

The Primacy of Affect

An Introduction to Affect-based Therapy, Supervision and Research

10x3-hour meetings September 2023-June 2024

2-5pm online and in person (London Waterloo)

Thank you for your interest in the course, the fourth of this kind facilitated by Manu Bazzano and chaired by John Davis.

The format will be similar to previous courses (*Identity and Emancipation* in 2020; *Zen and the Art of Therapy* in 2021; *Subversion and Desire* in 2022), but slightly expanded and on its way to become a training.

There will be one extra hour for experiential work, plus an *invitation* (not an obligation) to participants to do a presentation on a topic close to their interest/area of practice and/or to submit a piece of writing. The latter could be related, for instance to your own current research (or not). Articles will then be assembled in a book on Affect-based therapy, with the aim of bringing into the wider world the ideas emerging during our ten meetings. The topic of the 5th Meeting in January ('Making Love to your Data') will feature some (non)methodologies on how to escape formulaic ways of writing or doing research.

Each meeting will include an introductory lecture plus exercises and discussion. Before every meeting, participants will receive some reading material. In addition, please refer to the *Suggested Reading* list below.

We aim to have guest speakers/facilitators for some of the meetings. This will be confirmed nearer the time.

As with previous courses, this is work in progress and the outline below may change.

Please note: we aim to organize an experiential affect-based weekend in person in London in mid to late Spring 2024 in London Waterloo. This is a stand-alone event to which all participants to the course are warmly invited. Please register your interest early on as places are limited. For those coming from abroad, we will suggest affordable accommodation.

Every session will include experiential work.

Course outline

1st Meeting (15 September 2023)

The Power to be Affected.

Theory: A general introduction to affect and to Spinoza (1632-1677), the first source of inspiration behind *affect theory*. Is there an alternative to the body/mind divide that still hinders psychotherapy? What is *affect*? And how is it different from emotions and feelings?

Practice: we will experiment with shifting our focus from the self to affect.

2nd Meeting (13 October 2023)

Touch, taste, smell, rhythm, motion

Theory Language is important in the 'talking therapies' but its scope is limited. Affect is before language and before the individual. An exploration of some key ideas which point towards an understanding of human experience beyond language and towards affect, including Raymond Williams's 'structure of feeling', Frantz Fanon's 'third person consciousness', Walter Benjamin's 'non-sensual mimesis'; and Susanne Langer's 'open ambient'.

Practice: Dream Rhizome. An associative exercise in group inspired by social dreaming and Deleuzian rhizomatic practice.

3rd Meeting (17 November 2023)

The immediacy of experience

'Perception is a fold in the flesh of the world' (Merleau-Ponty).

Theory: Therapy focuses on the person and/or the relationship. This is helpful, but it misses something important, variously described as 'experience', 'event' and 'emergent phenomenon'. These are found in radical phenomenology and beyond.

Practice exercises in shifting the focus of therapeutic inquiry from the self to experience.

4th Meeting (8 December 2023)

Order and Chaos

Theory: Does the current trend of 'evidence-based' practice distort rather than enhance scientific inquiry? What would it mean to take scientific ideas to their far reaches? We will compare art and science by looking at Cézanne and an early discarded work of Freud (*Project for a Scientific Psychology*) where he claimed that affect does not think but *acts*.

Practice: exercises in body-oriented psychotherapy.

5th Meeting (26 January 2024)

Making Love to your Data.

Theory: an introduction to post-qualitative and non-representational research. How can writing about our work and our experience escape the old models? Can writing and research become exciting instead of a box-ticking exercise? Drawing on the work of Helene Cixous.

Practice exercise in *flow writing*.

6th Meeting (23 February 2024)

Psychotherapy and Politics

Justice listens at the gates of Beauty. (Aimé Césaire)

Theory An exploration of psychotherapy and politically-engaged work taken on by feminists, queer theorists, disability activists, and peoples living under the thumb of a normalizing power that colonizes the everyday and every-night life, and of 'experience' (understood as collective and 'external' rather than individual and interior).

Practice Working with difference. Introduction to affect-based supervision.

7th Meeting (22 March 2024)

The Virtual and the Actual

Theory Understanding affect is important to therapy, supervision and research because *it links the virtual to the actual*. What is the *virtual*? An aspect of reality that is open, forever unfinished, and in constant flux. What is the *actual*? An aspect of reality that is a mere snapshot of the above, made up of what we are able to do with our selective perception and

our contingent needs. To have a sense of the virtual is to open up a future of greater potentialities and connections ‘outside the box’.

Practice working with free-association.

8th Meeting (19 April 2024)

Imperceptible Mutual Assistance: Zen and the Unconscious

Theory In one of his discourses, the thirteenth century Buddhist priest, writer and philosopher and founder of Sōtō Zen, Eihei Dōgen, speaks of *imperceptible mutual assistance*. When we meditate together with sincerity and dedication we *affect* one another in positive ways which are not grasped by the conscious mind. We will explore the link between imperceptible mutual assistance and therapy/supervision.

Practice introduction to the practice of *zazen* (zen meditation) and applications for therapy and supervision.

9th Meeting (17 May 2024)

Art, Science, and Wonder

Theory. Is therapy an art, a science, or both? How can we better relate, in Isabelle Stengers’ words, to the ‘perplexity and messiness of a world where we, our ideas and power relations, are not alone, were never alone, will never be alone’? Can art and science meet in our therapeutic work? How can we revive a sense of wonder in our practice?

Practice Working with affect as a group.

10th Meeting (14 June 2024)

Theory A review of the main ideas discussed during the course.

Practice An experiential ‘encounter-style’ group process.

For those unfamiliar with Manu’s work and for material related to the course, visit www.manubazzano.com, where you’ll find video and audio podcasts, articles, and links to books.

Suggested Reading

(optional, useful if interested in the main sources and in expanding the research)

Melissa Greg and Gregory Seigworth (eds) *The Affect Theory Reader*. Duke University Press 2010

Theodor Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity* Routledge 1973

Manu Bazzano *Making Love to your Data*, Therapy Today March 2021, downloadable here:

<http://manubazzano.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/PostQualitativeTTmarch.pdf>

Manu Bazzano *Subversion and Desire*. Routledge 2023.

Manu Bazzano *Nietzsche and Psychotherapy*. Routledge 2019.

Helene Cixous *Writing Differences: Readings from the Seminars*. Open University Press 1988.

Helene Cixous *The Hélène Cixous Reader*. Routledge 1994

Gilles Deleuze *Desert Islands and Other Texts*. Semiotext(e). 2004

Jacques Derrida *The Post Card*. University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Daniel Stern *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*. Basic Books.