

Review of: "Against Integration"

Seamus Prior¹

¹ University of Edinburgh

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

In this thought-provoking article, Manu Bazzano takes on some of the most cherished ideas of contemporary psychotherapy, holding them up to incisive scrutiny from a place of intellectual rigour. In particular, he finds fault with the shibboleths of integration, holism, actualisation and post-traumatic growth. While the core argument is well-established, the article is somewhat wide-ranging, touching upon many philosophical concepts and therapeutic practice modalities which are not investigated in sufficient depth to provide a solid foundation for a full appreciation and evaluation of the arguments advanced. There is also a tendency towards generalisation, even stereotyping, in Manu's critique of contemporary therapeutic thinking and practice.

The clinical vignette of 'Alice' offers a helpful illustration of how a therapist may respond to a client disturbed by desires and behaviours which fall outside her idea of who she is or wants to be, without falling into the trap of seeking to restore the client to a balanced state of integrated, even normalised, 'wholeness'. Some engagement with Foucauldian ideas of self-governing docile bodies seems implied here, but it is not explicitly worked with. I also wondered how Manu would respond to the idea that 'being a self', having a sense of oneself as a stable, boundaried, predictable person, may be a necessary defensive fiction, a means of survival in a challenging, impinging environment. If so, for many clients, this necessary defence may not be one that therapists can so easily challenge or seek to dismantle, if they are to uphold their *primum non nocere*, first do no harm, principle. In short, I would like to hear more about how a therapeutic orientation committed to anti-integration might work in practice. Perhaps the subject for the next article on this theme?