

Guattari and transversality

Institutions, analysis and experimentation

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How, on the basis of what problems and concerns, in reference to what concepts, and in the light of what practices, can and should we understand the work of Félix Guattari? It is now fairly widely accepted that Guattari was not simply a junior partner in the two-headed exploration of capitalism and schizophrenia signed 'Deleuze and Guattari' and that there is a Guattari 'effect' that consists in more than the provision of clinical material and political experience, a heady rhetoric and a speculative interest in semiotic theory, for Deleuze to develop into well-formed philosophical concepts.¹ However, developing an exploration of what might be called the 'plane' of thought proper to Guattari is a task that remains for the most part still to be accomplished.

With the recent publication in English of a complete version of *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*,² anglophone readers are in a better position to appreciate some of the complexities of Guattari's thinking and, in particular, the depth of its engagement with a set of practices organized as much in relation to the institutional realities of working with psychosis as with the psychotic institutions of leftist politics in post-World War II France. Not only did Guattari work in one of the numerous hospitals in the French psychiatric sector, but he wrote for a newspaper, *La Voie Communiste*, which was at the forefront of a shift away from the Stalinism of the PCF. In these respects, the questions of the institution and, more specifically, of 'institutionalization' form an interesting starting point for addressing some key themes in Guattari's work, his relationship with Deleuze, and the nature of his lifelong engagement with clinical issues relating to psychosis, as well as his vindication of micropolitics, which is incomprehensible without some appreciation of the importance of the institution in his thinking.

Thus far, the institution and institutionalization do not figure that much in the few commentaries that exist on Guattari's work.³ The La Borde clinic is generally present, of course – unavoidably so – but

typically as a contextualizing point of reference to frame discussions of concepts. How the institution and its possibilities were crucial to Guattari's concerns can thus easily fall by the wayside. Philosophical readings that do not engage with this question of the institution, or which consider Guattari's early writings from the telos of the collaboration with Deleuze, risk missing the ways in which Guattari's work links theory and practice. Given the complexity of the developments around psychiatry in postwar France, ignoring the matter of how Guattari understood institutions and what is entailed by his notion of institutional analysis further risks missing the specific interest of his work in relation to the broader historical current of movements calling into question institutions more generally.

It is worth pointing out, in this respect, that the French term *institution* does not cover the same semantic field as the English term 'institution'. As Jean Ayme has pointed out in his essay on the history of institutional psychotherapy,

contrary to Anglo-Saxon use, for which the institution is the hospital, from which 'deinstitutionalization', designating the taking in hand of the ill outside of the hospital, follows, in French, *institution* designates first of all the action of instituting, and then 'everything that is invented by humans in opposition to the facts of nature'.⁴

What anglophones might think of as institutions, in French is captured by the term *établissement*. Jean Oury, following Tosquelles in his insistence on distinguishing 'institution' and *établissement*, remarks in a manner that is largely consistent with the spirit, if not the letter, of Guattari's thinking:

the establishment is a structure that is plunged into global society, and which relates to state criteria: it must answer to a large quantity of necessary administrative conditions; whereas *institutions* are something that can develop inside the establishment: they are quasi-infinite in number and variety.⁵

In these respects, exploring the issue of the institution has broader resonances. It not only helps elucidate the well-known theme of micropolitics, but it can help in the development of a more detailed consideration of questions of power, and in particular some of the differences between Deleuze, Guattari and Foucault. It also offers the possibility of a reading of Deleuze that starts from Guattari (rather than the more conventional reverse move). For, whilst the theme of the institution may have only a muted presence in Deleuze's work, it is there. Deleuze acknowledged this in an interview with Antonio Negri, in the journal *Futur antérieur* in 1990. Responding to a question about the problem of politics and the problematic relationship of movements to institutions that he (Negri) detects in his work, Deleuze acknowledged the importance of a movement within institutions that is distinct from laws and contracts. And it is precisely in relationship to Guattari, in 'Three Group-Related Problems', the essay that he wrote as a preface to *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, that we find an explicit invocation of the theme of the institution in relationship to politics, as a counter to the 'contractual' form of relationship to which anti-psychiatry found itself having recourse.⁶ We can also find a more direct indication of Deleuze's interest in institutions and the movement of 'collective creation' in his writing practice: first with Guattari and then in a reworking of the *entretien*, the 'conversation' format of the intellectual discussion, with Claire Parnet. For the *entretien* and the situation it creates in which an author 'explains' him- or herself is precisely an element of the institutions of philosophy that Deleuze was concerned with at that moment in French intellectual history: the emergence of media 'intellectuals', such as the *nouveaux philosophes*, the links between publishing and journalism, and the usurping of philosophy by marketing, in relation to which Deleuze situates key elements of his approach to 'doing' philosophy, subsequent to his encounter with Guattari.

Why institutions?

But it is perhaps in relationship to Foucault and to the shifts in his thinking that Guattari's approach to the institution is of the most immediate interest. At one point in the early 1970s Foucault and Guattari had a particularly close connection, through a collaborative project funded by the French government that eventuated in the publication of several issues of the journal *Recherches* on the 'genealogy of capital'.⁷ The institution and its critique were, of course, very much

in the 'air du temps' in France (and not just France) in the 1960s, both in the myriad agitations shaking the psychiatric sector and in intellectual debate, and Foucault was very much part of these agitations. A number of commentators have noted the way that Foucault's *The History of Madness* became something of a rallying point for the burgeoning criticism of the asylum. Robert Castel has gone so far as to talk of 'two' versions of Foucault's *The History of Madness* when making the link between the latter and a burgeoning 'anti-repressive sensibility'.⁸ And it was in relation, precisely, to the 'anti-psychiatric' current that Foucault would develop a critical analysis of the notion of the institution in his 1973–4 lectures at the Collège de France on 'Psychiatric Power'. These lectures, where it is a matter of reframing questions of psychiatric expertise in terms of a problem of power, rather than a primarily representational one of the 'perception' of madness, serve as an interesting counterpoint to Guattari's thinking. For Foucault argues that the institution (along with violence and the family) is a notion that will not get us 'very far' in the analysis of the links between a discursive practice and the apparatus of power. More pointedly for Foucault, the difficulty with taking the notion of the institution as an implicit framing device is that 'as soon as we talk about institutions we are basically talking about both individuals and the group, we take the individual, the group, and the rules which govern them as *given*.' For Foucault, the key point is that power is constitutive of individuals and groups: 'What is important therefore is ... the practical dispositions of power, the characteristic networks, currents, relays, points of support, and differences of potential that characterize a form of power, which are, I think, constitutive of, precisely, both the individual and the group.'⁹ Thus it is the informal tactical reality of power that takes analytic precedence over the more formalized, rational operations of the institution, which can, in Foucault's view, have nothing to do with anything like the production of subjectivity in which Guattari was evidently interested.

The underlying criticisms of 'anti-psychiatry' (in a broad, not the UK-specific, sense) are amplified in a series of rather generic characterizations of a whole series of developments – of which Guattari's work was a part – by Jacques Lagrange in the contextualizing presentation of Foucault's course, and these are indicative of a willingness to simplify what were ultimately a complex, not to say chaotic, set of historical processes in the postwar period. Whilst Lagrange is doubtless correct to point to the limitations of

the terms on which the institutional psychotherapy current in postwar French psychiatry may have sought to reform the 'psychiatrie de secteur', and to the broader connections between anti-psychiatry à la Laing and Cooper and institutional psychotherapy,¹⁰ his discussion overlooks any of the specifics of the ways in which thinking about institutions developed here, particularly in relationship to Jean Oury and to Guattari and, most importantly in this regard, the specific *use* to which institutional processes might be put.¹¹ Whilst the connections between 'British' anti-psychiatry and a range of movements (including institutional psychotherapy in France) have been explored in a more detailed and systematic way by Postel and Allen (who take care to indicate the importance in both of an engagement with Sartre, of the work of Minkowski, and so on),¹² they similarly eschew any consideration of questions about practice. In fact, Lagrange's view that later work in institutional psychotherapy (by which one might understand Guattari and Oury, despite the former's rather qualified stance towards this label) presents a 'sublimation of the institution' through a simple 'collectivization' of analytic concepts seems deliberately to misinterpret what Guattari's work aimed to do. And whilst Postel and Allen do offer an account of the rejection of anti-psychiatry *stricto sensu* within France, there is little sense of the details of why this shift came about.

Guattari himself was heavily critical of Laing and Cooper.¹³ It is true that his early work shares the more widespread sense that there is some anthropological truth about man (*sic*) in general to be found in schizophrenia. This is captured most notably in Tosquelles' claim that 'schizophrenia is to be found not only at the crossroads of all the problems of psychopathology, but even in the problem of Mankind itself: tell me how you conceptualise and act towards schizophrenia, and I will tell you what [kind of] psychiatrist and man you are.'¹⁴ However, we would miss much of the interest of Guattari's work if we remained riveted to this point. In fact, the recurrent interest that Guattari evinces for theoretical writings that have a strong connection to the phenomenological tradition – von Weizsäcker, Rumke, Binswanger, Tellenbach and Tatossian – not to mention Sartre, are acknowledged points of reference, many in his most elaborate theoretical text, *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, and his conceptualization of the refrain there, tackling questions of 'pathic' temporalization, is directly concerned with issues that were of central importance to that tradition.¹⁵ Yet references to phenomenology

and existential psychiatry prove very little in and of themselves: Guattari was not a phenomenologist and nor was he any great respecter of the unity of philosophical systems. His habit of drawing on insights, arguments, concepts and vocabularies pell-mell means that any attempt to adduce generic historical resemblances between his thinking and that of others with whom he might often have been closely related (Oury, for example) is a problematic move.

The institution in Guattari's work

Perhaps the clearest early statement of the importance of the institution as a concern for Guattari is to be found in a presentation (undated) he made to the *Groupe de Travail de Psychothérapie et de Sociothérapie Institutionnelles* (GtPsy), excerpts of which appear in *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* as an 'Introduction to Institutional Psychotherapy'. Framed in part in terms of the problematic nature of the methodological individualism that compromises analysis in its reliance on the one-on-one dialogue in the consulting room, Guattari refers here to 'institutionalization' as the 'problem of the production of institutions': 'who produces the institution and articulates its sub-groups? Is there a way to modify this production? The general proliferation of institutions in contemporary society leads only to reinforcing the alienation of the individual: is it possible to operate a transfer of responsibility, replacing bureaucracy with *institutional creativity*? Under what conditions?'¹⁶ The remainder of this text tackles a number of issues related to the connections between the institution and practice, and, casting to one side the idea of treating the institution as a structure, it introduces an enduring distinction in Guattari's work: that of the pliable and relative difference between subjugated and subject groups, groups spoken by others (that receive their law 'from outside' – doctors, for example, as addressees or referents of ministerial decrees) and groups that are capable of assuming their 'non-sense', their finitude, and interpreting themselves.

The theme of the production of institutions, once again framed in terms of the distinction between subject and subjugated groups, is also central to the text of a presentation at the La Borde clinic in 1966, 'The Group and the Person', which makes an interesting link with the theme of the revolutionary production of institutions that Deleuze picks up on in his Preface, and, with a more explicit nod to Lacan, to the idea of a connection between the production of the institution and the situation of desire in society: the institution is 'a sub-set within

production ... a residue which suggests what Lacan calls the *objet petit a*.¹⁷

The thematization of the institution in Guattari's early work extends both across a series of clinical texts – on the transference, on transversality (to which we will return) – and into a text that deals with the events of May 1968, 'Students, the Mad, and "Delinquents"'. Referring there in part to his own earlier work with the student movement, which metamorphosed into the setting up of the *Fédération des Groupes d'études et de recherches institutionnelles* (FGERI) and *Recherches*, the journal that would act as its mouthpiece, and subsequently that of the Centre d'études, de recherches, et de formation institutionnelles (CERFI), Guattari suggests that the institution is the 'unit of production' of subjectivity and points expressly to the 'luxuriant' production of institutions themselves as a result of the French Revolution.

Even on the basis of this cursory and incomplete characterization, it is evident that for the early Guattari the theme of the institution is inseparable from a problematic of desire and of subjectivity, at once individual and collective. But the theme of the institution is also, perhaps unavoidably, connected to Guattari's interest in semiotic theory. Indeed, it is precisely in relation to his endeavours with semiotic concepts that we can see the continuation of his working through of questions related to the institution and to institutionalization whilst collaborating with Deleuze. Semiotics helped Guattari acquire a more compelling understanding of the connections between institutional processes and the unconscious that *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* thematized. If the Guattari of the 1960s is still to a considerable extent operating with a Lacanian vocabulary in which the essential issue at stake is the production of *signifiers*, it is also true that he is at the same time looking for a way to break with this vocabulary. This can be seen not just in texts like 'Machine, and Structure' and 'From One Sign to Another', but also – with a first reference to Hjelmslev – in the lengthy essay 'Subjectivity, Causality and History', where he connects the possibility of revolutionary subjectivity to signifying breakthroughs that effect a rupture in the signifier. But the shift is much more marked in the *Echafaudages sémiotiques* that conclude his subsequent publication, *La Révolution moléculaire*, and specifically in the section on 'The Place of the Signifier in the Institution', where Guattari argues for Hjelmslev, and the distinctions he makes, as an aid to discerning the position of the signifier in the

institution – the position of which cannot, he argues, be discerned on the basis of the classic analytic situation.¹⁸ Hjelmslev's threefold distinction between matter, substance and form, cashed out in terms of expression and content, facilitates a conceptual relativization of the Lacanian signifier, resituating it in the context of a more complex set of semiotic systems which are, in principle, better able to deal with the material realities of the institution and the processes it sets in play. Interestingly, Guattari goes so far as to call these a-signifying signs 'institutional semiotics' and the use that he makes of Hjelmslev here is indicative of the connection that he thinks can be established between semiotic theory and institutional analytic practice.

Finally, it is worth noting how, in *Chaosmosis*, a text written when Guattari had become heavily involved in Green politics, he goes so far as to argue that the unconscious itself has become an institution: 'one finds oneself rigged out with an unconscious the moment one dreams, délire, forgets, or makes a slip of the tongue...'¹⁹

It is clear, then, that a critical engagement with the institution retains its importance throughout Guattari's writings. This reminds us that his thinking is always concerned with the specificity of concrete situations, even if some of his texts – *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, for example – seem to veer into the realms of extreme abstraction. This is further confirmed by the recent publication of a text of Guattari's from the late 1980s, 'De Leros à La Borde: Pratiques analytiques et pratiques sociales'.²⁰ In this respect, if we take Guattari's references to the institution and to institutionalization as a guide, Jean-Claude Polack's comment, that he stayed 'as close as possible to his everyday experience',²¹ seems fundamentally correct. The treatment of Guattari as an epigone of French theory, hence as tacitly located in the university apparatus, is highly problematic.

From transference to transversality

To respond to Foucault's objections to the idea that one might elaborate a critique of psychiatric power on the basis of the institution, a more precise appreciation is needed of what is perhaps the crucial concept in the early Guattari's writing: transversality. It is by means of the concept of transversality that Guattari would accomplish a rapprochement between the organizational practice of working in a hospital, the possibilities of concrete political action, and the more obviously clinical dimensions of the problems raised by working with psychosis.

It is hardly surprising, perhaps, given the ways in which the developments in psychiatry in France in the postwar period that are labelled ‘institutional psychotherapy’ entailed a ‘confrontation’ between a set of practices located in the hospital and the theory and practice of psychoanalysis, that the transference should have become a central issue at an early stage in Guattari’s work. The transference condenses that privileging of the epistemic prioritization of a ‘truth’ of madness over and above relations of power that Foucault in particular was at pains to criticize. ‘Transversality’ is an attempt at transforming the psychoanalytic concept of transference. This was crucial not just for Guattari’s own understanding of the possibilities of ‘institutional analysis’ but also for his subsequent encounter with Deleuze, and for the consequent dramatic stylistic shift in Deleuze’s writing, exemplified in *Anti-Oedipus*.

Drawing on a discussion of transference in a presentation by Jacques Schotte, which effects a rapprochement – that Guattari is far from accepting – between Freud and Heidegger, and extends the scope of the transference beyond the limited space of the analytic encounter, Guattari’s discussion is elaborated, from the outset, in terms of the distinction (which Guattari never really gives up) between subject- and subjugated groups: as a ‘temporary’ measure, and an ‘institutional experiment’. Schotte’s elaboration – of the links between transference and the field of language more broadly – enables Guattari to begin to think about the kinds of dynamics present in the transference ‘properly so-called’ at the level of the institution as a whole. And his framing of the institution in terms of the distinction between kinds of groups is important as a way of facilitating a move away from thinking in terms of structure, even if his understanding of the possible functioning of groups, vis-à-vis the institutional reality of the unconscious, is presented in terms of their signifying function. Thinking in terms of groups and their practices is, in this respect, a way for Guattari to avoid the reifying, eternalizing effects of the notion of structure (linguistic or otherwise) and to allow for the possibility, necessary to overcome the segregative split between reason and madness, that the institution can become something other than the means through which that split is consecrated.

In the context of the conceptualization of transversality, the distinction between subject groups and subjugated groups bears on the possibility that one can change ‘the nature of the data accepted by the super-ego into a new kind of acceptance

of “initiative”’, understood as the possibility of a transformation of the institution from within, a process by which different groups in the institution are susceptible to an openness to alterity. In so far as subject groups do not ‘cultivate their symptoms through rituals’ they are susceptible of risking a ‘face to face encounter with non-sense’, which encounter facilitates the lifting of individual impasses in relationship to the unconscious and makes it possible for that group to take the initiative in respect both of themselves and of others.

So long as the group remains an object for other groups and receives its non-sense, that is death, from the outside, one can always count on finding refuge in the group’s structures of misrecognition. But from the moment the group becomes a subject of its own destiny and assumes its own finitude and death, it is then that the data received by the superego is modified, and in consequence, the threshold of the castration complex, specific to a given social order, can be locally modified.²²

As is well known, Guattari’s thinking about subject- and subjugated groups has a particularly close link to Sartre’s thinking about groups in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.²³ Yet it is important to note that it is introduced by Guattari as relative to the possibility of ‘initiative’ in an institutional context, to the possibility, that is, of generating the kind of institutional change that will facilitate precisely the kind of movement vis-à-vis the unconscious that the transference is thought to accomplish. In part, this is an issue of how one might make ‘analysis’ work under conditions that are considerably more complicated than those which obtain in an individual analysis. However, we will miss the sense of the challenge posed by the concept of transversality if we restrict our understanding in that way: first, because it is a concept that is as much directed towards the staff as it is the patients; and second, because it is a concept that seeks directly to transform institutional realities by shifting the way in which people produce themselves and their relations to others within institutions. For the most part – and Guattari’s discussion here is directed more towards the personnel of an institution than the patients – the subjugated nature of groups such as the dominant personnel in the hospital, as Guattari understands it, is precisely to ‘block any expression of the desire of the groups of human beings of which the institution is composed’.²⁴ And whilst much of the discussion can be read primarily in terms of a critique of the alienating effects of the division of labour in the hospital and the way in

which that shapes power relations within the institution, Guattari is seeking to address the problematic way in which the transference in its more traditional acceptance *exacerbates* the problems of the institution of his day.

A fixed transference, a rigid mechanism, like the relationship of nurses and patients with the doctor, an obligatory, predetermined, 'territorialised' transference onto a particular role or stereotype, is worse than a resistance to analysis: it is a way of interiorizing bourgeois repression by the repetitive, archaic, and artificial re-emergence of the phenomena of caste, with all the spell-binding and reactionary group phantasies they bring in their train.²⁵

To put this another way: transversality effects a rapprochement between desire and power, understood in the sense of capacity or potentiality.

Transversality allows Guattari to introduce the possibility of a kind of group practice within the institution that generates analytic effects regarding the circulation of desire within it, and the subjective possibilities of working with it. Whilst in these early writings he is still thinking in terms of the traditional analytic vocabulary, his conceptualization of transversality in terms of subject and subjugated groups challenges the privileges that accrue to the

doctor in the institution. In the text on institutional psychotherapy mentioned at the outset, for example, we find Guattari arguing for the need to have 'done with the doctor as individual, colleague, citizen, who puts himself forward as the one who "speaks for..."', who is the "spokesperson" of the subject that the institution could be'.²⁶ In the text on transversality as such, this view is extended, by virtue of the more explicit conceptualization of the subject group, both into the idea that the analytic interpretation is something that can 'be given by the idiot of the ward if his voice is heard at the right time', and into the idea that the medical 'function' of the doctor must be split up into a 'number of different responsibilities involving groups and individuals'. In respect of both these points, then, a subject group forms precisely what elsewhere in *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* Guattari refers to as a 'collective agent of enunciation', or what Deleuze, in the slightly more picturesque terms of 'Three Group-Related Problems', refers to as a 'sort of "monster" that is neither psychoanalysis nor hospital practice ... a machine to enunciate and produce desire'.²⁷

Guattari's initial elaboration of the concept of transversality has a particular bearing on clinical questions around psychosis. The reality of the day-to-day situation of the psychiatric establishment, where it is a matter in particular of *treating* and not just *diagnosing*, say, a psychosis,²⁸ creates situations in which the one-on-one situation of traditional analysis does not work. For Guattari's colleague Jean Oury this problem could be understood in terms of the idea of the 'dissociated transference', an idea which connects to 'schizophrenic dissociation' and which Oury characterizes in terms of the idea of 'small pieces of transference which permit, as Tosquelles said, 'multi-referential investments'.²⁹ Indeed, the complex reality of a hospital, with doctors living alongside patients, administrative staff and others, clearly generates situations for which traditional analysis, taking the particular conditions of the session in the consulting room as the tacit yardstick situation through which to understand doctor-patient, or analyst-analysand dynamics, is inadequate. These problems, which are arguably compounded by the relative lack of interest of figures like Freud or Lacan in questions of the treatment of psychosis, generate an overreliance on an enunciative situation – the traditional consulting room – and a set of methodological individualist assumptions about how 'access' to the unconscious might be achieved, which are challenged by the processes that are operative in an institution, and which



it is difficult to deal with by reference to diagnostic concepts such as foreclosure.³⁰

Of course references to treatment may be thought to entail an acceptance of the prior gnoseological framing of madness, which the presence of a patient in an institution suggests, and hence, in turn, to confirm the view that institutional psychotherapy is simply 'reformist'. However, there is a clear difference between the situation of people like Guattari and Oury working in the psychiatric sector and accepting that hospitalization (as well as the broader perception of madness to which it is linked) might be something more than a transitory historical reality.

Guattari's ongoing concerns with thinking the reality of the hospital in terms of structure, and his equivocations with regard to language, are suggestive of an understanding of analytic gnoseology that is far from accepting their necessary foundedness. We have already seen how the functioning of groups and the notion of the subject group calls into question the privileges allotted to the doctor in the work of analysing the unconscious, as it is operative within the institution. This extends into Guattari's recurrently expressed view that psychoanalysis doesn't actually *do* much in the way of analysis (by virtue, he says, of the way in which analysts take refuge 'behind' the

transference). But whilst the correlated affirmation that institutional analysis *does* do analysis is an argument for allowing what takes place in the institution to challenge that gnoseology, the broader question that this raises is whether or not institutional analysis and the concept of transversality amount not to a challenging of the primacy of epistemology but simply to a collectivization of analysis and the claims that it makes.

In this respect, we might consider Guattari's approach to transversality by means of a contrast to another, related, critique of the transference. For Léon Chertok and Isabelle Stengers, discussing the transference in the context of a critical analysis of psychoanalysis in its endeavours to distinguish itself from hypnosis, the authority of analysis is inseparable from the epistemic claims that are bound up with the way in which transference comes to be understood. Referring to a claim of Freud's, to the effect that psychoanalysis has succeeded in placing the effects of suggestion at the service of knowledge, they comment that this claim implies that psychoanalysis defines the unconscious as a 'reliable witness' for this knowledge.

In the extremely specific conditions created by the analytic scene, the human psyche *must* allow



the analyst to recognize a difference between an 'arbitrary' interpretation and those that get at unconscious reasons.³¹

To put the matter more pithily: the analytic conception of the transference is indispensable to the claim to do analysis, to produce something approaching a truth.

Guattari's position in relationship to the transference is not quite that of Stengers and Chertok. If they share a concern with the bogus scientificity of psychoanalysis, for Stengers and Chertok, even declarations of the humility of the analyst vis-à-vis what he or she knows fail to call into question the kinds of exclusionary, disqualifying judgements that the heavy theorization of such humility permits. Overcoming the illusion of the subject-supposed-to-know, in analysis, does not prevent Lacanians from using their theory as a highly effective tool for dismissing the claims of others, just as the ironic structure of Socratic ignorance cannot be mistaken for genuine perplexity. Similarly for Guattari, transversality allows for a similar calling into question of analytic expertise: if the privileges of the doctor can be contested by the 'idiot of the ward', then at the very least analysis cannot be something that can or should be thought to be the privilege of the theorist. Guattari's concerns about Althusserian theory – expressed at several points in *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* – may, in this respect, be extended into a critical stance vis-à-vis 'traditional' theories of analysis, even if Guattari's continued affecting of a Lacanian vocabulary suggests such a critique would not be so readily forthcoming.

However, if the concept of transversality and the possibilities of a collective analysis of the unconscious in the institution point towards a calling into question of power structures within the establishment, there nonetheless remains a sense, for Guattari, that transversality still possesses some sort of epistemic virtue. It is difficult to understand how institutional analysis could continue to be a form of *analysis* otherwise. However, first, the flows of affect whose mobility across the institution becomes susceptible to analysis by virtue of the workings of transversality have to be understood – and here Deleuze is helpful – as the repetition of difference, as the opening up of subject groups to the transformational possibilities of the present. They are not the identitarian repetition of a past event, but the repetition of a possible opening. Second, transversality offers no *guarantee*, in the sense that Chertok and Stengers see the transference

acting as a guarantor of the epistemic credentials of analysis. This leads us into a final issue in relation to transversality and the question of the institution. This has to do with the *experimental* quality of the praxis that Guattari associates with subject groups.

Artifice and experimentation

For all its invocations of the praxis of group subjects, it remains the case that Guattari's early writing is caught up in the vocabulary and thinking of structuralist psychoanalysis. Not fatally so, perhaps, because it is also true that whilst Guattari deploys a structuralist vocabulary, he is already well on his way to subverting the obligatory references to the Master.³²

The argument I would like to make here is that the shifts that Guattari made in relationship to psychoanalysis by means of his conceptualization of transversality ultimately led him towards a theory and practice of institutional analysis that is more consequentially *experimental* vis-à-vis the 'scientific' credentials that the analytic conception of the transference draws on.

In the first instance, the processes of institutional analysis that Guattari associates with the work of subject groups is experimental in the rather banal and somewhat colloquial and simplificatory sense of 'trying things out'. This is demonstrated in the practice at La Borde of using a 'grille', a complex grid of rotating allocations of tasks involved in the running of the institution on a day-to-day basis. Guattari describes its operation as a 'sort of instrument for regulating necessary institutional disordering' and it is clear that its use aimed at having analytic effects establishing relations between different groups in the institution.³³ If we read the 'grille' in terms of the foregoing discussion, it appears a part of the kind of process that Guattari sought to cultivate in the institution as a way of preventing institutional inertia associated with the alienation of subjugated groups and their 'ritual' cultivation of symptoms. In later years, Guattari sometimes invoked Gisela Pankow's idea of 'transferential grafts' and her use of modelling clay (as a way of working with psychotic patients in situations in which the 'normal' transference would not operate) to offer a more complex characterization of the generation of transversality in the institution. As he puts it: 'at La Borde, our modelling clay is the institutional "matter" that is generated through the entangling of workshops, meetings, everyday life in the dining rooms, cultural life, sports, games,'³⁴ thereby drawing attention to the way in which transversality entails an operation on

institutional processes themselves, not as a substitute for what might be achieved through the use of the transference such as might take place with a neurotic, but as part of the process of generating possibilities of affective opening. This framing of the institution as a sort of modelling clay is an idea that has strong aesthetic resonances. It is perhaps as much in terms of Guattari's thinking about the institution, as in the context of any reference to contemporary art, that Guattari's later invocation of an 'ethico-aesthetic paradigm' should be understood. However, it is also important to point out that themes of artifice and creativity are central elements of his early thinking, which are not only closely allied to the question of the institution and of subjectivity in relationship, but also help flesh out the way in which we might understand what makes Guattari's work experimental.

In fact, artifice is a recurrent term in both *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* and, even more so, *The Anti-Oedipus Papers*. Guattari's use of this term suggests a remarkable consistency in his thinking, linked very closely to elements of his understanding of the institution and to his exit from Freudian and Lacanian understandings of analysis. Discussing, for example, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, what seems to interest him in Freud's 'work on the signifier' is its "literality" in all its *artificiality*.³⁵ Heideggerian etymology, anything that links that play to the past, is problematic for Guattari. Artificiality here signals an orientation 'in the direction of history' and its 'bricolage', not the past. In *The Anti-Oedipus Papers* there is a greater accentuation of the theme of artifice – most notably in the striking remark to the effect that 'the real is not the impossible, as Lacan thinks, but the artificial',³⁶ but also precisely in connection with the by-now-familiar theme of the subject group. What the subject group qua collective agent of enunciation generates, Guattari claims, is precisely the 'artificial and productive unconscious', the unconscious that in the institution effects ongoing generative movement of transversality through which subjectivity is transformed.³⁷

The claim that the real is the artificial and not the impossible is a strong statement of a view in which the real, far from being understood as negativity relative to structures traced by a formalist epistemology is, instead, that which one can capture, or 'assemble' in practical 'experiments': the collective agents of enunciation of, for example, science, which are of necessity artificial.³⁸ Whilst the rapprochement might be considered distasteful to some, there is an obvious parallel here to the 'practice' turn in science and

technology studies. Andrew Pickering's conception of the 'dance of agency' is an obvious exemplar in this regard.³⁹ It is worth noting that it is precisely in terms of an understanding of science as a process of the 'capture' of agency that Guattari starts to theorize the 'a-signifying semiotics' that he finds in Hjelmslev. As he puts it in *Molecular Revolution*,

the opposition between the sign and the referent, in theoretical physics, for example, seems to lose a certain degree of pertinence... This type of semiotic puts into play what we call sign-particles, that is to say entities that have passed beyond the space-time coordinates of existence. Between the sign and the reference, a new kind of relation is established, no longer a direct relation, but a relation bringing into play the entirety of a theoretico-experimental assemblage.⁴⁰

In this respect, Guattari's turn towards Hjelmslevian semiotics as a way of dealing with the problems that he sees in the Lacanian appropriation of linguistics, does not just mark a turn to a different kind of linguistics, better suited to grasping the semiotic complexities of an institution populated by people who have a particularly problematic relationship to language. It also marks a different understanding of the position of theory vis-à-vis the real.

This article has largely focused on Guattari's early writings, although the thematic of the institution is continuous throughout his work. The presentation of transversality in his early writings suggests that it embodies a logic that is or might be confined to institutions. That, however, is not the case. Indeed, by virtue of the subject group/subjugated group distinction, its logic is such as to generate processes of analysis that do not respect the limits of the establishment. The analysis of the unconscious in the hospital quickly brings into play movements beyond its walls. This is a movement that Guattari acknowledges, and he presents it as coextensive to the historical development of the institution itself. As he puts it,

La Borde progressively found itself implicated in more global calling into question of health, pedagogy, the condition of prisons, the women question, questions of architecture, urbanism... Twenty or so groups in the sector were thus constituted around the theme of 'institutional analysis', which implied that the analysis of the formations of the unconscious did not just concern the two protagonists of classical psychoanalysis but could be broadened out to much more extensive social segments.⁴¹

In some respects it would be surprising were this not to be the case. Whilst it is of course true to say that transversality is, in the process of its development in Guattari's work, substantively focused on the question of the problematic situation of psychoanalysis in the institution, from the outset his characterization unavoidably places the transformative effects it sought in the institution into a situation in which those effects are ultimately inseparable from what is 'outside' the institution. In the complexities of the broader question of Guattari's institutional transformation of the unconscious, the more comprehensively experimental shift to which transversality is related, we find a reworking of the epistemic underpinnings of analysis that, as Guattari starts to develop his joint work with Deleuze, issues in a pragmatics of 'theory' that is inseparable from the institutional experiments of which Guattari was a part.

Notes

1. See Éric Alliez and Andrew Goffey, eds, *The Guattari Effect*, Continuum, London and New York, 2011.
2. Félix Guattari, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality: Texts and Interviews 1955–1971* (1972), trans. Ames Hodges, Semiotext(e)/MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2015.
3. Gary Genosko's discussion of transversality in his *Félix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction* (Continuum, London, 2002) is something of an exception, as is an unpublished paper by Valentin Skaplink.
4. Jean Ayme 'Essai sur l'histoire de la Psychothérapie Institutionnelle' in *Institutions. Revue de la Psychothérapie Institutionnelle* 44 (October 2009) p.113.
5. Jean Oury, *Onze heures du soir à La Borde*, Galilée, Paris, 1980, p. xx.
6. On both of these points, see Gilles Deleuze, 'Three Group-Related Problems', in Guattari, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, p. 20: first, with a reference to Saint-Just, and second with a reference to the difficult position of institutional psychotherapy.
7. See the discussion in Liane Mozère 'Foucault et le CERFI: instantés et actualité' *Le Portique. Revue de philosophie et de sciences humaines* 13/14 2004 and the brief account in Stuart Elden 'Foucault's Collaborative Projects' online at <http://progressivegeographies.com/resources/foucault-resources/foucaults-collaborative-projects>.
8. See, for example, the discussion in David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, Vintage, New York, 1994, p. 119; along with the introduction to Jean-Claude Polack and Danielle Sivadon, *Intimate Utopia*, N-1 Publications, São Paulo, 2013. Jean-Claude Polack is probably not the only person for whom *The History of Madness* was an 'intellectual and rhetorical model'. See Polack, 'Analysis between Psycho and Schizo', in Alliez and Goffey, *The Guattari Effect*, p. 62.
9. Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France 1973–1974*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2008, pp. 13 (emphasis added), 15.
10. Jacques Lagrange, 'Course Context', in Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power*, pp. 356–7.
11. For an introduction to Oury, see David Reggio and Mauricio Novello, 'The Hospital is III: An Interview with Jean Oury', *Radical Philosophy* 143, May/June 2007, pp. 32–45.
12. Jacques Postel and David F. Allen, 'History and Anti-Psychiatry in France', in Mark S. Micale and Roy Porter, *Discovering the History of Psychiatry*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1994.
13. See 'Divided Laing' and 'Mary Barnes's Trip' in Gary Genosko, ed., *The Guattari Reader*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996. The introduction to this text is a useful historical reference point, as are several chapters in François Dosse, *Deleuze and Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2011.
14. Quoted in Postel and Allen, 'History and Anti-Psychiatry in France', p. 397.
15. Félix Guattari, *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, Bloomsbury, London, 2013, pp. 109–10, 206–7, 276.
16. Guattari, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, p. 62.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 214, translation modified.
18. Félix Guattari 'La place du Signifiant dans l'institution', in *La Révolution moléculaire*, Editions Prairies Ordinaires, Paris, 2012, pp. 449–62; in English, 'The Place of the Signifier in the Institution', in Genosko, ed., *The Guattari Reader*, pp. 148–57. This text has been the subject of a commentary by Janelle Watson: 'Schizoanalysis as Metamodeling', *Fibreculture* 12, special issue on Metamodels, 2008, <http://twelve.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-077-schizoanalysis-as-metamodeling>.
19. Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, Power Institute, Sydney, 1995, p. 10.
20. This text forms the second part of the book *De Leros à La Borde*, Editions Lignes, Abbaye d'Ardenne, 2012. The first half is an article, initially published in *Libération*, documenting the conditions at a hospital on the Greek island of Leros.
21. Jean-Claude Polack, 'Analysis, between Psycho and Schizo', in Alliez and Goffey, *The Guattari Effect*, p. 61.
22. Guattari, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, pp.106, 79.
23. See the discussion of fused and statutory groups and of the institution in Jean-Paul Sartre *Critique of Dialectical Reason* Volume 1, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith, Verso, London and New York, 2004, pp. 346–444, 576–663, respectively.
24. Guattari, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, p. 110.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, p. 234; Deleuze 'Three Group-Related Problems', in Guattari, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, p. 19.
28. This is a distinction that informs Guattari's suspicions about 'classic' analysis, which is treated in detail in the work of Jean-Claude Polack. See, for example, Jean-Claude Polack, *Épreuves de la folie*, Erès, Saint-Agne, 2006.
29. Jean Our in David Reggio and Mauricio Novello, 'The Hospital is III: An Interview with Jean Oury'.
30. Polack, *Épreuves de la folie*, pp. 45–65.
31. Léon Chertok and Isabelle Stengers, *Le Coeur et la raison: L'hypnose en question de Lavoisier à Lacan*, Payot, Paris, 1989, p. 166.
32. Lacan's presence was felt at La Borde throughout the 1960s, even though he was never actually there.
33. Félix Guattari, 'La "Grille"', in *Chimères* 34, Autumn 1998, pp. 1–14.
34. Guattari, *De Leros à La Borde*, p. 66.
35. Guattari, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, p. 80.
36. Which Éric Alliez has commented on in 'The Guattari-Deleuze Effect', his 'conclusion' to *The Guattari Effect*.
37. Félix Guattari, *Écrits pour l'Anti-Oedipe*, Editions Lignes, Abbaye d'Ardenne, 2012, p. 77. Éric Alliez has, in a number of publications, brought out the importance of the reference to the artificial in this text.
38. A reading of scientific theory in terms of enunciation is more or less constant in Guattari – and is most explicit in *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*.
39. See Andrew Pickering *The Mangle of Practice: Time, Agency, and Science*, Chicago University Press, Chicago IL, 2008.
40. Guattari, *La Révolution moléculaire*, p. 412.
41. Guattari, *De Leros à La Borde*, p. 69.