

Response to Guy Dargert's Article

Dear Guy Dargert,

The irony in your article was difficult for me. I kept thinking: Why are you being so sarcastic? And do you really think we (whoever this 'we' is) espouse integration because the bible tells us so? If the sarcasm is a put-down, who or what is being put down? Were you in a bad mood when you wrote the article?

Personally, I wouldn't work with a therapist who did not have a sense of the wholeness, the integratedness of the world, of people, of me as client, of him/herself. Eclecticism without an underlying sense of wholeness *is* woolly. I don't understand why this point of view received such scorn and disrespect.

My deepest subjective sense of the world is that oneness lies beneath all diversity or pluralism. This has nothing at all to do with monotheism, which is almost exclusively masculine, authoritarian, and associated with fragmentation of self.

For me this unity is not a scientific hypothesis to be argued or proven by reference to authority but a subjective experience of wholeness that occurs often enough and endures long enough to become the foundation for a point of view.

I wanted to ask you, 'What is *your* deepest experience of the world? As unified whole or collection of discrete fragments? Are both experiences equally deep and valid for you? Isn't each person's subjective experience the final authority here? Why aren't you talking about your own?'

Of course it is not good therapy when people promote integration or oneness beyond their own experience of it. Some therapists remain true to their own experience and others falsify it, perhaps in a wishful thinking sort of way. Many of us, I imagine, aim for the former but end up doing a bit of the latter as well sometimes.

Are therapists who falsify their experience in this way really in the grip of an archetype? Isn't it more likely that it is a defensive response by the humanistic therapeutic community to the taunts of the psychodynamic folk. (You're all over the place, doing a bit of this, a bit of that, but we only do *one* thing. And it's the *right* thing, by the way.) So the reply was that, yes, on the surface we may *appear to be* all over the place, but we're not really because *underneath*, there is a unifying idea or theory.

I doubt that any merely rational theory is up to this integrative task. But a subjectively experienced sense of wholeness is. Doesn't it arise from the same place that the 'helpful impulses and intuitions which do not account for themselves to the rational mind' come from?

At this point, I realised that for the most part I probably agree with you.

Yours, with thanks for an interesting read,

Steve King

Dear Steve,

Thanks for taking the time and trouble to share your response to my article.

I think it can be tricky to talk about things like wholeness, oneness and integration. The words all mean slightly different things. I call 'oneness' archetypal because it is bigger than we are. If we are really at one then there is no one there to have the experience. If a part of us is observing then it seems to me we are not fully at one. Instead we are in relationship, which implies separation. It seems to me that we can only talk about unitive experiences when we separate out from them. Then we can ask (like Ken Wilber does) is this a regressive, oceanic, pre-birth sort of unitive experience or is it a transpersonal experience. For some, such an experience is profound and deeply meaningful, for others it can feel like a psychotic hell - spirit trapped in matter with no way out, like a fly caught on fly paper.

I think the proper subject matter for psychotherapy is the subject. 'Who' is it that has experiences? Instead of detailing the experiences we have we can look to who (or what) it is 'in' us that has this experience. In the case of unitive experiences I think it is the one god, or archetype of oneness, that possesses us. I agree that this god probably is a 'him'. It seems to me that mother earth is into having lots of babies and is quite tolerant of diversity and disorder. I think that an earth sensitive style of psychotherapy would also be able to tolerate what seem to me the obvious paradoxes and ambivalences of ordinary life.

And, yes, it is true that I feel a degree of irritation that some of us therapists and counsellors quite literally want to lay down the law about what constitutes *psychotherapy*™ and *counselling*™. I'm talking about statutory registration here. The rules seem to me, in some cases, to be based on unexamined assumptions and prejudices. Already I have had the experience of one very able supervisee going into early retirement to avoid the intimidating demands of explaining her style of integrated practice for accreditation. The move toward statutory registration is probably an unstoppable process but I would like, at least, not to go down politely and silently.

Sincerely,

Guy Dargert

Response to John Sivyer's Article

Dear S&S,

John Sivyer admits to criticizing and exaggerating to make his point that the requirement for Continuing Professional Development on remaining accredited and registered results in some being financially exploitative and ineffective. Although I agree with him about the potential for this, perhaps I am less cynical as I speak from the position of being recently qualified in psychotherapy with fewer bad experiences. My personal experience of CPD in the latter stages of my training and since is that I have chosen interesting, enjoyable and worthwhile activities. He comments that training workshops and conferences are not bound by regulations or official guidelines for good practice and it is here that I see a dilemma. Surely, to set up such a system would result in even more rules, hoop jumping and expense. B.A.C.P. provide workshops (for which they charge a fee) on how to submit applications to become registered practitioners. If we start to regulate CPD provision, the next step could be workshops on how to submit applications for accredited workshops. I, too, exaggerate to make my point. But I would prefer to be credited with the ability to use my discretion to research the CPD activities and speakers for myself and take the risk of sometimes getting it wrong, than for there to be the introduction of yet another layer of regulation which would undoubtedly make these activities even more expensive and less accessible. I envisage also, that some small organisations and those locally run groups of the variety that are run by the members for the members would find it difficult to remain running because of the increase in workload and costs.

Ann Vodden

Dear S&S

Whilst I agree with Ann Vudden's points that we can all research into the efficacy of advertised CPD workshops, and that to over-regulate could be to beaurocratise and make it difficult for smaller organizations to continue offering CPD trainings, the point I was seeking to make was not to argue the case for regulation, but to critique the standard of much CPD training.

Since however, she has made two points tangential to our discussion, I would in reply to her argue that no regulation whatsoever allows for the possibility of exploitation in this wholly unregulated market. With which point, she says she agrees with me.

I am reassured that, for example, supermarkets are regulated by a set of food standards, both to ensure our health and safety and right of complaint, should their products fall below the set regulated standards.

I continue to be concerned that some voices within the counseling world apparently resist any form of accountability, and thus make it possible for others to subvert and manipulate those, often either arrogantly aloof or over-trusting counselors, who will not see the benefits of some form of regulation.

John Sivyer.