

Record in the Commens Bibliography. Retrieved from http://www.commens.org/bibliography/journal_article/bergman-mats-2007-common-grounds-and-shared-purposes-some-pragmatic, 02.07.2025.

Type: Article in Journal

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Title: Common Grounds and Shared Purposes: On Some Pragmatic Ingredients of Communication

Year: 2007

Journal: Cognitio

Volume: 8

Issue: 1

Pages: 23-43

Keywords: Communication, Collateral Experience, Purpose, Vagueness

Abstract: This article explores a set of key conceptions involved in Charles S. Peirce's account of communication, building on the hypothesis that his semiotic can beneficially be approached from a communicational or rhetorical point of view. Setting out from Peirce's claim that philosophy should begin with abstract ideas, but rather with the complex but familiar semiotic setting of ordinary dialogue, the notion of common ground is first explicated in terms of experience and knowledge shared by intelligences engaged in communication. The experiential aspect of communication is further spelled out by a discussion of Peirce's claim that the object of the sign is apprehended through collateral experience or observation that can be indicated rather than through description or other strictly semiotic means. Furthermore, it is shown that the common ground, although a prerequisite for communication in the Peircean framework, does not amount to a demand for identity of experiences; true communicational exchange and development requires experiential divergences. In the third part of the article, the outlined reconstruction is augmented by an examination of how objects are identified within more specific universes of discourse. The main contention defended is that this is only possible in a purposive context and that some degree of shared purpose is necessary for meaningful communicational interaction. Finally, the role of irreducible indeterminacy in communication is scrutinised, the principal upshot being that vagueness can be beneficial as well as detrimental for our attempts to understand each other and the world; its value depends on in what universe of discourse we operate and for what pragmatic purposes communication and thought is undertaken.

Language: English

