one thing needful for learning the truth, and that is a hearty and active desire to learn what is true. If you really want to learn the truth, you will, by however devious a path, be surely led into the way of truth, at last. No matter how erroneous your ideas of the method may be at first, you will be forced at length to correct them so long as your activity is moved by that sincere desire. (CP 5.575)

Moreover, a wisely designed enquiry affords self-correction not only for its conclusions, but also its premises (CP 5.582). As we read in his most quoted statement in *The First Rule of Reason*: “Do not block the way of inquiry” (CP 1.135).

When expressing his disappointment with American universities as institutions of teaching and not institutions of learning, Peirce emphasizes that one’s own desire to learn keeps the enquiry going within the community: “[...] it is not the man, who thinks he knows it all, that can bring other men to feel their need of learning, and it is only a deep sense that one is miserably ignorant that can spur one on in the toilsome path of learning” (CP 5.583).

In one of the chapters of *Philosophy of Mind* (CP 7.536) Peirce writes quite enigmatically that the flow of time involves learning and that all learning involves the flow of time. In a subsequent passage he explains that apprehension of continuity involves a consciousness of learning. Thus, learning is to him virtually reasoning, while the mere experience of a sense reaction is not learning: “That is only something from which something can be learned, by interpreting it. The interpretation is the learning” (CP 7.536). Moreover, reasoning has a continuous character: every act of reasoning involves another reasoning, which in its turn involves another, and so on: “Every reasoning connects something that has just been learned with knowledge already acquired so that we thereby learn what has been unknown” (CP 7.536).

Lastly, in his late work *Evolutionary Love* (CP 6.301), Peirce re-formulates his earlier take on experience as the necessary element that allows for self-correction into the notion of exercise, marked more clearly by action and agency. According to this approach, learning is “growth by exercise” where thoughts are put into situations in which they are free to play. Drawing on Lamarckian ideas of evolution, he makes a parallel between ideas and molecules in the way they reproduce by repairing the gaps where their division took place:

The conception which appeared, at first, as unitary splits up into special cases; and into each of these new thought must enter to make a practicable idea. This new thought, however, follows pretty closely the model of the parent conception; and

thus a homogeneous development takes place. The parallel between this and the course of molecular occurrences is apparent. Patient attention will be able to trace all these elements in the transaction called learning. (CP 6.301)

Since Peirce, the community of enquiry has been transposed onto the field of education by John Dewey, and later by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp, inspired by Justus Buchler's scholarship on Peirce (Gregory 2024; Kennedy 2012). They came up with Philosophy for Children, a dialogical speech community project. For the most part, the community of enquiry has been made known through the work of Dewey, Buchler, as well as Lipman and Sharp, and not so much through the work of Peirce himself, although Lipman and Sharp draw on his philosophy of enquiry.

Peircean enquiry appears as a sequence of logical arguments that emphasize the plurality of subjects, probes and views, as the condition to access reality. If we see knowledge-making and science through Peircean filters, 'the common' is not situated at the end of the research process, it is not a translation of scientific findings into accessible meanings, but its rationale. It reverses the logic of the common question on how science can help society. Instead, I argue, what it allows us to ask is what worlds we create when the premise of our knowledge-making is the care for plurality.

The difference between the Peircean community of enquiry and its conjugations developed later is that Peirce's vision is idealistic, enquiry-centred, and that the premise of unlimitedness is not emphasized in other versions. In a poetic and rigorous manner, it gives a deep and general sense of the whole endeavour of enquiry, providing the reader with enough space to think with it, instead of narrowing down the course of reflection to any specific field or ready-made method. Peirce rather takes the trouble to trace, in the most detailed manner, a map of all possible relations showing how they might condition the enquiry's itinerary.

2. Thinking with Peirce's community of enquiry

When designing a *dispositif*⁴ for my research on the importance of non-symbolic sign relations in the process of human learning about other species, it seemed to me that epistemology based on mental operations within academic language is not only betraying the topic, but also implies a solitary trajectory of translating

⁴ I follow here Vinciane Despret's (2009) take on *dispositif* as a situated research setup that takes into consideration the participants' response to what they think is expected of them during the enquiry. See Kucza 2025.

untranslatable realms, ending up with a study that is inaccessible to any living beings of my concern, apart from a narrow group of fellow researchers.

I decided to invite to the enquiry the residents of *Maarja küla*, a supported living facility in Estonia for adults labelled as having learning disabilities, where, over the last six years, I have been facilitating experimental sound and film workshops. Our shared artistic practices include Foley art, i.e. recording sound effects for existing nature documentaries or wildlife footage using everyday objects and our bodies, as well as other techniques of embodiment drawing on fiction and estrangement. Both the sound and moving image practices that we have been experimenting with do not aim to produce symbolic representations but trigger iconic and indexical semiotic activity. Emitting sounds during Foley sessions, for example, mobilizes the kinaesthetic potential of the body so that we become the animal or insect on the screen. The participants' taste in repetition, noise and slapstick humour, the variations of attention and temporality that underscore our explorations, and the importance of traces, touch and friction, make up the position from which we learn together about other species. While neurodivergent expressions are considered disturbances by behavioural studies and the therapeutic paradigm, in my research they are modes of enquiry for a more-than-human perspective.

While delving into post-Peircean takes on the community of enquiry would undoubtedly bring more specificity to the notion, in my research project I deliberately chose to stay closer to Peirce's ideas to avoid the specific context of education. I have rather intended to provide a foundation for shared learning where all the research participants and I are enquirers. I am neither observing how they learn, nor educating them, but learning in their presence and company.

What I wanted to propose, having observed the incommensurability of "science" and "society", as well as what research with the *Maarja küla* residents constantly reminds me, is considering a different kind of community of enquiry than the one we usually have in mind, i.e. the one consisting of fellow researchers from our disciplines with whom we confront, validate and transform our ideas. As much as the community's unlimitedness is a premise that cannot be translated into one research setup, in practical terms it still does matter how we choose our enquiry companions. *Maarja küla* residents became the most important companions in this research, since my relationship with them forces me to interrupt my automatisms of symbolic interpretation and attachment to neurotypical language usage. The group I have been working with includes participants who use language in very singular manners: there are people who do not use speech or who do not engage in any verbal expression, people who use vocalizations or echolalic repetitions, and people who use several languages. A lot of these expressions resonate with

what Julia Miele Rodas calls autistic language and poetics. When analysing autistic tropes in artworks, she proposes that some of them “work to trouble symbolic connections down to their vanishing point” (Rodas 2018: 185).

Confusion between different types of sign relation was characteristic of my first encounters with the residents of *Maarja küla*.⁵ One of the participants in my workshops uses speech in an echolalic manner, repeating fragments of the sounds and sentences pronounced by his interlocutors. While looking for a means of verbal communication with him, and knowing that some autistic people who do not speak use writing, I started to type the following question on my computer: “Would you like to take a walk?”⁶ To my delight, I saw him type the word “Yes” on my keyboard. I asked another question and got the same, thrilling answer. I went further, typing: “Would you prefer us to stay here or to go for a walk in the forest?” He typed “Yes”.

Without going into the details of the complexity of this situation, what I thought was a symbolic sign when he wrote “Yes” turned out to be something else in his use. His “Yes”, without carrying a symbolic meaning that I expected, bounced like a ping-pong ball that invites the other player to make a move. It was an indication of the continuity of our game. Even though the meaning that our communication might have had to him remained opaque to me, his commitment to maintaining the dialogue was even more remarkable because it was not played out on his terms. Most importantly, this situation revealed my own stubbornness in striving for symbolically constituted meaning.

Neither the language-based communication nor neurotypical expectations of symbolically mediated meanings would allow us to reveal ‘the common’ both in our relations and shared artistic practices. While we do not necessarily share the same learning motivations, but rather have occasionally converging interests and attachments, it is the creativity originating in the combination of translatability and untranslatability (Lotman 1990: 15) of our modes of enquiry that makes this shared enquiry precious.

The work of Deligny gives thorough insights into the incommensurability of non-symbolic and symbolic orders and advances the claim that the latter is dominant. I found in Deligny’s work two major aspects that matter for the common while navigating between symbolic and non-symbolic modes of enquiry: co-presence and shared territory.

⁵ This example was already described in an article in French, see Kucza 2025.

⁶ The original conversation was conducted in Estonian.

3. Ferdinand Deligny's life and work

Born in 1913,⁷ Deligny was a French educator and writer who worked with young people “with difficulties” in clinical and education settings; later in his life he abandoned institutions completely to create alternative support networks.⁸ Before WW II he started to work in the psychiatric hospital in Armentières, where he abolished punishment and organized shared activities involving both the children and the guardians. Later, as the director of the first *Centre d’Observation et Triage* (COT) in Lille, he designed an open centre for 80 teenagers and hired assistants from among the local working-class people and Resistance fighters. From 1948, together with the members of the French Communist Party, he was involved in setting up *La Grande Cordée*, another facility for psychotic children and young offenders. On the invitation of Jean Oury and Félix Guattari, he spent two years at *La Borde*, leading film workshops for patients. There, he met Janmari, an autistic teenager who would later be entrusted in his care. In 1967, together with Janmari, he moved to Monoblet in the Cévennes in southern France and set up a non-institutional living environment and a support network dedicated to autistic children. This is where he lived, worked and wrote until his death in 1996.

His lifelong philosophical project, emerging through his numerous writings of which only a narrow selection has been translated into English,⁹ is interwoven with his work and personal relations with the children who were entrusted to his care networks: young offenders in his early years, autistic and psychotic children in his later life. After the Cévennes network was initiated, he dedicated his work more clearly to modes of existence beyond language. The poetic quality of his writing, with neologisms and puns based on phonetic resonances and playful juxtaposition of drawings and text, responds to the urge to break away from symbolic orders. In a truly interdisciplinary manner, Deligny developed his ideas in dialogue with other thinkers, across different intellectual and practical domains, yet gave absolute priority to what his work within the networks revealed, not to any disciplinary or political loyalties.

Blurring the boundaries of anthropology and ethology, Deligny drew from Konrad Lorenz, Jean-Henri Fabre, Karl von Frisch and Claude Lévi-Strauss to propose a philosophical project on humans as a species, rejecting the premise of exceptionality based on the use of language, self-consciousness and symbolization.

⁷ For a more detailed biography see Miguel 2016 and Miguel, Vogman 2022, and the website <http://encontrodeligny.org/en/chronobiography/>.

⁸ The term ‘network’ (*réseau*) was used by Deligny both to represent the philosophical notion and the living facilities that he co-created. ‘Support network’ is my own phrasing.

⁹ See Deligny 2015 and Miguel, Vogman 2022.

As Miguel (2017) emphasizes, among Deligny's intellectual companions was Henri Wallon, a materialist psychologist who proposed that both study and therapy should not address individuals, but their whole *milieus*.¹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari borrowed Deligny's notion of 'wander lines' and territorialization to shape their concept of the rhizome. Deligny maintained links with the French film crowd of the time, including André Bazin, Chris Marker and Renaud Victor, who directed *Ce gamin, là* (1976), an experimental documentary on Deligny's network in Monoblet, as well as New Wave cinema filmmakers such as François Truffaut, who consulted with him on the script for *400 Coups* (1959).

Most of all, Deligny's thought is political and militant, rooted in the resistance to capitalism, institutionalization, and the dominance of the bourgeois orders. Although he was a member of the French Communist Party in the years after World War II, his thought on creating the common goes far beyond the notion of the collective (Miguel 2017).

3.1. Network and milieu

When referring to 'network' (*réseau*), Deligny meant both the residential structure that he co-created as a space of care and support for young people, such as *Grande Cordée* or the Cévennes network, as well as a mode of existence.¹¹ The ambiguity of the double meaning was typical of Deligny's writing: one kind of network was not a metaphor for another; rather, they were existentially interdependent.

Network is never given, never completed, it either disappears or becomes an institution. It is not a thought-out project, one cannot construct it, it weaves and reveals itself. It is also a non-model, as imitation and reproduction is opposed to Deligny's thought. Every network needs its own devices that produce "occasions" for things to happen: "If such a net was woven, what was it supposed to capture? It was a question of using opportunities, and, moreover, chance, that is, opportunities

¹⁰ I chose to keep the French version of the word, as it has been incorporated into English without translation through many philosophical works, for example those of Michel Foucault, Augustin Berque and Dominique Lestel. It is important to note the double meaning of '*milieu*' in French, which the English word 'environment' does not have: '*milieu*' is not only what is surrounding the subject, but also a central position. I suggest that Lestel's (2018) take on this notion is close to Deligny's usage. Moreover, it emphasizes *milieu's* importance for epistemology: it is the central position from which a point of view originates. However, while Lestel's '*milieu*' has a similar quality to 'umwelt' in the sense that it is not a construct, Deligny writes of installing a *milieu*.

¹¹ 'Mode of existence' (*mode d'existence*), which Deligny uses, evokes Etienne Souriau's (2015) modes of existence. In Bruno Latour's and Isabelle Stengers' introductions, they are types of existence that have their own patterns of "making reality" (Souriau 2015: 44, original quotation marks).

that did not yet exist but would come into existence through the use we would make of the ‘thing’ we had come across” (Deligny 2015: 37).

Deligny referred to the actions of setting up the network with the noun ‘tentative’ (*une tentative*), which evokes uncertainty and continuity, something subject to change, unlike the institution’s clearly delimited structure and purpose, established to perform a norm. When re-phrasing the definition of a ‘tentative’ in a letter (Deligny 2007: 771), Deligny describes the mode of living together with autistic children: an approach that seeks to provide them with points of reference.¹² He notes that by ‘point of reference’ he means a sign of a nature other than language (*parole*).¹³

Deligny believed that it is not the institution, but the *milieu*, the existing and organically growing social environment, that is capable of solving its own problems (Miguel 2022: 19). Hence, he was recruiting assistants among people from the same social class as the children, and from the neighbouring villages. In COT the guardians were people with criminal records, former unionists, labourers, craftsmen and activists (Deligny 2007).

Together with Jacques Lin, Gisèle and Any Durand, Guy and Marie-Rose Aubert, his collaborators and non-professional educators whom he calls ‘close presences’ in his writings, Deligny develops a living environment for autistic children who are “beyond speech”, and who are entrusted to him by psychiatrists and families who do not know how to deal with children who roam and engage in repetitive actions that are unintelligible to their caretakers. In Monoblet, a village in the Cévennes, within the premises of a former farm, young people were free to live according to their ‘modes of existence’, a term on which Deligny insisted, instead of emphasizing pathology, rehabilitation or therapeutic needs. As Alvarez de Toledo (2007a: 23) writes in the introduction to the largest edition of Deligny’s works in French, his criticism of institution did not concern its material, spatial or social structures, but the integration of abstract norms that impede invention.

3.2. Tracings and wander lines: epistemology of the infinitive

The network in the Cévennes did not propose any activity or pedagogical support apart from living in the presence of autistic children. Deligny initiates an informal research group on ‘close milieu’ (*milieu proche*) that focuses on delineating modes of shared existence based on ‘nonverbal language’ (*langage non-verbal*). The aim is

¹² I have translated the original ‘*repère*’ as ‘point of reference’. In French ‘*un repère*’ means an object or a quality that allows one to locate something in space or time.

¹³ I have translated the original ‘*parole*’ as ‘language’, although it is not clear whether Deligny referred to speech in the common sense of the spoken word or to any instances of language.

not to provide family members or close presences any explanation or pedagogical advice, but rather to trigger exploration and discovery, which they could carry out on their own (Deligny 2007: 665). Nonverbal language takes shape based on children's elaborated and re-used gestures. When looking into the possibilities of representing continuity in children's actions and habits, Deligny writes of 'tracings' (*tracés*), which are meant to account for movement:

We will find ourselves facing the difficulty that very often a drawing refers to a verbal inventory clumsily re-transcribed (a little man: head, belly, eyes) that has but a very tenuous link to the real perceived by the eye. Undoubtedly, we must avoid 'the edge lines' of the represented objects when drawing (which are fictional, purely conventional and undoubtedly relate to the verbal) and instead represent things by smudging, which is closer to reality. However, the tracings of gestures (cutting, slicing) or of a 'moving reality' (it is raining: lines) seem easy to provoke, which would give us a primer for writing. It is possible that the tracings are not representations of objects, but that they account for and put into 'signs' all other 'matter'. (Deligny 2007: 661)¹⁴

Alvarez de Toledo (2007b: 680) writes about the importance of the infinitive in Deligny's attempt to adapt his own literary language to autistic universes:

To adapt language metaphorically to the non-language of autism, and the speaking subject to the mode of being of an autist, Deligny uses the infinitive. He puts into the substantive form the verbs 'to trace', 'to locate', 'to swing' (later he invents 'to silence', 'to commune', 'to camera'). He eliminates persons and their conjugated or reflexive forms: I, the one who speaks, and he or she of whom we speak in their absence; 'this' [*ce*] as a demonstrative form replaces '-self' [*se*] which turns in towards the subject. The infinitive suppresses history (the case) and the future (the therapeutic project), leaving space for being HERE¹⁵. (Original capitals and italics)

While writing was an important site of experimentation for Deligny, he also used the camera in his work with children as early as his work in *Grande Cordée*. As Miguel (2022: 25) writes, the camera "sets up and installs the milieu there, where it is wielded. The camera is primarily responsible for establishing a new form of mediation between the members of the group and installing a scene and milieu." Deligny invents the verb 'to camera' (*camérer*), which emphasizes the agency of

¹⁴ Translation from French by Marta Kucza.

¹⁵ Translation from French by Marta Kucza. In the French original, Sandra Alvarez de Toledo uses 'y' which can be translated both as 'here' and 'there', depending on the context, which follows the sense of ambiguity that Deligny established on purpose. I suggest that in the quoted sentence 'y' evokes the state of being situated, being 'of' a place or situation.

the tool, contrarily to the cinema as a system of representation that creates its own language. Filming activities are also ‘tracings’ as they do not necessarily end up as finished works. Sometimes they consist in filming without the celluloid, as everything revolves around the notion of permanence understood not as fixity or lack of change, but persistence. When writing about the ontology of image in Deligny’s work, Jean-François Chévrier (2007: 1781) formulates the modality of meaning-making that is revealed in the autistic mode of thinking ‘in images’: “In this nonverbal exchange between substantial and active forms, metaphor is inscribed into sensory interactions: the pit of the hand is equivalent to the pit in the soil, a door closes a conduit, a pebble is a skin that is more or less smooth, all quality is experienced through friction.”

One of Deligny’s inventions was to map and transcribe the chaotic movements of children in space. Since adults – the close presences – were disturbed by what they interpreted as the lack of purpose and pattern in children’s movements, Deligny came up with the idea of mapping them out on a piece of paper where the most important objects, utensils, or landmarks were drawn. The sheets of carbon paper were superposed upon one another, where close presences would mark gestures, movements of one or several children, and other events that happened in different moments in time, within the space delimited on the background map. According to Lin,¹⁶ the close presences were blinded by the importance they were giving to language, and the maps became their seeing devices. Deligny (2007: 849) writes: “Maps? It’s about learning to see what does not concern us, I mean what is of no interest to ‘I’ or ‘he.’”¹⁷ Transcription of ‘wander lines’ (*lignes d’erre*) allows us to see shared territory without language or subject (Deligny 2007: 684). The children’s trajectories do not reflect any necessity and elude a systemic representation: “The trajectories of a child, the wander lines where the stops, returns, swings and loops obey the solicitations that are both real and imaginary, decoded, open in constellation and not closed in a system” (Deligny 2007: 848).¹⁸

Habit is not purpose- or intention-led, but rather an action of relating within a territory that is comprised of gestures responding to the solicitation of the landmarks, as in the story of three autistic children who used to help with baking bread. They carry trays with dough “with great concern for horizontality. One of us puts a glass full of water on a tray, and the tray is carried exactly as it should be. And yet, a glass of water doesn’t mean anything” (Deligny 2015: 2022).

¹⁶ The interview is accessible online: <https://vimeo.com/14742809>.

¹⁷ Translation from French by Marta Kucza.

¹⁸ Translation from French by Marta Kucza.

3.3. The Arachnean and non-symbolic orders

When living with people “beyond speech”, Deligny refused to use any pedagogical or therapeutic approaches, as these aim at the adaptation of the “maladjusted”. He mistrusted psychoanalysis, as it operates within the symbolic realm.

Deligny refers to the notion of ‘humans-that-we-are’ (*les-hommes-que-nous-sommes*) as representation of what we *ought to be* as socialized humans, and to which we constantly adapt our humanness as a species. Symbolic orders domesticate us into ‘humans-that-we-are’ at the expense of our species’ memory. They separate us from other beings, as they contribute to the amnesia of all the organic and animal heritage we have come into (Deligny 2015: 34). While he does not mention non-symbolic orders or relations explicitly, through the ‘wander lines’ and ‘tracings’ he develops a series of concepts that act as a counterweight to the dominance of the symbolic organization of social life and language.

It is important to note that when Deligny refers to signs and significance, he seems to mean specifically symbolic sign relations in an understanding close to the early distinctions of Peirce that emphasize their conventional basis: “And yet the very existence of a sign, however small, requires the acceptance of a convention that we must indeed suppose as recognized, acquired” (Deligny 2015: 158). He rejects the notion of meaning understood as resulting from an intentional action addressed to the Other in some of the children’s actions, using instead ‘a gesture’, something that invites and allows, but is not (yet) a sign.

If I say, despite whatever the-human-that-we-are may think of it under the impetus of doing what he can, that this *tapping*, even if what is at issue is a sign, is not a sign, because Janmari has never ever made this sign, which is nevertheless the slightest of signs. For those familiar with Janmari’s extraordinary dexterity where the slightest of gestures are concerned, there is something astonishing here. In every sign, a convention is involved; the other, toward whom the sign is made, is assumed to be capable of making the same sign, otherwise, the sign is never more than a gesture, a gesture of nothing at all, tapping on the wooden tabletop, a gesture that Janmari is not in the process of making as a sign, because he could permit himself to drink coffee once everything else was ready, prepared to tap on the table if that were all that was missing – which never happened. (Deligny 2015: 223)

Seeing subjectivity as resulting from language, Deligny writes about non-symbolic orders, where it is neither speech nor gaze that leads to an encounter and meaning-making, but shared territory. The non-symbolic, network-like order takes the shape of the Arachnean evoking a spider’s web, yet agency is not on the side of the spider, rather it is the web’s project to be woven (Deligny 2015: 34).

Deligny compares it to the act of writing, not as equal to the content of a book (Deligny 2015: 48–49). Yet in the same paragraph, he finds the writing metaphor insufficient to convey the Arachnean's nature, as "the thread of words does not emerge from spinnerets located at the base of the wrist; we have had to learn to write" (Deligny 2015: 49). It is the 'tracing' itself. The Arachnean is also like palm lines: it is permanent, but it is not visible, rather it is to be discovered (Deligny 2015: 77).

Most importantly, the Arachnean reveals the types of relation that the symbolic orders exclude:

All this to reach the point of saying that perhaps what I call a network is not of the symbolic order. No one ought to be surprised at this, and yet the persistent, self-evident phenomenon I call a network escapes the faithful mother tongue and, for good reason, the symbolic order; even if the use of this language is vernacular, since the vernacular in no way repudiates the symbolic order that structures it, even if the structuring occurs in the most singular, fragmented mode possible. [...] And this brings us back to the monopoly of the relation of the symbolic order, which is not merely dominant but which excludes all other forms of relations. The Arachnean is a way of evoking those other forms. (Deligny 2015: 107)

Deligny's philosophy points very strongly to the mutual irreducibility of the non-symbolic and symbolic orders, but it does not stop at the statement that an ethical translation is impossible. That he has himself resorted to language to pass on what it means to live in the presence of autistic children is not a proof that 'the-humans-that-we-are' must ultimately surrender to the symbolic. His community of enquiry was not sustained merely by his own thought, expressed through writing, as we are reading it now, but with myriads of tentatives, tracings, untranslated gestures, wander lines, points of convergence, that he made visible and kept intact in a systematic manner.

3.4. Topography of 'the common': Peircean indexical sign relations in Deligny's networks

While Deligny never explicitly uses the term 'indexicality', I suggest that he creates the possibility of non-symbolic and non-subjective modes of existence based on indexical relations. By indexicality I mean relations within the *milieu* that are signs only potentially, in a similar vein to Göran Sonesson's (2006: 171–172) view on indexicality as indexical 'ground' that builds on Peirce's notion of ground. Indexicality "involves two 'things' that are apt to enter [...] into a semiotic relation forming an indexical sign" (Sonesson 2006: 171). That is, contiguity and factorality without being signs: only with a sign function will they give rise to an indexical

sign. "Iconicity, indexicality, and symbolicity only describe *that which connects two objects*; they do not tell us whether the result is a sign or not" (Sonesson 2012: 84).

Deligny's intervention stops at facilitating Janmari's 'tracings': he neither considers Janmari's various gestures as signs, nor interprets them. The following story of the pile of mud allows us to understand how Deligny keeps indexicality intact in its quality of not yet being a sign. One day Janmari appears in Deligny's office and leaves a pile of mud on Deligny's table where the latter would once tap his fingers.

So there were quite a few people there and what could you do but finger the little pile of mud, with a mask of benevolent gratitude on your face. It is quite probable that without the gaze of the "they" [*on*], I would not have fingered something that evoked filth rather than an offering. [...] And yet, there it was, in the dross of damp earth and ash, what in archeology is called a find: all the pieces of a clay ashtray that, four years earlier, had sat on the table where I had been tapping my fingers. Which could just as well be written as I had written it before correcting the first draft: a clay ashtray had been broken and the shards tossed into in the basket of papers we piled up and used to light the bread-baking oven. Once the baking is complete, you have to wait for the oven to cool off and then scrape up the ashes, gather them up in a bucket and go spread them out on the terraces where the gardens are being prepared. But I should return to what I had to say: that a "candid" initiative is inspired only by accidents. Because, after all, these shards of an ashtray that shouldn't have been broken had no business being under the kindling consumed by the flames set to burn crumpled papers.

And in the blink of an eye the shards of clay buried for five years in ash and earth were rediscovered, and still there in what ought to be called the locatable, still intact because it had not had to suffer the plowing under of what one says to oneself [*ce qu'on se dit*]. (Deligny 2015: 138)

When Janmari places a pile of mud on Deligny's desk, it allows a series of forgotten events, 'the previously noted actings' that are, as Deligny comments, not acted on by identifiable persons, but the indistinct 'us', to be located. The 'us' is what Janmari seems to be attracted to. It does not comprise persons-subjects, but all the events that make up 'us': the accidental happenings of breaking the clay ashtray, tossing the shards into the waste paper basket, as well as lighting the oven, putting the bread in, taking it out, scraping out the ashes, smoking and tapping fingers on the desk, making clay objects; the series of shared habits and gestures known by heart by the whole network. Locating (*repérer*) is what is needed instead of perorating (*pérorer*): "Contrary to the unconscious, which I have heard does not take place (has no place), this fissure that I am evoking takes place: *topos*, and, as

far as we are concerned, what is at stake is a living area where both a life of the customary and a life of research go on side by side” (Deligny 2015: 157).

What can be learned from Deligny’s thought is that the common of incommensurable modes of existence is not a shared meaning. The common of the symbolic and the Arachnean exist only through a shared territory, in relation to the meaningful landmarks of co-habited space.

In the introduction to the first English edition of Deligny’s works, Bertrand Ogilvie (2015: 17) writes that what makes the common is performing an act in space and being ready to learn, not to produce knowledge but to guarantee that life is continued:

The common point lies in that inaugural decision to reorganize space, to reverse hierarchies, and to set about listening and lying in wait for that which (or for the person who) is there, and from whom there is everything to learn, whether he or she speaks or not. The slightest gesture, the slightest word, the slightest silence, as we know, counts, then, not so much so that knowledge can be produced and a cure can follow, or a reintegration into the human community, but more fundamentally so that a life can take place anew.

The networks that Deligny created together with his collaborators and the children entrusted to their care were communities of enquiry comprised of radically different modes of existence. His remedy for a violent translation of non-symbolic orders into symbolic systems was to keep indexicality visible through a dispositive that retains the imperfective aspect of ‘tracings’ and allows for the location of the common. The aim of enquiry in Deligny’s sense is to provide a seeing device that locates the points of reference that make the Other act.

4. Creating the community of enquiry: more than neurotypical human modes of knowledge-making

Peirce’s insistence on the communal aspect of enquiry seems radically more progressive and open-minded than ideas that backbone the knowledge-making institutions now, over one hundred years after his death. It challenges the rigidity of academia in recognizing other modes of enquiry and defining the conditions of membership in the scientific community. Protection of the disciplines’ boundaries, sanctification of the verification modes (Debaise, Stengers 2022), and maintenance of distance from the experience shared with members of the “worlds out there”, is characteristic not only of the natural sciences, but also the humanities, with semiotics being no exception. This leads, I argue, to an ever-

lasting misunderstanding and separation between the institutions of science and the worlds beyond.

What Peirce did not develop explicitly and in detail is how we learn and what the community or the multiple subjects of enquiry imply for the process of learning. My suggestion is that 'the common' of the enquiry takes place much earlier in the process of knowledge-making: we need our respective presence not only when we verify our premises and conclusions with others, but already in the process of learning, understood not just as a mental operation but also as readiness to expose ourselves to experience, one of the most important aspect of enquiry that Peirce proposed.

Through my shared enquiry with *Maarja küla* participants, our exploration of the umwelten of the black stork (*Ciconia nigra*) and the freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) through embodied sound and film practices, as well as the experimental sound work with nonspeaking participants, I understood that the capacity to produce and interpret nested levels of symbolic meaning does not equip me with tools for interaction with other co-habitants of our ecosystems. Neurodivergent modes of enquiry turned out to be much more sophisticated manners of attending to the environment's physical qualities and relating with the living (Kucza, forthcoming). Learning about our local ecosystem or exploring unreachable species through our own embodiment allowed me to train my attention to notice and interpret multispecies semiotic relations that the excessive use of language tends to obscure.

The Peircean premise of unlimitedness and fallibility could allow us to accept that the community of enquiry, like the one I participate in, is comprised of modes of existence that are not fully commensurable or mutually translatable. What matters then is not shared, single meanings, but the worlds that we make together; this article is only one among their diverse forms. When trying to understand what constitutes 'the common' in the process of learning with *Maarja küla* residents, I have been looking for the smallest units of convergence. Presence, habit and shared territory seem to be the most essential conditions for 'the common' to emerge. It is, however, not equivalent to what belongs to each subject simultaneously, or to the shared intentions, but to the growing network, as Deligny would call it, of which we are part. Meaning-making requires presence and implies a territorial relationship.

If Deligny's thought was to be articulated in terms of learning, *milieu* would be one of its key notions. It is an ecological process: we learn *of* a *milieu* by being part of it. Inventing the learning dispositive consists in "putting in situation" and finding devices that make visible what is otherwise imperceptible. Without using the term, Deligny's work emphasizes the importance of indexical relations,

through which we cohabit with other living beings, and of modes of enquiry that keep them untamed, in the imperfective form of tracing.

I suggest that Peirce's postulate of radical openness and Deligny's networks create the possibility of imagining an inclusive epistemology that writes itself with words but also gives space to those who do not speak – an epistemology that does not ultimately explain the Other with signs that they would not produce. This obviously does not mean that we cannot interpret the Other's actions, it is rather about training ourselves in locating the points of reference that matter for them, instead of explaining them with our abstractions. Deligny's networks legitimize the communities of enquiry, of which other species could be members as well, in their unique ways and on their own terms, and where we learn through 'the common', not through our, or their, unattainable 'selves'.

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À la recherche du commun dans le processus d'apprentissage. La communauté des enquêteurs de Charles S. Peirce et l'Arachnéen de Fernand Deligny

Cet article se propose d'articuler *la communauté infinie des enquêteurs* de Charles S. Peirce et la philosophie de Fernand Deligny issue de son travail de longue haleine avec de jeunes personnes autistes. L'association de ces deux univers conceptuels constitue le socle de mon projet de recherche. D'après Peirce, le savoir est un processus perpétuel, jamais accompli, augmentant avec une pluralité de voix. La perspective de Deligny nous permet d'éteindre la communauté des enquêteurs articulée par Peirce et d'y inclure les modes d'enquête au-delà de l'ordre symbolique. Grâce aux notions de *lignes d'erre*, qui rendent visible le territoire partagé sans faire appel au langage, et de *l'Arachnéen*, un réseau sans sujets, Deligny offre un cadre conceptuel radical qui permet de comprendre les modes d'existence et les pratiques corporelles au-delà du domaine symbolique. Il met en avant la pensée non symbolique basée sur l'indexicalité : ce n'est ni la parole ni le regard qui constituent le commun, mais un territoire partagé. Ces deux lignes de pensée complémentaires fournissent les fondations pour des recherches participatives « au-delà de l'humain ».

„Ühise“ otsingud õppeprotsessis: Charles S. Peirce'i uurimiskogukond ja Fernand Deligny „arahnelik“

Artikkel on katse seostada Charles S. Peirce'i „uurimiskogukonda“ ja Fernand Deligny poolt autistlike inimestega tehtud pikaajalise töö käigus välja töötatud filosoofiat. Nende ühendus moodustab minu uurimisprojekti aluse. Peirce'i järgi on teadmine määratlematu, lõppematu protsess, mis rikastub häälte mitmekesisuse kaudu. Deligny perspektiiv võimaldab meil laiendada Peirce'i „uurimiskogukonda“ ja hõlmata uurimisviise, mis ulatuvad üle sümbolse korra piiride. Selliste mõistete kaudu nagu „kulgemisjooned“, mis muudavad nähtavaks keeleta jagatud territooriumi, ja „arahnelik“, subjektideta võrgustik, pakub Deligny radikaalset kontseptuaalset raamistikku sümbolse valdkonna piiridest väljapoole jäävate eksistentsiiviiside ja kehaliste praktikate mõistmiseks. Ta pakub välja indeksiaalsusel põhineva mittesümbolilise mõtlemise võimaluse: ühist ei moodusta ei kõne ega pilk, vaid jagatud territoorium. Need kaks teineteist täiendavat mõtteliini pakuvad filosoofilise aluse enamat-kui-inimest hõlmavatele osalusuringutele.