

Peer Review

Review of: "The Polyvagal Theory in Contemporary Psychology: Why Popularity Should Not Be Confused with Scientific Validity"

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Full disclosure: I first came across PVT many years ago and quickly dismissed it as pseudoscience, as description masquerading as explanation. I have hardly seen reference to it since and never have cause to think about it. I therefore read this commentary as a novice to the subject and am left asking: "What does PVT actually say? What does it do? Why do we need it? Why do people like it?" Unfortunately, this commentary doesn't answer those questions, which probably reflects editorial restrictions on the length of commentaries.

Can I suggest the material needs to be reorganised, with points raised in the introduction addressed as subheadings. If that can't be done, then this topic is probably too big for a commentary and would need a much longer, formal review. I think the idea of criticism of widely held views is valuable (actually, essential in science), and I would not want to discourage the author, but as it reads, this viewpoint will appeal only to people who have already made up their minds. That's not the point of critical commentaries: the idea is to convince people who hold an opposing point of view. Also, the author needs to be careful of appearing resentful, as in: "I think the microbiome is important but PVT doesn't give it any time."

Speaking as a deputy editor of a critical journal, I would not recommend publication in its present format. However, with suitable editing, I think it would be a valuable corrective to a seriously flawed concept (I won't say 'model' because I don't think PVT is sufficiently developed to justify that label).

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.