

# The vulnerability of children termed disabled Raising questions about the role of semiotics in practice and research

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**Summary:** A broadened approach, as far as *Inclusive Education* and the associated fields of research are concerned, modifies the regime of signs and subjectivities through knowledge of semiotics and pragmatics. The focus here is not on the question of notions of learning and of children, as adults conceive them and as they get reproduced in general debate. Trying to understand the language itself, the dynamics and the communality that the children invent in their everyday coexistence becomes a reference point for the questions being posed. The article, which relates to the discussion of a study, partakes in the reflections on how one can develop a framework in order to describe affectivity and expression in relation to the structural and transformative aspects of "agency" and "care" in practice and in the formation of a concept of *Heterogeneous Education*.

**Keywords:** "Abstract machine" - Agency - Care - Expression - Inclusive Education - Pragmatics - Henri Wallon.

## La vulnérabilité des enfants dits handicapés. Rôle de la sémiotique dans la pratique et dans la recherche

**Résumé :** Une approche de l'*Éducation inclusive* élargie aux différents secteurs de recherche qui lui sont associés modifie le régime des signes et des subjectivités par la connaissance de la sémiotique et de la pragmatique. Nous mettons à distance les notions d'apprentissage ou d'enfants, tels que les adultes les conçoivent et les utilisent de manière générale. Essayer de comprendre le langage lui-même, les dynamiques et similitudes que les enfants inventent dans leur coexistence quotidienne est le point nodal des questions que nous nous posons. En appui sur une étude, l'article participe à la réflexion sur la façon dont on peut développer un cadre pour décrire l'affectivité et l'expression en relation avec les aspects structuraux et transformatifs de l'*agir* et du *care* dans la pratique et dans la conception d'une *Éducation hétérogénéale*.

**Mots-clés :** Agir - Care - Éducation inclusive - Expression - Pragmatique - « *Machine abstraite* » - Henri Wallon.

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## THE TRANSFORMATION OF COMMUNITY ORIGINATES FROM THE CHILDREN

*"In an integrative group at a child day-care centre (children aged 3-6) four children on their way into the building from the garden decide that they want to have a contest. One of the group members is Enno, whose legs don't work in a way that enables him to walk. In the garden he gets about on a balance bike. He sits on the saddle and is able to push himself along independently using his legs. Inside the building he moves around lying on the floor. The race was therefore to be a crawling race. The four children in the group lay down on the floor and vied with each other to see who would be the fastest. However, the contest was broken up before it had finished. A member of staff came along and said assertively that it was the rule that races inside the building are not allowed<sup>1</sup>".*

This anecdote is not intended to open up a discussion on the fact that the rule no (running) races should take place inside the building naturally and reasonably relates to the fact that *"running on legs"* quickly in confined spaces can lead to accidents. However, within a broader semiotic context it is possible to explore how an access to a discourse of inclusion that analysis pragmatics and expression could be a reference model for transformation.

The recognition that the way in which boys and girls in educational establishments shape their coexistence as their generation transforms the way in which in its professional context the adult generation establishes as a group context the patterns of coding gestures, facial expression, language, affectivity and perceptions.

A closer look at the contexts of the coexistence of children and adults in the everyday life of an integration group in a child day-care centre reveals a semiotic practice. This practice works on the one hand as the adults' prerogative of interpretation, with them translating the children's relationship with each other into their language. A dominance-minority dynamic reproduces itself in the form of a repression of the amalgamations in the interest of dissolving categorisations and of producing new relationship constellations on the part of the children, which indeed are not linguistically and phonologically characterised nor on the other hand binary coded, as the discourses would suggest pedagogues habitually are referring to, according to a set of norms and standards that are transferred to theory, qualification and practice via dominant discourses and practices of education and learning.

In order to expand the theoretical reference points of a developing practice of inclusion in the field of child day-care centres I would like to present research<sup>2</sup> that incorporates the *"lines of flight"* of these discourses and practices. These *"lines of flight"* occur where the girls and boys add expression of alternative coexistence to the activities, rules and communication structures that typically characterise exchange in the fields of education.

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1. The anecdote was presented for discussion in the thesis-colloquium by Tilmann Bäcker and André Held.  
2. Films shots in two day-care-centres in Germany within an integrative group in each, analysed using the Dokumentarische Methode/ Documentary Method of Ralf Bohnsack (2010).

Investigating the relation of these expressive movements to one another is not dependent on theoretical analysis, but on the composition of a system of intensities: perception, sensations, synaesthesia, thinking in images and songs etc. The significance of semiotics in everyday life at child day-care centres is based upon these realities, which cannot be recognised by the dominant discourses, but which express themselves in relation to these. The traces do not arise in a vacuum of a form of existence separated from everything else. With their songs and gestures the children are connected to their milieus in space and time, although the ways they connect are constantly changing.

Seeing speech with the eyes, as I wish to present it in a scene that occurred in the scope of a research project, is not intended to be a normative concept for a competency that can be acquired by specialist staff, but instead describe an agency of the children. With their perceptions and expressions they interrupt the everyday meaning of coexistence, thus generating new points of access to a collective world in which their learning and integration is to take place as a community. If the professionals were to follow the "*lines of flight*" of the children, this would expand their practical capabilities to include the practice of "*care*"; as is demonstrated below. Following these traces on the part of the professionals would bind them affectively to the bodies, both expressively and perceptively. In this case, "*care*" would be being involved in the practices of the children.

What I wish to portray as the "*vulnerability*" of the children in this respect is the moment where a specific tragic moment occurs, where they are excluded from the community because it is stabilising with regard to structural, socio-historic and socio-political dynamics that are recognised as universal, real and permanent. Forming a connection to these self-explanatory and singular languages, perceptions and constantly changing coexistence requires an expansion of concepts of reality, the questioning of language and its representative function. Vulnerability is therefore not personal vulnerability, but a structural function, or the function of stabilising a structure.

Against the backdrop of the dominance-minority-dynamic inherent in daily life of a society at a certain epoch the case can be made that: "*The vulnerability of the children termed disabled can be localised on the level of language.*"

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe these various connections to the world that are flighting the homogenising general with their concepts. With reference to their works I would like to deconstruct a pedagogic view of this crawling race situation. According to their concept of language as a machine that continually puts heterogeneous elements of ways to connect to oneself, to the other people and to the milieu together (via words, desires, rules, laws, bodies, spaces, objects etc.) the assemblages of subjectification and enunciation that represent a given reality are transformed. New things could be said with new words and gestures. Referring to the works of Henri Wallon and Brian Massumi, "*agency*" and "*care*" are conceptualised as an affective relational activity. These concepts of "*agency*" and "*care*" are not to be institutionalised by legislation nor deduced from ahistorical and universal constructs of body, knowledge, reality, community and truth. Introducing the term "*Heterogeneous Education*", I would like to discuss the openings of research

and practice in different disciplines towards the undetermined multiplicity of those momentums of creating new community in the fields. Following the “*lines of flight*” and resistance to micropolitics as overcoding language and exchange of children and professionals transforms their encounters of learning and togetherness towards an inclusive practice.

## EXPRESSION AND COMMUNITY

How is the view of the staff member structured (see anecdote above)? She breaks up the race situation, which on a political level would represent equality of ability, as all the children can, of course, crawl and the one who is only able to crawl is no longer disadvantaged vis à vis the dominant method of propulsion.

What is occurring here is a twofold dynamic of a pedagogic view that doubles the “*in deficit*” nature of childhood. The rule banning races corresponds to the social practice of establishing order in the child day-care centre by an arrangement of bans. But what kind of order has the staff member sought to restore? Firstly, it is implied as the finality in the children’s genesis that they are to become “*like the adults*”. The standard and the dominant model of being an adult include walking upright. Secondly, the intention is to preserve Enno’s inability to walk upright as a “*deficit*” in this discourse of the integrative group in a day-care centre in order to be able to identify him in recourse to essentialist differentiation<sup>3</sup>. –Why would the pedagogue want to preserve that?

Within this context I would like to introduce the construct of “*diagram*”, as developed in recourse to Louis Hjelmslev by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2014/1980), as a reference point for the following discussion. The diagrams, inherently moving linguistic systems, in which content and expression are not causatively linked, are not centrally controlled, nor controlled by any ideology, idea of society nor idea of humankind. Through social practices that correspond to the assemblages of enunciation and subjectification these regimes get both stabilised and transformed. People in particular who do not fit into the existing regimes because their language, bodies or lifestyles cannot be homogenised through institutionalisation and standardisation, tear at the networks. The intention to stabilise a society conveyed via the system of marketisation and rationality, as characterised by Neoliberalism (Foucault, 2004; Powell and Gooch, 2016) could only be realised by several individuals, not by all. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari study these challenges caused for any system of society by those destabilising minorities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983/1972, 2014/1980; Guattari, 2016/2014). These challenges emerge because a “*fissure in meaning*” calls the dominating language and dominating position of the speaker into question. Guattari (2014/1989) calls these movements within the assemblages “*a-significant breaks*”. Through their particular lifestyles, languages and bodies

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3. It is worth noting here that an “*Integrationskind*” (integration-child) is a bureaucratic category in Germany. This term is used in reference to funds that a child day-care centre can apply for if it has identified children with “*special needs*”. It supports the structure of “*integrative groups*” in “*normal*” child day-care centres. It is only in the defined groups that you will find the so-called “*integration children*”, who are then integrated into this group. The other groups and indeed everyone else in the establishment are oblivious to what goes on there.

people generate heterogeneity and "*de-territorialise*" the reference points of being and of their existence as if they would flee the territory of discourse, meaning and control. Alternative constructs in relation to truth, reality and structures of meaning then arise, if at the same time their universality and a-historic nature are called into question. The established prerogative of interpretation and interpretative patterns thus unravel in respect of their exclusive claim on validity. One material effect of these processes of unravelling truth and reality lies in the fact that the traditional poles of binary categorisations of "*being*" (man/woman, disabled/not disabled) lose their formal identities. As agents of their own lives people of a minority group define themselves in reference to the dominating systems in their "*ritornellos*" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2014/1980), which take their sense and meaning solely from the immanence and singularity of an event which is not planned, organised or foreseen by any bureaucratic, practical or scientific competency.

The potential of "*agency*" and "*care*" can be viewed as transformative, supporting a framework concept that enables the processing of the experiences of a community that is singular, which is derived from individual people and their expressions and not from a general programme. The general and the subordination of the individual and the particular in this general aspect and the programming of social contexts according to linear and causal procedures stand in contrast to this potential or – according to the concept of Deleuze and Guattari – are reference points for "*lines of flight*" and resistance who singular creations of other, unforeseeable and uncalculated passages to a new reality. The potentiality of the mutual dynamic of "*agency*" on the side of the children and "*care*" on the side of the professionals, lies in enabling dynamics of communality to arise that are not produced via the existing representations of physicality, childhood, community etc., which would serve to continuously repeat the processes of exclusion. Languages, speech, physicality, affectivity and the intensity of perception are binding in many ways. The standardisation of content and statement as a thing and a name to give and a knowledge reproduce the dynamics of a standardised subject of education and a standardised development of a self. Both support the given dominance-minority structure. The knowledge of the minority is not represented according to the content-statement-causality that is implicated in any communication. In keeping with the questioning of this standardisation and therefore the processing of a diagram reflecting the micropolitical structures as a reference point for enabling inclusion, the potential formation of numerous possible weaves of communality can be described. The body, the languages and the affects generate completely different traces of existence that could not be calculated in an inclusive programme. The "*lines of flight*" to programmes of integration and inclusion are of utmost importance in exploring the fields (see the scene in the next chapter). Deleuze and Guattari describe what keeps the diagrams moving as "*machinic*" aspects of the assemblage of subjectification and enunciation. The material of "*machinic*" aspects of an assemblage relate to states of intermingling of bodies, languages, spaces and times, desires and affects in societies. This material does not stay the same and so does not guarantee the same laws to be valid time and again. It transforms permanently in intermingling with new components. An abstract machine incessantly produces new kind of sense and "*being*" in all kinds

of expression. It consists of components which are words, affects, impulses, order words, perceptions, movements, materials, rules and rooms, ideologies, politics, economy and ethics and its new relations to each other and every new moment. The conveyance of the illusion of a central and reasonable control system through rules and laws gets destroyed by the notion of everyone at everything having a role to play within a diagrammatic movement of assemblages of enunciation, subjectification and desire.

It is not possible – asking for the conditions of transformation – to deduce a new future from the past or from previous experiences and knowledge. It emerges based on potentiality and virtuality, which harbour realities that are as heterogeneous as the components of the abstract machine that makes the diagram move (Maier-Höfer, 2015b). The dominance of the linguistic-logic machine in stabilising and homogenising expression then reveals its strategy, as Félix Guattari describes:

*“Inversely, non-linguistic semiotics can perfectly easily be creative and even break the lead weight of conformity of dominant linguistic significations. The operation of semiological overcoding of semiotic processes in the ‘free state’, which reduces them to the status of linguistic component, or to a dependency of language, consists in isolated traits that are useful for power formations for every one of them, and of neutralising, repressing, and ‘structuralising’ the others, by means of the signifying linguistic machine.”* (Guattari, 2016, 118).

There is thus a need to reconstruct what meaning is produced through interpretative supremacy and repression in order to assert dominant language and speaker position as well as a specific notion of interactive processes and rules of communality as truth and reality.

What characterises the staff member’s view of the crawling race (see above) makes this dimension of the prerogative of interpretation ascertainable: the children’s ritornell, being a de-territorialisation in relation to the dominant assemblages of subjectification and enunciation, is being re-territorialised. By interpreting the crawling race as a *“running race”*, the staff member triggers an internal repression among the children referring to the ban. The consequence of this is that the children’s expression is no longer able to set in motion the diagrams, which work according to the system of dichotomous attributions as well as the system of stabilising the standard and the ideal.

*“Under these circumstances the prosodic components that arise from song, from mimicry, from gestures, posture, etc. form ‘primitive speech’ can do nothing other than degenerate”,* so Guattari (2016, 167) says.

The re-territorialisation of the children’s physicality and the blocking of their extensions of all possible competitions and spectra of movement are enacted by the staff member with the order: *“Running races indoors are not allowed.”* She shifts the event, which could have opened new dimensions of communality, back onto a level of triggering an internalised repression, on which in reference to a corresponding regime she is able to count.

The words of the teacher (see anecdote above), which structure the situation, are not hers alone. In order to successfully speak her position and resort to the rule, these are supported by the social structures and support these structures in

turn. Taking these assemblages, taking in that which the children perform means channelling it in a direction that makes the corresponding actions of the teacher appear logical, self-explanatory and justifiable not just for her, but “*generally*”: “*The rule is that...!*” – Saying this must be connected to that which the children have done, said, sung, danced etc. This analytical approach illustrates what the dominant knowledge and what the minority knowledge is in this context. With their knowledge of combining with one another and following their desire for mobility and rivalry the children remain suppressible by the dominant structures, as in these assemblages it is not logical, self-explanatory and justifiable that the teacher provides a positive response to this situation.

It is important on the level of methodology that the action of the children and the action of the teacher can only be grasped in their relationship to one another. The aim is not to describe what the teacher could have done better and to describe where she could be criticised. The interaction of “*agency*” and “*care*” as I consider to be significant refers precisely to this moment in which the tracks of the movements to one another, the glances and the melody that receives an echo take place at a different level of reality, one that cannot be practiced nor created as competency, with the consequence that someone could be criticised for not having the corresponding qualifications and thus “*failing*” to achieve inclusion. Reflecting this reality level, for example in qualification and with regard to theoretical knowledge, is a challenge that also remains to be overcome. For the time being, it is necessary to resort to minority knowledge as a point of reference or better a “*line of flight*”.

“*We get nowhere until the pragmatic, but also semantic, syntactical, and phonological determinations are directly linked to the assemblages of enunciation upon which they depend*” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2014, 106) – This statement of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describes at this point the challenge in practice and for researchers in terms of being able to continue thinking of communality as a reference point of inclusion in relation to the agency of children. Brian Massumi, in addition has worked out that the meaning of a spontaneous expression that is singular and not seen as particular in reference to the general, lies in virtualising collectivity, i.e. opening it for all forms of interaction, even for what cannot be recognised via a word-thing-language-decoding system. What he criticises in *Cultural Studies* is that – as into a group context described by Wallon (see below) – the expressions are related to and generalised as the coherence of a homogenising group and its representations, goals and hierarchies. This correlation could specify the understanding of *Inclusive Education* and the corresponding dynamics of expression and transformation. Numerous modes of semiotisation relative to institutionalisation, normalisation and marginalisation should not let teachers miss the pragmatic openings, not only onto the real life communities, but also onto the levels of expression and agency of children. Massumi explains his critics:

*“As it is widely practiced, cultural studies falls short of singularity at both limits because it clings to the notion that expression is of a particularity. It realizes that expression is always collective. But it takes the collectivity as already constituted, as a determinate set of actually existing persons (in common parlance, a constituency). This contains expression: it restricts its movement*

*to the manifestation of a content considered to be generally applicable to a collection of particular persons, to an established category or class of human. It treats expressed qualities as general attributes or properties shared by the members of a class by pre-given 'right' (in principle if not in fact). This misses surplus-giving relation and the qualitative excess of liveliness overflowing every determinate expression. It misses the relational comingness of the community and the qualitative contagion of collective life-movement. It misses the impersonal or overpersonal excesses of ongoing transformation. It generally-particularly misses change..." (Massumi, 2002, 253)*

What Massumi is referring to, is a reality of events that touches affectively and unforeseen subjects in a world of a flowing material and social reality that never returns and repeats itself, neither in categorisation nor in standardisation of positioning within the community and not as a regime of knowledge and truth. Indeed, subjects in this reality are not entities, but associates who are sensitive to community, each other's expression and each other's different ways of connecting oneself with the components of this reality as a percept, an affect, a word, a gesture, a sound, an idea, even with a reality of laws, administrative structures, curricula and research methodology. Events put together in an operatory sense that transforms the micro-political, ontological pre-given. This reality of unpredictable situations operates on the level of potentiality. The question remains as to how these lines that flight the general can be connected to the discourse of the university, institutionalisation and the various practices in the different fields.

The framework concept of a "*heterogeneral education*" as I propose here could help to make this reality tangible. It is a reality that does not repeat itself and that does not fulfil the requirements of a system of representation. The general, which could be categorised via attitudes, movements, bodies, words etc. transform into the "*heterogeneral*" opening the community for more expressions, bodyness and subjectivity that is not represented in a binary code (e.g. abled-disabled), but diagrammatically open to new systems of content and statement.

## **KEEPING THE DIAGRAM OF *INCLUSIVE EDUCATION* IN MOTION**

The semiotics of educational space and time as well as institutionalisation, normalisation, and marginalisation are linked together. How do this semiotics put into action nursery, pre-school and school? – Approaching these questions within the research fields of *Inclusive Education* means identifying momentum for a semiotic creativity and recognising linguistic repression as being externally inflicted and internally triggered. This structure is revealing its pragmatics when explored in praxeological studies. However, the most important question to ask is: What makes it possible to a child to escape an investment in repression?

Dealing with this question there is a need to reconstruct what kind of meaning is produced through interpretative supremacy and repression in order to assert dominant language. The vulnerability of the children termed handicapped and also of those who are not termed handicapped could be identified against that backdrop. They act against the general, the idea that could be applied and the categories that makes language recognisable. The idea and ideal of togetherness as a prescribed



condition for exchange, moreover the speech and attributing language, are missing heteronomous components of language which consequently disappear muted in daily life. Structural exclusion in a very special way could be described according to these other realities of connecting oneself to one another in milieus in singular ways via multiple components that change their operating manner again and again. The potential that is created in a new situation in daily life establishes traces towards a reality of an affective presence. This presence, Henri Wallon and Brian Massumi describe, reveal the dominance-minority-dynamic in the discourses that operate on the level of binary representation.

The problems caused by the emancipatory discourse itself lies in the fact that it implies a sort of equality that has to support the ideal of equality in the prevailing biopolitical assemblages of enunciation and subjectification. The dichotomy of abled and disabled bodyness represented in biopolitics is driven subtly and even more repressively in an inclusive discourse. It operates as a barrier to inclusive semiotics. Another barrier for inclusion develops when speech is declared to be pure verbal attribution. The location of exclusion and production of deviations – whatever statements are made in this context or develop structurally via corresponding laws or bureaucratic systems (Maier-Höfer, 2016a) – are morally analysed. The creativity for producing “*lines of flight*” in expression and “*ritornells*” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2014/1980) remain hidden under those morals of “*you must not say this or that and not in that way*.” In order to maintain a homogenised community context that should not name deficits and differences, a regime of what could be said, what could be known and of what could be the truth is convincing. Affective presence is excluded from these representative systems at all events. Another barrier for inclusion is produced in an educational field that methodically refers to speech competency on the side of the children that is processed by imitation. The performance of expression and the world around the children is overcoded with names and things. A virtually endlessly discernible reality in the environment of a child is reduced to the experience of naming. Beyond this, the teachers who reduce this universal experience to naming are cut off from joining the children in finding words for things that are not objects but affect, perception or physical intensity or of creating resonance in multiple ways to each other’s desires to be together.

In order to illustrate how the structures, the actions of the adults and the actions of the children are connected to one another I would like to introduce a video transcribed scene from a study<sup>4</sup>. The scene is 44 seconds long. The participants are three children: Marie, a girl not-hearing from birth, Laurin, a boy who has multiple spastics and is described as “*severely disabled*” and a “*normal*” girl, as well as three teachers: teacher A, standing next to Marie, teacher B, standing next to Laurin, the girl and teacher C standing hand-in-hand next to Marie and opposite Laurin and teacher B.

*“Marie points her finger at the face of Laurin who sits in a wheelchair bound, with his mouth open and his glasses displaced. Teachers A around Marie and Laurin agree that Marie points at Laurin’s nose. At first, Marie points at Laurin*

4. The video transcribed scene belongs to a set of data I collected in 2012 in several “*integrative groups*” in Kindergartens, see Footnote 2.

and her mouth using the same hand. She repeats this gesture and then moves her hand to her throat. She performs the gesture for voice in sign language. She cannot hear. However, she perceives with her eyes that Laurin's mouth is open the whole time. She also perceives that his mouth stands open and nobody really speaks to him and approaches him.

After teacher B adopts teacher A's interpretation that Marie points at the nose of Laurin – without double-checking with Marie – she communicates to Marie that she must have meant Laurin's nose when pointing at him. Teacher A taps on Marie's shoulder twice and then on her nose saying 'this is your nose'. Afterwards she points at her nose saying "this is my nose." Then teacher A points quickly and shortly in the direction of Laurin saying 'and Laurin'.

Marie points at Laurin again. He remains the focus of Marie's attention.

This results in teacher B trying to turn Laurin's head and his vision towards Marie and against his spasm. She wants to connect Laurin to Marie via possible eye contact, in order to support Marie's interest in Laurin.

At another communicative level the 'school situation' continues. A child next to Marie asks "and mine?" meaning her nose. Teacher A that has introduced pointing at the nose says to the girl "yours? You do know that" tapping twice in the direction of the child's nose using her arm right in front of Marie. Marie repeats teacher A's gesture tapping in the air twice right in front of the girl's nose. The teacher that has introduced pointing at the nose pets Marie's back. Teacher C says 'this is right' while the girl holding the hand of teacher C and standing next to Marie is leaving the scene.

After Marie points at Laurin again the teacher tries to turn Laurin's head again in the direction of Marie, even though the interpretation that Marie had meant his nose was already uttered. Teacher B feels that Marie still has attention for Laurin and that the school situation was not what made sense to Marie; she remains in contact with Laurin. Only this time teacher B remains in contact with Laurin a bit longer. Teacher B tries to get into Laurin's field of vision. He then bends his head on his own and releases his overstretched posture, Marie observes this closely. She is interrupted by the previous child coming back and Marie noticing suddenly the child's approach."

Since Marie cannot hear she tries to see a verbal exchange with her eyes as she does with gestures in order to compensate her not-hearing. The teachers, however, do not pay attention to this differentiated communication behaviour consciously. The question for the researcher here is: What is the pattern of misunderstanding in that scene?

It seems to be impossible to explain to Marie that Laurin always keeps his mouth open as he cannot close it due to his spasm. However, he is neither hungry nor thirsty nor does he scream. Seeing the mouth widely opened as Laurin shows it, it is most challenging to try to understand why the teachers actually refer to the nose. There is no background in the interaction and communication that takes place that justifies the reference "nose" as an object of interest of Marie. According to a stabilising systematic of meaning and positioning, the teachers connect their understanding to a pre-configured structure of what could be said and what could

be a shareable expression. They refer to what stabilises them and what stabilises their idea of sharing and creating community as a perspective of integration would demand it. Indeed, not all teachers keep up with this systematic.

Teacher B finds herself involved in another dimension of sharing community. Involving herself in the persisting interest of Marie, teacher B gets access to another shareable reality. She acts in a way that could be neither a category of teaching nor any distinct feature of redundant exchange that stabilises pre-given systematics. Something new is happening that breaks the meaning of communication itself.

Biopolitics as an assemblage of subjectification and enunciation which is socio-historically dominant represents – in keeping with the discussion that I wish to launch here – a barrier to inclusion. The teachers' sense of community is based on stabilising equality and the *normal* or *ideal* that is represented as a bodily condition and as categories of similarity. What I wish to reiterate here is that the recourse to the reference "*nose*" is not random and has nothing to do with the persons and the setting in which the film material was shot, nor with the physical condition of Marie or Laurin, but rather with a fabric that makes the action of pointing to the nose and naming it appear sensible and logical.

Biopower (Foucault, 2004) is presenting an effect, even if differences should not be mentioned against the backdrop of an inclusive discourse that "*comprises everybody and in general*". The arbitrary between "*ill*" and "*healthy*" is developed in that moment as follows: they speak about the "*healthy*" but not about what would be declared "*ill*" especially relating to an essentialist ontological understanding of language. The always open mouth and the missing hearing as a differentiating feature are excluded in this communication.

With their interpretation that Marie was pointing at Laurin's nose, the teachers indicate the similarity of bodies that appear the same in the mirror. This can be mediated by the "*nose*" which is a neutral zone in the face in this context, as it does not differ from the ideal in this case. What is pointed out here by mirroring each other is the "*normal*"; the "*not differing*"; the "*not ill*" which itself does not indicate the own being weak, different and vulnerable. Thus, they may perceive the differentiation of the "*other-bodies-in-expression*" as an ideological and moral threat for the cohesion of the group. However, Marie's intention is not to find an excluding and attributing difference to Laurin. For her indicating to the open mouth is not a threat for the community and its ability to integrate everybody, but a gesture she needs assistance in interpreting. She needs assistance as she connects herself to Laurin's open mouth as a mouth gesture in a communicative situation which she cannot identify here. She herself wants to become part of the ongoing communication – in case there is any – which at the moment she cannot take part in. She wants to explore the communication that she anticipates affectively. As she cannot insist on her question by speaking and cannot eliminate the misunderstanding by repeating her gesture she can simply be missed or reinterpreted according to a different goal, although she keeps affectively in touch with an ongoing bodily expression as she herself expresses her awareness towards Laurin with her posture.

Referring to the "*nose*" and praising Marie when she understood the topic around the nose correctly is a diversionary tactic. The teachers also refer to the practice of

teaching. They indicate the thing and the name and claim their power of language dominance and their power of settling the standard of language competency. This tactic works because it is possible to refer back to the prerogative of interpretation and the praise for “*doing or saying it right!*” Marie is indirectly praised for responding to the ritual of “*pointing at the nose!*” which is based on imitation, and for no longer insisting on her awareness for Laurin’s open mouth. Furthermore, Marie’s missing voice stabilises the prevailing assemblages of enunciation and subjectification that are based on verbal action and corresponding exchange. All other expressions remain undetected and without conscious resonance in the constellation of the group. The fissure in meaning is testified to by teacher B, however. She perceives the reality of a communication that is far closer to a singular expression than a repetitive context of communality, but which is created via the reference to the nose. The manner in which the children are involved in a “*situation of commanding!*” by the adults in a task that they are required to fulfil is logical, self-explanatory and justifiable according to the assemblage. However, in this moment teacher B gives up this perspective. She does not name the open mouth instead of the nose. She enters into the pragmatic field of expression. Affectively sharing the community with Marie and with Laurin, she tends to “*navigate movement!*” as Massumi would describe it<sup>5</sup>.

*“So language is two-pronged: it is a capture of experience, it codifies and normalises it and makes it communicable by providing a neutral frame of reference. But at the same time it can convey what I would call ‘singularities of experience’; this kinds of affective movements that we were talking about before that are totally situation-specific, but in an open kind of way. Experiencing this potential for change, experiencing the eventfulness and uniqueness of every situation, even the most conventional ones, that’s not necessarily about commanding movements – it is about navigating movement. It’s about being immersed in an experience that is already under way. It’s about being bodily attuned to opportunities in the movement, going with the flow. It’s more like surfing the situation, or tweaking it, than commanding or programming it. The command paradigm approaches experience as if we were somehow outside it, looking in, like disembodied subjects handling an object. But our experiences aren’t objects. They’re us, they’re what we’re made of. We are our situations, we are our moving through them. We are our participation – not some abstract entity that is somehow outside looking in at it all.”* (Massumi, 2003, 219-220.)

Experiencing this a-signifying communication which does not seek for a referent but for a movement towards traces that would open up sociality, teacher B herself becomes an active part of the creation of the situation and the ongoing process. “*Care!*” as a response to this opening thus represents a line to the assemblage of the diagram, as the body is not regarded as a body with requirements, which are satisfied with the aid of assistance, or a body with deficits, which need to be balanced out via the intervention of the teacher. A wider context is created, in which the expression is incorporated. It is not in the way in which the expression is interpreted, but in

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5. Henri Wallon (see below) describes this kind of movement as “*activité relationnelle!*”/ activity that creates relation between agents.

which it is affectively touched that the expression continues, on the one hand the open mouth, on the other the way in which Laurin can be involved in the community. Gesture, posture, expression – a choreography of a group of people – blend into a scene that expands upon contexts that would have remained closed if the nose was the sole subject. The reference pattern of language is extended. It is a new topic that the open mouth does not become the reference, but that the open mouth which Marie embeds in the context with her attention becomes a gesture that teacher B passes on with a movement towards Laurin. She leaves the body of Laurin as an object for forming communication and follows in the traces of Marie.

Marie's activity opens this situation for Laurin and for teacher B. Her agency represents a specific kind of "*listening*," without in this case being a physical hearing. She combines with the people in her own particular way of speaking and listening; and, in her own way, with Laurin. She perceives her body as a self, able to perceive the coming and going of people affectively and with her multiple senses. She acknowledges the presence of people, in this case Laurin, particularly where Laurin could not be integrated into the "*point to the nose and name it system*": The speaker positions, the gradient of activity and passivity and the reference point of physicality are derailed in this scene, if only briefly. Marie has successfully shared her minority knowledge with teacher B.

Using theoretical points of reference I would like to discuss this structural dynamics in more depth in order to develop access to a minority-knowledge about relational activity that is affectively organised, as Henri Wallon describes it.

## THE STRUCTURE OF ACTIVE, AFFECTIVE RELATION TO THE MILIEU

With his transdisciplinary approach, Henri Wallon has correlated very many dimensions of the growing-up of children. In his essay "*Les milieux, les groupes et la psychogenèse de l'enfant*" / "*The milieus, the groups and the psychogenesis of the child*" (1976, extract from the *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, 1954) he differentiates the "*milieu*" and the "*group*".

Seeing milieus not as a given fixed system people have to adapt to in order to survive, but as something that develops in the interaction of social capabilities and technical means as produced by civilisations, leaves an open framework for people to actively shape their ways of existence. The social conditions of their existence enable the subjects to make personal decisions and choose in comparing affectively different milieus they are or were involved in. So follows the hypothesis of Wallon:

*"A child's biological constitution at their birth will not be the only law that shall determine their destiny. The effects can be transformed in detail by the social circumstances of their existence, where personal choice is not absent."* (1976, 288, translated by CMH<sup>6</sup>)

In his essay Wallon explains that this choice is possible because a subject has an affective relation to their milieu. A particular relationship to oneself and others

6. In French : « *La constitution biologique de l'enfant à sa naissance ne sera pas la loi unique de son destin ultérieur. Ses effets peuvent être amplement transformés par les circonstances sociales de son existence, d'où le choix personnel n'est pas absent.* » (1976, 288)

in a social, ideological and material milieu enables a subject to search actively conditions for live that fit with one's experiences and desires. "Care" as a concept of a resonance to affective activity is to be explored here as a "line of flight" and resistance in relation to biopolitics (Maier-Höfer, 2015a, 2016b).

The very early life references Wallon describes as *dialogue tonique* between humans and as reciprocity at the level of the mutual perception of "posture" are reinvigorated affectively concerning the perception of oneself in milieus or they invigorate the affective reference. The possible action from this point is what Spinoza calls "conatus" (1977, Ethics, Part III, Proposition 4-6<sup>7</sup>). This affective strive connects humans with their activity that Spinoza sees as the contrast of passive bearing of affects coming from other humans and life situations. This active search and the choice to make are important points of references for the being and becoming of the subject, as Wallon highlights:

*"The milieu in which a person lives and the milieu that he dreams of are the forms that mould the personality. This moulding is not only passive. The milieus to which he refers begin determining his behaviour and habitus precedes choice. However, choice is superimposed, whether it is to release discordance or to compare one's own milieu with others."* (1976, 289, translated by CMH<sup>8</sup>)

The tensions that develop psycho-physically in the organism of a person in relation to their milieus form an affective way for perceiving oneself together with others in territorial and machinic assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari, 2014/1980; Guattari, 2016/2014).

Wallon emphasizes in "*Les origines du caractère chez l'enfant*" / "*The origins of the character of the child*" that emotions are not only part of every age but they concern the whole psycho-organic system (1983, 174). The muscle tone is the point of reference at which one's own affectivity connects with "posture" to become an expression that gains meaning in a current mutual exchange of humans. A "perception of oneself together with others" develops as a visceral, affective, and impulsive gesture. He says:

*"Basically, as a function of expression, as a transformable function, emotions are a formation which descends from the posture and they have the format of the muscular tone. Their diversity depends on the hyper or hypotension of the tone, on their free flow in a gesture, and on action or on its pointless accumulation and on its use, immediately, by spasms."* (1983, 174, translated by CMH<sup>9</sup>)

The desire to maintain oneself and the dreaming and wishing that comes up when comparing milieus forms a special space of the existence. That special space cannot

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7. <http://www.spinozacsack.net78.net/The%20Ethics,%20Benedict%20de%20Spinoza.pdf>

8. In French : « Les milieux où il vit et ceux dont il rêve sont le moule qui met son empreinte sur sa personne. Il ne s'agit pas d'une empreinte passivement subie. Assurément les milieux dont il relève commencent par commander bien de ses conduits, et l'habitude précède le choix. Mais le choix peut s'imposer soit pour résoudre des discordances, soit par comparaison de ses propres milieux à d'autres. » (1976, 289)

9. In French : « Essentiellement fonction d'expression, fonction plastique, les émotions sont une formation d'origine posturale et elles ont pour étoffe le tonus musculaire. Leur diversité est liée à l'hyper ou à l'hypotension du tonus, à son libre écoulement en geste et en actions ou à son accumulation sans issue et à son utilisation sur place par des spasmes. » (1983, 174)

be recognised due to repressive, disciplinary places and it cannot be created via plans, bureaucracy or organisation structures and programmes. Psychophysiological tensions are crossing the body and the events. In this active, affective connection one's own impulsiveness and spontaneity are interwoven in the expressions. Expression comprises affect, body and content into one special incident that cannot be generally decoded. Expressiveness is not affectively decoded when sorting into a group codex. Any type of expression can be valid where it affects people that allow a community that is not based on a visual similarity but on becoming similar within the event itself. The bodies become similar in their affectability, Spinoza says. This is how living together is perceived and created which is different via external codes and regulations.

Using affects, impulses, screams, gestures and mimic expressions the subjects are initiating from the begin of their lives a kind of exploration of the surroundings and their capacities to enter into a dialogue that relate the subjects to themselves and to the processes of exchange and creation a civilisation is able to offer to them. In a dialectical contrast<sup>10</sup> to that active and affective relation to the milieu, oneself and others, Wallon describes the relation to the structure of a group. The group is an important point of reference for a subject, Wallon suggests, as only the group shapes coherence which is necessary for a subject to find resonance and a framework to receive constant feedback on the level of postural relational activity. But in order to act adequately within a group, the gestures are aligned to a code so that all gestures can be understood by all group members at all times. This integrates the members in the group context and connects them with the representation systems and group targets as well as its hierarchies. The other person in an exchange becomes the mirror to one's own person. Imitating other people gives a chance to learn and get along in the representation systems. Imitation, however, delivers a completely different type of self-reference. It is driven by the image and not by the tensions. In contrast to affective reference, affectivity as emotionality is decoded in relation to representation systems and no longer in relation to personal gestures and inner tensions. Wallon writes:

*"This assimilation of oneself to the other mediated by the group already has the signs of a categorical thinking that is applied onto action. It is indispensable to the child, not only for acquiring certain knowledge about rules, but in order to get aware of one's own capacities, and perceiving oneself. The position that varies incidentally according to their merits, was given to them by the group, the tasks they assume, the confinement at least of self-love they have to face, the norms that are imposed on them by her affiliation to the group, forces them to regulate their action and to control them in the others as in a mirror, in short to create an image as an exterior reference to oneself and*

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10. Spinozian and Cartesian transition in ontogeny is a concept I have developed in order to describe unforeseen passages from one dimension of self to the other, in accordance to different contexts of expression (Maier-Höfer 2015a, 2015b), acknowledging that even more passages to other dimensions, which are not yet explored are virtually possible.

*to conform to the demands that reduce the absoluteness of spontaneity and initial subjectivity.” (1976, 294-295, translated by CMH<sup>11</sup>)*

As Wallon continues the group dynamics deliver a range of interpretation of affects and impulses. The subject becomes their own object of understanding. Motifs and items as points of reference for affects and impulses shape emotions that can be communicated within the codex. Without these intellectual points of reference a human becomes sensitive to very many, unclear stimulations from the body and impressions from the environment. In the early years, however these intellectual reference points are not available. It is the *dialogue tonique*, as Wallon describes the affective activity of expressive exchange between human beings that helps sorting out one's affects without even recognising them categorically.

The affective approachability connects the subjects with their own psychophysicality that cannot be categorised as “ill” or “healthy”, “adult” or “child”. The affective activity is the essence of what can be experienced ontologically in contrast to a binary, deficit-oriented categorisation that is deduced from some “higher order” – for whatever that “higher order” represents and whoever guarantees its universal, ahistorical reality thus protecting the group cohesion.

Affective sorting out oneself with the milieus turns humans into subjects that can actively influence their destiny and desire if the social relations in the civilisations leave a creative scope. The subjects can use these creative scopes even if these are not recognised in sociological research or a defined structure of community, as they are affectively and ontologically immanent and do not reflect general fates that can be administered. This is the challenge for research, practice and theory formation. Starting with the activity and independence of subjects concerning their perception of the milieus makes it impossible to give general explanations or predictions. It is exactly the activity and affective autonomy of the subjects that Wallon emphasises in reference to his concept of “milieu”:

*“Therefore, several milieus can overlap within the same individual and they can even come into conflict with each other. Some are humiliating and others are for one's best; some are denied and others to strive for. The existence of real milieus then can be doubled according to a child's judgements of value or to their imaginative aspirations as within the course they make a stand against the situation preferring one's own, and a stand against the other's case preferring one's own destiny.” (1976, 289<sup>12</sup>)*

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11. In French: « Cette assimilation de soi à autrui par l'intermédiaire du groupe a déjà les caractères d'une pensée catégorielle s'appliquant à l'action. Elle est indispensable à l'enfant, non seulement pour l'acquisition de certaines disciplines, mais pour prendre conscience de ses propres capacités, de ses propres sentiments. La place, d'ailleurs variable selon ses mérites, que lui assigne le groupe, les tâches qu'il assume, les sanctions tout au moins d'amour-propre qu'il y rencontre, les normes que lui impose son appartenance au groupe l'obligent à régler son action et à la contrôler sur autrui comme dans un miroir, bref à s'en faire une image comme extérieure à lui-même et conforme à des exigences qui en réduisent l'absolue spontanéité et l'initiale subjectivité. » (1976, 294-295).

12. In French: « Plusieurs milieux peuvent donc se recouper chez le même individu et même s'y trouver en conflit. Il y en a des honteux et d'autres avantageux; il y en a qui sont reniés et d'autres convoités. Ainsi l'existence des milieux réels peut être doublée chez l'enfant par des jugements de valeur ou par des aspirations imaginatives, au cours desquelles il oppose la situation où il voudrait être à la sienne, et le cas d'autrui à son propre destin. » (1976, 289)



## CONCLUSION: A RITORNEL OF BEING AFFECTIVELY PRESENT

"Agency" and "care" are dimensions of the growing-up of a generation that connect the concept of *Inclusive Education* to active children who are referring to their own aspiration and desire of becoming and to active professionals who become more or less aware of their involvement in the desires of children that wish to be connected in several, unforeseeable ways within their milieus with each other and the social and material world. In keeping with this statement and the thoughts developed in this article, how is it that children can invent words, break syntax, change significations, produce new connotations, movements, action words, order words, socio-political and pedagogical frameworks, as much in community life as in speech?

Marie (see transcribed scene above) connected herself to the group dynamics. She was imitating gestures and was following the choreography of pointing and naming. On the other hand Marie was affectively present. As a modulation of a somehow always tense body the affect is sort of an unfelt emotion as it is not connected with the general, objectifying subjectivity – as Wallon puts it (see above) – but can connect with everybody and everything via abstract machinery, new and different at any given moment – as Deleuze and Guattari would add. Marie was interwoven with the milieu by striving for interaction and by tearing at the networks of the stabilisation of a pre-given communality. Laurin's open mouth became her centre of awareness according to that she explored the context of mutual interaction as she could feel it in an affective framework of exchange – not at a cognitive meta-level but as a resonance to an affective expression in the milieu. She succeeded in the end: her affective connection of 44 seconds with herself, Laurin and the milieu has become a reality! Marie, of course, had a different perception of time: affect puts us in the here and now – thus she was present even if not represented in the prevailing assemblages of enunciation, subjectification, and desire. She followed her own aspiration. Her "ritornello" could be witnessed as a "*line of flight*" that called into question the common practice of integration in the research process. As she was not exclusively a part of the group, she moved the diagram. She was not excludable, because she was too close to reality itself.

What goes on at the level is not even recognised – let alone felt. There are only effects on the organism in form of micro shocks that keep appearing: it passes by without recognition "*but it is not not real*," as Brian Massumi would emphasise (2002). Sorting out this reality as passing by and passages would affect the tension of the "*uncorporeal*" body as an active desiring multiplicity which could not be taken into possession by any ideology or programme. It will resist permanently limited ontological options of being and becoming. Expressions that criss-cross the milieus would be a reality to explore in practices as well as in researches. This is what does not render research reliable and available for common truth, transferability and generality. The work of the abstract machine will always succeed in dissolving these dimensions. What significance can be awarded to the analysis of scenes such as the one that I have illustrated? The "*fissure in meaning*" as a semiotic-pragmatic background of involvement in the daily life shared with people in different places is the momentum of attention of one's affectivity as a shock to the body as well as to the thought. The traditional poles of social representation lose their formal identity whereas the

anticipation of perspectives is no longer possible. Technocratic inclusion and ahistorical, universal frameworks that would help to identify the right thing to do at any place in any time according to an order of rational processes – on the side of the responsible adults – are another, even the dominant, reality. Memorising potentialities, those of Marie, Laurin and teacher B, noting traces in the manner of Fernand Deligny (1979), who has witnessed the autistic children's gestures, movements, perceptions and languages in the camp in the Cevennes by drawing up maps, would make the diagram move, but this would not have any transformative force if this reality is not related as "*lines of flight*" and resistance to the collective assemblages of desire, of subjectification and of enunciation as an event that questions the general categories. It was Deligny who questioned the significance of *one* language and *one* form of the self, acting as a reference point for identification for all people and consequently excluding those with no access to that "*one*".

The theoretical concepts Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Henri Wallon have explored could be connected to the experiments that were possible via the social creativity of professionals in diverse fields and to questions asked, to those who remain unsolved and to the desiderata formulated by *Diversity Studies* and *Childhood Studies*. Simi Linton's (1998) conviction that art is a point of reference that would open up society for experiences of otherness that are not binarily over-coded would lead to a close exploration of a heterogeneous field of expression. The studies of the symbolic activity of children who create their rules and culture transforming those of the former generation which Willam Corsaro (1985) conducted in the USA and in Italy prove the role children are already playing when they involve themselves in society. These activities remain mostly unnoticed, because they are not structured by adults and according to aims of socialisation that the former generation would expect as a conventional way to adulthood, nor structured by research typically carried out on children. Children are welcome when they participate in programmes invented by the adults for their participation. Whether or not this represents effective participation was questioned by Cairns (2006). The materialist line of disability studies challenges the situation that emancipatory and participatory approaches are coupled with children's and disabled people's needs for protection and advocacy. Mercer (2004) in particular discusses the conceptual benefits and problems when focusing on disabled researchers, as a mechanism for emancipatory action. A practice of resistance against concrete technologies of power that produce oppression and impairment of people termed handicapped, as Abberley (1987) describes it, would relieve those affected from having to pursue an individual struggle for equality.

The discussion of the various approaches, which I could only touch on briefly here, should not lead to the derivation of a homogeneous practice and a homogeneous superordinated theory with the aim of finding a new discipline incorporating all issues. The fact that these issues arise in various disciplines and in different practical fields in their own respective way, expanding the disciplinary, pragmatic and categorical attachments would appear to be the suitable background for the further development of inclusion. I would hope that children would be involved in this further development, against the background of the theoretical concepts that I have developed here, although the manner in which this would occur remains, certainly, open.



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