

On some aspects of a semiotics of the non-identical: Deleuze, Guattari and Adorno

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Abstract. In this article I propose to use the philosopher Theodor Adorno's concept of the non-identical to explore the semiotic project that Félix Guattari developed alone and with Gilles Deleuze. I begin by recalling the principles, concepts and aims of schizoanalysis, as theorized by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*. Schizoanalysis is a militant practice that seeks to analyse the productivity of desire in the unconscious and its multiple points of applications in the social world. Alongside his collaboration with Deleuze, Guattari practised schizoanalysis as part of his clinical work at the La Borde Clinic. Initially inspired by Hjelmslevian semiotics, Guattari then proposed his own classification of signs, better suited to analysing the multiple components of subjectivity, desire and the unconscious in relation to capitalism. Deleuzo-Guattarian schizoanalysis combined with the more specifically Guattarian semiotics is from the beginning oriented towards the non-identical. It offers conceptual and analytical tools for identifying and mapping the heterogeneity of the most singular semiotic universes within the media, art, science and, more broadly, social life.

Keywords: schizoanalysis; a-signifying semiotics; non-identical

We're always wondering whether there might be life or intelligence on other planets, way up in the stars ... but we never ask ourselves about the infinitely small ... maybe it could come from there, from a universe that's even smaller than protons, electrons, quarks... *This is how Axel, a young biologist in his early 20s, reveals to Janice (a student dropout of about the same age) the amazing discovery he has just made. But as soon as a device is installed to establish permanent contact with this mysterious entity, a major problem arises – a problem that led to the failure of Axel's previous experiments: though infinitely small, this Universe is capable of causing grave disturbances to Hertzian communications systems! What follows is a series of spectacular convulsions all across the planet, a situation that only becomes stable once the inhabitants of the squat where Janice lives have managed to make verbal contact with the entity, which they have taken to calling UIQ (the Infra-quark Universe). This leads to a phase of reciprocal learning and exchange between the two worlds.* (Guattari 2016: 49)

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The text above is an excerpt from the synopsis of the film *Love of UIQ*, on which Félix Guattari worked from the 1970s. Passionate about science fiction, Guattari imagines in his own way a story of an extraterrestrial encounter. Unlike the usual stories, radical otherness does not come from another, remote planet in a very distant galaxy. It is much closer. The unknown, the non-human already exists among us, on our own Earth. It must still be possible for us to discover it. Guattari places this universe on the infinitesimal scale of the molecular, even smaller than protons, electrons and quarks: the Universe of the Infra-quark (UIQ). Indeed, young scientists have discovered that “[t]he chloroplasts of [a] mutant strain of phytoplankton are sending out messages [...] something like a language, that comes from the very depths of cellular life!” (Guattari 2016: 97).

The description of this strange entity and its relationship with humanity is presented as an exercise in speculative fiction whose philosophical themes and questions are directly imported from the work of Guattari, alone, and with Gilles Deleuze. Indeed, UIQ is the very illustration of the idea of a ‘machinic subjectivity’ and a deterritorialized ‘body without organs’, infinitely small, yet capable of the greatest existential transformations. *Love of UIQ* therefore appears as a very personal project for Guattari. He chose a director, his American filmmaker friend Robert Kramer, and even approached producers in Hollywood in the early 1980s. Unfortunately, the film would never be made. However, the UIQ creature evolved and recomposed itself elsewhere, no longer in the field of fiction, but rather in that of theoretical analysis, sometimes disconcertingly. I am thinking of Guattari’s last two books, *Chaosmosis* (1995[1990]) and *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* (1993[1989]), both haunted by this “kind of dark matter that simply requires an adequate relay to be able to manifest itself and insinuate its way into the organic life and machinic arrangements of our planet” (Guattari 2016: 14).

UIQ is a figure of the indicible and the unknown whose description synthesizes concepts, themes and analytical tools that Félix Guattari developed alone and with Gilles Deleuze. In this article, I propose to interpret it as a metaphor for what Theodor Adorno suggests be called the ‘non-identical’, that which escapes our capacity to understand and which our rationality, by means of concepts and categories, seeks to reduce in order to control it better. To invoke a key concept of the Frankfurt School’s Critical Theory to approach such an object seems surprising at first sight. The analyses of the Frankfurt School thinkers are based on a dialectical, historical and materialistic understanding of the social totality and the development of reason, an approach driven by a reflection on the conditions under which human emancipation would be possible. In Deleuze and Guattari’s works, the influence of Heidegger and Nietzsche is greater than that of Hegel and Weber. The now-famous concepts of ‘assemblage’, ‘rhizome’, ‘deterritorialization’,

‘nomadism,’ or even ‘minority’ no longer refer to a totality, but to a multiplicity, at the risk of abandoning a fundamental critique of the main forms of social mediation which, ultimately, always determine the conditions of individual and collective existence. In other words, the postmodern content of the Deleuzo-Guattarian theses seems to amount to a posture that is irreconcilable with the project of critical theory of the Frankfurt School. This is why the common philosophical project of Deleuze and Guattari has been juxtaposed only to a very limited extent with the writings, concepts and analyses of the thinkers of the Frankfurt School. Nevertheless, attempts to bring them closer together have been made by some researchers who have proposed to analyse Adorno’s negative dialectic in the light of the Deleuzian concept of ‘difference’ (Dallmayr 1997; Nesbitt 2005) or to extend Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communication by the more specific Deleuzo-Guattarian pragmatics (Connolly 2008). I sought to establish possible points of convergence between the work of Deleuze and Guattari and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, in order to establish their complementarity. It was on the basis of a key concept of critical theory, ‘reification’ that it seemed possible to establish a productive connection between the thinkers of the Frankfurt School and Deleuze and Guattari (Richert 2022). In this article, I wish to pursue this rapprochement by focusing more specifically on Guattari’s semiotics and Adorno’s concept of the ‘non-identical’.

For Adorno, the non-identical corresponds to the inexpressible dimension of being that cannot be assimilated by “logical” thinking, i.e. classified, hierarchized, categorized by means of abstract concepts and notions. Adorno (1993[1963]: 33, 147, 137, 147, 147, 102) uses several terms to describe the non-identical, such as the “concept’s Other”, the “incomprehensible”, the “indissoluble”, the “unmastered”, the “unknown”, “the things one cannot speak about”. By developing a systematic critique of identifying thought, Adorno became the defender of the non-identical. For Adorno, thought is by its very nature identifying: “Thinking means identifying” (Adorno 1973[1966]: 5). Rationality, defined as the use of our capacity to think coherently and logically, tends to eliminate the non-identical. Following Adorno, it obscures the particular, the singular and the heterogeneous in order more easily to assimilate the totality of existing things into a coherent whole, while highlighting their intrinsic qualities that make them classifiable, interpretable and hierarchizable. In so doing, the subject ends up totally confusing the thing with the concept, the intelligible with the sensible.

In their famous joint work, which has been criticized for its glaring pessimism (Honneth 2008), Adorno and Horkheimer develop a philosophy in which the historical process of the development of rationality, under the notable impetus of the *Aufklärung*, has led logical thought to grasp only that dimension of being that is

particularly suited to the work of thought, i.e. being that presents to consciousness a dimension that is intrinsically accessible to knowledge. Despite its critics, the work of the theorists of the first generation of the Frankfurt School remains highly pertinent for reflecting on the consequences of the infinite extension of technical and instrumental rationality at the heart of the development of capitalism (the rise of populism and fascism, climate and environmental degradation, etc.). In this article, I more specifically wish to use the concept of the 'non-identical' as a key to reading the semiotic project that Guattari developed alone and with Deleuze. Initially, I want to return to the specific features of schizoanalysis, which largely influenced Guattari's classification of signs, which I seek to interpret as an effort to preserve and rescue the non-identical.

Schizoanalysis as a method of investigating the non-identical

Anti-Oedipus (Deleuze, Guattari 1983[1972]) proposes a singular return to Marx, characterized by a series of reinterpretations, reappropriations and conceptual re-elaboration against a background of rupture with a certain Marxist tradition (Garo 2011). Deleuze and Guattari jointly develop the presuppositions, principles, concepts and objectives of a new practice capable of analysing the productivity of desire and discovering its nature, formation and functioning in the social world. Deleuze and Guattari call this new method 'schizoanalysis'; it tends to distance itself from certain theories of Freud and Lacan criticized for their reductionist conception of the functioning of the unconscious. Thus, schizoanalysis is based on a questioning of the importance played by the Oedipus complex or the structure of language in the formation of the unconscious. Moreover, schizoanalysis must in some way serve to politicize psychoanalysis, which must become aware of the influence of the socio-political field, which is decisive on several levels: from the conduct of psychotherapy to the psychological disorders experienced by people in therapy whose desire is always already determined by certain objects, discourses and social representations. In doing so, schizoanalysis equips itself with a critical programme that aims both to "undo the expressive Oedipal unconscious, always artificial, repressive and repressed, mediated by the family" (Deleuze, Guattari 1983[1972]: 88), while also privileging the openness and discovery "of the unconscious investments of the social field" (Deleuze, Guattari 1983[1972]: 277).

As the subtitle of the book – *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* – indicates, the figure of the schizophrenic is central in *Anti-Oedipus*. This has earned Deleuze and Guattari problematic interpretations of their analyses, that sometimes amount

to caricatures: celebration of the figure of the schizophrenic, apology for the nomad, acceleration of capital flows, etc. (Dosse 2011). Ultimately, Deleuze and Guattari rather insisted on a restart of desire, not an anarchic one, but in connection with an outside that is always in the process of being produced. If Deleuze and Guattari attach so much importance to schizophrenia, it is not to refer to the clinical entity suffering in the hospital room, but to schizophrenia as an experience that blurs identity assignments, overturns family categories and tends to free itself from them in a process of continuous and unlimited desiring production. Schizophrenia is understood by Deleuze and Guattari as that which resists the coherence imposed by identity thinking and rationality as defined by Adorno. They insist on proposing to see in schizophrenia – as a process that invests the entire social field, shakes various codes and transgresses imposed limits – a parallel with the dynamics and deep tendencies of the capitalist mode of production that constantly deterritorializes desire and productive forces by dissolving their old social and cultural codes while reterritorializing them on new norms and dynamics adapted to logic of the market valorization.

These analyses are therefore largely influenced by Marxist theses, and in many respects echo Adorno's, for whom the universalization of commodification and exchange value are linked to the very power of capitalism. By evaluating things and people in terms of utility, efficiency and, more generally, exchange value, instrumental rationality appears to be a form of logical thought that reduces everything it encounters to measurable and interchangeable categories, in other words, mutilating the non-identical. Adorno, like Deleuze and Guattari, therefore sought out forms of life and expression in the social field that would resist this implacable logic. The other side of reason, madness, which is part of the schizophrenic process, appears as a form of resistance. Deleuze and Guattari therefore conceptualize the figure of the schizophrenic to make it an operator of analysis that is both critical of capitalism and foreign to it, or estranged. Critical because in *Anti-Oedipus*, the schizophrenic embodies a deterritorialized subjectivity, i.e. a form of subjectivity that escapes the normative structures imposed by capitalist society. And estranged because this critique is relayed by concepts and notions borrowed as much from Marx's critique of political economy as from psychoanalysis, anthropology or even literature (machine, body without organs, socius, flow, etc.). This strangeness can be understood as a desire to distance themselves from Marxist terminology, but also to multiply viewpoints and perspectives in order to give an account of a dynamic that escapes logical thinking, which is precisely the aim of schizoanalysis.

Schizoanalysis brings to a theoretical level the experiences and reflections carried out within the clinic of La Borde, a psychiatric establishment founded in 1953

by Jean Oury where Guattari worked for many years. La Borde is particularly recognized for the establishment and development of institutional psychotherapy, which poses the psychiatric institution as a space of freedom where, through the treatment of patients, new ways of living and feeling the world are experimented in rupture with the reality of the social field. Therefore, the provision of care involves the establishment of social connections and the creation of a living together which requires active participation of the patients, who have various responsibilities regarding the organization of activities relating to social life within the hospital (cooking, gardening, theatre, sport, writing, etc.). Psychiatrists intervene in the management of time and space, on internal regulations and standards, to propose original institutional practices that transform the existential coordinates of patients. Before, during and after his collaboration with Deleuze, Guattari never stopped thinking about the establishment of fields of experimentation where universes of values new to patients develop, and about the possibility of discovering universes of otherness and meaning previously unknown. For example, Guattari mentions the case of a neurotic patient who furtively evokes memories of cars during psychotherapy. Is this trivial reminiscence or appearance of the subject of the unconscious? In any case, Guattari (2015[1970]) recommended that his patient take driving lessons again. We shall see here creative means put in place by the psychoanalyst who, rather than pinpointing a trauma linked to childhood and parents, encourages his patient to undertake new activities, which should prompt new keys of deterritorialization of desire in order for it to invest a new object (driving, but also a relationship to space and landscape, to escape and mobility, etc.).

In its attempt to identify signs and clues that signal new perspectives, universes of otherness that were previously unthinkable, schizoanalysis is greatly concerned with the non-identical. If the schizoanalyst does not want to interpret these signs or clues for fear of subjecting them to a system of representation cut off from their real assemblages of enunciation, he or she must nevertheless map their trajectories and imagine possible bifurcations towards new forms of otherness. It is in this perspective that Guattari formalizes his own semiotic classification, the originality of which is based on the existence of a class of signs that no longer fundamentally participates in the process of signification, but encourages the constitution of universes of reference yet to be discovered. I will now present the specific features of Guattari's classification of signs, which appears to be an attempt to open up towards the non-identical.

From non-identical matter to signifying form

I now want to show that Guattari's semiotic project, inspired by his theorization of schizoanalysis with Deleuze and its application at the La Borde Clinic, is founded on a principle of preserving the singularity of the objects in the world we encounter. In order to think about the world and experience it the subject necessarily relies on categories and concepts that end up stifling its richness and singularity. At the heart of Guattarian semiotics lies an old metaphysical problem that animated the philosophical discussions of Plato and Aristotle, namely the duality between form (the intelligible world) and matter (the sensible world). Whereas Plato saw a radical separation between matter and form, Aristotle defended the idea that the two planes coexist. For Plato, form is primary in relation to matter, because it designates a pure, immutable and eternal reality. Aristotle reduces the importance of form, but considers it to be the essence of everything in that it actualizes the potentiality of matter. In both cases, albeit with some nuances, Plato and Aristotle give primacy to form in their conception of reality. This duality, characterized by an emphasis on form, was considered by Adorno (2000[1965]: 37) to be the "core of the metaphysical tradition" according to which "the intelligible, noumenal sphere is more real than the empirical". For Adorno, this primacy of form over matter, of the intelligible over the sensible, has committed Western philosophy to a metaphysical quest for identity that reduces the world and its perception into a few categories, the more effectively to control it: "the universal, pure form, is nothing but the form of social dominion in abstracto" (Adorno 2000[1965]: 80).

Guattari's semiotics revisits the distinction between form and matter in its own way, relying in an original manner on the work of the Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev, known for developing glossematics but also for the difficulty of his sometimes very abstract theories (Eco 1976). In the preparatory notes for *Anti-Oedipus*, it is Guattari who suggests using the work of Hjelmslev, which has profoundly influenced the semiotic dimension of schizoanalysis (Genosko 2002: 155). Hjelmslev is known for the distinction he made between the *plane of content* and the *plane of expression*, which can be related respectively to the *signified* and the *signifier* as defined by Saussure. To this first distinction, Hjelmslev adds a second, relating *form* and *substance*. Hjelmslev identifies a factor common to all languages that he calls '*mening*' in Danish ('purport' in English), considered as "the factor that is common to all languages", i.e. "the amorphous 'thought-mass'" (Hjelmslev 1963[1943]: 52) and which could be considered as referring to the 'non-identical' for Adorno. Statements formed differently but expressing the same idea (e.g. 'I do not know' in English, '*Je ne sais pas*' in French, and '*Jeg ved det ikke*' in Danish) bring into play the same common denominator, the purport which corresponds

to this amorphous mass formed differently from one language to another. He compares this unformed purport to the same cloud that changes shape over time depending on the weather. It is each time the purport that takes a specific form from one language to another. For Hjelmslev, semiotization corresponds to the process of transforming the purport into substance from a specific form. To put it more simply, purport can be understood as a substance imagined outside of any form, that is, *a substance without form* (Badir 2000). Substance is semiotically formed when the “form being projected onto the purport, just as an open net casts its shadow down an undivided surface” (Hjelmslev 1963[1943]: 57); where the undivided surface corresponds to the purport, the open net to the form, and the shadow to the substance.

Drawing on Hjelmslev, Guattari and Deleuze (notably in *A Thousand Plateaus* [1987(1980)]) develop several concepts – ‘abstract machine’, ‘diagram’, ‘detrterritorialization’, etc. – to conceive of the pre-semiotic stage, where there is neither form nor substance yet, no distinction, no superiority between the plane of expression and that of content, but rather a multiplicity of intensities that opens up a universe of possibilities. Guattari, alone, also uses this tripartition of ‘purport/form/substance’ to establish his own semiotic classification, to which I now wish to return. In his own classification, Guattari (1984[1977]: 74–81) distinguishes between two types of signifying semiologies: (1) *semiologies of signification*, and (2) *symbolic semiologies*, which he separates from more specifically non-human sign systems: (3) *non-semiotic encodings* and *a-signifying semiotics*.

(1) *Semiologies of signification* are based on a semiological substance, which results from the articulation between a signifier on the plane of expression and a signified on the plane of content. These systems of signs recentre all the substances of expression (sound, image, etc.) on a single signifying substance so that they can always be translated according to the binary system ‘signifier/signified’. With these sign systems, the sign is caught in a game of unlimited deferral with other signs, where the real is put at a distance, while the signifier, according to Derrida’s well-known formula, never ceases to refer to another signifier: a sign always adds up to another to form the web or net falling on an amorphous and “atmospheric” content (Deleuze, Guattari 1987[1980]: 138). These semiologies therefore only function on two planes: the one on which the contents are formalized, and the other on which the expression is formalized. Furthermore, these two planes appear to be stable and homogeneous.

However, Guattari questions the naturalization of such a process of homogenization. Indeed, the substances relating to semiologies of signification are anything but natural. According to Guattari, they have become semiological and no longer

semiotic, in the sense that all the polyvocality of the substances of expression is clearly delimited and determined by the logics of the structure of the language. Guattari's description of the semiologies of signification is at times negative, partly because of his questioning of structuralism and its influence on psychoanalysis and semiology. Of course, the semiologies of signification are indispensable to being able to communicate and understand the world. Guattari's critique is ultimately aimed at their propensity to reduce their world in terms of certain immutable and universal categories. The link with Adorno's analysis is even more apparent. To use Adorno's terminology, the semiologies of signification are those in which the logic of identity reigns in so far as we use it to identify objects, almost unconsciously, by subsuming them under concepts that tend to erase their overflowing richness.

(2) For their part, *symbolic semiologies* use a multiplicity of substances that no longer depend solely on the linguistic structure. These are, for example, gestures, postures, somatizations, rituals, dance and body markings observed in children or schizophrenics. The substances of symbolic semiologies therefore retain a certain autonomy and can never really be totally translated by the semiologies of signification. Guattari insists on the immediacy of their mode of manifestation, e.g. the cry of a child, which allows us to understand, without much difficulty, the child's pain or fear. The importance that Guattari gives to symbolic semiologies can be explained by his experience at the La Borde Clinic. He points out that children or the sick often express themselves without having to resort to semiologies of signification, but can use a whole range of gestures, facial expressions, drawings, cries and laughter that cannot be so easily translated into the dominant language. Adorno himself had thought of childhood as that period of life when things still appear enchanted and magical because of an ability to perceive things in their difference and singularity, until the symbolic collapse established by the logical thinking of the adult world. As Guattari (1984[1977]: 168) observed:

Experts, technocrats of the mind, representatives of the medical or academic establishments will not listen to such forms of expression. Psychoanalysis has worked out an entire system of interpretation whereby it can relate everything whatever to the same range of universal representations: a pine tree is a phallus, it symbolizes order and so on. By imposing such systems of interchangeability these experts take control of the symbolic semiologies used by children, the mad and others to try to safeguard their economy of desire as best as they can.

On the contrary, schizoanalysis involves a set of modes of expression which bring into play a multiplicity of signs, which are not only a matter of translating

or interpreting, but rather of liberating and enriching within the framework of psychotherapy.

(3) *Non-semiotic encodings* refer more specifically to “natural” signals (e.g. hormones or genes) that transmit a message without necessarily producing a defined signification and that function independently of the constitution of a semiological substance. In this case, Guattari opens his classification of signs to both biosemiotics and zoosemiotics. As Thomas Sebeok (2001) has clearly shown, semiotics can be considered as a process that extends to the entire biosphere. Jesper Hoffmeyer and Kalevi Kull, for example, have sought to explain the genetic code based on a single semiotic process at work throughout the biosphere.² However, it seems relevant to underline the importance of the privative character of the *non*-semiotic, which raises some questions concerning the existence of a form of semiosis present at all levels of life. For example, insect communication proceeds from a highly specialized encoding that functions from a series of a-semiotic chains that do not allow any translatability and no “significant flight” (Guattari 1984[1977]: 98). Guattari’s semiotics therefore takes into account the specificities of non-human forms of communication which operate from an a-semiotic logic without the need to create any referent or meaningful opening. This kind of communication does not need anyone to interpret the message, yet it acts directly on reality while resisting all forms of objectification by logical and identifying thought.

(4) Like symbolic semiologies and non-semiotic encodings, *a-signifying semiotics* relativizes the importance of semiologies of signification in the production, circulation and reception of signs that can no longer be grasped by the signifier/signified pair alone. A-signifying semiotics occupies a central place in Guattari’s semiotic classification. Following his logic, their primary objective is not to produce signification, but rather to establish new connections with “material fluxes, with intensive de-territorialization” (Guattari 1984[1977]: 136). A-signifying semiotics no longer work with signs that represent by analogy, contiguity or in a purely arbitrary manner (icon, index, symbol), but by direct conjunction with material flows. Such signs “do not derive from a signifier nor are they even signs as minimal elements of the signifier; they are nonsigns, or rather nonsignifying signs, points-signs having several dimensions” (Deleuze, Guattari 1983[1972]: 241). These are the points-signs, for example, of an electric flow captured and

² Hoffmeyer, who was greatly influenced by Sebeok, considers the semiotic process at work in genetic encoding: “The genome (the sum total of an individual’s genetic material) is therefore a sign vehicle, or even better: a set of sign vehicles, referring to the construction of an organism, the ontogenetic trajectory” (Hoffmeyer 1996: 20).

transmitted by television, which completely dispenses with voice or writing. These points-signs form intersection points, crossroads, and open up a whole regime of multiplicity. Unlike non-semiotic encodings, this category indicates a beyond of human-centric semiotics, a beyond that is characterized by an irreversible passage towards semiotics involving theoretical apparatuses and increasingly more sophisticated and artificial technologies. In other words, these semiotic systems have a lot to do with the development of technology and sciences which open up a universe of possibilities, as they gradually permeate the social world. To give a slightly more concrete picture of how a-signifying semiotics works, Guattari repeatedly cites music, physics, mathematics, but also computer science and the devices that result from these, all of which have a unique power of non-conceptual expression. The bank card is a good example of an info-technical object on the basis of which Guattari (1995[1990]: 49) offers an enlightening description of the a-signifying semiotics brought about by it:

The indicative matter of a-signifying semiotic machines is constituted by “point-signs”; these on one hand belong to a semiotic order and on the other intervene directly in a series of material machinic processes. Example: a credit card number which triggers the operation of a bank auto-teller. The a-signifying semiotic figures don’t simply secrete significations. They give out stop and start orders but above all activate the “bringing into being” of ontological Universes.

The bank card is subject to a complex set of banking protocols. As Genosko shows, the simple operation of inserting one’s bank card into a reader activates iron oxide particles aligned on magnetic strips. When these particles are decoded, a whole process of opening and closing access points, checking passage or blocking the signal is triggered: all these events that go far beyond simple gestures (Genosko 2008). The a-signifying signs that are enlisted in the simplest operation of withdrawing money from an ATM are not concerned with producing any meaning, but with functioning by operating connections between heterogeneous elements. In fact, computing seems to be one of the most successful modes of realizing a-signifying semiotics. The programming code functions in the machine independently of the effects of meaning that it can exert on a developer or programmer capable of reading and understanding it. For the computer scientist, as for the computer, “there are no longer thirty-six possible interpretations, but a single designation with an extremely precise and rigid syntax” (Guattari 1984[1977]: 214). A-signifying semiotics is characterized by specific functioning, i.e. by multiple connections and branches linking together sign systems directly articulated to various material flows; it proceeds by “diagrammatization”. According to Guattari,

the diagram depends on a-signifying semiotics, in the sense that it does not seek to represent reality, but rather to construct a new type of reality by tracing new potentialities while managing to free itself from a fully formed substance.

A-signifying semiotics has attracted renewed interest in recent years from scholars such as Gary Genosko (2016) and Maurizio Lazzarato (2014), because it sheds new light on the enslaving power of digital capitalism, now relayed by a whole range of cutting-edge technical equipment such as artificial intelligence. However, the abovementioned scholars tend to perceive a-signifying semiotics in a particularly negative light and the description they produce of its effects (shaping of affects, capturing desire, adjusting perception thresholds at a preconscious level) is reminiscent of Foucault's analyses of discipline as a tactic of power that creates docile and exercised bodies. For example, Lazzarato uses a-signifying semiotics to describe how the subjectivity of traders is affected as they are prey to a multiplicity of a-signifying signs, diagrams and other graphs on the basis of which economic decisions with "real" consequences are made:

The sign flows circulating from computer to computer in real time constitute a reality that is as objective as material flows; they influence subjectivity and the functional links in the system which set share prices and act directly on the "real" economy. In the trading room there are only diagrams, only curves traced by a worldwide computer network, which indicate the upward and downward movements of share prices [...] That signs (machines, objects, diagrams, etc.) constitute the focal points of proto-enunciation and proto-subjectivity means that they *suggest, enable, solicit, instigate, encourage, and prevent certain actions, thoughts, affects or promote others*. (Lazzarato 2014: 96–97)

A-signifying semiotics connects directly to bodies: they generate affects and passions, modulate libidinal charges, control and regulate behaviours and attitudes. In this sense, the Guattarian description of the effects of a-signifying semiotics in the social world is indeed very close to the diagnosis made by Genosko and Lazzarato. Since a-signifying semiotics operates in a regime inferior to that of signification and interpretation, one could almost believe in its neutrality. Points-signs are not concerned with the meaning effects that they can generate. Only the triggering and connection mechanisms that govern their functioning count. However, there is nothing a-signifying about the modalities under which they diagrammatize themselves; these modalities depend on power formations that partially govern their routinization. Thus, a-signification plays a crucial role in capitalist social formations:

The whole fabric of the capitalist world consists of this kind of flux of de-territorialized signs – money and economic signs, signs of prestige and so on. Significations, social values (those one can interpret, that is) can be seen at the level of power formations, but, essentially, capitalism depends upon non-signifying machines. There is, for instance, no meaning in the ups and downs of the stock market; capitalist power, at the economic level, produces no special discourse of its own, but simply seeks to control the non-signifying semiotic machines, to manipulate the non-signifying cogs of the system [...]. A-signifying machines do not recognize agents, individuals, roles or even clearly defined objects. By this very fact they acquire a kind of omnipotence, moving across the signification systems within which individual agents recognize and become alienated from one another. Capitalism has no visible beginning or end. (Guattari 1984[1977]: 171–172)

The time when Guattari imagined and described the functioning of a-signifying semiotics corresponded to that in which microcomputing was developing and the mass media offering was specializing. Guattari would return several times to the enslaving effects of a-signifying semiotics at the level of the individual and collective psyche. As negative as these effects may be, he sees in a-signifying semiotics a prime potentiality for the social world due to their propensity to make us discover completely new ontological universes. What Guattari seeks with schizoanalysis and his classification of signs is the development of a certain relationship of a-significance, a breaking point of meaning intersecting with the emergence of lines of flight that relativize the importance of the semiologies of signification. A word, an image, a line of code or even a sound can serve as deterritorialization operators, provided that we give them a *diagrammatic* interest, i.e. pay less attention to the interpretation of their meaning effects, and more to the connecting points they elicit. A-signification can therefore be understood as a mode of expression that resists subsumption under the totalizing categories of identifying thought, which nevertheless seeks to control its effects and instrumentalize its deployment. As a result, a-signification is ambivalent: it is either a promise of emancipation, or a reinforcement of existing and future modes of alienation. In any case, Guattari's semiotic project can be conceived as a tireless effort to take into account the multiplicity of modes of expression in which new paths of access to the unknown, the inexpressible and the ungraspable are revealed.

Non-identical as a precautionary principle

So far, I have presented schizoanalysis as a kind of existential cartography that no longer interprets neurotic dead ends, paranoid delusions and failures of the unconscious, but must grasp whether these can serve as indicators signalling new

universes of references to branch off into in order to overcome a blocked situation. Guattari's classification of signs aims precisely to identify the components responsible for blockages or openings toward universes of meaning and otherness that are new or waiting to be discovered or even created. In my view, schizoanalysis is oriented towards the non-identical in its desire to spot symptoms and clues that signal new perspectives or previously unthinkable universes of reference, taking into account the existence of the pre-semiotic stage constituted by non-semiotically formed matters, this depth of being where thought comes up against the limits of what it is capable of conceptualizing.

For this reason, I thought it was relevant to link the concept of the non-identical to the semiotic project that Guattari developed both alone and together with Deleuze. In his classification of signs, the non-identical can even be considered as a precautionary principle which implies the recognition that any object, thing or individual subject always exceeds the concepts which claim to grasp them. Guattari's classification of signs leads us to consider this very moment when a signifying substance is fixed, which facilitates its submission to the logic of identification, i.e. the very moment it is captured by, and interpreted through the concept that names it.

To conclude, I would like to mention two areas that Guattari has privileged in his latest works, namely aesthetics and ethics. Aesthetics first, because, as Adorno reminds us on numerous occasions in his work, aesthetic experience is intimately linked to the non-identical. For Guattari, this does not just concern artistic creations, because aesthetics, considered more broadly as the sensitive dimension of being, works as well in the fields of science, ecology, and economics. It is less a question of institutionalized art circumscribed in the aseptic space of museums than one of the very movement of bringing into being incorporeal universes that carry both the artist and his audience into a movement that transforms the relationship to sounds, plastic forms, pictorial dimensions, but also to the environment and otherness. Each work of art has an inexpressible character, a surplus of meaning that exceeds interpretation. In my opinion, this dimension of being should be part of any investigation directed towards the non-identical, which is already considered in advance as precarious and uncertain. Indeed, the subject risks encountering some resistance from the semiologies of signification that slow down the gradual passage to a threshold of nonsense where the usual coordinates of the lived world are blurred. The concept of the non-identical provides a means of better understanding Guattari's preferred approach to certain objects capable of transforming our sensitive relationship to otherness, to the cosmos, to space, but also of making strange our usual relationship to a world determined essentially by the rhythms of production and consumption of goods. In this sense, estrangement

also implies re-enchantment. Non-identical expresses a posture of openness to apprehend the multiple dimensions of existence, while aiming to enrich it by discovering universes of otherness peripheral to the dominant coordinates.

Which brings me to the end of this article on the ethical implications presupposed by its mode of investigation which, to the extent that at any given moment it necessarily resorts to semiologies of signification, must always remain aware of the irreducibility of the objects that capture its interest, beyond or below the abstract categories imposed on them. It ultimately aims at a recognition of the singularity of the objects it seizes, which cannot be reduced to a series of predicates or judgements. It therefore favours a theoretical attitude that refuses any domination of the object by the concept, this as a means of preserving the otherness of what is under scrutiny. Rather than enclosing reality in fixed structures, it is a question of allowing this amorphous, non-semiotically formed non-identical matter to manifest itself in all its singularity. Such a posture therefore compels the subject to consider the multiple dimensions of the world in which s/he is immersed, a world always already constituted by inexhaustible resources of potentialities and virtualities, and forces of radical transformation of the existing order.

Translated from the French by Simon Levesque.

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Sur quelques aspects d'une sémiotique du non-identique : Deleuze, Guattari et Adorno

Dans cet article, je propose d'utiliser le concept de non-identique du philosophe Theodor Adorno pour explorer le projet sémiotique que Félix Guattari a développé seul et avec Gilles Deleuze. Je commence par rappeler les principes, concepts et objectifs de la schizoanalyse, tels qu'ils sont théorisés par Deleuze et Guattari dans l'Anti-Œdipe. La schizoanalyse est une pratique militante qui cherche à analyser la productivité du désir dans l'inconscient et ses multiples points d'application dans le monde social. Parallèlement à sa collaboration avec Deleuze, Guattari a pratiqué la schizoanalyse dans le cadre de son travail clinique à La Borde. D'abord inspiré par la sémiotique hjelmslevienne, Guattari a ensuite proposé sa propre classification des signes, mieux adaptée à l'analyse des multiples composantes de la subjectivité, du désir et de l'inconscient en relation avec le capitalisme. La schizoanalyse deleuzo-guattarienne combinée à la sémiotique plus spécifiquement guattarienne est d'emblée orientée vers le non-identique. Elle offre des outils conceptuels et analytiques pour identifier et cartographier l'hétérogénéité des univers sémiotiques les plus singuliers au sein des médias, de l'art, de la science et, plus largement, de la vie sociale.

Mõnest mitteidentsuse semiootika tahust: Deleuze, Guattari ja Adorno

Käesolevas artiklis teen ettepaneku kasutada filosoof Theodor Adorno mitteidentsuse mõistet uurimaks Félix Guattari semiootilist tööd, mida ta tegi nii üksinda kui ka koos Gilles Deleuze'iga. Alustuseks tuletan meelde skisoanalüüsi aluspõhimõtteid, mõisteid ja eesmäärke, nii nagu Deleuze ja Guattari need „Anti-Oidipuses” välja töötasid. Skisoanalüüs on aktivismile suunatud praktika, mis püüab analüüsida iha tootlikkust teadvustamatuses ning selle paljusid rakenduspunkte ühiskondlikus maailmas. Lisaks koostööle Deleuze'iga praktiseeris Guattari skisoanalüüsi oma töö käigus La Borde'i kliinikus. Olles algselt inspireeritud Louis Hjelmslevi semiootikast, pakkus Guattari hiljem välja omaenda märgiklassifikatsiooni, mis sobis paremini iha, teadvustamatuse ja subjektiivsuse arvukate koostisosade analüüsimiseks seoses kapitalismiga. Deleuze'i ja Guattari skisoanalüüs koos konkreetsemalt Guattari semiootikaga on algusest peale suunatud mitteidentsuse poole. See pakub mõistelisi ja analüütilisi tööriistu, mille abil tuvastada ja kaardistada ainuliste ehk singulaarsete semiootiliste maailmade heterogeensust meedias, kunstis, teaduses ning ühiskondlikus elus laiemalt.