

# Review of: "Psychotherapy as a Subversive Art"

Maria Nichterlein

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Bazzano's paper presents an ambitious paper and articulates 'a breath of fresh air', a paper worth reading, even when I disagree with some of its tenets (it would be concerning otherwise). In it, he does not just (re)claim the art - no, the craft (and here the difference is, as Bateson would say, one that makes a difference) - in/of therapy but does so through a genuine attempt of 're-envisioning our understanding' of our work. He does so, as he - like a Shakespearean Macbeth - himself declares, by taking the vision we have of our work not to a polarization towards its antithesis (against/instead science) but to its limits, to an exploration on 'how far can it can go'. Conceiving therapy as a craft then is not done as a definition of an essence of sorts but as an invitation - as Deleuze and Guattari invite us to consider - of what what such practice does, both in terms of theory and vis-a-vis the 'elusiveness of mental distress.'

Bazzano does so by resorting to the critical theorist Theodor Adorno and his concept of 'world feeling' - a world that stands in stark contrast with the more rehearsed 'world view' - to refer to a modern feeling that is formally immanent - does not resort to a transcendent structure of any kind (interpretative or structural) - since it produces its own synthesis. World feeling does not bring a knowledge of the world. He uses this concept to alert us to to the one that is invited through the concept of worldview: not a knowing, not even a not-knowing. In using Adorno's world feeling, Bazzano invites a different kind of engagement with the world, to a different appreciation of our craft as an intimate encounter not with others but with phenomena. In doing so, phenomena is emptied of predetermined conceptual apparatuses that assume what such phenomena is or should be (a critique to phenomenological approaches) or what it should mean (a critique to hermeneutical models) - but as a singular and emerging process. Such a process, establishes both our selves as subjects and the singularity of the phenomena at hand. In this, Adorno is useful in his appreciation of what art does, since, as Bazzano alerts us in his presentation, art does not offer slogans but attempts to articulate the contradictions and complexities of life.

In using Adorno consideration of an aesthetic approach, Bazzano reminds us that our work is not about making judgment - with its assumption of privileged knowledge - but to an attunement to the pulse of life. In doing so, Bazzano is joining his work to the one of many in critical psychology and process oriented philosophy who are increasingly raising alarm at the social control underlying traditional models of psychotherapeutic work. In this, Bazzano reminds us - quite insightful and incisively - that psychoanalysis 'was steeped from the start in bourgeois ideology', a point that connect quite intimately with Deleuze and Guattari's claim in *AntiOedipus*.

Once aware of these distortions, and through the distinction between *civis-civitas* and *polis-polites*, Bazzano's move towards a reconnection with the craft of our practice is done by pushing this concept - practice - to its political dimension and by inviting us to consider that the work done in the therapeutic space is not a neutral - neutralizing (thus deeply

conservative) and law abiding - practice but a praxis, a fine manifestation of our constant and untimely construction of our civility; as Blake once wrote, the constant construction of Jerusalem.

Having said this, it is my belief that the paper is at times too long and goes in areas that can be problematic. I would have not included the bit on 'hindrances' since I feel it confuses - makes us lose track of - the main argument. I would also respectfully ask him to reconsider the distinction between 'critical theorists' and 'academics' (not only was Adorno himself an academic but many academics - not my case, so I feel more free to make this statement - are conservative in their work). I believe that these minor corrections might not only tighten the argument but also make it clearer.

Needless to say however that these are rather minor point in front of the complexity at hand. Bazzano is an elegant and profound writer and I imagine this paper will prove to be a seminal paper for a psychotherapy to come, for a psychotherapy that raises from the desolation of our times and helps in paving the road for the work that lies ahead for our humanity.