Gospel Perspectives
on Psychotherapy's
Fundamental Problems

Turning Freud Upside Down

Eds. Aaron P. Jackson & Lane Fischer with Doris R. Dant

AMCAP Journal Volume 24
The Association of Mormon Counselors
and Psychotherapists
www.amcap.net

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Brigham Young University Press
Provo, Utah

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Turning Freud upside down : Gospel perspectives on psychotherapy's fundamental problems / edited by Aaron P. Jackson and Lane Fischer with Doris R. Dant.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-8425-2594-7 (paperback : alk. paper)
1. Pastoral counseling. 2. Pastoral psychology. 3. Psychotherapy—Religious aspects—Christianity. 4. Psychotherapy. I.
Jackson, Aaron P., 1960- II. Fischer, Lane, 1955- III. Dant, Doris R., 1944-
IV.
Title.

BV4012.3.T87 2005
253.5'2—dc22

2005008074

Contents

Introduction

It is now time to examine the theoretical opinions governing present-day psychology.

Sigmund Freud, *Dream Psychology*

This book is not a mere Freud basher. Rather it is an indictment of basic concepts that riddle much of psychotherapy. Freud is used here as the symbol of those governing assumptions that are not only contrary to the gospel but sometimes harmful to clients.

In the following article, Aaron Jackson and Lane Fischer note that Christian clients often worry about psychotherapy negatively affecting their souls—for good reason. Religious therapists who are unaware of their practicing assumptions may act upon anti-gospel principles. Thus Jackson and Fischer have two goals for this book: (1) to turn things upside down or shake the foundations of our assumptions and (2) to begin building a psychotherapy consisent with the gospel.

Aaron P. Jackson
and
Lane Fischer

Confronting the Interface between the Gospel and Psychology

Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand.

—*D&C 88:78*

While working at the counseling center at the University of Utah, one of us noted an interesting pattern. Potential clients would often present themselves at the front desk, and when asked if they had any preferences for the counselor they might see, many would reply either "I don't care, as long as they're Mormon" or "I don't care, as long as they're not Mormon." While this pattern illustrates the tension that exists in Utah between the dominant Mormon culture and "non-Mormon" culture, more importantly for our purposes, it illustrates the fact that people care about the potential impact of counseling on their personal values and beliefs. They are wary of counselors whose belief systems may differ from their own.

Many Christians are confronted with the awkward interface between the gospel and psychology when they or someone they love considers seeing a counselor. Inevitably, they raise the question of the counselor's religion. However, this concern rarely seems to lead to questions about the counselor's theoretical perspectives, assumptions about human nature, or counseling techniques. Like the students at the University of Utah, most people seem to feel that if a counselor shares their religious beliefs, the counseling experience will be safe for them. Our contention is that just having a counselor who shares the same religious beliefs does not protect a client from the negative impacts of psychological philosophies on his or her religious beliefs. We believe that relatively few counselors have been able to successfully reconcile the fundamental assumptions of their religions with the fundamental assumptions of counseling theories.

There are several reasons why many counselors have difficulty reconciling psychology and the gospel. First, for many decades, mainstream professional psychology had an antireligion bias. This bias restricted even the discussion of religious values in the training of mental health professionals. Only recently has psychology, as a profession, begun to acknowledge this bias and become more open to issues of spirituality in human experience. Accordingly, many counselors completed their training without having an opportunity to address such issues in academic settings. Second, Christians in general and Latter-day Saints in particular have historically mistrusted the counseling profession. While some of this mistrust has certainly been justified, this bias has led many Latter-day Saint counselors to take one of two roads: either they have adopted a counseling approach that is more "religious advising" than

counseling, or they have developed an intellectual distance between their professional and religious views.

The reluctance to reconcile religion and counseling theories was made painfully obvious to one of us in a graduate counseling course at Brigham Young University. The professor presented the mainstream counseling theories, and the lecture led to some discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of the theories as they related to the gospel. Ultimately, as the class discussion highlighted the contradictions between the philosophical assumptions inherent in the gospel and the philosophies of the counseling theories, it became apparent that none of the theories was particularly compatible with the gospel. Someone in the class asked the professor how he reconciled these issues, given that he was a practicing psychologist. He replied simply, "When I go to church, I put on my church hat, and when I do counseling, I put on my psychologist hat." It is difficult to describe how discouraging this pat answer was to those of us hoping for some insights and practical advice on how to reconcile the two philosophies. We realized that this professor had simply abdicated the responsibility of developing a philosophy that accounted for both religious and professional beliefs.

Our sense is that such philosophical shallowness is common among mental health professionals, whether religious or not. In the secular world of graduate school at a public university, the other one of us had similarly frustrating experiences. He recorded his thoughts and feelings about his efforts to reconcile the gospel with his professional training:

> I was raised in a religious mode. I still pursue my spiritual training and serve as an elder and teacher in my church. My ideas are based more in the scriptures than in "scientific" personality theory. Yet, I have invested great sums of money and time away from my family to pursue training as a behavioral scientist.
>
> I have experienced frustration with the prevailing intellectual tradition. Whereas my colleagues answer questions by asking, "What do the data say?" (as though the data speak with a voice of their own), my first impulse is to ask, "What do the scriptures and the prophets say?" One frustration emerges when the scientific community is disparaging of my use of the scriptures as a base for exploration and interpretation of observations.
>
> The type of questions I tend to ask is somewhat different than those of my colleagues as well. When I ask the most basic questions

of the behavioral sciences such as "What is the nature of humankind?" a myriad of corollary issues emerge. What is the nature of law? What is the nature of freedom? What is the nature of truth? What is the nature of good and evil? What is the nature of human responsibility? What is the nature of God? To ask any one of these questions is to ask them all. Another frustration is that the scientific community doesn't deal openly with these issues. It is as though those types of questions are best left to philosophers and theologians.

I am aware of the mantra repeated in my classes that science is merely a mode of agreed-upon procedures which render data for examination. Behavioral scientists must then construct laws and interpret the data. Two problems emerge with that construction. First, even if science is independent, how can behavioral scientists construct laws and interpret data without first approximating answers to those larger questions? Second, how can an agreed-upon human procedure (science) not have implicitly woven into its fabric an *a priori* image of humans, law, freedom, good, evil, truth, responsibility, and God? If the assumptions and values woven into science are wrong and unexamined, and I am giving my life's energies to this science, then I am at great risk of a life of meaningless and error-ridden toil. I have become like the alchemist's apprentice who learns by hard years of service to his master to do nothing.

This account describes the experience of many students as they face psychology's fundamental philosophical and theoretical problems. As we have mentioned, those considering seeing a counselor or referring someone for counseling have similar frustrations if they consider the problems inherent in the theories of potential counselors.

The Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists (AMCAP) published a text by Richard Williams entitled "The Restoration and the 'Turning of Things Upside Down': What Is Required of an LDS Perspective?" In this address, he articulated an argument for radically reconsidering our assumptions about applied psychology:

> There is perhaps no set of scriptural passages closer to the center of our restored religion than those found in Isaiah 29 that deal with the "marvellous work [and] . . . [the] wonder" that is about to come forth among the children of men (Isa. 29:13–14). These same passages, part of the message of the First Vision, are also

found in 2 Nephi 27. In the 2 Nephi version, beginning in verse 24 we read:

> And again it shall come to pass that the Lord shall say unto him that shall read the words that shall be delivered him: Forasmuch as this people draw near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men—Therefore, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, yea a marvelous work and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise and learned shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid.

The next verse talks about the response of the world to this marvelous work and wonder. Here we find the grounding of the vision I am trying to articulate:

> And wo unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord! [These are, I believe, the people opposed to the Restoration, those whose lives are not informed and animated by the Restoration.] And their works are in the dark; and they say: Who seeth us, and who knoweth us? And they also say: Surely your *turning of things upside down* shall be esteemed as the potter's clay. (v. 27, italics added)

Potter's clay, in scriptural terms, is worthless. It seems that from the perspective of those not participating in the Restoration, it (the Restoration) turns things upside down. From their perspective, surely something that "turns things upside down" is not going to amount to much. It simply cannot be true; it cannot last. This "turning of things upside down" is an image worth contemplating. It is a very powerful metaphor. A turning of things upside down is not a mere course correction. It is no minor adjustment. Turning things upside down is not a process of refining. Certainly, turning things upside down requires more than just adding another dimension to the wisdom of the world. I submit that we must assume that "turning things upside down" does just that: it turns the wisdom of the world on its head.

Williams argued that the Apostasy permeated all aspects of intellectual life. He demonstrated how modern and postmodern constructions of psychology lead to nihilism. He argued that the Restoration of the gospel was and is the remedy for the philosophical errors of traditional metaphysics. The major implication of his text is the need to build a psychotherapy from the foundation of the Restoration. Williams's text rekindled our hopes that psychotherapists could eventually practice from a philosophical base that is consistent with the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. He stated:

> I think it absolutely crucial that people informed and enlightened by the restored gospel of Jesus Christ stand firm against an increasingly forceful and turbulent secular mainstream. This is even more important for those of us engaged in a profession that undertakes to recommend or even prescribe to others how to live more effective and meaningful lives and provide those whom we teach or serve the means to improve their lives. There is no insight nor any understanding comparable to the restored gospel in providing meaning, focus, direction, and value to the enterprise of helping people live meaningfully and effectively.

In keeping with our hopes, the purposes of this volume are (1) to shake the foundations of our assumptions or, as Richard Willams proposed, to "turn things upside down" and (2) to begin to provide some of the alternative foundations that will guide our explanations of how counseling works. Authors were asked to respond to a basic question with their best understanding of the gospel. They were also asked to speak, as much as possible, to the implications for counseling interventions—not just the theoretical and philosophical issues.

The authors' responses are divided into five parts corresponding to the questions we are raising about the nature of these fundamental concerns: law (part 1), suffering (part 2), agency (part 3), truth (part 4), the human being, and change (both in part 5). The book concludes with Aaron Jackson's discussion of four paradoxes and four critical questions that became evident in the work of the contributing authors. He calls for further scholarship to resolve the paradoxes and answer the questions.

Some readers may find it useful to read the concluding chapter before reading all the other chapters. Doing so will give the reader some background questions to entertain while reading these chapters. Other readers may prefer to read the subsequent chapters cold—without our bias—and then compare their reaction to ours. In either case, we trust the reader to approach the text with an appropriate mix of faith and skepticism.

Reference

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Part 1

The Nature of Law

How the devil do you reconcile all that we experience and have come to expect in this world with your assumption that there is a moral order?

Sigmund Freud, *Psychoanalysis and Faith*

Natural law implies that there is no moral order. But such a notion, Stephen Yanchar and Amy Fisher Smith write, is dismissed by gospel teachings. In part 1 of this book, Yancher and Smith discuss further differences between gospel law and the concepts of natural law that often underlie psychotherapy. They address the far-reaching implications of each for counseling and describe a gospel-oriented psychotherapy that explores the moral dimension of choice and operates within Christ-centered values.

Lane Fischer presents a Latter-day Saint perspective on law that avoids two common traps—the belief that law is uniform and therefore applicable in all situations and the opposing belief that law is always relative, never universal. These beliefs provide contrary answers to two issues—where law comes from and how it applies. In resolving these issues, Fischer reconsiders the traditional conception of infinity. He also addresses the lawful nature of the ecologies that God has organized.

STEPHEN C. YANCHAR
AND
AMY FISHER SMITH

Gospel Law and Natural Law

PRACTICING PSYCHOTHERAPY IN A SPIRITUAL CONTEXT

Wherefore, verily I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal; neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam, your father, whom I created.
— *D&C 29:34*

For persons embarking on any rational, scholarly, or scientific endeavor, the presupposition of lawful orderliness seems inescapable. With this presupposition in place, we are afforded the metaphysical backdrop against which a coherent and systematic account of the physical universe may be formulated. Without the presupposition of orderliness, no successful endeavor toward systematic and coherent knowledge would seem likely or even worth pursuit in the first place, since the universe would be characterized by only randomness and capriciousness. The presupposition of orderliness, in short, enables the generation of orderly knowledge.

Moreover, prima facie evidence gives us no reason to doubt the remarkable orderliness of the world, delicately formed with lawful regularity, harmonious ecological systems, and multiple levels of organization. From our everyday experience, we possess a knowledge of the predictable manner in which objects and entities tend to move and operate. From physics' laws of motion, we can accurately predict the movement of an object, given a knowledge of its initial conditions (e.g., location and velocity); from chemistry we can confidently predict the outcome of chemical combinations such as nitroglycerin and kieselguhr (dynamite); from biology and medicine we have dependable knowledge of how anatomical structures and systems such as the human circulatory system routinely operate and, under certain circumstances, fail to operate. Finally, and more broadly, we see how (according to some construals) physics, chemistry, biology, and "special" sciences, such as economics, psychology, and sociology (among others; see Fodor, 1981) fit into a monolithic, though tidy and well-organized, hierarchy of sciences, often with one providing the ontological foundation for the next (e.g., the theorizing of August Comte, 1988).

Because the world appears to be so orderly and because the assumption of lawfulness is taken so seriously in the physical sciences, it is not surprising that the social and behavioral sciences have come to view their subject—the human being—as a mere natural object that operates in accordance with this same lawful necessity. Perhaps Voltaire, the well-known French philosopher, best captured this idea when he remarked:

> It would be very singular that all nature, all the planets, should obey eternal laws, and that there should be a little animal, five feet

high, who, in contempt of these laws, could act as he pleased, solely according to his caprice. (As quoted in Robinson, 1986, p. 298)

Turning Freud Upside Down

Should we flatly and uncritically presuppose that human beings, as one more bit of ontological baggage in a lawful, orderly universe, operate in necessarily lawful, orderly, and utterly predictable ways? And if human beings are subject to natural laws in much the same way as any other natural object in the universe, how do we, as Latter-day Saint scientists and practitioners, reconcile important gospel principles, such as moral agency and divine intervention, with a deterministic scientific framework? Should such a reconciliation be performed?

In what follows, we will address these concerns by clarifying the meaning of human action and the practice of psychotherapy, first, under the concept of natural or scientific law (terms that we will equate for the moment), and second, under what we refer to as gospel law. We will make several key distinctions between these two broad conceptions of law and outline the implications that each conception holds for the idea of human existence, as well as for the idea of a professional, therapeutic relationship. In so doing, we will make a case for one possible reconciliation of gospel law and orderliness that, we think, is consistent with Latter-day Saint doctrine and our overall thesis. Finally, we will discuss our reconciliation's implications for the practice of psychotherapy.

What Is a Law of Nature?

The belief that the universe operates according to lawful regularities is widely acknowledged by scientists and lay persons alike. Although contemporary physics has long acknowledged quantum mechanics and relativity theory (e.g., Zukav, 1979), these developments may or may not have implications for psychological science; one prominent theoretical psychologist suggests that they may not (Robinson, 1984). Others have suggested that much of contemporary psychological science still operates under a Newtonian model where human action is thought to be fully determined by that subset of natural laws and forces pertaining to human beings (e.g., Slife, 1993).

Despite the ubiquity of the concept of natural law, the question of what precisely is meant by *law of nature* is difficult to answer. In

many cases, the term *law of nature* refers to a universal, scientific principle that governs or determines the whole of the physical world, a principle such as the "law" of gravity, Newton's laws of motion, the laws of thermodynamics, and so on. There are more circumscribed scientific laws as well, such as Stevens's power law (loudness grows in proportion to intensity raised to the power of 0.67) and the Bell-Magendie law (the separation of sensory and motor functions of the spinal cord).

Textbooks and trade books in the behavioral sciences vary in their definitions of the concept of scientific or natural law but commonly converge on one of two varieties: (a) laws are theories that have been so well supported that they are taken to be universally true (Bordens & Abbott, 1999, p. 465; Herzog, 1996, p. 11; Pelham, 1999, p. 29), and (b) laws are empirically observed regularities that, once quantified, require a theory to explain them (Bordens & Abbott, 1999, p. 465; McBurney, 1994, p. 36; Singleton, Straits, Straits, & McAllister, 1988, p. 23). Some have argued that laws are central to science because they describe (or perhaps explain) functional relationships between two or more genuine phenomena in such a way that we are afforded a clearer, often mathematical, understanding of them (e.g., Fechner's law; see Robinson, 1995). Perhaps the most sophisticated rendering of this approach to scientific law comes from the work of Carl Hempel (1965), whose hypothetico-deductive explanatory model serves for many as the ultimate goal of science (Robinson, 1986). Opposite this approach to lawfulness are eliminative laws (i.e., nomological reductions; see Hyland, 1995; see also Churchland, 1986), which seek the reduction of our ontology (what we assume to have real existence) to one kind of fundamental substance—often physical matter—such that only one set of laws is needed, rather than possible multiple sets of laws that obtain at different levels of physical organization.

Clearly scientists and philosophers are not in complete agreement regarding the nature of a scientific or natural law per se. Bearing in mind the variety of ways with which scientists and philosophers are prone to use the concept of law in their work, we can nevertheless identify a common conceptual thread that runs through many definitions seen in the behavioral science literature, rendering them largely equivalent. The common thread to which

we refer is adequately described in Blackwell's entry on law of nature in *A Companion to Metaphysics* (Kim & Sosa, 1995):

> It is widely held by both scientists and philosophers that our universe is governed by scientific laws and that it is one of the primary aims of science to discover these laws.... Lawful regularities are said to be in some sense necessary and capable of bestowing some kind of necessity on events which they subsume. The necessity is sufficient to support COUNTERFACTUALS. (p. 266)

This definition suggests at least four things about "natural lawfulness" as the concept is used in science: (a) The concept of natural law takes us to the realm of metaphysics, where we are confronted with the philosophical question What is the ultimate nature of reality? If the axiom expressed in Blackwell's definition is true, then nature consists, at least in part, of the existence of fundamental laws that govern the properties of objects and entities that said laws are thought to cover. Laws of nature are, in this sense, part and parcel of the organization and operation of the universe. (b) Laws of nature usher in a kind of necessity where physical events in the universe could not operate in any way other than that which is determined or described by a given law—there are no exceptions. (c) Laws of nature support counterfactual conditionals (i.e., contrary-to-fact conditionals, or *if-then* statements where the "if" portion of the premise is known to be false), which means that the laws should obtain universally, not just in cases where they have been historically corroborated (e.g., if the volume were decreased by .33 in a hypothetical cylinder [even though it was not], then its pressure would have exerted 44.1 pounds per square inch). (d) If natural laws do not themselves determine or govern the whole of physical reality, then they are at least factual descriptions of the orderly, predictable manner in which objects and entities do operate.

Human Beings under Natural Law

It is the above characterization that we will henceforth refer to as natural law and that we will now address in light of its implications for ordinary human activity. Our principal question is as follows: Do natural laws, which are thought to determine the physical universe, determine human beings as well, thereby obviating the

theoretical possibility that humans may act by what are commonly taken to be their own agentive powers? Surely from the orthodox scientific perspective described above, we must answer this question in the affirmative, for as philosophical psychologists have observed, "The notion of 'free will' in a determined universe violates every canon of parsimony, scientific unity, objectivity, and positivism" (Robinson, 1986, p. 452). "Put bluntly, if the will is truly free, then there can be no lawlike generalizations about it to be had" (Green, 2000, p. 63). This notion of lawful necessity is clearly taken for granted in behavioral science research texts that posit a determined universe, including predictable and controlled human beings, as a central axiom of science.

So far, little of this discussion should be surprising to those who have been trained in science and who are well acquainted with its fundamental canons. The assumption of orderliness is taken to be a prime prerequisite in accruing knowledge, and science's long pursuit of natural laws is a logical extension of this assumption. But it also behooves us, as Latter-day Saint scientists and practitioners, to consider the consequences of this canon so boldly stated yet so often uncritically accepted. Because others have already competently identified and explored the implications of an approach to behavioral science that assumes lawful necessity and the automaticity of human action, we will briefly review what are, for our purposes, the six most crucial implications.

The first implication of natural law as a foundational principle in behavioral science is the loss of personal responsibility (Rychlak, 1979; Slife & Williams, 1995). If human beings operate according to natural laws and thus possess no innate volitional ability, then (as the classic example goes) their activity is no more purposive than that of a rock rolling down a hill, which moves merely in accordance with the laws—motion, gravity, and so on—that are thought to govern the entire physical universe.

A second implication of natural law is the loss of meaning (Gantt & Reber, 1999; Slife & Williams, 1995, pp. 14–64; Slife & Gantt, 1999). If human beings operate according to natural laws and thus possess no innate volitional ability, then their activity is no more meaningful than that of the above-mentioned rock, which is not ordinarily thought to be operating in any meaningful way.

This is to suggest that the meaning of an act derives in large measure from the purpose or intention of the initiating agent.

A third implication of natural law is the loss of morality (Gantt & Reber, 1999; Williams & Gantt, 2002). In a universe with no intrinsic meaning and no human moral agents to consider consequences, to make informed choices between options, and to recognize (and perhaps correct) mistakes when committed, there can be nothing in the lives of human beings that reasonably resembles any action that could be considered "moral"; rather, all activity is in some sense neutral. It just is, like any other natural event—ultimately a mere instance or by-product of the universal law that necessitated it.

A fourth implication of natural law is pernicious pessimism (James, 1897/1956; 1907/1978). The loss of agency and its corollaries—loss of personal responsibility, meaning, and morality—brings with it the loss of hope, the onset of a destructive pessimism, and, indeed, the paradoxical situation where we find ourselves locked in a universe where we can be deeply regretful of an act yet unable to have acted otherwise in order to avoid the regretted act in the first place. Moreover, our lack of agency precludes the possibility of ameliorating our action in the future in any way, thus making future error unavoidable. This paradox was presented in William James's famous dilemma of determinism (1897/1956), a dilemma which seemed so preposterous to James that he rejected the doctrine of determinism upon which it was based and affirmed unadulterated free will, a "melioristic" doctrine that allowed for the possibility of loose play in what appears to be a fixed and determined universe and for the possibility that human beings could be thus afforded the freedom required to improve the quality of their lives (James, 1897/1956; 1907/1978).

A fifth implication of natural law is that at least one part of Latter-day Saint doctrine is false. Prophets and, indeed, the body of scriptures accepted by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as inspired have adhered to the principle that human beings, as children of God, are given the gift of moral agency. This is not an obscure principle known only to a few General Authorities and scholars of ancient and modern scripture; it is a principle taught from baptism (or even before baptism). Of course, the concept of

agency may mean different things to different Church members, but there seems no reason to debate the many scriptures in which human agency is described as an essential part of the gospel, for example:

> All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence. Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light. (D&C 93:30–31)

A sixth and final implication of natural law is the loss of spirituality itself. Other commentators have shown that the assumptions of modernist science, including that of a closed universe controlled by natural law, are at odds with the notion of a spiritual universe (Slife, Hope, & Nebeker, 1999). To argue in favor of a closed universe governed exclusively by natural law is to argue against a world wherein the sacred, spiritual, and miraculous can exist. In a closed, naturalistic universe, there is no God to transcend what we take to be the ordinary workings of nature—that is, to create or set apart the sacred, to bring spirituality to our lives, to work miracles, and so forth. If we accept the concepts of naturalism and natural law as they are commonly understood in the behavioral science literature, nothing can transcend nature because nothing but impersonal nature exists, from the most overarching laws to the smallest particles of matter.

This brief sketch of the consequences of the concept of natural law is meant to suggest that Latter-day Saint scholars should be concerned with the philosophical question of human agency versus lawful necessity. It is our assessment that the general picture of human existence under a strict natural conception is one that brings with it the impossibility of a meaningful, moral, and spiritual life where we may, through our agency—in conjunction with the grace of Jesus Christ, whose atonement permits the possibility that we may be "ameliorated" and washed clean—strive toward a Christian ideal.

Psychotherapy's Ambivalence and Natural Law

If the aforementioned consequences of natural law hold for human beings in general, then what are the consequences for counseling and psychotherapy in a Latter-day Saint context? Ultimately,

we will show that these consequences—the loss of agency, personal responsibility, meaning, and morality—are borne out in the psychotherapeutic relationship as well. Because psychotherapy and counseling are driven by scientific findings that are undergirded by natural law, the implications of naturalism are inextricably tied, at least theoretically, to the practice of psychotherapy.

However, the idea of counseling and psychotherapy as practices devoid of agency, personal responsibility, and meaning may seem counterintuitive to practitioners, especially to Latter-day Saint practitioners. What sort of psychotherapist—LDS or otherwise—would deny the client's freedom, autonomy, and personal meaning? That this question arises at all in the minds of practitioners demonstrates their commitment to specific assumptions about positive mental health and psychotherapy that are incompatible with the notion of natural lawfulness.

For instance, in a commonly cited survey of mental health practitioners—including clinical psychologists, marriage and family therapists, social workers, and psychiatrists—common psychotherapy values clustering around agency, freedom, and autonomy emerged. The survey reported specific psychotherapy values that practitioners considered important in the guidance and evaluation of psychotherapy with all or many clients (Jensen & Bergin, 1988). These values include "one's sense of being a free agent; having a sense of identity and feelings of worth; being skilled in interpersonal communication, sensitivity and nurturance; being genuine and honest; having self-control and personal responsibility" (p. 295). Clearly, these commonly endorsed psychotherapy values include rather than exclude notions of agency, responsibility, and morality. Furthermore, the Jensen and Bergin (1988) survey findings are consistent with other assessments of practitioner values. In delineating what he considered "essential therapist values," Hans Strupp (1980) included "the dual goal of personal freedom and human relatedness. With regard to the former, it extols individual autonomy, responsibility, fairness, decency, and honesty in interpersonal relations" (p. 399). Thus, many therapists assume that human beings are fundamentally moral agents, and they conduct their clinical work in a manner consistent with that assumption.

If therapists often practice in a manner that encourages client freedom, autonomy, and responsibility, then why perform a critical examination of scientific law and naturalism within counseling and psychotherapy? From our perspective, a critical examination of scientific law and naturalism is salient for two reasons.

First, the assumptions that inform the behavioral sciences in general, of which counseling and psychotherapy are a part, can influence us in ways that are not always explicit. Without careful analysis, it is easy to appeal to worldly ideas that lead us afield, even when we have the best of intentions. This is not necessarily to say that we should abandon the entirety of psychological, scientific, and scholarly knowledge and that we should never try to understand the natural and social worlds of which we are a part, but it is to say that the fundamental assumptions and theoretical starting points of our scholarly and practical projects, as well as our conclusions, should not flatly contradict principles, such as agency, that we know to be true.

Furthermore, even if practitioners do assume agency, morality, and related topics as guides to the therapeutic encounter, the research and theories that are expected to drive counseling and psychotherapy are informed by a science that rests on naturalistic assumptions. This situation, of course, is highly paradoxical and may be the crux of the infamous research-practice schism in the discipline. Ultimately, we are left with a situation in which many therapists base their practice on an assumption of agency in spite of their formal training and in spite of subscribing to naturalistic assumptions (Williams, 1998).

A second reason for critically examining natural law conceptions within psychotherapy is that concerned practitioners need to be conscious of the disparity—in all its manifestations—between a theistic and a naturalistic conception of science and psychotherapy. If the contemporary assumptions regarding human nature, psychotherapy, and science are inconsistent with the tenets of the restored gospel at the most fundamental level, then a theoretical foundation consistent with the restored gospel must be explicitly formulated. That is, we should not be content with merely ignoring our training and the disciplines of counseling and psychotherapy, but rather we should be actively striving toward an explicit, systematic,

and well-thought-out approach to counseling and psychotherapy that is consistent with our most fundamental beliefs.

For this reason, we present the implications and consequences for therapy that logically follow from the tenets of natural law. We do not assume that all therapists practice in the manner outlined here. Nevertheless, the therapeutic implications discussed are the inevitable outcome of psychotherapy under natural law, whether therapists practice according to these principles or not.

Psychotherapy under Natural Law

From a naturalistic perspective, lawful necessity is presumed to cover both normal and abnormal behaviors. Regarding abnormal behaviors, the discipline has developed a scientific classification system that describes different categories of diagnoses that are based upon a disease model of mental illness. We are referring here to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*, authored by the American Psychiatric Association (1994).

The *DSM-IV* is premised upon natural law. If diagnosed, persons are presumed to manifest a disease process characterized by a specific and consistent symptom pattern. The diagnostic categories themselves are designed to be static and objective representations of an external reality—in this case, the "reality" of mental illness. Hence, the therapist can predict the course and outcome of the disease, because the client's behavior is expected to conform to the predictable and stable pattern that characterizes the diagnosis. These diagnoses are then assumed to be universal and generalizable. Although exceptions to this universalism may be thought to occur in certain circumscribed cases (as in the case of culturally different clients), the diagnoses themselves are presumed to cut across contexts. In this way, the diagnostic system is a lawlike and universal system in the vein of naturalism.

If therapists utilize the *DSM-IV* as it is intended to be used (i.e., as a universal category system), clients can suffer detrimental effects. When therapists use the diagnostic system as a means of understanding the client, they are less likely to see client behaviors that contradict characteristic behaviors of the particular disorder. Indeed, therapists only "see" client behaviors that are consistent with the diagnostic description. Ultimately, such a universal

classificatory system sabotages client agency. If therapists categorize a client through diagnosis, the overarching, lawful reality of the diagnosis eclipses the client; the client is not perceived to be or act other than what the diagnosis indicates. In this case, the client can never exceed the boundaries of the diagnosis.

Some may argue that the use of the *DSM-IV* categories is descriptive, rather than explanatory as we suggest. However, given the axiomatic assumptions inherent in the diagnostic system, it is a quick and seductively easy step from viewing diagnoses as descriptive to viewing them as explanatory or real. Consider an example case, which is based on an actual client of the second author of this paper. The client, whom we will call Jack, is forced by the court to attend group psychotherapy because he committed various acts of domestic violence. Through therapeutic work and assessment with Jack, the group leaders converge upon a diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder as the most accurate representation of Jack's pathology. He consistently manifests antisocial symptoms in his interactions with others. For instance, he may exploit and manipulate others for his own personal benefit without any semblance of remorse, and if other group members confront these behaviors, Jack vehemently denies their truth.

What if Jack briefly changes his seemingly characteristic pattern? Suppose Jack abruptly, yet genuinely, acknowledges his responsibility for hurting others but then returns to his characteristic pattern of denying responsibility. Will the group therapist recognize the change as a real change consciously initiated by Jack, or will she explain the change as merely a veiled aspect of his underlying and stable disorder? These questions hinge upon whether we view the diagnosis as a greater reality and truth than Jack himself. When clients are resistant to change, seemingly stuck in their old dysfunctional behavior patterns (as Jack is), it is particularly tempting to invoke the explanatory power of the *DSM* diagnoses.

When the diagnosis defines Jack, his possibilities for change are limited. In this case, therapists are at risk of becoming hopeless about Jack and his prognosis. This is indicative of the "pernicious pessimism" ushered in by natural law. The therapist cannot maintain an optimistic belief in the possibility for change because Jack's

behavior is already determined by the course of the pathology. We might wonder, Why attempt psychotherapy at all with such a client?

Turning Freud Upside Down

Some therapists may resist our characterization of the *DSM-IV* system and its potential effects. In practice, for instance, not all psychotherapists treat the *DSM-IV* categories as lawful descriptions of client behavior. Indeed, some therapists refuse to diagnose clients on the grounds that such categories label and ultimately limit clients. Others minimize the importance that diagnoses have for treatment. In the case of Jack, for example, some therapists might argue that it is crucial to maintain hopefulness for the possibility of Jack's changing. Indeed, part of the goal of psychotherapy is to facilitate the change process. While we are sympathetic to such an optimistic therapeutic position, the naturalistic assumptions that ground the *DSM-IV* make this optimism halfhearted at best. Indeed, preconceptions and categorizations may impact therapy processes in subtle ways that shape our perception of the client and his or her possibilities for change. It is well documented in the psychological literature, for instance, that people tend to be biased toward confirming rather than disconfirming hypotheses, and the manner in which diagnostic labeling can negatively influence therapy has also been discussed (e.g., Freeman & Dyer, 1993; Mills, 1989). Perhaps Nickerson (1998, p. 183) best summarized this concern when he stated:

> Taxonomies that are invented as conceptual conveniences often come to be seen as representing the way the world is really structured. Given the existence of a taxonomy, no matter how arbitrary, there is a tendency to view the world in terms of the categories it provides.

Regardless of how we implement the *DSM-IV* in practical situations, our use of it does not alter the fundamentally deterministic and lawlike character of the theoretical system itself. In fact, if therapists were to minimize the lawfulness of the *DSM-IV* categories, then the system would lose its scientific thrust. In this case, psychotherapy would forfeit its claim to scientific accuracy.

Another implication of a commitment to naturalistic explanation affects the character of the psychotherapeutic relationship. From a naturalistic perspective, human beings are viewed as being

no different than other natural objects, all of which are presumed to be governed by the laws of science. Hence, human beings (and their pathologies) are objects worthy of scientific study. This is ultimately the justification for empirically validated treatments: practitioners ought to match certain disorders (natural phenomena) with certain treatments that have demonstrated predictable (i.e., lawful) scientific effectiveness. Just as in the physical sciences, where scientific achievement has resulted in technological advancements and mastery over nature, we in the behavioral sciences hope for the same achievements and technological advancements in the realm of human behavior (Slife & Williams, 1995). Psychotherapy becomes a means of helping the client achieve mastery over the self through the therapist's application of scientifically derived laws. From the perspective of naturalism, psychotherapy is not a relationship but an applied technology founded upon scientific advancement.

A technology-based psychotherapy, however, is not equipped to address questions of meaning and morality. Such moral questions are premised upon teleology and purpose—the assumption that there exists a higher aim or aspiration that one ought to strive for in life. A technological psychotherapy premised upon natural lawfulness cannot, by definition, recognize such purposeful intention (Guignon, 1992). A technological psychotherapy can only assist clients in achieving certain ends as long as those ends seem realistic and as long as they fall within the purview of scientific knowledge. From this perspective, psychotherapists cannot ask what constitutes the "better" or more "worthy" life; the therapist's only duty lies in applying the appropriate empirically validated treatments that facilitate specific mastery skills. Such a psychotherapy is ultimately amoral and remains indifferent to the ends in themselves (Guignon, 1992).

When moral considerations are removed from the reach of psychotherapy, spiritual considerations are excluded as well. In their scientific commitments, the behavioral sciences adopted an image of humanity defined by the lawfulness of nature. Within this naturalistic image, nothing of the sacred, religious, or spiritual can survive. Indeed, from this perspective, according to religious philosopher Mircea Eliade (1961), we live in a "desacralized cosmos," a cosmos or world that rejects the significance of the sacred and denies its

manifestation. Consider the sacred phenomena of miracles, for example. Miracles have traditionally been defined as supernatural events or divine interventions that defy or radically alter the laws of nature. From the perspective of a naturalistic universe, such nonnaturalistic explanations are viewed as primitive or unsophisticated explanations that were invoked before the true laws of nature were known. Hence, it follows that as we increase our "naturalistic" knowledge of the world, nonnaturalistic and miraculous explanations ought to become obsolete. From this view, miraculous explanations are ultimately errors or misinterpretations of phenomena that only the canons of science can accurately explain.

It follows, then, that a psychotherapist risks error in recognizing the miraculous or the sacred at work in the life of the client and in the course of therapy. For this reason, most therapists do not discuss miracles. Indeed, if therapists are committed to scientific and naturalistic explanation, miracles do not seem to emerge at all. Recognition of the miraculous requires recognition of the transcendence of the natural frame of things, and such transcendence is impossible from a naturalistic perspective. Ultimately, the sacred and miraculous cannot exist in the meaningless and causally determined spaces created by naturalism.

What Is Gospel Law?

The above-described loss of agency, meaning, morality, spirituality, and, indeed, anything that could reasonably be considered part of human experience suggests to us not only that a natural law conception is burdensome and unprofitable from a therapeutic perspective but also that it is contradictory to the precepts of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. The picture of humanity that emerges from this naturalistic approach casts human beings as automatons that are no more involved in the working out of the substance of their own lives than would be any inanimate object utterly subject to the nontheistic laws of nature.

The restored gospel provides a different picture of humanity than this—one so vastly different that persons under the covenant of God who have "put off the world" are sometimes referred to as "peculiar" (McConkie, 1966, p. 565). Indeed, from a worldly perspective, Latter-day Saint doctrine is peculiar in that it ushers in a

concept of law that is in a sense incommensurable with the above-described conception of natural law—or stated differently, gospel law is of a different genre than the traditional scientific conception described above. Nonetheless, as we will now try to make clear, the conception of law that we see in the scriptures (though of a different genre than other conceptions of law) has profound implications for our understanding of human existence and the more narrow topics of counseling and psychotherapy—implications that stand in stark contrast to the determinism described earlier.

Perhaps the first and most obvious message one receives as she or he ponders the scriptures is that the concept of law is an integral part of the unmistakably righteous and divine plan of God. In *Mormon Doctrine* (1966, p. 433), Bruce R. McConkie stated:

> Generally throughout the scriptures the term law has reference to the "law of the Lord." (Ps. 1:1–2.) That is, it means the statutes, judgments, and principles of salvation revealed by the Lord from time to time. In ancient Israel, for instance, the law was the law of Moses—which was a preparatory gospel, a law of restrictions and ordinances. To us the law is the law of Christ—which is the fulness of the gospel or "the perfect law of liberty." (Jas. 1:25.)

There are many such laws in the scriptures: the law of tithing, the law of chastity, the law of consecration, and so forth. These are the laws by which the children of God are blessed, guided, and judged; they are ultimately the means by which we come unto the Father and the Son.

Notice here that the idea of gospel law comes to us not as a set of naturalistic principles that determine the whole of the universe in the scientific manner described above—that is, in a strict way that precludes the possibility of human agents acting other than sinfully or virtuously (depending on the lawful regularities in place)—but rather as the decrees of the Lord that we may or may not choose to follow. This is to say, the Lord provides us the way unto him through his word and Spirit—through his mortal ministry, through ancient and modern prophets, through scripture, and so forth. Persons on earth may always choose to not follow the decrees of the Lord; they may choose to not follow the "strait and narrow path" (1 Ne. 8:20) to borrow a phrase from the prophet Lehi.

Indeed, it seems clear that the very idea of abiding or not abiding by a gospel law is predicated on the notion that the children of God are agents unto themselves—beings who may affirm a gospel law by obeying it or deny that law by disobeying it. The agency described here would seem to be the agency spoken of by the Lord in Doctrine and Covenants 101:78: "That every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment." So it appears that the concept of gospel law actually demands moral agency.

Human Beings under Gospel Law

But what of the nature of the physical universe itself? That is, irrespective of the sublime laws and covenants decreed by the Lord, what of our scientific intuition that we are situated in a universe determined by lawful necessity and uniform regularity? That is, what of the brute facts of gravity, electromagnetism, Newton's laws of motion, the laws of thermodynamics, and so forth? These phenomena are, after all, crucial aspects of the Enlightenment-spawned universe that have suggested the veracity of the doctrine of determinism.

In response to this question, we first wish to stress that determinism per se is not an unequivocal fact of human existence; it is, rather, a philosophical proposition or predicating assumption that may be either accepted or rejected (James, 1897/1956, pp. 572–573; Robinson, 1986, p. 432; Yanchar & Hill, 2003). Whether this proposition is accepted or rejected, of course, will have profound consequences for the theories we develop and the therapeutic practices we employ, so it is crucial that practitioners and theorists consider this matter, and the matter of lawfulness in general, very carefully before advocating any particular position. In light of the fact that determinism is a philosophical position that may be either accepted or rejected, it seems easiest and most appropriate to refer to the scriptures (once more), which suggest two things: (a) the Lord has indeed granted us agency (as discussed above), and (b) the Lord is the decree-er of the putatively "natural" laws, as well as the other more commonly recognized gospel laws. Doctrine and Covenants 88:41–43 tells us:

> He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever. And again, verily I say unto you, he hath given a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons; [a]nd their courses are fixed, even the courses of the heavens and the earth, which comprehend the earth and all the planets.

This passage suggests that there are no laws pertaining to the physical universe that are not established or decreed by God for his divine purposes.

The difference between an orderly, lawful universe with and without God, then, is that natural law without God operates by some kind of natural necessity where no exceptions are possible; for any anomalous phenomenon (including human behavior), there must exist some covering law, even if it has not yet been discovered. Even if we never discover a respectable law covering a given anomaly, the assumption is made that such a law is nonetheless operative. This assumption is taken as an "article of faith" of the traditional scientific philosophy that presupposes laws of nature.

An orderly universe with God, on the other hand, is a universe where God is the law as well as the exceptions to the law. Although God's house is a "house of order," it is up to his will whether or not gravity operates, even in particular situations or spatiotemporal regions (it may not, as in the case of Christ's ascension or the parting of the Red Sea); whether or not the sick or afflicted can be miraculously healed (they may be, as in the case of priesthood blessings and Christ's many miracles); and so on. Of course, this list gives only a small sample of "anomalies" in the scriptures that bear witness of the flexibility of what we call laws of nature. From this perspective, so-called laws seem to be as universal and immutable as God wants them to be—they are nothing more, nothing less. In this sense, the idea of natural law and gospel law might fit harmoniously if natural law is understood as God's organization of, and operations in, the physical world that are subject to his will and that do not obviate human agency.

The scriptures are also clear that the gospel does not amount to some form of deism, where God merely sets the laws of the universe

in motion and then exits the scene, allowing nature to take its course without interaction or intervention. Rather, the scriptures suggest that an embodied, loving, and involved God participates with us as we conduct our lives here on earth. He is a god of miracles, a god who answers prayers through inspiration and through his servants, as we read in Psalm 50:15—"And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me"—and in 4 Nephi 1:5:

> And there were great and marvelous works wrought by the disciples of Jesus, insomuch that they did heal the sick, and raise the dead, and cause the lame to walk, and the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear; and all manner of miracles did they work among the children of men; and in nothing did they work miracles save it were in the name of Jesus.

From the perspective we are advocating, then, we need not think in terms of, nor feel beholden to, the traditional naturalistic concept of lawfulness; rather, we can recognize that this is God's universe and that any manifest lawfulness is, in fact, God's will.

Given our stance on lawfulness in the universe, we can make several inferences about the nature of human beings. First, as stated above, we have been given the gift of agency by our Father in Heaven and thus are responsible for our actions. With this gift of agency, any action will have been chosen from a larger (though limited) set of possibilities, and a sin need not have been committed. The existence of agency makes good on William James's concern that human regret be viewed as the product of avoidable error, which, in turn, leads to the optimistic possibility that we may increasingly avoid sin and error in the future—that we may always ameliorate our conduct through repentance and by virtue of Christ's atonement.

Second, human agency allows for the possibility of meaning and morality in our lives. Because we can freely and thoughtfully choose among the alternatives afforded by our immediate circumstances and the broader context of our lives, there is an intrinsic meaningfulness to our conduct. Our actions mean something because we intended certain things while ruling out other possibilities, hopefully of less worth or virtue. Moreover, acts can be judged

as moral or otherwise because we have the capacity to freely recognize vice and virtue and to act for the sake of one rather than the other. Understood this way, a moral act might be construed as one where the will (or explicit direction) of God is followed, although the possibility existed for it to not be followed.

Psychotherapy under Gospel Law

If we accept the notion that human beings are the agentive children of a participating god who decrees the laws of the gospel, including those that appear to be natural laws, what then do we assume about the enterprise of counseling and psychotherapy? First, we assume that clients have agency. They have the capacity to generate meaning and to act for the sake of that meaning. Clients are never lawfully determined by their pathologies or past events or traumas. Certainly, these kinds of phenomena occur and contribute to human experience. However, these phenomena do not necessarily determine the lives of human beings. Rather, clients actively bestow meaning to such phenomena and, through their agency, establish for themselves the significance and impact of life events. Indeed, God's gift of agency allows for the generation of such meanings.

In this sense, agency allows for the "possibility of possibility"—the possibility of options and change (Slife, 1994). No matter how rigid and seemingly fixed a client's behaviors might be, the possibility of behaving otherwise always exists. Of course, this is not to say that such a rigid and fixed client would necessarily change. As therapists, we cannot force clients to change. Indeed, such change is ultimately in the hands of God and the client. However, under gospel law, clients always hold the possibility for change through Christ, and as therapists we should not abandon our hopefulness for such a possibility. Moreover, God may work among humans in other ways, such as by providing empathy, understanding, and insight or by softening hearts or by providing trials that ultimately refine character and strengthen faith.

Of course, as was discussed previously, many therapists already endorse agency as an indispensable feature of psychotherapy and the change process (Jensen & Bergin, 1988). However, the agency and the freedom to generate meanings and choices that many

therapists endorse may be of at least one of two kinds: human-centered agency or Christ-centered agency.

If people generate meanings and choices independently through their own originative sources of meaning and action, then agency is human-centered. Human-centered agency ultimately leads to a relativistic world comprised of a plurality of subjectively defined meanings, none of which can be viewed as "better" or "higher" than any others (Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). In therapy, for instance, clients are often encouraged to create their own meanings and choices. However, when these meanings and choices are human-centered—when they emanate from the client's own authentic and individual center—the therapist cannot challenge the client's choice. From the standpoint of human-centered agency, all client choices are "good" choices as long as they are realistic and self-generated. In other words, the "best" choice for the client is one that is individually and independently conceived by the client. When all independent client choices are "good," none can be better or worse. Ultimately, then, the potential virtue of such choices cannot be examined.

In contrast, Christ-centered agency through gospel law allows for an exploration of the moral dimension of choice. Hence, the second implication for therapy under gospel law is the inclusion of an unmistakably moral dimension to psychotherapy. Gospel law not only allows for agency but provides an orientation or grounding for how one ought to live. Gospel law establishes the boundaries of a "better" and "higher" existence as exemplified in the life of Christ. Therefore, Christ-centered values provide the standards and parameters of the good and worthy life. Psychotherapy under gospel law incorporates Christ-centered values as the foundation for psychotherapy. That is, Christ-centered values are the values of psychotherapy—the values that define therapists' broader notions of psychological health. For instance, the divinely inspired words of the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians encourage us to act with charity, the pure love of Christ, in all aspects of our lives, as therapists or otherwise.

Under gospel law, our therapeutic work with clients is always and already informed by Christ-centered values like charity, hope, and love. Being "loving" in this manner emphasizes one's obligations to

others before the self; facilitating client insight and behavior premised upon this Christ-centered value is viewed as the highest and most ethical behavior for clients (and therapists). Therefore, not only can clients (and therapists) choose to be loving, but they have a responsibility to do so, as indicated by gospel law and by virtue of their agency.

That psychotherapy is a value-laden enterprise is well documented in the academic literature (Bergin, 1980; Beutler & Bergan, 1991; London, 1986; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Tjelveit, 1999). Psychotherapy values are inescapable, and psychotherapists' values, whether held implicitly or explicitly, impact clients. So the issue is not whether a counselor endorses values; the issue is what kind of values a counselor endorses. From our perspective, the best psychotherapy values are Christ-centered values.

A third implication of gospel law for clinical practice is allowing for the emergence of the sacred and the miraculous. Recall from our previous discussion that miracles are traditionally defined as supernatural events that contradict the laws of nature. However, as the psychological historian Van den Berg (1961) argued, miracles are required to defy the laws of nature only when nature itself is described as lawfully and ontologically prior to religion. He suggested two things: (a) we can conceive of the naturalistic perspective as the interloper that has changed the way we look at God's creations, and (b) we cannot reasonably expect to see God if we assume a determined, mechanized, and mathematical nature that by definition omits the possibility of his presence.

The philosopher of religion Mircea Eliade (1961) described this determined and mechanized view of nature (i.e., natural law) as "profane space" (p. 22). Profane space, as contrasted with "sacred space," is devoid of miracles and is characterized as "homogeneous" and "neutral" (p. 22). That is, the profane space of natural law is neutral and meaningless. No space is qualitatively different or unique in comparison to any other space in nature. The possibility of such uniqueness or qualitative difference is characteristic only of sacred space. Eliade (1961) stated:

> For religious man, space is not homogenous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others. "Draw not nigh hither," says the Lord to

> Moses. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." (p. 20; see also Ex. 3:5)

Turning Freud Upside Down

The space in which Moses stands is not neutral. Indeed, it is sacred space—space that is infused with meaning and purpose as defined by God.

By contrast, profane space cannot possess human meaningfulness, nor can it provide direction or orientation for its inhabitants, because it is neutral. This is to suggest that profane space—natural space—denies the presence of God. Indeed, God can be with us only when we allow his presence to unfold in us and when we allow ourselves to see God's presence in others. However, the idea of sacred space seems possible and important only from a nonnaturalistic perspective that grants the existence of the sacred.

Therapy under gospel law acknowledges the presence of the sacred from the outset. Clients are viewed, not as determined natural objects, but as spirit children of God who already reflect and glorify him. Clients' sacredness, as spirit children of God, extends beyond a diagnostic system that assumes behavior is determined by natural laws; clients, therefore, cannot be reduced to mere instances of diagnostic categories. From a gospel perspective, then, diagnostic categories, which are only our limited theoretical attempts to make clients' behavior comprehensible, should be held tentatively, not absolutely (Slife & Reber, 2001). The diagnostic categories never provide an exhaustive picture of clients, because clients—as spirit children of God with a divine potential—always have possibilities available to them that transcend the parameters of any particular category.

The sacred gifts of God, including the atonement of Jesus Christ, miracles, and moral agency, are what make therapeutic change possible. Such sacredness—Christ's work in us—allows clients to overcome psychological traumas, heal wounds, and implement life changes that would be considered unlikely or impossible from a naturalistic view. The therapeutic cases that particularly embody this sacredness and possibility for change are cases wherein the client exceeds the therapist's expectations. These are the therapy cases that surprise practitioners. Perhaps the client experiences profound insights that radically alter perceptions of reality, resulting in changes that no one in the life of the client (therapist included) had

imagined possible. Haven't we all experienced such cases? From the vantage point of gospel law, these are the cases in which miracles—manifestations of the sacred—occur.

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LANE
FISCHER

The Nature of Law

UNIVERSAL BUT NOT UNIFORM

And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions.

—*D&C 88:38*

Every system of thought must eventually deal with order, chance, and the nature of law. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how the restored gospel of Jesus Christ defines the nature of law and to identify the implications of such a definition for psychotherapy. First, I will briefly examine the apparent tension between two competing secular models: modernism and postmodernism. Then I will highlight how that apparent tension continues in spiritually based models of law. Next I will argue that a reconceptualization of infinity resolves the tension between the models. Given that argument, I will explain how law is universal but not uniform across ecologies. A brief discussion of how God organizes variable ecologies is followed by the primary implication for psychotherapy.

Modernism versus Postmodernism

John A. Widtsoe (1908) was a Latter-day Saint scholar whose scientific inquiry was grounded in modernism. His text *Joseph Smith as Scientist* is based on the belief that "the great, fundamental laws of the Universe are foundation stones in religion as well as science" (p. 1). Widtsoe was so convinced of modernism and Mormonism that he used their congruence as proof of each other. "At every point of contact," he said, "the sanest of modern philosophy finds counterpart in the theological structure of the Gospel as taught by Joseph Smith" (p. 71). Zygmunt Bauman (1992) is a sociologist who has explored postmodernism. His text *Intimations of Postmodernity* articulates the reactionary rise of postmodernism and its implications for intellectual life. Both Widtsoe and Bauman dealt with the nature of law but came to very different conclusions.

Widtsoe taught that nature is essentially unknowable. He noted that humans know things only by their effects on other things. Before the rise of modernism, the unknowability of nature led to harmful superstition. As scholars observed the regularity in relationships between events, they articulated a principle of cause and effect. Widtsoe stated, "As this principle of the constancy in the relations between cause and effect was established, the element of chance in natural phenomena, with its attendant arts of magic, had to disappear" (pp. 32–33).

From the principle of cause and effect emerged the search for the governing laws of nature through which all phenomena could

be explained, predicted, and controlled. Before science set out to discover the laws of nature, modernism made an assumption about the nature of law. Widtsoe taught that the

> laws of nature are, therefore, man's simplest and most comprehensive expression of his knowledge of certain groups of natural phenomena. They are man-made, and subject to change as knowledge grows; but, as they change, they approach or should approach more and more nearly to the perfect law. Modern science is built upon the assumption that the relations between cause and effect are invariable, and that these relations may be grouped to form great natural laws, which express the modes by which the forces of the universe manifest themselves. (p. 34)

He further spoke of the nature of unexplained phenomena:

> It must also be admitted that men possess no absolute certainty that though certain forces, brought into a certain conjunction a thousand times, have produced the same effect, they will continue to do so. Should a variation occur, however, that also must be ascribed to an inherent property of the forces or conditions, or the existence of a law not understood. There can be no chance in the operation of nature. This is a universe of law and order. (p. 35)

Finally, Widtsoe concluded that "none can transcend the law. In the material world or in the domain of ether or spirit, like causes produced like effects—the reign of law is supreme" (p. 37).

Modernism assumes that natural laws exist in the universe and that human beings discover them by application of observation and reason. Widtsoe conceded that humans' articulation of the laws of nature are approximations but assumed that "the perfect law" does exist. He was convinced that there is no chance in the universe and that all things are fixed in invariant conjunctions. The essence of Widtsoe's argument is that human beings are part of a universe in which natural laws preexist them and govern their existence—natural laws exist outside of humans' construction of them.

Bauman (1992) also identified the ultimate unknowability of nature. He opined that modernism arose out of the fear that nature is unpredictable and that life is full of contingency. He judged the rise of modern science and its obsession with control as a flight from the ambiguous uncertainty of life. While Widtsoe averred that the reign of law is supreme, Bauman denied the supposed

lawfulness of all things. Bauman expressed the postmodern view that all laws of nature are merely convenient human inventions. Belief in such laws is essentially imposed by the existing social power structures. While Widtsoe acknowledged that scientific laws are approximations of the underlying perfect law, Bauman argued that there is no underlying perfect law and that such approximations are only myths to live by.

Bauman defined the postmodern state of mind as an attempt to face the contingencies of life without the order imposed by authority:

> Postmodernity . . . does not seek to substitute one truth for another, one standard of beauty for another, one life ideal for another. . . . It denies in advance the right of all and any revelation to slip into the place vacated by the deconstructed/discredited rules. It braces itself for a life without truths, standards and ideals. (p. ix)

While postmodernism has been criticized for its destructive influence and refusal to replace "one truth for another," Bauman described its work as a site-clearing operation that scrapes the dross off of the truth:

> While renouncing what merely passes for the truth, dismantling its past, present and future putative, ossified versions, it uncovers the truth in its pristine form which modern pretensions had maimed and distorted beyond recognition. More than that: the demolition uncovers *the truth of the truth*, truth as residing in the being itself and not in the violent acts performed upon it; truth that has been belied under the domination of legislative reason. (p. ix)

Postmodernity denies the orderliness of the universe and focuses on the chance and unpredictability of it. It denies any authority to define truth. Rather, it places truth at the center of each being. The essence of Bauman's argument is that law ultimately arises from within the individual. It does not preexist nor govern human behavior *a priori.*

While modernism assumes the existence of self-existent natural law, postmodernism does not. It assumes that all descriptions of law are convenient myths. It further asserts that laws are constructions in people's minds. While we may share common myths as cultural laws or mores, ultimately any individual can construct ideographic laws that are as valid as those of any other individual or culture.

While modernism and postmodernism rest on different assumptions about the nature of law, neither system necessarily requires the existence of God in the universe. Modernism's natural law seems to operate without God, and Bauman eloquently concludes that postmodernism's "deposition of universal reason did not reinstate a universal God" (p. xxiii). In contrast, what follows in this chapter presumes that the reader has a fundamental witness of the existence of God. If we believe that God exists as an actor in the universe, what, then, is the nature of law?

The Law to and from God

It might comfort us if we could say that the law of the universe is God's will. However, that assertion seems to ignore God's own experience in the universe. Simply inserting God into the system does not resolve the dilemma between the modern and postmodern conceptions of law.

On the one hand, we claim, "As man is, God once was: As God is, man may be" (Smith, 1884, p. 46). We also read in *The King Follett Discourse* that "intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle. . . . The first principles of man are self-existent with God" (Smith, 1983, p. 21). Self-existent principles are reminiscent of modernism's construct of natural laws. They exist independently of anyone's construction of them.

On the other hand, we read that God decrees laws. For example, Alma 41:8 reads, "Now, the decrees of God are unalterable," and D&C 130:20 states, "There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world." The relationship of God to law described in these scriptures is reminiscent of postmodernism, in which the individual constructs laws. Uncertainty about the nature of law, whether it is self-existent or constructed, seems to continue even when we consider God as an actor in the system.

The tension between these two conceptions of law is palpable within a single paragraph of *The King Follett Discourse.* Joseph Smith (1983) taught:

> God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself. The relationship we have with God places us in a situation to

> advance in knowledge. He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted with himself, so that they might have one glory upon another. (pp. 21–22)

In that single paragraph, law originates both outside of God and by God's decree. Obviously, if God finds himself in the midst of spirits and glory before he has decreed any laws or principles about how things work, law exists outside of him. Sequentially, however, he then decrees laws by which these coeternal self-existing spirits might progress and advance as he advanced. The laws that govern the existence of coeternal spirits arise outside of God, and the laws that God instituted for their advancement arise from inside God. Since law apparently originates both outside of God and inside God, there must be some way to reasonably order these processes and resolve the tension between these two conceptions of the origin of law.

Reconceptualizing Infinity: Law > God > Law

One resolution to the dilemma hinges on a reconsideration of God and the concept of infinity. As long as our construction of God limits him to infinite knowledge and power, it hardly seems possible for law to originate both inside and outside of God. The solution hinges on our understanding of infinity. By traditional definitions, if God has infinite power and knowledge, then it is impossible for him to be contained in a system larger than his infinite self. However, if it can be shown that it is possible to conceive of an order that transcends infinity, then it is possible for God to have infinite knowledge and to simultaneously be held in a system larger than himself.

Sometimes words such as infinity do not mean what we think they mean. Sometimes long-accepted principles can be shown to not be necessarily true. For example, through revelation to Joseph Smith, the Lord corrected our understanding of the term *eternal punishment:*

> Wherefore, I revoke not the judgements which I shall pass, but woes shall go forth, weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. . . . Nevertheless, it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written *endless torment.* Again it is written *eternal damnation;* wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men,

> altogether for my name's glory. Wherefore, I will explain unto you this mystery. . . . For, behold, the mystery of godliness, how great is it! For, behold, I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name. Wherefore—Eternal punishment is God's punishment. Endless punishment is God's punishment. (D&C 19:5–12)

The clarification of the term *eternal* is very instructive. Because it is possible to reconsider the definition of certain attributes of God without being blasphemous, one wonders what other superlatives applied to God, such as the term *infinite,* might be misconceptions. Our common conception of the term *infinity* stems from Aristotle's pronouncement that infinity annihilates all other numbers. It is commonly taught that while $(a + b) \geq a$ and $(a + b) \geq b$, any value added to infinity results differently such that $(a + \infty) = \infty$ and $(b + \infty) = \infty$. Aristotle's concept of infinity may have compromised our understanding of God.

The nineteenth-century mathematician Georg Cantor demonstrated a model in which he showed, using the principles of set theory, that an ordered set can transcend infinity (Dauben, 1979; Lavine, 1994). A subsequent set can transcend that set, and so on. Cantor's work has come to be known as the model of transfinite numbers. Interestingly, Cantor conceived of each superseding set as existing on a different order. I believe Cantor's work is a key to resolving the tension between self-existent law and constructed law and the tension between God as a decreer of law and a discoverer of self-existent law.

Because we commonly assume that infinity annihilates all other numbers, we have limited God to mere infinite knowledge. If, as Cantor's work suggests, infinity can be enclosed by a transfinite set and that transfinite set can then be enclosed in a series of nested orders, then Joseph Smith's King Follett discourse makes perfect sense.

Given that construction, it is possible for God to have infinite knowledge such that he can decree laws for lower-order ecologies and still be held within a superseding ecology that is self-existent outside of him. One of the major themes of the temple endowment is that of succeeding orders of law, priesthood, light, and knowledge.

The organization of this earth, another major theme of the temple endowment, is very instructive. God took self-existing elements and organized them, by decree, into an earth. He did not create the earth out of nothing. (The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* was apparently an adaptation designed to maintain consistency with Aristotle's conception of infinity.) Furthermore, God did not simply organize a barren earth; he organized an ecology. Three components define an ecology: organisms, environments, and the laws that govern their relationships. The process of organizing an ecology involves placing elements and organisms into relationships according to laws. It seems that in organizing this ecology, God selected self-existing matter and self-existing organisms and integrated them, by decree, into relationships according to self-existing laws that he learned by his own experience in the universe.

Each ecology has its own system of law. At the same time that God organizes one ecology of law, he is held by another ecology of law himself. That is exactly what Joseph Smith taught in the King Follett discourse. God found himself in the presence of other self-existent, coeternal, less-developed beings and saw fit to institute laws whereby they might progress as he had progressed.

Given that there are nested ecologies and that God exists in one of those ecologies that transcends infinity, he has superseding knowledge and power to organize lower-order ecologies. God can organize ecologies and spaces and earths and gardens for us.

The Universal Law and the Variable Ecologies

There seems to be one law that suffuses all other ecologies—the law of justice. The law of justice states that for every behavior there is a consequence. We often think of the law of justice erroneously, interpreting justice as punishment for violating the law. A recent cartoon ("Pickles" by Brian Crane) captured that misconception cleverly. In the cartoon, a grandmother is scolding a grandfather in the presence of their grandson. She stomps away, saying, "Someday, Earl, you're going to get your comeuppance." The young boy asks his grandfather what "comeuppance" means. The grandfather explains that "comeuppance" means getting what you deserve for your behavior. The sweet little boy smiles and says, "I hope mine is ice cream." The law of justice demands both payment

for sins and blessings for obedience. Some behaviors are associated with peace and ice cream, while some are associated with sorrow. However those behaviors and consequences may be set up in any particular ecology, they always follow the same regulatory pattern. While for every behavior there is a consequence, we also know that the consequences are not uniform across ecologies.

The restored gospel clearly teaches that there are variable conditions established in a plentitude of variable ecologies. By revelation, the Prophet Joseph taught:

> All kingdoms have a law given; and there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or a lesser kingdom. And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions. All beings who abide not in those conditions are not justified. (D&C 88:36–39)

In the same way that there are variable conditions across kingdoms, there are variable consequences across the variable ecologies' particular laws. The Prophet Joseph taught that "of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation" (D&C 82:3). Clearly, if you live in a more-enlightened ecology and violate the demands of that ecology, you receive greater punishment than if you live in a less-enlightened ecology and are never aware of the ecological demands of a higher law. That concept has profound implications for Latter-day Saint therapists.

Adam and Eve's Experience

When God organized the earth, he planted a garden eastward in Eden (Gen. 2:8). The Garden of Eden was a particular ecology that existed according to specific laws that applied only in the garden. Outside of the garden was a different ecology in which different laws applied. Adam and Eve were placed in the ecology of the garden. Examining their experience is instructive.

The garden Adam and Eve were placed in was a particular ecology with paradisiacal conditions. As long as Adam and Eve maintained the demands of the law—as long as they did not partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, certain conditions

held. There was no suffering. There was no death. Adam and Eve walked and talked with God. Food, if necessary, was readily available. There was no knowledge of good and evil. Neither were there children. Neither was there any human development. Those were the consequences of maintaining the ecological conditions of the Garden of Eden.

When they partook of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, consequences ensued and the ecology changed. In fact, we have the metaphor of being driven out of the garden—out of one ecology and into the ecology in which we, as their children, now exist. Suffering was present in the new ecology. Death was present. Adam and Eve were out of the immediate presence of God. They had bread by virtue of their labor. They also had children. They experienced increase, development, and knowledge of good and evil.

We often think of the Garden of Eden only in terms of its upside. We often think of our current ecology only in terms of its downside. In fact, there is an upside and a downside to each ecology. While Eden seems like stress-free living, it allowed no children, development, or knowledge of good and evil. While our current ecology seems to be filled with thorns, thistles, and universal death, it also allows the joy of children, development, and knowledge of good and evil. In each ecology, there are conditions and consequences that ensue according to the behavior of the actors in the ecology.

Transgression

The Fall of Adam was a transgression. There are five Hebrew terms that are translated as *transgress:*

chalaph: to pass on quickly, to substitute, to change for better, to renew

ma'al: to act unfaithfully

abar: to cross over, to traverse

pawsha: to rebel or revolt

raba'h: to become great

The Pearl of Great Price presents the most robust record of Moses's account of the Fall of Adam. Adam and Eve were the first to use the term *transgression.* Unfortunately, we do not have Moses's original report of their statement to know which sense of *transgress*

to use. Nevertheless, the term *transgress* can be seen as a crossing over or change from one ecology to another. In that sense, Adam's transgression was a crossing over.

While Adam and Eve may have had some vague sense of the benefits of the succeeding ecology, they did not fully understand the conditions and consequences of it. For example, they did not comprehend what death was. Learning about death was one of the first lessons about the new ecology. The Lord made coats of skins for them, which likely came from some animal that was sacrificed. I can imagine the shock Adam and Eve must have had as they witnessed the death of the beautiful creature who gave up its skin for them. Nevertheless, the skins were better than the fig-leaf clothing they fashioned for themselves. Their poor attempt to protect themselves was not as effective as being covered by the literal and metaphoric protection fashioned by God. When the Lord escorted them across the boundary from one ecology to the next, he said, "Cursed shall be the ground *for thy sake*" (Moses 4:23; italics added). This ecology is a good thing. It refines us.

After the Fall,

> Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God. And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient. (Moses 5:10–11)

They reflected that the crossing over was a good thing. They were aware, more than we, that both ecologies had an upside and a downside.

At this point, justice intersects with mercy. Adam and Eve understood that through the atonement of Jesus Christ and the mercy extended through his loving sacrifice all the families of the earth could eventually have the best of both ecologies. While Adam and Eve benefited from having their eyes opened, knowing good from evil, and having children, they were aware of their separation from God. Yet they had testimonies that through the Atonement,

they would be resurrected, see God in the flesh, have the joy of forgiveness, and eventually enjoy eternal life, which is a gift to those who conform to the laws of the celestial kingdom.

An exposition of the nature of mercy is beyond the ken of this chapter, but the interested reader is referred to Lehi's astounding discourse on the interplay among existence, agency, justice, and mercy; Amulek's sermon on justice and mercy; and Alma's instruction to his son regarding the relationship between justice and mercy. Significantly, Alma concluded that mercy cannot rob the eternal demands of justice. He stated that "mercy claimeth the penitent" (Alma 42:23). Repentance is the behavior required to obtain mercy. While resurrection is a free gift that demands nothing of us, exaltation requires conforming to the law of repentance. Can mercy rob justice? "Nay; not one whit," Alma warned (Alma 42:25). Even mercy operates according to the law of justice.

Ecologies of Law and Infinite Orders of Fullness

Sections 76 and 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants illustrate an order of kingdoms, the telestial, terrestrial, and celestial, that are defined according to the laws that characterize those kingdoms. Regarding the nature of these kingdoms, a revelation given to Joseph Smith says:

> Bodies who are of the celestial kingdom may possess it forever and ever; for, for this intent was it made and created, and for this intent are they sanctified. And they who are not sanctified through the law which I have given unto you, even the law of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom. For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory. . . . Ye who are quickened by a portion of the celestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness. And they who are quickened by a portion of the terrestrial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness. And also they who are quickened by a portion of the telestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness. (D&C 88:20–26, 29–31)

These are the variable ecologies of law by which people can be justified. (*Justified* means to function within the strictures of the law of any given ecology.) One can choose, as an agent, to maintain the conditions of telestial laws and be justified. One can choose, as an agent, to maintain the conditions of terrestrial laws and be justified. There is no antipathy among the kingdoms. The kingdoms are not defined by who the King is. They all have the same King. They are defined by the variable laws and conditions that exist in them. Each kingdom represents an order of things, and in each order there is a fullness. The reconceptualization of infinity allows each order to be infinite and full. I think that God, knowing that his children would not all abide the demands of the celestial law, prepared kingdoms—ecologies of glory—for them. This is a uniquely Latter-day Saint concept and must be a foundation piece in any attempt to create a psychotherapy based on Latter-day Saint ideas.

Implication for Practice

One implication of this tripartite conception of variable ecologies—(1) organisms (2) are in relationship with environments (3) according to variable laws—is in our approach to tolerance. Modernism's focus on a unitary law led to an approach toward therapy in which professionals were expected, by virtue of their scientific knowledge, to cure people who were deviant from the norm. That model was an outgrowth of modernism's assumption that there was a unitary natural law to which the scientist was privy and the lay person was not. Science was the authority that imposed the truth on the uneducated populace. That model led to abuse of people as it held little tolerance for deviance. The postmodern approach to tolerance emerged partly in reaction to such abuses.

The postmodern model of tolerance is essentially a horizontal model. Tolerance is enjoined toward all behaviors because all things are local and relative. There is no construct or behavior that has any particular value over another. A belief or behavior is upheld, not because of its truth value, but because of the political, economic, or military power behind it.

Neither the unitary vertical model of modernism nor the random horizontal model of postmodernism is workable. Latter-day Saint therapists often experience modernism's model as judgmental

and postmodernism's model as a capitulation of truth. The model of law articulated in Doctrine and Covenants 88 avoids both errors.

The model of ecologies of law is a nested model that has consistency and variation across ecologies. It is neither vertical and unitary as in modernism nor random and horizontal as in postmodernism. In the Latter-day Saint model of law, there are more- and less-encompassing ecologies of law. In more-encompassing ecologies of law, the demands are greater, the blessings are greater, the punishments are greater, and the glory is greater.

This model of law allows the therapist to engage people where they are while simultaneously inviting them to a more adequate law. Because people are free to choose and can be justified living at the level of law that they choose, the model allows therapists to tolerate clients' choices to remain in any given ecology. Latter-day Saint therapists do not have to impose a belief system on anyone. They do have to be patient with themselves and others. Even if therapists are personally striving to meet the demands of a more-encompassing law, they do not have to impose that law on clients as the unitary best way to live. They can invite themselves and others to live the most adequate laws that they can abide. Neither do they have to assume that not striving to abide the celestial law necessarily leads to mental illness. It is possible for a person to be justified, happy, and healthy while fulfilling the demands of the telestial kingdom.

There is no antipathy among the kingdoms. In fact, each of the kingdoms enjoys the presence of a member of the Godhead. Speaking of the terrestrial kingdom, the Lord explained that souls who choose this ecology "receive of the presence of the Son, but not the fulness of the Father" (D&C 76:77). Speaking of the telestial kingdom, the Lord explained that "these are they who receive not of his [Jesus's] fulness in the eternal world, but of the Holy Spirit through the ministration of the terrestrial" (D&C 76:86). A member of the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, or God the Spirit—ministers to each ecology.

Joseph Smith's bold redefinition of the term *eternal* along with his description of variable ecologies of law and the nature of God are uniquely Latter-day Saint concepts that must be foundation stones in the development of an LDS model of psychotherapy.

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Part 2

The Nature of Suffering

Happiness . . . is a problem of satisfying a person's instinctual wishes. . . . The pleasure principle . . . dominates the operation of the mental apparatus from the start.

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

Having adopted some version of Freud's pleasure principle, many psychotherapists have guided clients in the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain (hedonism). This commitment to hedonism has ominous implications for counseling. In part 2, Edwin Gantt outlines those implications and proposes that a Christian understanding of pain and suffering has much to offer to individuals and the discipline of applied psychology.

Robert Gleave questions common assumptions about pain and suffering and offers a framework in which pain and suffering can be seen—and welcomed—as essential aspects of a full life. In this light, a healthy acceptance of pain might sometimes be the goal of counseling rather than the problem to be eliminated.

EDWIN E. GANTT

Hedonism, Suffering, and Redemption

THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTIAN PSYCHOTHERAPY

Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

—*Matthew 26:38*

Few questions have so animated the discourse of the philosopher and the priest, the physician and the poet, as why it is we suffer and what our suffering might possibly mean. Of course, the question has never been solely the province of the scholar or the professional, as can be attested by any parent who has had to look on helplessly as a young child wastes away in a hospital bed. The implications of how this most pressing question of life is answered are profound. As Truman Madsen (1966) has noted, for some "the most staggering objection to belief in a personal God is the ugly, tragic, overwhelming fact of human inequality and suffering" (p. 53). Paradoxically, others have found in suffering not only the most divine assurances of God's enduring love but also the overpowering call to brotherhood and full humanity. Mother Teresa, for example, taught that "in the slums, in the broken body, in the children, we see Christ and we touch him" (Muggeridge, 1971, p. 114). Clearly, in addressing the question of suffering, we are not just playing with some "academic toy" (Madsen, 1966, p. 53) but are dealing with an issue of immense and potentially soul-rending human significance.

Despite a lengthy, rich, and sometimes contentious history of literary, philosophical, and theological inquiry into the problem of human suffering, our modern world has increasingly come to rely on psychological and psychotherapeutic explanations of suffering's origins and meaning. Indeed, many scholars have argued that psychology has come to compete for and in large measure usurp the cultural and intellectual space once occupied by religion, literature, and moral philosophy (see, for example, Hooykaas, 1972; Szasz, 1978; Vandenberg, 1991; Vitz, 1977). It has become commonplace in our society to believe that psychologists not only hold the keys that will unlock the mystery of suffering but also possess the techniques necessary for eliminating it. Because of this assumption, psychologists are often afforded the sort of status and respect that was in earlier times reserved for priests and prophets, sages, and shamans.

I intend to argue, however, that some of contemporary psychology's more popular ways of conceiving suffering are very much at odds with the understanding of it found in ancient and modern revelation and are, thus, for Latter-day Saints deeply problematic—both intellectually and spiritually. Although not always explicitly articulated, many of the theories and practices of modern psychotherapy

are undergirded with a philosophy of hedonism. That is to say, much of the modern psychotherapeutic enterprise is informed by the "doctrine that pleasure is the good" and that the maximizing of individual pleasure is "what we ought to pursue" (Gosling, 2000, p. 336).

One result of this commitment to hedonism in psychology is, I will contend, that human emotional, psychological, and moral suffering often are regarded only as obstacles to our attainment of happiness and the good life. Indeed, it will be shown that a number of prominent schools of thought in contemporary psychotherapy assume that suffering is essentially pointless and unnecessary, the unpleasant byproduct of some impersonal pathological process, defect of rationality, or biochemical deficiency. As such, it is "without intrinsic meaning" and is "seen as some sort of absurdity" (Vitz, 1977, p. 103). It is with this view that psychotherapists so often set their agenda solely in terms of how to most effectively mitigate—if not terminate—the various forms of psychologically relevant human suffering. That such suffering may have profoundly spiritual and moral meaning receives little attention (cf. Young-Eisendrath, 1998).

In what follows, then, I hope to show that, although this sort of psychotherapeutic project seems morally sound, it fundamentally misses the point of suffering—particularly when understood from within the context of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Insofar as psychology's hedonistic conception of suffering is mistaken and insofar as we therapists endorse that conception in either our theories or our practices, we may hinder our clients from developing a morally deep and spiritually significant life. By minimizing or neglecting the inherent meaningfulness of human suffering, we may prevent our clients from coming to understand, in the words of Viktor Frankl (1986), that *"human life can be fulfilled not only in creating and enjoying, but also in suffering!"* [1] (italics in the original) and that "life

1. Frankl did not say that suffering can be "fulfilling" in human life, but he does state that in suffering human life can be "fulfilled." He did not suggest that suffering is a fulfilling way to live one's life, as though it were just one more possible method or means of achieving some level of personal satisfaction or contentment. For Frankl, we are all, by virtue of being human, called to fulfill our lives, as we would a duty or an obligation, without regard to the degree or amount of personal

can reach nobility even as it founders on the rocks" (p. 106). Ultimately, I will propose that, while the call to alleviate suffering is undoubtedly central to both the theory and practice of psychotherapy, there is a spiritually deeper and more pressing call to which we as therapists must first give heed: the demand for us to suffer with our clients in their suffering, to "watch and pray" (Matt. 26:41) as they experience the agonies of their own Gethsemanes.

The Intellectual Roots of Hedonism

The roots of our Western intellectual tradition begin with the Greeks—and thus the roots of hedonism do also. The individual most often affiliated with the hedonist position is Epicurus, who contended "that all men, at all times, pursue only their own pleasure" (Russell, 1945, p. 245) because "pleasure is the first good and natural" (Epicurus, 1981, p. 294). Interestingly, however, Epicurus was not the first to advance the notion that we are by nature selfish and seek only after our own personal pleasure. An earlier advocate of hedonism was Thrasymachus, a contemporary of Socrates and Plato, a man dubbed by one noted historian of philosophy as the "brutal champion of the rights of the stronger" (Copleston, 1985, p. 95). Unlike Epicurus, who would suggest that the greatest pleasure was to be found in moderate living aimed at minimizing pain, Thrasymachus argued a "might-is-right" approach to justice and ethics, maintaining that because personal pleasure is the ultimate good those with the means to get what they want should in fact do just that (cf. Plato, 1961, pp. 588–589).

Ironically, even Socrates, who consistently sought to counter this sophistic equation of physical pleasure with the ultimate good, still maintained at the core of his teachings the notion that conduct is governed by a concern for matters of personal pleasure. Socratic doctrine held that acts that produce pleasure are always to be judged in light of their ultimate rather than immediate benefit. Because the unreflective pursuit of pleasure may lead one only to

satisfaction to be garnered. Indeed, for Frankl, finding meaning in our lives, whatever our circumstances might be, is our ultimate duty—to ourselves, others, and God. It is vital to keep this distinction clearly in mind to see how Frankl avoids falling into one or another of the more traditional forms of egoism.

future misery, the relative worth of a given course of action should be determined by whether or not it provides long-term or ultimate benefit (i.e., pleasure) to the person. Thus, as Guthrie (1950) has noted, in the Socratic or Platonic system, "acts which in themselves give pleasure can be referred to the question of ultimate benefit as to a higher standard, while still maintaining the attitude of pure self-interest" (p. 103).

In the end, then, for many ancient Greek thinkers, though they disagreed continually and vehemently about the proper means of its achievement, the ultimate goal of life was always the pursuit and maximization of pleasure for one's self. Even Aristotle, who questioned the thinking of his predecessors and contemporaries in many profoundly insightful ways, nonetheless held that our most committed and concerned friendships were in reality just the outgrowth of a more fundamental love of self.

Although eclipsed somewhat by intensive theological speculation, various versions of the hedonist doctrine continued to inform philosophical thought in significant ways throughout the medieval period. A great deal of intellectual effort during this time was devoted to demonstrating how service to God and obedience to his commandments were, when considered most broadly, really just matters of self-interest. For example, St. Augustine (K. Rogers, 1997) argued, "For, that man might be intelligent in his self-love, there was appointed for him an end to which he might refer all his actions, that he might be blessed. For he who loves himself wishes nothing else than this. And the end set before him is 'to draw near to God'" (p. 60). St. Augustine urged his fellow Christians to ask themselves what earthly and transitory pleasure could possibly compare to the eternal rewards of heaven that are to be made available to the obedient and dutiful. Christians should then ask whether it is in their own best interests to do all they can to secure such eternal bliss for themselves.

Indeed, as St. Thomas Aquinas later reasoned, if contemplation of ultimate reality is the greatest good and God is the ultimate reality, then our greatest opportunity for the single-minded contemplation of God is in the afterlife, and the more single-minded our contemplation, the greater our joy (cf. Rogers, 1997, pp. 61–73). The

individual who settles for the evanescent pleasures of mortal flesh is a fool who will fail in the end to secure that which is the most truly gratifying of all pleasures: eternal communion with God.

Interestingly, despite this tradition of assuming self-interest to be central to human endeavor, it was not until the Enlightenment that hedonism achieved a nearly undisputed predominance in explanations of human motivation and behavior. Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1968), for example, offered an account of human motivation wherein self-preservation and self-aggrandizement were not only right but natural and absolute. He contended that we are naturally constituted to seek to ensure our own survival and pleasure, regardless of the costs to others. In fact, Hobbes maintained that our natural inclination as human beings is to wage unrestrained war on one another so as to maximize material acquisitions and power. Furthermore, if not for the controlling influence of a powerful and organized state capable of imposing its will on the individual via the threat of force or the promise of security, the "life of man [would be] solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes, 1968, part 1, chap. 13, p. 186). The impact of this Hobbesian doctrine for later political, social, and intellectual developments can hardly be underestimated.[2]

One profound consequence of the modern advancement of the doctrine of hedonism is that hedonism has, in many ways, come to

2. For example, by deftly mixing the influences of Hobbes and Epicurus, Jeremy Bentham (1914) was able to assert that "nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure" (p. 1) and that "each individual always pursues what he believes to be his own happiness" (Russell, 1945, p. 775). Based on this fundamental assumption of self-interest, Bentham then proposed what has come to be known as the utilitarian system of rationality and ethics, a system that has proven to be enormously influential in contemporary law, politics, economics, and philosophy. Following closely in Bentham's footsteps, John Stuart Mill (1969) wrote, "Of the social virtues it is almost superfluous to speak; so completely is it the verdict of all experience that selfishness is natural. . . . [The people we regard as moral are simply selfish in a different way;] theirs is . . . [a] sympathetic selfishness" (p. 394). By the middle of the 19th century, particularly with the advent of Darwinian evolutionary theory and subsequent biological accounts of human behavior, hedonism had clearly begun to take center stage in the political, moral, and social thought of the West (cf. Ruse, 1999; Smith, 1997).

be identified with rational thinking. Henry Sidgwick (1981), for example, felt that it was

> hardly going too far to say that common sense assumes that "interested" actions, tending to promote the agent's happiness, are *prima facie* [at first sight] reasonable: and that the *onus probandi* [burden of proof] lies with those who maintain that disinterested conduct, as such, is reasonable. (p. 120)

Ayn Rand (1964) argued that the rational person "sees his interests in terms of a lifetime and selects his goals accordingly.... [This] means that he does not regard any moment as cut off from the context of the rest of his life, and that he allows no conflicts or contradictions between his short-range and long-range interests" (p. 51–52). Thus, to be rational is to seek after one's own interests in a manner as careful, consistent, and efficient as possible (cf. Shaver, 1999).

To fall short in the realization of this ideal—or, even worse, to reject it outright—is by definition to be irrational. Indeed, as Nathaniel Branden (1964), one of Rand's collaborators, explained, "To sacrifice one's happiness is to sacrifice one's desires; to sacrifice one's desires is to sacrifice one's values; to sacrifice one's values is to sacrifice one's judgment; to sacrifice one's judgment is to sacrifice one's mind" (p. 41). Given this sort of intellectual presumption, it should not come as too great a surprise that one of the most explicitly hedonistic of all our modern theories of human action, and one of the most widely endorsed in both the humanities and the social sciences, is known as Rational Choice Theory (cf. Becker, 1976; Coleman & Fararo, 1992).[3]

3. In his text *Theory and Progress in Social Science,* James B. Rule (1997) identified three essential tenets of the Rational Choice school of thought. First is the notion that "human action is essentially *instrumental,* so that most social behavior can be explained as efforts to attain one or another, more or less distant, end[s]" (p. 80; italics in original). Second, individual actors "formulate their conduct through *rational calculation* of which among alternate courses of action are most likely to maximize their overall rewards" (p. 80; italics in original). The third and final tenet of Rational Choice Theory is that "large-scale social processes and arrangements—including such diverse things as rates, institutions, and practices—are ultimately to be explained as results of such calculation[s]" (p. 80). This last point, according to Rule (1997), is a crucial claim for adherents of the theory, in that

Hedonism, Psychotherapy, and Suffering

As a product of modern philosophical thought, psychotherapy often reflects a strong intellectual commitment—both in terms of its theories and its practices—to the epistemology and ethics of hedonism. Because psychotherapy has, in many ways, become the major modern attempt to address the question of the good life, it has been intimately concerned with the question of human emotional, spiritual, and moral suffering. As mentioned above, our modern world has increasingly come to look to psychologists for answers to questions about the meaning of life and suffering. The therapist, as a highly trained expert in human affairs, is often thought to be uniquely situated to offer not only rationally based explanations for the presence of suffering but also empirically defensible counsel on how best to achieve happiness in life (cf. Gantt, 2001; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999).

In close connection with this assumption is psychotherapy's long-maintained belief that the personal views and values of clinicians and therapists have little direct effect on clients, at least insofar as those values are conscientiously set aside in the therapy hour by the careful employment of established methods and techniques of treatment. It was thought that the therapist could be "a kind of horticulturist engaged in bringing out the true nature of each client by encouraging a process of unfolding along predetermined lines" (Wallach & Wallach, 1983, p. 17). This assumption, however, has been convincingly proven to be fallacious as many authors have shown the inextricable connection between moral values and therapeutic practice (see, for example, Bergin, Payne, & Richards, 1996; Kurtines, Azmitia, & Gewirtz, 1992; Howard, 1985; Woolfolk, 1998).

Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere (Gantt, 2001), clients come away from therapy with a good deal more than a simple, value-free cure for their psychological ills. During the course of most psychotherapeutic treatments, clients are initiated into the language, customs, assumptions, values, and practices of an entire moral

the "doctrine provides the indispensable analytical tools for relating aggregate events and processes to the microworlds of face-to-face interaction and individual decision making" (p. 81).

order within which they are encouraged to make sense of themselves, their symptoms, and the world. This initiation is not simply an academic or intellectual exercise, however. It is, rather, "an active moving into and shaping of [the client's] life in the light of the therapist-patient dialectic" (Barton, 1974, p. 238).

Clearly, one of the most profound ways in which therapists give shape to the moral and psychological landscape of their clients' lives is the way in which they help clients to articulate and pursue a particular vision of the good life. Unfortunately, there is an astonishing lack of sustained or critical discussion concerning the various metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical presuppositions inherent in psychotherapy's often hedonistic conceptions of the good life. Therapists seem content simply to iterate, in various ways, the fundamental virtues of self-fulfillment, self-expression, self-esteem, self-discovery, self-love, and self-acceptance. Suffering, in the broad spectrum of its psychologically relevant manifestations (e.g., depression, anxiety, fear, shame, grief, guilt, and regret), is usually conceived of as an obstacle to the realization of individual potential. As such, suffering is seen to constitute a sort of barrier that must be overcome if individuals are to attain a maximal degree of happiness and contentment in their lives (Young-Eisendrath, 1998).

Because the various psychological forms of suffering are so often viewed as pathological or irrational in nature, psychotherapy's commitment to eradicating their effects in as efficient and timely a manner as possible is seldom held up for critical scrutiny.[4] Rather, the issue that seems to have most fully captured the discipline's attention is the more methodological one of how best to reduce or eliminate the unpleasantness of those pathological conditions from which clients happen to be suffering.

4. A few notable exceptions to this rule are *The Brighter Side of Human Nature: Altruism and Empathy in Everyday Life* by Alfie Kohn (1990); Michael and Lise Wallach's (1983) *Psychology's Sanction for Selfishness: The Error of Egoism in Theory and Therapy;* Paul Vitz's (1977) *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship;* George Kunz's (1998) *Paradox of Power and Weakness: Levinas and an Alternative Paradigm for Psychology;* and Frank Richardson, Blaine Fowers, and Charles Guignon's (1999) *Re-Envisioning Psychology: Moral Dimensions of Theory and Practice.*

Given the vast and varied nature of the landscape, it would be all but impossible in the limited space available here to even begin adequately identifying the many ways in which hedonistic assumptions suffuse contemporary psychotherapy. Therefore, rather than reel off some comprehensive, but only marginally informative, list of schools and practices, I will attempt a more in-depth look at a few of the more widely practiced modern therapies. In particular, I will examine Albert Ellis's school of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), the Client-Centered Therapy of Carl Rogers, and, finally, certain trends in contemporary drug therapy. Although I realize the limited scope involved in such an analysis, I nonetheless feel strongly that each of these traditions can be seen to be exemplars of the larger discipline of psychotherapy.

Albert Ellis, Hedonism, and Suffering. Perhaps one of the clearest modern exponents of the notion that suffering is irrational—and, by implication, pointless—is Albert Ellis, who has maintained that "one of the basic philosophic aspects of rational-emotive therapy . . . is an emphasis on hedonism, pleasure, and happiness" (1962, p. 336). Ellis has stated that, at least in this regard, his Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy is no different from most other forms of therapy in that

> just about all existing schools of psychotherapy are, at bottom, hedonistic, in that they hold that pleasure or freedom from pain is a principle good and should be the aim of thought and action. . . . The rational-emotive therapist, therefore, is far from unique when he accepts some kind of a hedonistic world-view and tries to help his patients adopt a workable hedonistic way of life. (p. 363)

Although he has repeatedly asserted that his main therapeutic goal is to minimize the irrational anxiety, depression, and anger his clients feel, Ellis is not content with merely a negative definition of psychological health and well-being. Rather, in a more positive vein, he has argued that the rational-emotive therapist should encourage clients to adopt the notion that "it is good for me to live and enjoy myself" and decide to "strive for more pleasure than pain" (Ellis, 1973, p. 23).

Because hedonism is assumed to be identical with rationality in this system of therapy, suffering, in whatever psychological form it

might take, is ipso facto irrational, the product of an inappropriately directed style of living and reasoning. Because it is irrational, suffering is also pointless and unnecessary. The solution to the dilemma of suffering is to simply adopt a more "healthy" and rational style of living and thinking, one that will prove to be more personally satisfying and self-enriching.

Ellis does not, however, advocate a "short-range, self-defeating hedonism of a childish variety" (1962, p. 336). Rather, that immature form of hedonism is spurned in favor of a more long-range form of hedonism, one that is clearly reminiscent of that found in ancient Stoic philosophy. Borrowing terminology from Freud, Ellis (1962) suggests that "the reality principle of putting off present pleasures for future gains is often a *much saner* course to follow than the pleasure principle of striving only for present gains" (p. 363; italics added). In short, Ellis (1962) has argued for

> the philosophy that one should primarily strive for one's own satisfactions while, at the same time, keeping in mind that one will achieve one's own best good, in most instances, by giving up immediate gratifications for future gains and by being courteous to and considerate of others, so that they will not sabotage one's own ends. (p. 134)

This philosophy of long-range hedonism is "consistently stressed in RT" (Ellis, 1962, p. 363) so that clients will come to understand that the unhappiness they are experiencing is ultimately the result of failing to engage in the rational calculation and pursuit of their own long-term self-interest. As Ellis (1962) has stated, "The main aim of RT is to help the patient to clearly see what his own basic philosophic assumptions or values are and to significantly change these life premises" (p. 348). If these irrational values are not "significantly changed" (i.e., abandoned in favor of a philosophy of long-term hedonism), however, the client's "underlying anxiety and lack of self-confidence will not be greatly ameliorated" (p. 349).

Carl Rogers, Hedonism, and Suffering. In contemporary psychotherapy, Ellis is, of course, not the only major voice advocating the notion that suffering is irrational, pathological, and pointless. Carl Rogers, too, offered an essentially hedonistic answer to the questions of suffering and the good life. For Rogers, achievement of

the psychological good life is understood in terms of becoming a "Fully Functioning Person" (Rogers, 1961, pp. 183–196). This is a person whose self-concept is congruent with his or her inherent tendency to value positively those experiences that increase personal fulfilment and satisfaction, a person who is "open to the wide range of his own needs" and who is a full "participant in the rationality of his organism" (Rogers, 1961, pp. 194, 195). Such a person is creative, sensitive, and thoughtful, a being whose feelings and reactions "may be trusted to be positive, forward-moving, and constructive" (Rogers, 1961, p. 194). In short, because the fully functioning person "does not have to satisfy the introjected standards of other people, he or she is guided entirely by the organismic valuing process and enjoys total self-acceptance" (Ewen, 1998, p. 396).

Clearly, in this particular scheme, the basic nature of humankind is held to be constructive, trustworthy, and rational. In response to the Freudian notion that human beings are basically irrational and governed by aggressive and destructive impulses that must be controlled, Rogers (1961) argued that "man's behavior is exquisitely rational, moving with subtle and ordered complexity toward the goals his organism is endeavoring to achieve" (pp. 194–195). In the fully functioning, genuinely rational person, there is a "natural and internal balancing of one need against another, and the discovery of behaviors which follow the vector most closely approximating the satisfaction of all needs" (Rogers, 1961, p. 195). Unfortunately, according to Rogers (1961), "the tragedy for most of us is that our defenses keep us from being aware of this rationality, so that consciously we are moving in one direction, while organismically we are moving in another" (p. 195). Only when the individual manages to overcome irrational defensiveness and embrace a genuine openness to experience will behavior "come as close as possible to satisfying all his needs" (Rogers, 1961, p. 190).

Therapy, then, is about assisting the suffering client in overcoming the burdensome weight of irrational defensiveness (i.e., conditions of worth) so that "he would continue to move toward becoming himself, and to behave in such a way as to provide the maximum satisfaction of his deepest needs" (Rogers, 1961, p. 194). Suffering, as understood in the Rogerian framework, is capable of only two meanings: symptom and obstacle. Suffering, in its various

forms, represents a symptomatic expression of an underlying incongruence or disharmony in the individual's life and organismic experience. Likewise, as symptom, suffering points to the presence of a barrier obstructing the achievement of the individual's natural and rational pursuit of his or her own self-interest. The role of the therapist is not to assist the client in exploring the existential significance and possible moral meaningfulness of suffering but rather it is to help the client "to consider each stimulus, need, and demand, its relative intensity and importance, and out of this complex weighing and balancing, discover that course of action which would come closest to satisfying all his needs in the situation" (Rogers, 1961, p. 190).

Psychopharmacology, Hedonism, and Suffering. At the opposite end of the therapeutic spectrum from both the REBT and client-centered approaches is an increasingly popular way of understanding and treating human suffering and distress: psychopharmacology. Rosenzweig and Leiman (1989) pointed out that

> although in the past many psychiatric dysfunctions have been approached from an exclusively psychological framework, current efforts have developed a distinctly biological orientation. This orientation is leading to progressive refinements of the categories of mental disorders such as schizophrenia and anxiety. This accomplishment is aiding not only understanding but also therapeutic interventions. (pp. 600–601)

One of the most obvious ways in which such biological "refinements" have impacted clinical theory and practice in recent years is seen in the astonishing rise of both the use and the acceptance of medication for the treatment of emotional, social, and interpersonal problems. Indeed, it was only a decade ago that Peter Kramer, a psychiatrist at Brown University, coined the troubling phrase "cosmetic psychopharmacology" (cited in Shorter, 1997, p. 314) and, thereby, ushered in a new era of psychopharmacological hedonism.[5]

5. Interestingly, Kramer's phrase appeared in print at roughly the same time as President George H. W. Bush's congressional resolution declaring 1990 to be the first year of the Decade of the Brain.

For Kramer (1993) and like-minded others (e.g., Banich, 1997; Kolb & Whishaw, 2000), human emotional and interpersonal suffering is at root an expression of an underlying medical condition. That is, suffering is in reality just the symptomatic manifestation of a disturbance in the neurochemical activity of the individual's central nervous system. The brain, Seward (1999) told us, "has one extremely important characteristic: it is capable of emotions" (p. 33). Those emotions that the brain creates for us, however, are often unpleasant and distressing and, thus, less than desirable. The most appropriate remedy for such a situation, then, would seem to be a chemical one (Cooper, Bloom, & Roth, 1996). After all, as Nancy Andreasen (1984) suggested, emotional and psychological suffering are diseases and "should be considered medical illnesses just as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer are" (p. 29). It is in this sense that Goodwin (1986) asserted that not only is talking therapy of little real value when compared to drug therapy but it can even make "people feel worse; talking about the problems reminds them of them" (p. 107).

In its most basic sense, psychopharmacological intervention involves altering an individual's neurotransmitter activity to reduce or eliminate the patient's presenting symptoms (Feldman, Meyer, & Quenzer, 1997). Symptom reduction has long been—at least in psychiatry—the primary (if not the only) standard for judging the worth or success of a particular therapeutic treatment (Luborsky, Singer, & Luborsky, 1975). Indeed, Shorter (1997) noted in his widely cited history of psychiatry that "lifting symptoms rather than cultivating a sympathetic rapport in the office [has] remained the ultimate therapeutic objective" (p. 314). In this model, the patient's presenting symptoms—the experiential features and enactments of his or her suffering—constitute a sort of diagnostic signpost that points toward some more basic, underlying biochemical dysfunction that is the real source of the patient's problems. The medical model reduction of the complex experiential meaning of suffering to the status of symptom is almost never questioned, and neither is the notion that the first order of therapeutic business is the elimination of such symptoms. Suffering is not to be taken at face value, nor is it thought to possess any intrinsic meaning or significance. Rather, it is seen merely to be an unfortunate outcome of fundamentally

impersonal and mechanical biological processes operating out of the individual's awareness and beyond his or her control.

Despite a number of glaring differences in terms of both theory and practice, the psychopharmacological perspective clearly shares with its humanistic and cognitive cousins a commitment to the philosophy of hedonism. As Shorter (1997, p. 324) and others noted, "Psychiatry [has] nurtured a popular culture of pharmacological hedonism" in which millions of people (both clients and professionals) have come to see drug therapy as the ultimate technological solution to the problems of everyday living. Evidence for this claim can be found in Kramer's (1993) international bestseller, *Listening to Prozac,* the principal message of which seems to be that personal contentment and self-confidence can, indeed, be found in a pill.

For example, Kramer (1993) offered the following story to illustrate the promise of pharmacological solutions to the problems of human suffering:

> After about eight months off medication, Tess told me she was slipping. "I'm not myself," she said. New union negotiations were under way, and she felt she could use the sense of stability, the invulnerability to attack, that Prozac gave her. Here was a dilemma for me. Ought I to provide medication to someone who was not depressed? I could give myself reason enough—construe it that Tess was sliding into relapse, which perhaps she was. In truth, I assumed I would be medicating Tess's chronic condition, call it what you will: heightened awareness of the needs of others, sensitivity to conflict, residual damage to self-esteem—all odd indications for medication. I discussed the dilemma with her, but then I did not hesitate to write the prescription. Who was I to withhold from her the bounties of science? Tess responded again as she had hoped she would, with renewed confidence, self-assurance, and social comfort. (p. 10)

This account clearly implies that the only genuinely rational and moral response to Tess's unhappiness and dissatisfaction with her life was to provide a biochemical means of replacing her pointless suffering with a chemically induced sense of satisfaction.[6] Kramer

6. The most disturbing feature of this account is, at least for me, the fact that, despite the obvious dilemma involved here, when the moment for action came Dr. Kramer did not hesitate to provide a chemical solution. Indeed, it almost seems as

(1993) further argued that drug therapy "simply gives anhedonic people access to pleasures identical to those enjoyed by other normal people in their ordinary social pursuits" (p. 265). Notice the rhetoric of normality and rationality at play in this pronouncement. Anxiety, depression, and isolation, it is assumed, are really just nonrational, biomechanical conditions that can be fairly easily swept aside if we just deliver the proper dosage at the proper time. As in Ellis's and Roger's models, suffering in itself is pointless and unnecessary. Indeed, it is abnormal and dysfunctional. The maximization of individual pleasure is the point of our existence—or so we are told—and, in this case, psychoactive medication the most rational and efficient means for its achievement.[7]

The Christian Alternative

It is instructive to contrast these psychotherapeutic conceptions of suffering with those articulated in the canons of revealed Christianity. Holy scripture clearly teaches that suffering is not "some sort of absurdity" (Vitz, 1977, p. 103) bereft of any genuine meaningfulness, a sort of accident to be overcome or managed or even anesthetized. Rather, scripture teaches us that suffering is a challenge to be lived, an obligation to be shouldered, a meaning to be found. For example, in the biblical account of Job, we are confronted with a righteous man's struggle with a bewildering array of afflictions. While the story of Job does not provide a single, simple answer to the question of human suffering, it does suggest "that affliction, if not for punishment, may be for experience, discipline, and instruction" (Bible Dictionary, "Job," LDS KJV, 1986, p. 714).

though Kramer feared the guilt that might ensue should he violate the hedonistic imperative to provide Tess with some quick chemical relief from the stresses and strains of her life. The presumption seems to be that a man of science ought to do all he can to assist his patient in the pursuit of maximum pleasure and self-satisfaction—particularly if the means of procuring such satisfaction is as simple as the dash of a pen and the filling of a prescription.

7. For many today, particularly third-party payers, the efficiency and speed with which psychopharmacological interventions work is the strongest argument in their favor. After all, why waste all those months working to establish an environment of trust and care and openness in the consulting room when a prescription treatment regimen can be implemented and significant symptom reduction observed—in just a few visits?

Likewise, while unjustly imprisoned in Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith learned that his suffering had both meaning and purpose when the Lord stated that though "the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee . . . all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (D&C 122:7).

As Christians, we acknowledge that suffering is an obvious feature—and, perhaps, in some ways an unavoidable feature—of our mortality. We also maintain that suffering can play a vital role in our salvation—though not merely as a test of moral character or of the capacity for endurance. Rather, for the Christian, suffering is a powerful way in which one can come to understand and experience the depth of Heavenly Father's love for his children. Suffering, though not something to seek for its own sake,[8] nonetheless can provide—in some small and incomplete way—insight into the infinite suffering experienced by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on our behalf, as well as a clearer understanding of the infinite love that motivated such suffering. This understanding is never solely intellectual but rather is also deeply and profoundly experiential and, thus, deeply and profoundly spiritual.

Because we recognize the intrinsic meaning and importance of suffering, we Christian therapists are in a position to see that there is a deeper issue involved in the question of suffering than simply how it can be most efficiently alleviated. For the Christian psychotherapist, then, the fundamental moral question incumbent in the suffering of our clients is not how it is to be alleviated but first *how it is to be addressed* in the community of faith. How are we as

8. One obvious counterexample that might be offered in objection to this claim is fasting. As commonly understood, fasting is a sort of self-imposed suffering wherein one abstains from food and drink for a given length of time. However, a careful reading of modern revelation teaches that fasting is a form of prayer and communion with God, the real purpose of which is not suffering but rather comfort and communication. For example, Hills (1992) suggested in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* that "a person may fast when seeking spiritual enlightenment or guidance in decision making, *strength to overcome weakness or endure trial, comfort in sorrow, or help at other times of special need*" (p. 501; italics added). Clearly, fasting is not so much a matter of suffering for its own sake as it is a divinely inspired means whereby we may commune with Deity—especially in times of suffering and hardship. It is interesting to note also that in Doctrine and Covenants 59:13–15 the Lord explicitly identifies fasting not only with prayer but also with joy and rejoicing.

practicing psychotherapists—and, more fundamentally, as disciples of Christ—to understand and respond to the suffering of others?

Hedonism, Suffering, and Redemption

I am not suggesting, of course, that as Christians we are not concerned with alleviating suffering. Quite the contrary. The proper way to address the suffering of others may be, in many instances, to do all we can to ease it. After all, Isaiah demands that we "relieve the oppressed" and "plead for the widow" (Isa. 1:17), while Alma commands us to "mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:9). However, we should be careful not to read into these and other prophetic injunctions a simplistic—and ultimately hollow—hedonism. Instead, we must realize that mourning with those who mourn and comforting those who stand in need of comfort may well involve a great deal more of us than alleviating their suffering. It may also involve a commitment to suffer with them in their trials as they struggle to find meaning in them (cf. 1 Cor. 12:25–26; see also Gantt, 2000). It may demand that we truly do take upon ourselves one another's burdens and thereby open ourselves to the glorious possibilities of a genuinely loving and Christlike relationship.

One of the clearest and most poignant modern examples of one who was "willing to mourn with those that mourn" (Mosiah 18:9), one who had, in the words of Jude, "compassion, making a difference" (Jude 1:22), was Mother Teresa. Here was a woman well acquainted with the faces and demands of suffering in all its painful and disheartening forms, a woman whose life was spent tirelessly ministering to the needs and wants of her brothers and sisters amidst the most horrifying and piteous conditions imaginable. Here was a woman whose life has much to tell us about how the Christian should address the suffering of others. Speaking of her work among the poor and helpless in the ghettos of Calcutta, Mother Teresa said:

> Without our suffering [here], our work would just be social work, very good and helpful, but it would not be the work of Jesus Christ, not part of the Redemption. Jesus wanted to help by sharing our life, our loneliness, our agony, our death. . . . We are allowed to do the same; all the desolation of the poor people, not only their material poverty, but their spiritual destitution, must be redeemed, and we must share it, for only by being one with

them can we redeem them, that is, by bringing God into their lives and bringing them to God. (Mother Teresa, 1975, p. 3, as cited in Inchausti, 1991, pp. 67–68)

Turning Freud Upside Down

One of the most striking aspects of Mother Teresa's comment is the way she completely identified the work of Christ with suffering with others in their suffering. Indeed, she suggested that sharing in the suffering of others is not so much a duty or an obligation or even a commandment as it is an opportunity and a blessing. We are allowed, she said, to live the way our Savior did, to be with and for others as he was. The redeeming work of Christ, she taught, takes place in the concrete moment of suffering and in the compassionate sharing of that suffering. For us to truly participate in the work of Christ, it is never enough to just follow the commandments and be morally concerned for the welfare of others—especially if our moral concern is enacted only in a detached or abstracted fashion or only when we find it convenient or personally profitable. For Mother Teresa, the work of Christ is to share in the loneliness, the pain, and the fear of those sufferers who confront us.

As Christ bore the afflictions and sufferings of all mankind, we, too, are called upon to bear the burdens of our brothers and sisters who, in their suffering, call upon us for aid. All the while we should remember that, no matter how much we give of ourselves or how deeply we share in another's pain, the real miracle of redemption is ultimately the product of Christ's loving sacrifice. And while we may be called to participate in the work of redemption, in the end it is the Master whose work it is, and it is to him and him alone that we must direct those for whom and with whom we would suffer.

One further feature of Mother Teresa's comments deserves attention. In her mind, the compassionate service she and her fellow nuns were rendering to the poor, the sick, and the needy in the streets of Calcutta was in some way very different from what she called "social work." It is not that social work—what will be taken here to include psychotherapy—is necessarily detrimental or unhelpful but rather that, at least as traditionally conceived, it is not the work of God (Feister, 2004).

I am quite convinced that she is right on this point. I am not fully convinced, however, that such a distinction is a fundamental

one—that the social work of psychotherapy cannot also be the (social) work of God. Indeed, I sincerely believe that not only can it be the work of God but it must be the work of God. Expending our efforts in any other work is ultimately a waste of time—our own, our clients', and God's. I am convinced that the gospel of Jesus Christ calls upon us to radically reconceptualize and reenvision the project of psychotherapy—from the ground up—so that it can become yet another means by which we can accomplish the work of God here among his children.

Although admittedly sketchy and in need of further development, the point I wish to make most strongly here is that we need to reenvision psychotherapy as first and foremost a way of responding to the call to suffer with our clients in their sufferings rather than think of therapy as only an educational vehicle for the identification and satisfaction of individual desires (Gantt, 2000). Prior to entertaining the question of how to most efficiently meliorate our client's suffering, or whether we should even do so, we need to seriously entertain the question of our client's suffering itself—its possible meanings, purposes, and our own and our client's moral responsibilities in the face of it. The fruit of such consideration would likely be the recognition that suffering is not something to be dismissed out of hand as a pointless obstacle to personal fulfillment but is something that can be embraced on its own terms and whose meaning can be explored and articulated. We might also learn that our discipline's desire to relieve suffering as efficiently as possible actually short-circuits an important existential and spiritual process intended to bring souls to Christ.

By focusing so intently on symptom reduction and assuming that the rational calculation and pursuit of self-interest is synonymous with the good life, modern psychotherapy may have robbed many people of the opportunity of developing a morally deep and spiritually significant relationship with both their fellow beings and their Savior. As President Spencer W. Kimball (1982) taught,

> Being human, we would expel from our lives, sorrow, distress, physical pain, and mental anguish and assure ourselves of continual ease and comfort. But if we closed the doors upon such, we might be evicting our greatest friends and benefactors. Suffering can make saints of people as they learn patience, long-suffering,

> and self-mastery. The sufferings of our Savior were part of his education. (p. 168)

If suffering is one way we can come to Christ, to experience the miracle of the Atonement by coming to learn the meanings his atoning sacrifice has for us, then any therapy that denies the importance or meaning of suffering or seeks to minimize it prematurely is in need of our most serious reevaluation.

Some Clarifications

At this point, to avoid some possible misunderstandings, I will clarify what is *not* being suggested in this analysis. First, the point that alleviating suffering is still an important goal of psychotherapy bears repeating one more time and in a bit more detail. Although it is possible to vigorously debate the appropriateness or the viability of some of the therapeutic means that have been suggested for alleviating suffering, it would be farcical to debate the importance that the alleviation of suffering has for the psychotherapeutic enterprise. I am not proposing that psychotherapists need not be concerned about relieving the suffering of those who seek out their services. Rather, my proposal is that we subordinate the noble desire to alleviate suffering to the more fundamental moral demands to share the suffering of others and to care for the redemption of their souls. We should pay careful heed to the hedonistic origins of many of our traditional psychological conceptions of suffering, of its origins, nature, and meaning. We should respond to such conceptions by more explicitly addressing the question of suffering from within the framework of the gospel of Jesus Christ—a framework that is fundamentally antithetical to that of hedonism.

Second, I am not suggesting that the job of the therapist is to advocate suffering or to encourage others to indulge in it. That would simply be to assume the hedonist argument in reverse. Casting the psychotherapist as sadist is not the solution I seek. As Broderick (1992) noted in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,*

> Latter-day Saints do not believe that pain is intrinsically good. In their teaching there is little of asceticism, mortification, or negative spirituality. . . . If benefit comes from pain, it is not because there is anything inherently cleansing in pain itself. Suffering can

> wound and embitter and darken a soul as surely as it can purify and refine and illumine. (p. 1422)

Hedonism, Suffering, and Redemption

The key for us as Latter-day Saint therapists, then, is not to encourage our clients to glory in their suffering, as though the mere experience of anguish were sufficient to sanctify and cleanse the soul, but rather to help them appreciate that their suffering can have meaning and that in their suffering they are never alone or bereft of hope. Despair is never the answer. Thus, we cannot teach that suffering is something to be sought or celebrated for its own sake. Rather, it is something that must be accepted, at least for a time, and something that we must strive to endure with a "steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men" (2 Ne. 31:20).

Of course, not all forms of suffering are of the same sort, and not all forms of suffering should be addressed in the same manner. As Broderick (1992) again noted,

> As a social being, man is vulnerable to emotional suffering that often rivals physical pain—anxiety, rejection, loneliness, despair. Among the sensitive there are also other levels of profound suffering. They may relate, for example, to the awareness of the effects of sin or the anguish of the abuse or indifference of one's loved ones. And there is vicarious suffering in response to the pain around one and the sense of the withdrawal of the Spirit. (p. 1421)

It is important to add that there are those who choose to suffer because they derive some perverse joy from it, either from the attention they may receive or the guilt and sympathy they may induce. Addressing such suffering clearly requires more of the therapist than simply "playing along." Conversely, there are those who suffer in innocence, the helpless and tragic victims of others' violence, greed, and hatred. To such we must offer, without reservation, the hand of fellowship and the healing balm of Gilead (see Jer. 8:21–22).

It is also important that there be no confusion regarding what is meant by the concept of suffering with others in their suffering. This concept, at least in this article, should not be taken to be synonymous with either condescending pity or despairing commiseration. To genuinely suffer with another does not mean that I allow

you to "cry in my beer" while I cry in yours as we both self-servingly bemoan the miserable cosmic unfairness of our lot in life. That sort of "sorrowing of the damned" has no part whatsoever in the authentic therapeutic encounter. Neither is suffering with another a means of justifying or excusing the often immoral and sinful behaviors that lie at the root of many forms of suffering.[9] To truly suffer with another requires far more than convenient co-misery, simplistic sympathy, or a readiness to excuse. Rather, in suffering with another we willingly and selflessly take upon ourselves their pains and torments so that the burdens they bear may be lightened. To suffer with others is to offer oneself wholly and unreservedly to another, a gift of the fullest and sincerest compassion.[10]

Obviously, in a philosophical or conceptual exploration such as this, it is difficult to spell out exactly what suffering with another might look like in any given therapeutic encounter. What is being proposed here is not so much a technical approach to the practice of therapy as it is a fundamental mind-set of openness and Christlike compassion and, thereby, a framework for re-envisioning the entire therapeutic process. Thus, there are probably many different ways in which a particular therapist might suffer with a specific client in a specific therapeutic moment. At the very least, however, genuinely suffering with a client would seem to require a willing suspension of the therapist's professional detachment and value-neutral stance

9. On this point, President Spencer W. Kimball (1982) taught, "There are many causes for human suffering—including war, disease, and poverty—and the suffering that proceeds from each of these is very real, but I would not be true to my trust if I did not say that the most persistent cause of human suffering, that suffering which causes the deepest pain, is sin—the violation of the commandments given to us by God" (p. 155).

10. Obviously, the question of therapist "burnout" could be raised here. Emotional fatigue amongst therapists has not only been a long-standing problem in the profession but also in recent decades has become a growing one (see, for example, McCarthy & Frieze, 1999). It might be argued that, should therapists follow my suggestions in this paper and truly suffer with their clients, the likely outcome would be an increase in the incidence of therapist burnout. Unfortunately, space limitations will not allow for an adequate response to such questions. Nonetheless, I will voice my suspicion that most therapist burnout might be explained by the fact that, relying on secular and self-oriented models of therapy, many therapists have only their own, finite emotional resources to draw upon in

towards that client's suffering. Further, it would most certainly require the therapist to be deeply attuned and responsive to the whisperings of the Spirit so that he or she might know in any given moment how to respond to the client as Christ himself would respond. Relying solely on technique and abstract treatment strategy will almost certainly short-circuit the real healing that comes through a genuine encounter with Christ that is facilitated by a therapist willing to serve him. Perhaps, in the final analysis, what matters is not the "how" of therapy but the "why" that lies behind whatever action the therapist feels called upon to take.

Still, it might well be asked, What are the practical benefits and advantages of suffering-with over other possible approaches to therapy? Such a concern is, however, rooted in the hedonistic understanding of psychotherapy being called into question here. The point of suffering with clients is not that it results in improved therapeutic outcomes or more efficiently speeds clients back to health and productive contentment. It is that we fulfill the sacred duty we have been enjoined by Christ to take upon ourselves.

As Christian therapists, we offer ourselves to our clients, because they are, in fact, our brothers and sisters and because doing so is right and good and true. The willingness to make such an offering arises out of the spiritual desire to do all we can to serve our brothers and sisters and, thereby, glorify God. Indeed, as Joseph Smith taught, "The nearer we get to our heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls; we feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders, and cast their sins behind our backs" (Smith, 1993, p. 270; see also Isa. 38:17).

dealing with the often overwhelming suffering they encounter in the consulting room. The Christian therapist, however, recognizes that his or her own resources are far too meager for the momentous task at hand and that ultimately it is Christ's infinite love and compassion upon which he or she must draw in order to truly suffer with a client. By fully and unreservedly relying upon the Lord in conducting his or her therapeutic work, the Christian therapist will most certainly be sustained, sanctified, and renewed in that work. One is reminded, for example, of the Lord's support of Alma and his people in their bondage to the Lamanites: "And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord" (Mosiah 24:15).

This should not be taken to mean, however, that the therapist is the transformative agent in the life of the client or that the discovery of meaning in suffering is the result of the therapist's having shared in the client's pain. To assume such would be to engage in a particularly pernicious form of priestcraft wherein the therapist is set up as a savior and mediator of the sufferings of others. Our call as Christians and as therapists is not to set ourselves as "a light unto the world, that [we] may get gain and praise of the world" (2 Ne. 26:29) but rather to attend to the needs of others as they work out the meanings of their relationship with God. Only insofar as our willingness to emulate the Savior by sharing in the suffering of another serves to point them toward deeper possibilities of knowing God, his love for them, and their own complete reliance upon the power of his saving grace will our therapeutic efforts be genuinely therapeutic. I do not believe this point can be emphasized too much or too strongly. We must never lose sight of the fact that it is only in light of the infinite and atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, that our clients will be able to come to find meaning in their suffering and, even then, only insofar as they allow him to instruct them in its meaning.

As Alma the Younger taught, Christ took upon himself our pains and afflictions "that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, *that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people* according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12; italics added). Thus, as therapists we must never forget that Christ understands the suffering of our clients in ways that we, even at the best of times, can only barely begin to imagine. Nonetheless, we have an absolute obligation to take up their sorrows, to share in their suffering, and to do all we can to help make a space in our clients' lives wherein they can experience the atoning love and healing power of the Master. Ultimately, it is only insofar as we heed this call and shoulder this sacred obligation that our work as psychotherapists can cease to be mere social work and truly become the redeeming work of God.

It is also important to recognize that I am not proposing a therapeutic technique here, as though suffering with others in their suffering were just some new treatment strategy that could be employed over the course of a given therapy to increase the likelihood of a successful outcome. Suffering with others is not "a channel by

which the therapist communicates a sensitive empathy and an unconditional positive regard" (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1989, p. 233). This is not to say that technique is never warranted in therapy or that it has no place or purpose in our therapeutic endeavors. Neither does it mean that medication has no role to play in therapy. Rather, it is only to say that the call to suffer with others in the moment of their anguish is morally prior to the implementation of any treatment method or technique. Method and technique must always be guided by and subordinated to our fundamentally moral responsibility to the client in his or her suffering. Only as psychotherapy comes to admit this moral priority will it become truly therapeutic in the fullest and richest sense of that word.[11]

11. The Greek word from which we derive the term *therapy* is *therapeia,* a term that denotes service or attendance as well as healing. Additionally, it connotes an act of service, or "tending to," which is freely and devotedly given rather than forced or purchased (for a more detailed treatment of this point, see Williams and Faulconer, 1994, p. 346).

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ROBERT
GLEAVE

Sorrow, Suffering, and Evil— Is There Reason to Hope?

IMPLICATIONS FOR APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with a surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God.

—Ether 12:4

Sorrow, suffering, pain, and evil are a part of our daily experience. Any of us can relate a multitude of life events, small and large, to confirm the ubiquitous presence of difficulties. Some of our most difficult wrestles concerning the existence of God or the meaning of life include questions and uncertainties regarding the place of suffering in our lives. My intent is to highlight the prevailing misconceptions of suffering and to present a gospel-based reconception of sorrow and evil that can serve as a background or context from which we can revisit our view of psychotherapy. While discussing difficulty, pain, and sorrow, my parallel purpose is to build faith in Jesus Christ and his ability to support and lift us through and beyond the mortal condition.

Misconception of Suffering

In his Brigham Young University forum address, David Paulsen (1999) presented what he called the problem of evil. As he reviewed the thinking of many scholars and theologians, questions surfaced regarding God's omnipotence, omniscience, and benevolence. The thinking follows, roughly, these lines: Why is there misery in the world? If God is all-knowing, he must have been aware of an alternative that would have prevented misery. If he is omnipotent, he should have been able to prevent misery. Or perhaps he is not benevolent and did not care to avoid misery. In the end, many of the world's thinkers and theologians have difficulties finding a way to reconcile the presence of misery with the existence of God's omniscience, omnipotence, and benevolence. The problem, it seems to me, boils down to the premise that pain, sorrow, suffering, difficulty, and misery are tragic, to be avoided at all costs, that they are definitely not part of a benevolent plan.

By accepting the premise that evil, sorrow, and difficulty are tragic, the scholars of the world are necessarily trapped and unable to extricate themselves from the contradictions that follow. If God is omniscient and omnipotent, then he must necessarily be causally implicated in the presence of the sorrow and difficulty that we experience as mortals. Given the starting premise, his causal involvement in misery cannot be seen as benevolent. One is left, then, with only two possible resolutions to the contradictions: the removal of

one of the three qualities (omniscience, omnipotence, or benevolence) from God's character or—the final solution—removal of God.[1] Perhaps by reexamining the beginning premise that misery is tragic and embracing the notion that it is possible for a benevolent Father in Heaven (with a divine purpose in mind) to be causally responsible for the presence of evil and sorrow in the world, we can arrive at a more satisfactory and satisfying resolution.

When we experience pain, we often cry out for a variety of validating responses from our environment or, more specifically, from God. We want our injury to matter, and we want a response that validates that we matter. We want to know that our suffering is understood and of consequence. Our search for validation includes a call for justice or a striking out against the cause of our injury (sometimes foolishly escalated to the desire for revenge). We call out for a repair of the damage and the recovery of our losses. We also seek measures and assurances that the event will be prevented in the future (with the assumption that it should have been prevented in the first place).

Since we experience our pain in the present tense, we cry out for a validation that also can be experienced in a temporally proximate (present) tense. Many times we feel that, if the validating response is not temporally proximate to the pain, the response has not been

1. Just as many theologians want to maintain that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent yet find that they cannot, many psychotherapists get caught in a similar bind. Therapists often state their goals and intentions in terms of encouraging the client to enhance personal efficacy and self-generated, desire-driven choosing. They then find, however, that they cannot maintain this view while embracing the premise that sorrow, suffering, and evil are tragic. This view of the tragic nature of sorrow, suffering, and evil leads to counterproductive messages to clients such as that they are "broken" or that their lives or families are "broken" when they experience less than optimal (i.e., painful) outcomes. When we as therapists hold out options or make suggestions that would improve a client's life (i.e., remove pain), we are implying that (a) if the client is "good enough" at implementing our suggestions (following the rules), tragedy will be avoided; (b) if tragedy comes, it is because the client (person) did not "get it right"; (c) anyone who does not choose what is right (as we have defined it) is a fool and destined to live a tragic life; (d) one's own preferences and desires must give way to rules. Therapists are then left to react to tragedy and are limited to "fix it" interventions with the intent to eliminate the tragedy that (by implication) should not be.

presented. Perhaps it is not wise for us to limit God's validating response to only those responses that are temporally proximate (as we experience them in mortality). Perhaps there could be purposes and gifts to be bestowed upon us that might follow a temporal distance in the validating response offered by a loving and benevolent God. In fact, I suggest there are great, significant kindnesses bestowed by a loving God who is omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent in the delay—at least as viewed from a mortal, temporal perspective—of a validating response to pain and sorrow.

Reconception of Suffering

To the limited degree possible, let us try to expand our minds beyond the mortal constraints of temporality and consider the pre-earth existence from which we came. Information is sketchy regarding that time, perhaps purposely so, but let us imagine an existence wherein we lived with Heavenly Parents. I can imagine that the love of an omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent God filled our souls constantly. To have been in that condition, filled at every moment with overwhelming love and peace, would seem to have been a wonderful existence. I believe, however, that it would have been impossible in that environment to experience such feelings as loneliness, intense loss, worry, fear, and failure.

I can also imagine that we observed that our Father in Heaven had access to those emotions (loss, worry, etc.) and knew how to manage and work with things that were beyond our experience and comprehension. Perhaps we wanted to be like him. We may have shouted for joy as he presented a plan that would allow us to learn those things that he knew. His plan would allow us to have a period of time where a veil was over our minds and we would be able to have access to loneliness, sadness, failure, incompleteness, and sorrow.

If the accounts of near-death experiences, as reported in books like *Life after Life* (Moody, 1975) and *Return from Tomorrow* (Ritchie, 1978) are accurate, it may be that when we leave mortality we return very quickly to that feeling of being filled with Heavenly Father's love. It may be that this mortal existence is the only flash of eternity where we are allowed to have a veil over our minds and are allowed

to experience incompleteness, pain, and sorrow, which give us such richness of experience. From this view, then, perhaps feeling lonely would not be seen as a disease condition but rather as one of the very purposes for being alive.

Pain, sorrow, suffering, and evil, then, may not be deficits to be overcome, controlled, removed, or eradicated, but rather they may be gifts from a benevolent Father that can serve as instruments for developing a divine nature. We may perhaps go so far as to see the traditionally tragic elements of life as the very tools of the trade in the construction of heavenly mansions. Our response to difficulties may be different if, rather than run from and avoid trouble, we could turn and embrace it.

A kind and loving Heavenly Father, in my view, has not left us in a condition that is filled only with sorrow, evil, and suffering. He provides many moments that are delightful and pleasant and that even hold traces of our life before this one. We sometimes talk of the veil being thin when we can experience in some small measure a connection with that which is larger than this world. Many of us long for those feelings of connectedness to God and are frustrated when again they become absent. Perhaps too often we misinterpret that condition of constant peace as the "home" state, that state which should be the prevailing state in this life. However, we are not at home, and that condition is not intended to be our consistent condition while we are here in mortality.

As much as we wish for a constant state of bliss and restfulness, the granting of that wish would completely undermine the very purposes of our mortal existence. We may have existed for eons in that condition in premortality. We may exist for a continued eternity in that restful condition following this life, but "the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors" (Alma 34:32). This small, brief moment in eternity is the time intended for us to have less-than-optimal experiences.

When sometimes we misinterpret the "wished-for" as a home state, we are led to complaining and kicking against those difficulties that so quickly follow the moments of respite. We sometimes misinterpret our partial success as failure and perhaps, in the process, miss the gentle tutoring that is intended to make us better.

In an article entitled "Bowels of Mercy," John Durham Peters (1999) gave some central insights. I will include only a few:

> Several [Latter-day Saint] commentators have honed in on what Elder Neal A. Maxwell terms the "stunning" Book of Mormon insight that Jesus suffered "in order that He might know how" to succor his people. In a striking articulation of this aspect of the Atonement, Lorin K. Hansen argues, "It is not Jesus' suffering per se that redeems men and women. Suffering has an effect on him, and it is that effect (or change) that makes possible human redemption. The power of redemption comes through his expanded knowledge and sensitivity, which he then expresses through his role as mediator."
>
> . . . Elder Maxwell similarly explains that "the infinite intensiveness of Christ's suffering" was necessary for him to become a "fully comprehending Atoner." . . .
>
> Obviously, there is a huge difference between abstract, theoretical knowledge and knowledge developed and tested in the crucible of experience. . . .
>
> Embodiment holds all kinds of secrets unknowable to the spectator. A spirit who has never lived in embodied mortality may know all things except what it is like not to know all things. In mortality, a spirit can become acquainted with the night, privation, and ignorance. It can encounter lack, absence, desire, and negativity in their fullness (or rather, their partiality). It can learn about waiting, surprise, the uncertainty of all action—everything, in short, that derives from living in time. . . .
>
> Perhaps the *locus classicus* of such a notion in LDS literature is Joseph Smith's second letter from Liberty Jail: "Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God." It is in the same letter that we read, "Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith" (D&C 121:45; compare 88:6). This is a manifesto for a kind of knowledge, art, and life that is not afraid of the heights or the depths, a kind of inquiry that is as broad as God's mercy and as deep as the lowest reaches of mortality. Taking condescension in this way has rich implications for our relation with God, each other, and our vision of our place in the cosmos. (pp. 34–35)

These comments illustrate that suffering has eternal advantages and is not something to be counted as a loss or as something to be avoided. The partiality inherent in mortal living, he notes, is a gift to

mankind for their understanding. It is not something that is to be seen as faulty or broken. Rather, it is something that we can see as a fascinating part of our tutoring. Furthermore, exploring evil and good deepens our understanding. Again, the "opposition in all things" is part of a learning experience. While we do not need to seek specifically for evil in order to contemplate its effects—we all experience sufficient amounts of evil due to our mortal condition—still the opportunity to explore or contemplate the effects of evil can be a significant part of deepening our understanding and can create a strong foundation for going into the eternities and accomplishing the tasks that lie there.

Perhaps, then, God is not intimidated by suffering. Perhaps he has no sense of crisis or tragedy when assigning or allowing us difficult experiences. He may view those experiences somewhat like a homework assignment or a household chore or exercises with weights—something that is intended to make us grow but that subsumes no crisis or tragedy. His ability to see no crisis or tragedy in these events of suffering may lie in his longer-term view and his knowledge that he has provided a response of justice and recovery for every hurt and loss. He may know that he will respond with great benevolence to every incident of suffering and that full validation and recovery will be granted in every instance.

Often an element of suffering is included as part of decision making. Many times holding to principles of righteousness requires an element of sacrifice. In fact, I believe that the road to high nobility always passes through suffering. We demonstrate our deep affection for family members and others for whom we care precisely by the degree to which we suffer for them. The Savior indicated that "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). However, in order for suffering and sacrifice to be more than victimization, there must be hope of eventual recovery, which can then allow for a freely given gift of choosing to enter into and endure suffering in the present for a greater future purpose.

Hope for recovery and restitution must be greater than something that is simply wished for. We must look forward to that day with confidence, with an assured anticipation, and with full expectation of receiving the desired outcome. It is true that, given mortal

existence, that day is yet future, but if we can express deep faith in an omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent God, whose view contains past, present, and future at once, then we can act in the present with confidence—a "perfect brightness of hope" (2 Ne. 31:20)—that recompense and triumph will be the final outcome. With this kind of confidence, based on deep faith in the Savior, we can indeed "with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God" (Ether 12:4).

Hope that is a confident expectation requires strong faith that the mortal experience lies within manageable bounds. There are several scriptural references which clearly indicate that this mortal life is kept within the boundaries that the Lord has ordained to be part of mortal experience (D&C 122:9; Gen. 3:15; JS–H 1:16). No power of darkness, no influence from the evil one is allowed to cross boundaries the Lord has set. Every experience is within our capacity, and the Atonement provides a recovery for every loss (1 Cor. 10:13).

For hope to be deeply rooted in the sure expectation of future peace, it cannot be based solely upon a letter-of-the-law keeping of commandments. It must involve deeper soul-searching and personal wrestling with questions of mortal living. Moses 6:60 clarifies three distinct paradigms, each intended to bring us closer to God in its own way at different times in our lives: "For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified." I believe that each of these paradigms is needed at one time or another by those who are seeking the kingdom of God.

By the Water. As individuals come from one of a multitude of other paradigms into the family of the Church or become distanced from the influence of the Divine and lose sensitivity to things of the Spirit, there is potential for much confusion and much uncertainty. It is important to learn about and embrace the principles of being baptized and keeping the commandments, principles that are basic and that can serve us when our hearts are hardest and we are most distant from heaven. These principles provide a structure that is both helpful and needed to mark the way back to heartfelt connection with God. Structure can provide rules and guidelines and help plant one's feet firmly on the gospel path. The children of Israel

whose hearts were hardened by a life of slavery and idolatry needed to start with similar structure and laws.

Turning Freud Upside Down

By the Spirit. As one becomes familiar with the rules, laws, and structures of the Church and as the feelings of the Spirit start to swell in the heart, the first paradigm can be discovered to be incomplete. In our mortal condition, opposing commandments present themselves in ways that our mortal faculties cannot clearly prioritize. We find ourselves wanting to do neither or both of the mutually exclusive choices before us. At times, neither seems to be good or right; at other times, both seem important to choose. It is inevitable that a less-than-optimal (as we see it) choice will be forced upon us, as in the case of Nephi's quandary over Laban (1 Ne. 3, 4). Nephi was commanded to bring back the plates, but Laban was not willing to part with them. Nephi faced breaking one or the other of two commandments: either to disobey and not bring the plates or to disobey and commit a violent act against Laban.

In circumstances such as this, the commandment paradigm is inadequate to guide decision making, and another paradigm becomes important: "By the Spirit ye are justified." One who is sensitive to the workings of the Spirit can be guided, prompted, and directed in choosing which commandment to break. The Spirit can then justify the less-than-optimal choice thrust upon us. Notice that it is not the individual that is allowed to define what is right but rather Father in Heaven, who imparts guidance through inspiration. In Nephi's case, I am personally confident that it would have been easier or personally more comfortable for Nephi to leave Jerusalem without the plates, but the Spirit constrained him and asked him to make the terrible sacrifice of taking the life of a fellow human.

By his willingness to embrace personal sorrow as a part of life's experience, Nephi was able to offer a freely given gift and choose to follow a higher principle and to respond to tutoring from a loving Father. Consider another dilemma. We are commanded to give gifts with a glad heart and a feeling of benevolence. At times, however, our development and spiritual growth may be such that we are not prepared to give the gift benevolently. Should a person choose to give the gift anyway, knowing that giving the gift without the proper intent may not bring blessings? Or should that person choose to not give the gift for the wrong reasons, in which case the commandment

to give the gift goes unheeded. One can imagine that in varying circumstances it may be appropriate for a particular person in a particular time of life or personal development to be asked by a justifying Spirit to give the gift in spite of not having the attached appropriate feelings. One can also imagine that in another particular time and with another person and another set of circumstances one might be asked to withhold the gift, waiting instead for the feelings and proper attitudes to develop so the two commandments can then be fulfilled together. If one relies only upon the commandment paradigm, this particular dilemma seems unresolvable. But if one is able to act within the second paradigm and allow the Spirit to justify one incomplete answer or choice although it is less than optimal, one can respond to gentle tutoring by a loving Father and seek help and guidance beyond the first paradigm.

Perhaps we can begin to allow for and to understand the increased complexity that is available with the second paradigm. Life is no longer a true-false or multiple-choice test but becomes a laboratory that includes wrestling with complex and interactive ideas, behaviors, and feelings. The gospel and life are no longer constrained by only linear and dichotomous options. More nuanced, creative, and interactive possibilities can emerge.

It is a gross oversimplification to equate this view with situational ethics. While the decision making is complex and takes into account a multiplicity of contexts and conditions, interaction between a tutoring God and a struggling son or daughter encountering heartfelt dilemmas with mortal limitations is certainly more rich than can be captured in the concept of situational decision making. There continues to be a very rich and divinely appointed grounding upon which decisions are based. They are not, however, limited to linear processes, with only either-or, on-off possibilities.

By the Blood. At some point, through sufficient wrestling with important issues, ideas, and decisions, it can be discovered that this second paradigm is also incomplete and that it is appropriate to move into yet another paradigm: "By the blood ye are sanctified." While I do not as yet comprehend as much as I would like to regarding this paradigm, the metaphor of blood was clearly chosen purposefully. It is here that one can perhaps comprehend charity and the reason such words as *longsuffering* are included in its definition.

Goals of Therapy

Turning Freud Upside Down

The ideas to this point are intended to serve as a ground or context against which we can consider some applications to psychology. Let us now turn to a figure or application of these ideas.

I will say little about the paradigm "By the water ye keep the commandment." Much of psychology's traditional interventions seem to fall into this category. The applications that I present are founded in the paradigm "By the Spirit ye are justified." In this paradigm we can acknowledge, and be willing to wrestle with, multiple possibilities and embrace issues of the heart. This paradigm is full of dilemmas and mutually exclusive alternatives. Any decision made in mortality is complex, neither fully flawed nor fully without flaw, making decision making that much more difficult. Besides, providing premature closures or quick solutions to dilemmas might grossly oversimplify the circumstance and inhibit the growth opportunities that are so richly and benevolently presented by a loving Father.

I propose, therefore, that the treatment goals in this paradigm be, not the resolution of a problem, but rather the restoration of engagement with life events with full awareness of the complex issues involved. The goal in this paradigm could be to express preference through active choosing. Subgoals might include restoring perspective, dialogue, hope, and purpose to the struggle. To fully embrace this style of therapy, one must adopt a style of client interaction that puts the client in charge of the agenda and treatment process. It is important to eliminate to the degree possible the idea of being one-up or one-down. The therapist, as an expert, becomes counterproductive. The therapist might become a cotraveler or companion, someone who can "mourn with those that mourn" (Mosiah 18:9). From this view, the goal of therapy is to help people find a way to live more like they want to live and, in the process, leave behind many of their problems (but with few direct attempts to "solve problems"). It is important to encourage the client to take sufficient time being "in" the problem; therefore, there is no hurry to move someone "past" a problem.

Once one is able to accept the fact that there will be some degree of harm done with every mortal choice made, one can focus less

upon avoiding harm and more upon doing the will of the Father in the present. Motivations of love and kindness can become powerful reasons for looking at and changing the delivery of feelings and wishes in interpersonal and intimate interactions. Issues of shame, self-pity, and self-deprecation can fade into the background as one becomes less troubled with "getting it right" and more concerned with being helpful or making a valuable contribution.

Interventions

Let us now turn to a sampling of specific interventions. As with any intervention, *the use of these techniques will need to be placed in a context, chosen with clinical judgment, and applied to individual circumstances as they may be clinically relevant.*

1. Encourage the client to spend more time in the problem. Many clients have difficulty staying engaged with their problem and try to move very quickly to bring a closure or solution to the problem. This response often has the effect of the client choosing an incomplete or inadequate response. Taking additional time in the problem allows for additional patterns and complexity to emerge. As an example, consider the following fictional marital dialogue:

SHE: I need you to listen to me more.

HE: I need you to be more supportive of my schoolwork.

SHE: No, you don't understand how badly I need you to listen to me. I feel like I am all alone.

HE: I don't think you understand how much I need your support to get through my very difficult class schedule. I'm gone all day long, working hard every minute. I need your support.

SHE: Of course, I want to support you, but I can't when I am feeling so alone. I don't ever get any time with you.

HE: I would like to spend time with you as well, but I am so overwhelmed with my schoolwork. If you could just help me, I would probably have more time to be with you.

SHE: You don't understand. I can't support you more until I am feeling better about our relationship. Sometimes I get so mad at you for never being home that I don't want to do anything for you.

HE: Sometimes I get so frustrated with your hesitance to help me that it is hard for me to come home.

SHE: That really hurts me. I've felt that you have been avoiding me. That really makes me angry.

HE: When you get angry like this, it puts so much more burden on me. I've got so much that I am doing, I don't know how to make it better for you. If you could just help me, things would go so much better.

SHE: Don't you understand how badly I need you to take care of me and to listen to me? I thought being married would mean having a very good friend, but I have never been so lonely in my life.

HE: I thought getting married would be finding someone to help and support me. I've never felt I've had so much to do with so little help before in my life.

SHE: Can't you just take a moment or two and talk with me every day? It's really important to me.

HE: You don't understand; I simply can't take the time. I've got so much pressure. Why can't you help me more?

SHE: I simply don't have any relationship with you. You simply can't find it in you to be loving and kind, can you?

HE: You demand so much from me, and I am already so overwhelmed. Why can't you just back off—or even help me sometimes?

SHE: You know, you really are a jerk. We wouldn't be having most of these problems that we are having in our marriage if you would just stop and take some time and be with me.

HE: That was really mean. You know that the problems we have in our marriage really come from your inability to hold up your end of the family.

SHE: No, our marital problems exist because you won't listen to me.

HE: No, it is really your fault that we are having trouble because you don't support me.

SHE: No, it's your fault that we are having trouble—you won't listen to me.

HE: No, it's your fault.

SHE: No, it's your fault.

HE: No, it's your fault.

SHE: No, it's your fault.

HE: Okay, I'll agree there is fault on both sides.

SHE: That's fine, I can agree that there is fault on both sides. If you will just listen to me, I will work harder to support you.

HE: I'm willing to try to listen to you if you'll support me better.

SHE: I really do want to support you better, but I need you to listen to me first.

HE: I would enjoy talking with you and listening to you and interacting with you more, but I need support before I can do that.

SHE: But I just can't give you the support until I feel like we're connected.

HE: I don't know how to give time to being connected until I am able to take care of more things, which means I need your support before we can take time to talk and interact.

SHE: But I don't have energy for it. There doesn't seem to be any relationship here.

HE: Why can't you go first?

SHE: But I want you to go first.

HE: No, you go first.

SHE: I don't want to go first. You go first.

HE: I don't want to go first. You go first.

SHE: This is silly. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad for me to go first.

HE: Well, if you're willing to go first, maybe I could go first.

Notice that as this particular couple stayed engaged with what seemed to be interminable disagreement, the pattern of their interaction and the theme of their discussion were able to be clarified. The content was important, but only as it elucidated the pattern and theme that were foundational elements in the disagreement.

2. Legitimize multiple positions and encourage judgment in choosing among the options. Here the question of what to do becomes less simple. One must now ask, "What is the right thing for me to do now, with regard to this situation and this particular person?" In other words, personal judgment and agency are required to choose a response.

> To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

> A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace. (Eccl. 3:1–8)

3. Use questions to increase awareness of issues. Such questions would be nonjudgmental or nonprivileging of any side of a particular issue—they would simply be questions designed to help a client fully explore and experience the circumstance. Examples include the following:

> What are you feeling?
> What often happens next? (just before?)
> How would you describe _____ in more detail?
> When do you notice _____ ?

4. Deal with a problem by enhancing the feeling of that problem. For example, many clients avoid feelings of helplessness and try to gain more control of their lives out of a belief that they "can't stand it." When people are encouraged to stay in the feeling of helplessness for a significant time, they are able to understand that the helplessness does not overwhelm them. They learn they are not helpless in the face of helplessness. They are still free agents making choices and managing their feelings quite nicely, even without a validating or relieving response from the environment. Clients can become aware of their own ability to make decisions about what they will believe, how they will see their own lives, and what basis they will use to make choices. With regard to their own sense of self and confidence, they are helped, in the long run, to become impervious to changes in the environment.

5. Explore the beneficial aspects of their presenting complaint. With this intervention, clients are asked to find something positive in that which they are trying to overcome. Clients are encouraged to increase the complexity of their view of the problem. They are encouraged to stay engaged with the feelings involved in the problem while they examine various aspects of their behavior and circumstance. Parents who are worried about a teenage son who infrequently sneaks out of the house at night and takes the family car to visit his girlfriend might be pleased about his increasing autonomy. Someone who has suffered at the hand of another might be grateful for an increase of sensitivity to others.

6. Challenge the sense of crisis or tragedy in their presenting complaint. Important aspects of this intervention are captured in the poem "What of That?" (anonymous, 1901):

Tired? Well, what of that?
Didst fancy life was spent on beds of ease,
Fluttering the rose-leaves scattered by the breeze?
Come, rouse thee! work while it is called day!
Coward arise! go forth upon thy way.

Lonely? And what of that?
Some must be lonely; 'tis not given to all
To feel a heart responsive rise and fall,
To blend another life into its own;
Work may be done in loneliness. Work on!

Dark? Well, and what of that?
Didst fondly dream the sun would never set?
Dost fear to lose thy way? Take courage yet.
Learn thou to walk by faith, and not by sight;
Thy steps will guided be, and guided right.

Hard? Well, what of that?
Didst fancy life one summer holiday,
With lessons none to learn, and naught but play?
Go, get thee to thy task! Conquer or die!
It must be learned; learn it, then, patiently.

This intervention allows a sense of crisis and tragedy to be taken out of clients' circumstances. Clients can then move from a sense of being cheated to a restoration of intrinsic motivation to overcome difficulties rather than being overcome by them.

7. Give generous praise and celebrate personal achievements without the need to add *but* or *next*. Since there is no goal to resolve problems directly, there is no need to move out of the enjoyable moments that can accompany incremental successes. Allowing that there will be another day to make additional refinements, a person can fully allow an uncluttered celebration of the present moment. Additional motivation and a renewed confidence may follow.

A reconceptualization of suffering informed by the restored gospel of Jesus Christ allows us to embrace the problems of mortal living with optimism and hope. It also allows us to reformulate our

view of psychotherapy and to explore therapeutic goals and interventions that may be more patient with and respectful of God's children as they use their difficulties to construct future mansions.

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Part 3

The Nature of Agency

Obscure, unfeeling and unloving powers determine men's fate.
Sigmund Freud, *The Question of Weltanschauung*

Whether or not they state such views, psychologists often see humans as determined by genetic, familial, cultural, socio-economic, and other "powers" and therefore having little or no choice in determining their fate. This view is not only inconsistent with the purpose of counseling (if people ultimately have no choice, how can they initiate change) but also pessimistic about the outcome of counseling.

To address such issues, Daniel Judd uses a gospel-based understanding of what he calls moral agency, to identify potential misconceptions counselors may have in struggling with the question of human agency. Richard Williams proposes that our understanding of agency is a watershed issue that has implications for all theological and philosophical perspectives—not only for counselors but also for our culture in general. Both Judd and Williams work to overcome what they see as an artificial dichotomy between agency and determinism.

DANIEL K. JUDD

Moral Agency

A DOCTRINAL APPLICATION TO THERAPY

Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself. And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit.

—*2 Nephi 2:27–28*

One of the philosophical discussions that is central to the majority of academic disciplines, as well as the helping professions, is the debate over free will and determinism (see Williams, 1992). As clinicians, we often deal with questions pertaining to the degree to which our clients are free to exercise their moral agency. Just how free to choose is the person who has become drug addicted? Is a person who has become enslaved to alcohol always going to be an alcoholic, or to what extent can he or she choose otherwise? What of same-sex attraction—is a person who feels the pull of homosexual attraction born with such feelings as a predetermined eventuality? What about those of us with explosive tempers, feelings of inferiority, mania, depression, eating disorders, or anxiety—do we have the capacity to think, feel, and act differently? Our understanding and beliefs about the answers to such questions, as a culture and as individuals, have great relevance to how we go about our work as therapists.

While it would be more than presumptuous to propose that one paper could adequately describe the free will–determinism debate, let alone provide an original addition to the body of literature (see Rychlak, 1981), it is my intent to provide a brief theological introduction and several clinical applications. This paper will also provide a philosophical strategy for thinking more clearly about moral agency and its counterfeits. My underlying assumption is that a correct understanding of the Latter-day Saint doctrine of moral agency has much to offer humanity in general and therapists in particular as we strive to understand and embody such an important principle.

Determinism and Moral Agency Defined

Simply stated, the argument of determinism states that our thoughts, feelings, and actions are determined by forces outside our volitional control. "Free will, by contrast, is the assumption that the agent could have acted otherwise, all other factors remaining the same" (Slife & Fisher, 2000, p. 84). Those who espouse the theory and practice of determinism believe that human behavior is determined in the same naturalistic way as eye color or physical stature. Determinism takes many forms. Some people focus on deterministic forces as being genetic in origin, and others concentrate on the

biochemical, social, and familial aspects. Regardless of the form, "for many, if not most schools of psychology, determinism is the essential principle that allows psychology to be a science" (Williams, 1999), thus allowing no room for the legitimacy of moral agency.

While the philosophy of determinism, as it is generally taught, is incompatible with the doctrine of moral agency, it is important to understand that the Lord has established bounds to the agency he has given us. Latter-day Saint theology embraces the doctrine of agency but also teaches that some of the events of human experience are caused and are outside the boundary of moral agency. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1996) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated:

> Of course our genes, circumstances, and environments matter very much, and they shape us significantly. Yet there remains an inner zone in which we are sovereign, unless we abdicate. In this zone lies the essence of our individuality and our personal accountability. (p. 21; see also Oaks, 1989, pp. 10, 1–17)

Moral Agency

From before the foundation of the world, the doctrine of moral agency has been central to the existence of humanity. Prophets, both ancient and modern, have taught us that it was the agency of man over which the "war in heaven" was fought (Rev. 12:7; see also D&C 29:36–38). Our Father's plan included agency, the moral choice between right and wrong; Lucifer's plan "sought to destroy the agency of man" (Moses 4:3) by eliminating choice.

The traditional understanding of how Satan attempted to destroy the agency of humankind and enslave their souls includes the adversary's use of forced obedience. In an account of Latter-day Saint parents exercising unrighteous dominion over their teenage daughter, Carlfred Broderick (1996) illustrated how easy it is to misunderstand agency. Dr. Broderick's account begins with his referring a Latter-day Saint family to a Jewish colleague for therapy. After encountering resistance from the parents to the counsel to "lighten up a little" with their rebellious teenager, the therapist sought Dr. Broderick's counsel: "Every time I suggest any movement in the direction of loosening up, they [the parents] patiently explain to me that I just don't understand their religious obligation, as

Mormon parents, to keep this kid in line. Frankly, I don't know how to deal with this. I don't want to attack their religious beliefs, but the situation is explosive" (p. 88).

After some discussion, Dr. Broderick suggested a particular strategy wherein the therapist would express interest in the family's religious beliefs—specifically "the war in heaven." The therapist followed the suggestion and called some time later in wonderment at how well Dr. Broderick's counsel had worked.

Dr. Broderick's colleague indicated that even the rebellious teen had offered to share with him a copy of a book about their faith with a picture of the family in the front (a missionary edition of the Book of Mormon). The therapist was most surprised with the mother's dramatic change. After describing how the mother had responded quickly at the opportunity of sharing her beliefs, her enthusiasm came to an end as quickly as it had started. Dr. Broderick's colleague described what happened:

> "In seconds she had launched into some story about a council in heaven and two plans and she gets about three minutes into it and she stops cold in her tracks and gives me a funny look and says, 'All right, Doctor, you've made your point.' From that moment on they were like putty in my hands. It was like magic. Carl, what is this war in heaven?" (Broderick, 1996, p. 89).

Obviously, the mother had come to the realization that what she was doing in the name of her religion was in reality the same satanic deception designed by the adversary to destroy her family. Just as Satan was attempting to "destroy the agency of man" (Moses 4:3), she, too, was attempting to destroy the agency of her daughter.

While most prophetic and academic descriptions of Lucifer's plan indicate that his method was to selfishly force mankind to do right, Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1982) offered an important alternative understanding:

> When the Father announced his plan, when he chose Christ as the Redeemer and rejected Lucifer, then there was war in heaven. That war was a war of words; it was a conflict of ideologies; it was a rebellion against God and his laws. Lucifer sought to dethrone God, to sit himself on the divine throne, and to save all men without reference to their works. He sought to deny men their agency so they could not sin. *He offered a mortal life of carnality and sen-*

suality, of evil and crime and murder, following which all men would be saved. His offer was a philosophical impossibility. There must needs be an opposition in all things. Unless there are opposites, there is nothing. There can be no light without darkness, no heat without cold, no virtue without vice, no good without evil, no salvation without damnation. (pp. 666–667; italics added)

Turning Freud Upside Down

Elder McConkie proposed that the way in which Lucifer "sought to destroy the agency of man" (Moses 4:3) was to eliminate any distinction between right and wrong, allowing humankind to live in any way that they desired, and that in the end he (Satan) would redeem them (see Moses 4:1). We see the anti-Christ Nehor teaching a similar false doctrine in the Book of Mormon:

> And he had gone about among the people, preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church; . . . And he also testified unto the people that *all mankind should be saved at the last day,* and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life. (Alma 1:3–4; italics added)

Robert J. Matthews, former dean of religious education at Brigham Young University, described Lucifer's lie and those who believed it in premortality:

> It seems strange to me that a third of all the spirits that had the potential to be born into this world would have favored a plan based on forced obedience. Most of us do not like to be forced. As I see it, the real issue was not so much one of force as it was that Lucifer said he would *guarantee* salvation for his spirit brothers and sisters. He promised salvation without excellence, without effort, without hard work, without individual responsibility. That is the lie he promulgated in the preearth councils.
>
> That so-called shortcut to salvation captivated many gullible and lazy spirits. They wanted something for nothing. (Matthews, 1990, p. 272)

Whether Lucifer's plan was one of authoritarian power, relativistic indulgence, or both, the scriptures plainly teach that he was and is "a liar from the beginning" (D&C 93:25) and that he "will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them

down to hell" (Alma 30:60). I believe that as therapists we need to be ever on guard for the counterfeits that the adversary attempts to employ to destroy the agency of man—for the war in heaven continues on earth, and the battle for the souls of men continues to rage in countries, communities, and perhaps especially in families.

Moral Agency and Free Agency

Throughout this paper, I have and will use the words *moral agency* as opposed to *free agency.* My intent in doing so is to honor the subtle and yet profound doctrinal distinction between "moral" agency and "free" agency made by President Boyd K. Packer (1992, p. 67) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: "The phrase '*free* agency' does not appear in scripture. The only agency spoken of there is *moral agency,* 'which,' the Lord said, 'I have given unto him, that every man may be *accountable* for his own sins in the day of judgment'" (D&C 101:78; italics added). The phrase *free agency* implies that we are simply making choices between logical alternatives with no regard to moral agency. *Moral agency* implies a choice between right and wrong where agency and morality are intimately connected. President Packer (1992) also stated:

> Regardless of how lofty and moral the "pro-choice" argument sounds, it is badly flawed. With that same logic one could argue that all traffic signs and barriers which keep the careless from danger should be pulled down on the theory that each individual must be free to choose how close to the edge he will go. (p. 66)

Those who argue for same-sex marriage, abortion on demand, or a host of other issues are arguing for a free agency where morality plays no part. They want to characterize agency as choosing from alternate lifestyles the one that will best suit their own desires. Such is not the agency given us by God (see 2 Ne. 2:27). The Apostle Paul taught of the relationship of agency and morality as he addressed the Saints in the city of Corinth. After identifying such problems as fornication, adultery, idolatry, homosexuality, theft, drunkenness, abuse, and extortion, he asked, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and *ye are not your own?* For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit,

which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19–20; italics added). Some of the Corinthian Saints were apparently misusing their newfound Christian liberty, or perhaps a Greek disdain for the physical body was serving as license for them to do with their bodies whatever they pleased. Interestingly, the word *licentiousness* has the same etymological root as the word *license* (Barnhart, 1995, p. 431). Although we hear such things as "It's my body" and "It's my life, I will do as I please," the Lord has clearly taught us that we are not our own and that the only way to truly find meaning and purpose in life is to use our God-given gift of agency to follow him.

The Nature of Man

Another Latter-day Saint doctrine that has important bearing on the exercise of moral agency concerns the nature of man. Many philosophers, theologians, and therapists who come from a traditional Judeo-Christian theology teach that man is born evil and thus has a natural disposition to rebel against what is right (Luther, 1525). Others, mostly intellectual descendants of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, believe that children are born innately good and that if left to themselves without the influence of a corrupt culture they will naturally choose the right (Thomas, 1988, p. 274). Others, often following a more academic tradition, believe a child at birth is a tabula rasa, a blank slate that is molded and motivated by his or her environment (see Judd, 1996).

As one compares these three philosophies with Latter-day Saint theology, it becomes apparent that while there may be some truth to them, there are also falsehoods that can lead to the erroneous exercise of agency. For example, if parents believe their child is "born evil," they may be more likely to believe that "beating the devil" out of their child is their God-given responsibility (Aries, 1962, pp. 128–133). Conversely, parents who believe their children are born "good" may be more likely to indulge them, believing that the children will naturally choose that which is good because they are good. Those parents who believe children are "blank slates" may compel them to "be somebody" by overly involving them in activities designed to "make something" of them. Professor David Elkind described this dynamic as "the hurried child" (Elkind, 1981).

A Latter-day Saint Perspective

In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord stated that at birth children are not blank slates nor are they good or evil; they are innocent:

> Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, *innocent* before God. And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through *disobedience,* from the children of men, and because of the *tradition of their fathers.* (D&C 93:38–39; italics added)

Though complicated by our own sins and the traditions of our fathers, to each of us is given the gift of agency. In the Book of Mormon, we read, "Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other" (2 Ne. 2:16). We are not compelled to be good or evil by an inner disposition to be so, nor are we simply blank slates acted upon by our environment. The scriptures teach that we are "agents unto [our]selves" (D&C 58:28) with the capacity to choose right or wrong. While we become the "natural man" (Mosiah 3:19) through our "disobedience" and "the tradition of [our] fathers" (D&C 93:39), we certainly were not "born that way" (see Alma 42:12).

Counterfeits

In his teachings, the Prophet Joseph Smith described and defined agency as "that free independence of mind which heaven has so graciously bestowed upon the human family as one of its choicest gifts" (J. Smith, 1949, p. 49). While most of us would agree that agency is a gift given by God, it is important to remember that Satan attempts to counterfeit this precious truth. President Joseph F. Smith (1949) stated:

> Let it not be forgotten that the evil one has great power in the earth, and that by every possible means he seeks to darken the minds of men, and then offers them falsehood and deception in the guise of truth. *Satan is a skilful imitator,* and as genuine gospel truth is given the world in ever-increasing abundance, so he spreads the counterfeit coin of false doctrine. Beware of his spurious currency, it will purchase for you nothing but disappointment, misery and spiritual death. The "father of lies" he has been called, and

such . . . has he become, through the ages of practice in his nefarious work, that were it possible he would deceive the very elect. (p. 376; italics added)

President Brigham Young taught, "If true principles are revealed from heaven to men, and if there are angels, and there is a possibility of their communicating to the human family, always look for an opposite power, an evil power, to give manifestations also; look out for the counterfeit" (1998, pp. 68–69).

One method I have used over the years to help myself and those I am working with understand truth and counterfeit is to draw diagrams that contrast the various philosophies. An example follows:

Truth	Counterfeit
moral agency	determinism
bounds	indeterminism

Satan's counterfeit of the doctrine of moral agency is a false philosophy I have labeled "*in*determinism." While I wholeheartedly believe that it is our privilege and responsibility to assist our clients in understanding that they are "free to choose" (2 Ne. 2:27), I also believe we are responsible to help them understand that there are certain limitations to agency as well. We read in the Doctrine and Covenants that "unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain *bounds* also and conditions" (D&C 88:38; italics added). Dallin H. Oaks provided two simple examples of such bounds in a symposium address at Brigham Young University: "In the flesh we are subject to the physical law of gravity. If I should hang from the catwalk in the Marriott Center and release my grip, I would not be free to will myself into a soft landing. And I cannot choose to run through a brick wall" (Oaks, 1989, p. 10).

In the spiritual sense, the Lord has set boundaries he has asked us not to cross, for he knows that if we were to do so we would be in danger of losing our agency and being "under the bondage of sin" (D&C 84:51). The Lord has also taught us that as we follow his will freedom will follow: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31–32; italics added). Other bounds are set by our own experience. As much as I might want to play the piano I cannot because I have not learned how and am therefore not free to do so at this time. More serious examples of these bounds are found in the lives of those with whom we work. Most, if not all, of us have worked with individuals who have physical and psychological limitations from which they will not be free until the Resurrection. Our responsibility is to help them be as free as they possibly can while helping them to identify and accept the truth of their limitations. The Lord has told us in the Doctrine and Covenants, "And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning" (D&C 93:24–25). I believe "The Serenity Prayer," made popular by the proponents of Alcoholics Anonymous, embodies the same truth: "God, grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference (*"Pass it on,"* 1984, 252, 258n).

For years I have known a woman who fell out of the back of a pickup when she was a child and suffered serious brain trauma. While this good woman is able to care for herself and lives a productive life, she continues to experience serious consequences from her accident. I have been inspired by her example of exercising agency within the limitations imposed on her by her accident. I know from conversations with her that she had therapists early on who, coming from a deterministic perspective, wanted to institutionalize her, judging that she would never be capable of living independently. On the other hand, therapists working from an indeterministic philosophy have made demands upon her that appear to me to be inappropriate based on her limitations. It is my experience that each of us tends to lean one way or the other—we have either bought into the deception of determinism, indeterminism, or both.

False doctrines such as these often come in pairs. Commenting on the strategies of Satan, the British philosopher C.S. Lewis (1960) taught, "He [Satan] always sends errors into the world in pairs—pairs of opposites. And he always encourages us to spend a lot of

time thinking which is . . . worse. You see why, of course? He relies on your extra dislike of the one error to draw you gradually into the opposite one" (p. 160). Could it be that some of us have taken such a strong stand against determinism that we have fallen into the counterfeit of what I have labeled indeterminism? And others of us may have felt so strongly about the dangers of indeterminism that we have become deterministic in our approach to therapy?

Dogmatism and Relativism

Dogmatism and relativism are another example of a counterfeit pair of opposites that are related to our clinical understanding of the doctrine of agency. Sometimes the terms directive and nondirective therapy are used in the counseling community to describe a therapist's philosophical approach to assisting clients. A therapist who is directive runs the risk of usurping the client's agency, while a nondirective clinician may provide no hope or direction for the client because of the therapist's attempt to be respectful of a client's right to exercise agency.

Most Latter-day Saint psychotherapists would agree that agency is inextricably connected to morality and that God's will is central. As therapists, however, we must always be aware of the danger of forcing our will on our clients. Dogmatism is the counterfeit of absolute truth while relativism is the counterfeit of relative truth.

Truth	Counterfeit
absolute truth	dogmatism
relative truth	relativism

A good example of what I am attempting to describe is the Latter-day Saint teachings concerning the sanctity of life. Murder (as opposed to killing) is always wrong, but abortion may be the right moral choice under carefully defined circumstances. President Boyd K. Packer (1990) taught the following:

> The scriptures tell us, "Thou shalt not . . . kill, nor do anything like unto it" (D&C 59:6). Except where the wicked crime of incest or rape was involved, or where competent medical authorities

> certify that the life of the mother is in jeopardy, or that a severely defective fetus cannot survive birth, abortion is clearly a "thou shalt not." Even in these very exceptional cases, much sober prayer is required to make the right choice. We face such sobering choices because we are the children of God. (p. 85)

A circumstance where abortion is the moral choice is an example of relative truth because the choice involves a consideration of circumstances. The Prophet Joseph defined relative truth this way:

> That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another.
>
> God said, "Thou shalt not kill;" at another time He said, "Thou shalt utterly destroy." This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire. (J. Smith, 1949, p. 256)

The major way relative truth differs from the satanic strategy of relativism is that the former (relative truth) places God's will at the center of the decision, while the latter (relativism) does not.

Salvationism and Humanism

The philosophical relationship of determinism and moral agency has an important parallel found in the history of Christianity. Even though latter-day prophets have taught that reformers such as Martin Luther came as "servant[s] of the Lord to open the way" for the restoration of the fullness of the gospel, there were many doctrines the reformers misunderstood. While Martin Luther was able to articulate many of the failings of the Roman Catholic Church, of which he was an Augustinian priest, he continued to believe and preach the doctrine of the depravity of man. Unlike the traditional Catholics of the day, Luther believed that God's redemptive grace did not need to be connected to the sacraments of the church but could come to man freely without any kind of works involved. Martin Luther dismissed free will and believed man is powerless to do anything of his own volition to be redeemed from his fallen state (Luther, 1525). The French reformer John Calvin added another dimension to Luther's teachings by arguing

that man's salvation was predetermined by God even before birth. It was not until much later that reformers such as John Wesley brought more acceptance of the doctrine of free will. Wesley, the eighteenth-century cofounder of Methodism, stated:

> He [mankind] was endued[*sic*] with a will, exerting itself in various affections and passions; and, lastly, with liberty, or freedom of choice; without which all the rest would have been in vain, . . . he would have been as incapable of vice or virtue, as any part of inanimate creation. In these, in the power of self motion, understanding, will, and liberty, the natural image of God consisted. (Wesley, 1852, p. 50)

We have much thanks to give John Wesley and others like him for teaching the doctrine of moral agency, but the virtue of what they taught also became distorted. Though the theological acceptance of individual agency (self-determination) was a major part of what led to the French and American revolutions, it also supported the acceptance of a humanistic philosophy that eventually displaced God and placed man at the center of civilization. Both counterfeits are diagrammed in the following table:

Truth	Counterfeit
grace	salvationism
works	humanism

Latter-day Saint theology in general and the Book of Mormon teachings specifically have clarified the proper relationship between the doctrines of grace and works. While we talk of the importance of exercising our moral agency, we must also be aware that redemption is not something we acquire through our own efforts (see 2 Ne. 2:3 and 2 Ne. 25:23). Most readers are aware of the famous poem "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley, which concludes with the following proud, almost defiant, expression: "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul" (Henley, 1958, p. 95). Although Henley's poem rings with a certain strength, it could also be considered humanistic in that it underscores man's own hope of extricating himself from his fallen state. In an attempt to show the great

need we have for Christ, Orson F. Whitney, of the Quorum of the Twelve, wrote the following response to "Invictus":

Art thou in truth?
Then what of him
Who bought thee with his blood?
Who plunged into devouring seas
And snatched thee from the flood?

Who bore for all our fallen race
What none but him could bear.—
The God who died that man might live,
And endless glory share.

Of what avail thy vaunted strength,
Apart from his vast might?
Pray that his Light may pierce the gloom,
That thou mayest see aright.

Men are as bubbles on the wave,
As leaves upon the tree.
Thou, captain of the soul, forsooth!
Who gave that place to thee?

Free will is thine—free agency,
To wield for right or wrong;
But thou must answer unto him
To whom all souls belong.

Bend to the dust that head "unbowed,"
Small part of Life's great whole!
And see in him, and him alone,
The Captain of thy soul. (Whitney, 1926, p. 611)

Submission to Christ

The Book of Mormon plainly teaches that without Christ there would be no hope of resurrection or eternal life. In fact, the prophet Jacob explained that without Christ we would "become devils, angels to a devil" (2 Ne. 9:9). I believe that, for therapists' help to truly be of worth, we must be forerunners to our clients' coming more fully unto Christ, for it is only in him that we can truly be free.

The Savior taught, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23–24). In the following, C. S. Lewis (1960) provided some explanation of what it means to lose one's self:

> Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favourite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will ever be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in. (p. 190)

In addition to eloquently inviting readers to find themselves by submitting to Christ, Lewis (1960) also described the role of Christ in the development of personality:

> Our real selves are all waiting for us in Him. . . . The more I resist Him and try to live on my own, the more I become dominated by my own heredity and upbringing and natural desires. . . . It is when I turn to Christ, when I give myself up to His Personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own. (Lewis, 1960, p. 189)

President Ezra Taft Benson (1988) added a latter-day witness of the blessings of submitting our will to God:

> Men and women who turn their lives over to God will discover that He can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace. Whoever will lose his life in the service of God will find eternal life. (p. 361; see also Matt. 10:39)

Conclusion

The debate between the proponents of free will and those of a deterministic view of human behavior will obviously continue. One of my most serious concerns is that the philosophy of determinism is coming to be seen as the more sophisticated of the two perspectives and the arguments for moral agency are being judged as naive. It has been my experience that to be taken seriously in most academic and clinical circles, one must generally accept the postulates of determinism.

What concerns me even more than the apparent consensus in professional circles is that this same "sophistication" seems to be increasing among Latter-day Saints. Perhaps this is one reason it appears that there is a higher-than-average rate of antidepressant consumption among the population of Utah even though the incidence of depression among the Latter-day Saints has been shown to be similar to the general population (Judd, 1999). What I think this consumption rate might be telling us is that an increasing number of Latter-day Saints are coming to see their lives in deterministic ways and are losing their sense of moral agency. They are coming to see their emotional problems as being caused by something over which they have little or no volitional control, much like being diagnosed with diabetes.

While this belief may be good news in some situations where the problems are indeed physical and those who are afflicted can be helped by competent medical assistance, it can be spiritually deadening in others. Some kinds of depression are related to imbalanced biochemistry, and antidepressant medications can be a part of an effective treatment, but hopefully neither we nor our clients will always see our problems in such naturalistic and deterministic ways. Sometimes "despair cometh because of iniquity" (Moro. 10:22) and will be healed only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance of our sins, and baptism, and by responding to the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. If people go to their physicians to obtain medication for feelings of despair that have come as a result of sin and never accept the Savior's invitation to "come unto me" (Matt. 11:28), they are on the wrong road, heading the wrong direction. We need to teach our clients that the possibility exists that

some experiences with depression (and other emotional problems) can be brought about by physical causes alone and they need to accept medical treatment as a blessing from God. Other clients' problems may be tied to both sickness and sin and may require both the physician and the bishop—as well as the help of the Lord—to be overcome.

My intent has been to teach the doctrine of moral agency and to assist the reader in being aware of the various associated counterfeit philosophies. It is my sincere hope that each of us can come to a better understanding of the doctrine of moral agency and not be too quick to enslave ourselves to either a deterministic or indeterministic philosophy when liberation and redemption can be found at the hands of the Master Physician, Jesus Christ.

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Richard Williams

Agency

PHILOSOPHICAL AND SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

—*John 8:32*

Perhaps no question regarding our fundamental human nature is more important than the question of agency. No issue takes us closer to the center of our being. Agency is a genuine watershed issue because the position we take on the issue of whether we are moral agents determines to a great extent the positions we must take on most other questions of psychological and therapeutic relevance. I think it not an overstatement to say that, in the social sciences, it will be very difficult to get other questions right unless and until we get the question of agency right. Agency is the hinge on which our understanding of all other psychological phenomena turns. At the same time, no concept in the contemporary social sciences has shown itself to be more resistant to clarity, closure, or even consensus than has the concept of human agency.

This essay will present, albeit in an abbreviated form, justification for these claims and for why we should care about the issue of agency in the social sciences. I will also argue that psychology and indeed much of our intellectual tradition has gone wrong in its attempts to understand agency, and I will illustrate how it has done so. Finally, I will suggest five necessary, though perhaps not sufficient, prerequisite conditions for the existence of human agency that must be incorporated into any adequate social scientific theory of agentive action. An understanding of agency grounded in these necessary assumptions—if it is reflective of the light and truth of revelation residing in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ—will empower us to do something of genuine importance in our therapeutic work, in the intellectual world, and in the broader culture, whose self-understanding is influenced profoundly and yet rather unreflectively by contemporary intellectual currents, including those popular in the contemporary social sciences.

In his book *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder,* Elder LeGrand Richards gave an account of Apostle Orson F. Whitney's conversation with a Catholic cleric whose assessment of Mormonism and its adherents was this: "You Mormons are all ignoramuses. You don't even know the strength of your own position" (Richards, 1976, p. 3). I think this observation is true from a theological perspective, although in ways perhaps unanticipated by the cleric who made it, and too often unappreciated by Church members. I also believe it is equally true from an intellectual or academic perspective.

The core idea of my work on agency (e.g., Williams, 1992, 1994, in press) came to me when I was a young Aaronic Priesthood holder in a rather small ward in a small town in rural Utah. In the course of his lesson one Sunday, one of my advisors, not an academic but a believing man, said something very much like this: "Free agency is not doing what you want to do; it's doing what you should do." For some reason that statement settled into my soul and felt true. It is the only thing I can ever recall telling my parents that I had learned at church. And it never left me. If I were to attempt to put into a single sentence the essence of the position on human agency presented in this essay it would be simply this: Agency does not consist chiefly in doing or being able to do what we want; rather, it consists in doing or being able to do what we should—in living truthfully.

In addition to making a conceptual analysis in support of this thesis, I hope to show that human agency is an essential and ineluctable facet of our ontological reality. I also hope that throughout the analysis it is clear that the concept of agency has far-reaching religious, theoretical, practical, and therapeutic implications.

The Inevitable Effect Our Understanding of Human Agency Will Have on the Course and Results of Psychotherapy

The fundamental importance of agency for psychotherapy lies in the fact that the understanding of human agency that a therapist brings to therapy reflects the deepest and most profound ontological commitments and thus profoundly influences such things as diagnosis, etiology, choice of therapeutic treatments, and prognosis.[1] It will also inevitably influence a client's own sense of self-efficacy and responsibility for his or her own behavior as well as the course and ultimate success of treatment.

Simply put, the question of agency is the question of what we fundamentally *are.* What sort of beings we are must surely determine in some strong sense what it means to become "pathological."

1. Obviously, the view of human agency that clients bring to therapy is also important, but this is not the subject of the present paper. Furthermore, given the position of relative status and the aura of authority enjoyed by the therapist, not to mention the fact that clients generally come to therapy seeking self-understanding from their therapists, clients' understandings of their own agency are relatively vulnerable to influence from their therapists.

The understanding of our fundamental nature will give substance to our understanding of what it means to be "dysfunctional" and, probably most importantly, to our understanding of the nature of the "good and flourishing life" (Robinson, 1997, 1999).

If we do not know with confidence what we are, what we are capable of, and what the foundations and dimensions of a good life are, then all therapeutic endeavor is, in essence, a shot in the dark. Therapeutic outcomes judged to be positive may accrue, but we cannot escape the suspicion that such may be merely manifestations of a type of self-fulfilling prophecy involving shallow understandings of health and sickness, fairly emaciated expectations of the "good life," and interventions designed to realize just those expectations.[2]

It is extraordinary but accurate that within psychology we have achieved neither unity nor even consensus regarding what sort of beings we human beings are at our foundation. The social sciences are characterized by substantial divergence of opinion and doctrine regarding just what it means to be a human being. The intellectual cleavages are often deep. They are important and deeply meaningful.

2. Some might argue that we do not need to have a final understanding of our being in order to achieve good therapeutic results, that other sciences cannot claim to have such understanding of their subject matter either, as evidenced in the field of quantum physics, or that such a final understanding of our nature is either in principle or in practice impossible, at least in this life. Such arguments have much in common with some lines of postmodern analysis in psychology (e.g., Gergen, 1991) and betray something of the unsettled character of contemporary psychology.

Others would argue simultaneously that psychology should accept only hard scientific truth and that ultimate truth is impossible. This spirit of intellectual agnosticism has substantive consequences for psychology and for the practice of psychotherapy, but they are beyond the scope of this essay.

A minimal response to the issue, particularly in this LDS publication venue, is that no small part of the power of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the latter days is the restoration of the possibility of real knowledge of a type that surpasses other knowledge available to the world in scope and surety. It includes knowledge of the plan and purpose of life, the history and potential of the human soul, and the perfectibility of human persons. Without this type and quality of knowledge, the Restoration hardly has any impact in psychology and psychotherapy, and the LDS psychologist hardly has any advantage over a psychologist whose roots and allegiances are both grounded firmly in the doctrines of men and the understanding of the secular world. We should confidently aspire to more than this.

Perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of this unsettled state of affairs is that it has arisen in a discipline which, since its inception, has attempted to define and establish itself *as a science.* In contrast, every established science seems to be settled regarding the fundamental ontology of its subject matter. Indeed, such a settled state—even if somewhat temporary—is one of the most important features that characterize a science as science. Thomas Kuhn (1970), for example, suggested that just such a consensus on the nature of the subject matter of a science is an essential part of what is required for the conducting of what he refers to as "normal science." Kuhn's work further suggests that ontology is one of the issues with sufficient import to bring about a revolution in science. Indeed when disagreements regarding the fundamental structure or nature of their subject matter have arisen in the established sciences, these disagreements have often precipitated substantial paradigm shifts, if not genuine "revolutions." However, the important point for the present discussion is that these other sciences have settled the matter of the ontology of their subject matter—consistently, even if only temporarily.

It might be argued that it is the immaturity of the social sciences that has prevented their resolving the ontological question in regard to human nature. But this defense is wearing thin in view of the fact that there are currently sciences substantially younger than the social sciences which do not have the same problems. Rather, I am persuaded that the lack of a human ontology in psychology is attributable to a rather cavalier attitude toward the project. Many within the social sciences contend, without supporting evidence, that the question of ontology does not matter, thus taking refuge in a naive pragmatism that assumes one can do good without an adequate conception of just what, for human beings, might constitute the good.

Others in the discipline have argued that the question of ontology is best left to philosophy while we concentrate on our practical and empirical projects. It should be sufficient to note in response that no other science has left its most important questions to another discipline—not even to philosophy. Scientific psychologists continue to have serious debates about the nature of what it is they are studying. No other scientific field has such debates very long,

and when one does have them, it has them in earnest, pushing forward to a resolution of the debate. Furthermore, debates are most often precipitated by persuasive data from seemingly crucial experiments. The social sciences have failed to take their disagreements so seriously, and they have certainly not produced persuasive data. No technology has resulted from unsettled ontology. In psychology we have not achieved a settled state. We do not know, or at the very least, we are not confident of what our subject matter is. This unsettled state gives rise to some very severe problems, not the least of which is the rise of eclecticism, of a type not found in other sciences. The problems resulting from the lack of a settled ontology arise in two ways.

First, whatever else we may do in therapy in relation to the presenting symptoms or problems people bring to therapy, we will also inevitably give people a sense, at least a tacit understanding, of what they *are*—what kind of beings they are and thus what they are capable of. This, I believe, is an inevitable by-product of any therapeutic encounter. It is also a by-product, if not a direct outcome, of studying psychology in the classroom. Second, because an understanding of what we are underlies every understanding of what we can do, our clients, and others exposed to psychology, will also leave therapy, or the classroom, with an understanding of what they can do, of what is possible.

In my judgment, the best metaphor for therapeutic change and for teaching is conversion. A telling characterization of psychoanalysis, here paraphrased from Sigmund Freud, suggests the goal of psychotherapy is to raise people from abject misery to ordinary unhappiness. For a Latter-day Saint therapist, or any Christian therapist, this is simply not good enough. The restored gospel of Jesus Christ opens for us a vision of what we fundamentally *are* and of what we can become. It also offers the promise of confirmation of this vision and, through the tutelage of the Spirit, practice in achieving it in part in mortal life. Indeed, it can be argued that this practice of living our greater vision is one of the great mortal purposes of our lives. Because human agency is at the core of this vision, an understanding of human agency is, or ought to be, at the core of all psychological theories and practices.

Human Agency as a Watershed Issue

Human agency is a genuine watershed issue for psychology and for a culture. It is not an issue to which one can be partly committed. Intellectual integrity, which honors rational consistency along with the nature of agency itself, requires that we fall on one side of the issue or the other. We either are or are not moral agents. The reason human agency is so crucial to our self-understanding and our achieving our purposes is that agency is the core of all that is most human about us. It defines our eternal character. There are a number of issues in psychology which, although important, do not go to the heart of our humanity. On these there can be disagreement with few grave consequences for individuals or for cultures. However, because agency defines human *being*, there can be no compromise. We must either believe in the reality of human agency, seek to understand that it is and what it is or give ourselves over to an entirely different understanding of ourselves and the meaning and purpose of life itself.

Unless we are human agents such that we have a genuine capacity for self-direction, which thus gives rise to genuine possibilities, and unless our pasts and our futures are in some fundamental sense open-ended and not merely given, it is impossible to attribute real meaning to our actions or maintain a sense of meaning in our lives and relationships. Without genuine possibility in life, all acts are simply necessitated and, without the possibility of being otherwise, are without meaning (Williams, 1987).

By the same token, if we are not human agents, since we simply *are* what we must *be*, we simply *do* what we must *do*. And since necessitated acts are neither good nor bad, we cannot behave morally or immorally. We can reach no judgments about morality except those we are predetermined to reach. It would be peculiar to refer to such judgments as morality. Furthermore, the imposition of any system of morality becomes tyranny because the determined preferences of one group must be imposed upon the natural propensities of others. In addition, if we are not moral agents, genuine intimacy is not possible. Beings who are less than agents are not capable of voluntary associations nor of purposively directing the path of their relationships. Necessitated relationships, because they lack intentionality and meaning, offer only a facade of objectively defined intimacy.

Finally, and this is relevant to all religious people and of particular importance to Latter-day Saints because we are a covenant-making people, only a moral agent can make a covenant. A covenant is, in its essence, a purposeful, free will act, undertaken for the purpose of accomplishing something nobler and larger than ourselves. Determined natural organisms, by definition, do not have purposes beyond and larger than themselves. They cannot do things of their own free will and choice. We cannot make covenants unless we are moral agents.

For the foregoing reasons and others, I am convinced that if we are to have a coherent and useful understanding of our own agency, we must take a philosophical hard-line position on the issue. This means that human agency is really an either-or issue. Because the existence and nature of our moral agency is an ontological issue, we cannot, as many try to do, take an eclectic position on the issue. Because, as an ontological issue, human agency is the starting point of our analyses and understandings of ourselves, it is not possible to be "partial agents"—we cannot be agents and not agents at the same time. Those who try to take such eclectic positions can do so only because they view agency as a derivative phenomenon arising from something more ontologically fundamental in our nature. It is, however, a logical inconsistency to hold that agency can arise from nonagency. It partakes of the same logical problem as attempting to get "something" from "nothing," or "ought" from "is." Such views of agency fail to take agency seriously, oversimplify the issue, and fail as psychologies capable of expressing our most human qualities and our eternal natures.

Although in one sense agency has proven to be an extremely complex issue, in another sense I believe it to be among the "plain and precious" truths of our humanity. My testimony is that the essence of the issue is not so complex that it cannot be simply grasped, as all principles of the gospel can be simply grasped. In order to illustrate this, I will discuss the importance of human agency in terms of its alternatives. That is, in trying to understand human agency, it is helpful to ask, What are the alternative understandings of ourselves that we are left with if we reject the notion of the fundamental reality of agency? The alternatives will be explored in terms of ontology and in terms of the conceptual issues that attend agency.

If We Are Not Moral Agents, What Are We?

On the ontological level, the answer to the question, "If we are not moral agents, what are we?" is that we are moral agents or we are natural organisms. To say that we are natural organisms is to say that we are beings indistinguishable in our essence from the kinds of beings we encounter in the natural world. The actions of natural organisms are completely explained by the natural laws and principles that underlie them. Even as moral agents, we might expect that many natural laws and principles may describe the actions and processes of our bodies, and we must take account of these processes as we act in the world. However, to say that we are moral agents is also to say that in our actions that both arise from and reveal that which is most fundamentally human about us, we are not products of natural laws or principles nor are we controlled by them. A fairly radical naturalism is the alternative to an agentive understanding of human action.

Naturalism pervades both the academy and our culture. It may be the most obvious and insidious contemporary threat to our agency and to our proper understanding of ourselves. While, I will argue later, some sort of determinism is necessary for the existence of agency, the species of determinism offered to us in the theories and models of psychology, profoundly influenced by naturalism, are fundamentally incompatible with agency. We cannot embrace both reductive, biological naturalism and human agency.

Also entailed in the question "Agency or what?" is a difficult conceptual issue relating to how we might know or understand agency. We must inquire whether agency can be rendered intelligible and rationally consistent. This is an important issue because if agency cannot be rendered intelligible and cogent it will be difficult to accept and incorporate it into pedagogy and practice.

In most discussions of the issue, it is common to suggest that the alternative to agency is determinism. This analysis is, however, misleading because it is oversimplified and incomplete. The issue of agency is most often set up as if there were a conceptual dimension anchored on one end by determinism and on the other by freedom, or agency. This framing of the problem is unfortunate and comes from not being sophisticated and careful enough in our approach to

the issue. This, in turn, too often comes from not being serious in our analysis of the issue. The problem with this analysis is that there is a parallel dimension, most often tacitly assumed but not examined, that runs between determinism on the one end and indeterminism on the other. Since both conceptual dimensions are anchored on one end by determinism, it is common to conflate freedom and indeterminism since they both find themselves in opposition to determinism. This has imposed a great burden on those who advocate an agentive approach. Those who wish to defend agency in human action must also defend the proposition that human actions are indeterminate. This is too great a burden, and nearly all proagency arguments collapse under the weight of it. However, rather than abandoning human agency, the proper response is to examine the nature of determinism and indeterminism more carefully.

Determinism, Indeterminism, and Human Agency

It is too often the case that arguments about determinism and freedom leave the concept of determinism itself unexamined, assuming it to be unambiguous. They rely on a general premise that determinism requires that all events have causes, most often taking natural causes to be the paradigm case. A finer-grained analysis will show that causality itself does not obviate agency. Some types of causes make agency impossible, but others do not. The analysis of determinism required to show this is also an analysis of indeterminism. What emerges from the analysis is that determinism is not inimical to agency. Rather, agency requires some form of determinism.[3]

Determinism is an attractive explanatory strategy in the social sciences because it appears to be a necessary assumption underlying any genuine science of behavior. However, this does not mean that only one particular understanding of determinism must hold if psychology is to be able to provide an understanding of human behavior that has the level of certainty attributable to science. I will

3. I am by no means the first to make this argument. Strands of the argument run all the way back to Aristotle. An early contemporary formulation of the argument can be found in Foot (1957).

suggest here what may be called a minimalist definition of determinism—one that if accepted will provide all that psychology needs of determinism in its quest for rigorous understanding and predictability but one that makes few metaphysical assumptions and which does not commit itself to a mechanistic ontology that destroys the possibility of agency. Under this definition, determinism is the proposition that all events (and other things, including human actions) have meaningful antecedents, absent which the events (or things) would not occur or would not be what they are.

Given this definition of determinism, indeterminism, in contrast, is the proposition that events (and other things, including human actions) have no meaningful antecedents. If human actions have no meaningful antecedents, they must arise from nowhere and for no particular reason. They just happen. Under indeterminism, all events are essentially random—not connected to other events in any meaningful way. When agency is conflated with indeterminism in human events, agency cannot be anything other than randomness or a capacity for complete caprice in our actions.

Two problems immediately assail any attempt to defend or explain agency as indeterminism. First, it is patently obvious that human events are not random but are meaningfully connected. It seems to violate our very nature as well as our experience to suggest that we behave without reason or rationale. It defies common sense to suggest that this happens on a large scale. Indeterminism in human events is decidedly refuted by experience. Second, agency as indeterminism provides for no more meaning in human actions than does determinism. There is no meaning in random, unconnected events. Determinism is important in our understanding of human behavior precisely because it preserves agency and morality. Agency as mere indeterminism cannot accomplish this. Thus, any adequate understanding of agency must eschew indeterminism and begin with the thesis that there is determinism in human events. The real question is what kind of determinism can preserve the possibility of a genuine agency that can, in turn, preserve meaning and morality in our lives.

Returning to our minimalist definition of agency, we can see that all that is required for determinism is that there be a strong link between events and their antecedents. We must next inquire after

the nature of this link. If there are strong links between behaviors and their antecedents that do not destroy agency but are still strong enough that without the antecedents the events would not occur (or be as they are), then we can preserve a meaningful agency and determinism at the same time. Mechanical and biological links are clearly destructive of agency, as are stimulus-response links governed by environmental forces requiring no active participation by an agentic person. It is obvious that neither nature nor nurture as classically conceived in psychology—the hallmarks of social scientific explanation—can explain events without destroying agency. Yet, even if nature and nurture fail to preserve agency, it does not follow that all meaningful links between antecedents and events destroy agency.

We can find an example of such links in the strong relation that exists between the plot of a novel and any of a number of subplots. Without the plot, certainly any subplot would not be at all, or, at least, it would not be what it is. However, there is never just one subplot that can possibly arise from any particular plot. Once a subplot arises, it can be rewritten, abandoned, or woven back into the plot at any one of a number of points in the plot. This example conforms to the requirements of determinism, yet it preserves possibility and the agency of the author. There are undoubtedly other ways of thinking about the relationship between events and antecedents that preserve both determinism and agency, but this example should suffice.

The astute critic of an agentive position will no doubt argue that this example of a novel is unfair because it assumes that the author of the novel already has agency or there would not be the flexibility in the relationship between plots and subplots he or she might create. But this is precisely the point. In the present essay, we can leave aside the question of whether similar agency-preserving relationships exist between the antecedents and events of the natural world, though I very strongly believe that they do.[4] What is

4. The interested reader is referred to the work of the late physicist, David Bohm (1957, 1980).

most important has been established: in the world of human affairs, deterministic relations between human acts and their antecedents which do not obviate human agency are possible.

The critic's objection illustrates another point crucial to the present analysis: human agency cannot arise from nonagentic substances, structures, or processes. It must be an ontological a priori in human existence, or it cannot exist at all. It must be the starting point of our understanding of ourselves. Latter-day Saints, by virtue of restored knowledge, are in a uniquely strong position to defend this proposition. In summary then, agency is not the opposite of determinism. Agency is enfolded into the deterministic, and therefore meaningful, contextual and worthwhile universe in the orderly actions of morally agentic eternal intelligence.

Human Agency and Free Choice

There is one other problematic aspect of the common understanding of human agency that deserves our attention. Nearly all analyses of agency in philosophy and psychology define it in terms of freedom of choice—the freedom to choose what we will or will not do.[5] Perhaps the most controversial part of the present analysis is the contention that there really is no such thing as a genuinely free choice. I will show that this state of affairs does not compromise our agency. It simply requires us to understand agency differently.

The argument proceeds in the following manner. It is inherent in the concept of choice that there be *grounds* for the choice. This is to say that choices must be made for reasons, and the reasons are formulated so as to take account of prevailing and possible conditions, motivations, life projects, contingencies, and principles, among other things. If there are no grounds or reasons for a choice, it is not genuinely a choice but merely a random action, unconnected to other

5. Note that even if we cannot actually physically do what we "will" to do, the freedom of the will, the freedom to choose can still be intact and uncompromised. It is the freedom of the will, rather than the freedom to carry out an act, that is of real concern to any analysis of human agency (Thorp, 1980). However, the distinction blurs when one considers acts of will to behave as having essentially the same character as any and all other acts.

actions or conditions. As we have seen, this state of affairs reflects indeterminism. The grounds for our choice include such things as our experiences, our desires, our values, our cultures, our languages, our assessment of our capabilities, and our moral commitments.

At the same time, however, precisely to the extent that any of these things—the grounds or context of our actions—become really influential, they constrain our choices and compel us to act in one way instead of another. To the extent that our grounds for action become important and compelling, our choices are no longer *free* choices. Thus, we have a genuine dilemma. If we have no grounds as the foundation of our choices, making some choices more right or appropriate than others, then our actions have no rationale and thus no meaning. Our actions can be free of all constraint but not meaningful, and thus we have no agency worth having. On the other hand, if our actions do reflect the constraints of reason and the deploying of rationality in the assessment of the grounds for our action and the quality and purpose of our choices, then our choices are really not free but grow out of the grounds themselves.[6]

From my study of the problem, I conclude this is a genuine dilemma. It requires us either to abandon the thesis that we are human agents or to rethink our commitment to free choice as the defining essence of agency. I strongly recommend the latter course. This dilemma also points up another difficulty traditionally faced by psychologists who wish to defend agency. They generally end up defending mere freedom of choice, and then the analysis runs aground somewhere between the Scylla of rationality and the Charybdis of freedom.[7]

Attempts to resolve this dilemma I have outlined and to preserve free choice as the essence of human agency often take one (or

6. Charles Taylor (1985) referred to this process as the making of "strong evaluations" and argued persuasively that this uniquely human capacity is a necessary constituent of our freedom if our freedom is to be judged worth having.

7. This predicament is reflected most clearly in the "radical choice" approaches to human freedom found in much of the existential literature. See, for example, the account of freedom given by Sartre (1956) and Merleau-Ponty's (1962) trenchant critique.

more) of three forms. The first attempts to resolve the dilemma by granting that our choices are strongly determined by our grounds (reasons, values, etc.) but free choice is preserved in that we are free to choose those determining grounds. This analysis fails, however, when we simply inquire after the grounds on which we might choose our grounds. The problem of choosing the grounds for our choices of courses of action is analytically identical to the problem of choosing our courses of action in the first place. The same dilemma reemerges, and our understanding of agency ends in an infinite regress. I believe we can have a fuller and more helpful understanding of our moral agency than this—that we do not have to settle for the mysticism of infinite regress.

The second attempt to resolve the dilemma is to claim that while the grounds and reasons for our choices may influence us and our choices, they do not determine us or them. This analysis rests entirely in the distinction between influence on one hand and determinism on the other. When we search for the fundamental principle wherewith we can distinguish determinism from mere influence, we are drawn to the principle of agency itself. That is, something will be determining in our lives if we are not agents, but if we are agents, it will merely influence us. Thus, we distinguish between influence and determinism by invoking the concept of agency, and then defend our definition of agency based on the distinction between determinism and influence. This is, of course, a clear example of begging the question. The analysis is entirely circular. Again, I hope that we do not need to resort to such a question-begging analysis to defend a principle as profound and powerful as our agency.

The third attempt to resolve the dilemma within the constraints of a definition of agency as choice invokes a homunculus—a choosing agency within the larger agent person. The argument suggests that while a particular person may be constrained by grounds in making choices to the extent that the choices are not really free, some part of the person—an inner self, a central processor, or even a "soul"—is able to enter into the choosing process free from the constraints acting upon the person and make a free choice. This line of thinking encounters problems from two directions. First, when

we inquire about the grounds upon which this inner "chooser" makes its choices, we see that we end up in the same infinite regress entailed in the argument that we can choose our grounds. Second, if we define agency as the choices made by an entity unconstrained by our own personal and intimate concerns, constraints, and contexts, we wonder about the value of such agency. We would hope, as moral agents, that our choices should first be made by ourselves as whole persons and secondly that they should reflect our own moral commitments within our moral situation. The human and moral value of an agency divorced from that is questionable.

Based on the arguments outlined here, I have become convinced that our agency does not consist essentially in our potential for radically free action. We really would not value such actions because they would not make contact with any moral context or with any meaningful projects of our lives. Thus I am convinced we need to think about agency in different terms.

Freedom as Living Truthfully

There are ways of understanding agency and freedom that do not fall prey to the conceptual problems we have just discussed. I present one such way as an example (see Williams, 1992). Suppose that I were to present you (the reader) with a very difficult mental puzzle, so difficult to solve that you could not do it on your own. I might allow you to freely generate and freely choose as many possible solutions to the puzzle as you possibly could, but because the puzzle is so difficult and is completely outside your realm and range of experience, you could not generate nor choose a real solution to the puzzle. I might provide you with a thousand alternative solutions from which you could freely choose, none of which would solve the puzzle. In spite of unrestrained freedom of choice, you would not be free to solve the puzzle.

When we inquire as to what is needed in order to be free to solve the puzzle, the answer seems to be that one would need the *truth of the matter* of the puzzle. Lacking the truth of the puzzle—what it is, how it works, and what it means—one would not be free to solve it. Thus it is possible to define agency, not foremost in terms of choosing, but in terms of having the truth or *living truthfully.* It is

truth that makes us free (John 8:32). In what senses does truth make us free? If we live truthfully, in accordance with and animated by truth, we are free from falsity. We are free from the effects and consequences of imagined constraints, blind alleys, and insubstantial apparitions with which a false world assails us. We are not trapped in a world that does not exist, trying to make sense of it or trying to achieve something that cannot be achieved in the false world in which we are stuck. We are free from insisting and maintaining in the face of contradictory evidence that the world and other people are as we take them to be (cf. Warner, 1987, 1997). Perhaps this sense of freedom is part of what was intended in Alma's explanation to Corianton that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). In the false world we construct from the raw materials of wickedness, we can never solve the puzzle of happiness, and thus we are not free to do so.

In a larger sense, truth gives us freedom from sin, self-deception, and falsity—from all of those construals of the world that hold us captive and prevent us from being who we, from a more truthful perspective, really are and what we, from an eternal perspective, might become. Lacking truth, we are prevented from tapping into that within us which inclines toward perfection and beckons us to be like our Father is. Understanding the nature of God, understanding the truth about ourselves and what it means to be the kinds of beings we are, knowing in our hearts the truth of the atoning grace of Jesus Christ, and realizing the reality of our moral purpose on earth—these are the truths that make us free. These are the truths that provide the opportunity for the flourishing of the moral agency with which we are endowed.

Necessary Conditions for the Understanding and Flourishing of Agency

Based on the foregoing analysis of agency and the conceptual problems that surround it and in an attempt to take seriously the notion of agency as living truthfully, I wish to propose five conditions which I believe must hold in the human condition if agency is to be judged possible and if it is to flourish in the lives of humankind. I believe that the doctrines of the restored gospel are not only compatible with these conditions but require that they hold.

The point of this discussion is not to defend the truth of the restored gospel based on intellectual argument. The gospel is true despite all such arguments. It is true even if this analysis is fatally flawed. My point is, rather, to suggest that Latter-day Saints are uniquely empowered and should be uniquely motivated to defend agency and that Latter-day Saint social scientists should confidently be on the forefront of the intellectual fray regarding agency. We should be confident and eager not only to defend agency but to take up the challenge of legitimating it in intellectual discourse. We should proactively incorporate into our therapeutic practice the power of agentic concepts. We should teach our brothers and sisters about their agency and help them to flourish as moral agents.

I will propose five conditions of our humanity—five things which must be true of us and our world—in order for human agency to be possible and intelligible in any account of human action. I will attempt to express these conditions, where appropriate, by including references to scriptures reflecting the light and knowledge of the Restoration. Owing to the truths of the Restoration, we are, of all people, richly blessed in being able to understand our agency.

1. We are preexistent, eternal, intelligent beings. This is the ontology from which any adequate understanding and explanation of human agency and action must begin. It is an ontology bequeathed to us as our heritage from the Restoration. The Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 93:29–31) informs us that

> man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence. Behold, here is the agency of man.

Our capacity for intelligent action (to have reasons, to desire, and to judge) is not a derived attribute merely coincidentally attached to us through some more fundamental entity or process. Nor does it evolve over time from something more primitive. It is the very essence of our being. By virtue of being the kind of beings we are, we are intelligent; and it is in being intelligent that we are the kind of beings we are. I take this to mean that we are intelligent in a way very much like light is light. If our capacity for intelligent action,

which is at the heart of any conception of agency, were shown to derive from something else outside of our being who and what we are—say, from something nonintelligent or something other than ourselves—then such agency would necessarily be constrained—bounded—by the constitutive attributes of that more fundamental thing. This conception of agency as derivative provides no ultimate meaning and only a limited freedom. In contrast, I posit that the agency of an eternal intelligent being is as absolute as the eternality of that being.

It is common, almost required, in contemporary intellectual circles to suggest that human action and intelligence itself emerge or evolve from nonintelligent processes and structures, most often from the meat and chemicals of the nervous system. That there is no evidence for this, nor any persuasive theory of how this might happen—of how intelligence might arise from nonintelligence—is one of the most important and yet widely ignored questions with which psychology should concern itself. The doctrine of eternal, uncreated intelligence provides the most credible and expansive explanation of human action and agency. Indeed, without the assumption that we are eternal intelligences, no adequate theory of meaningful action and agency is possible.

2. We are the kind of beings who act rather than the kind which are acted upon. In 2 Ne. 2:14, we encounter another aspect of the fundamental ontology of our being human, closely related to the previous one:

> And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon.

I take from this that it is legitimate to speak of two categories of created things: things having the fundamental character to act and those whose fundamental character is to be acted upon. While we may not be the only such beings, we may be confident that we are the type of beings the fundamental nature of which is to act. What this means, I believe, is that we are innately and eternally the kind of beings who are not swept into action without our own participation. We are not the sort of beings who become what we are by being

done unto. We are the sort of beings whose acts require our active assent and participation. This is not to say that all actions are deliberated and absolutely controlled by us—chosen through an act of absolutely free choice—for such choice has been shown to be impossible. Nevertheless, even under conditions of limited options and distorted understandings, our actions, however inadequate and ineffectual, however much they may be a capitulation to circumstance, *are acts* of capitulation in which we must actively participate and to which we must assent. Nothing moves us without our participation and our assent. This is essential for any account of agency.

If ever we were to become the type of beings whose fundamental mode of being is to be acted upon, we would cease in that moment to be agents. Our agency would be lost. This is not to say that we are not acted upon in any way at all; gravity, for instance, acts upon us, as do microorganisms and natural processes of growth and decay. However, in our activity as human beings, children of God, we are not acted upon in our meaningful actions in the way that natural objects in the world are acted upon by any number of natural processes and events. Being eternal intelligences in a mortal created state, all of our intelligent and moral acts are, by definition, acts, because it is fundamental to our nature to act in just these most important matters. In these meaningful acts we are not acted upon in the way natural objects are acted upon.

In a talk published in *BYU Studies* some years ago, Elder Dallin H. Oaks (1988) made a distinction between agency and freedom. He taught that, while our freedom to act and control ourselves and our destiny could be lost or surrendered, our agency, our right and power to act for ourselves, could not. It is a constant and can never be destroyed. I take this to be compatible with this proposed second condition of agency. Our agency both requires and consists of our being the type of beings who act rather than the type which is acted upon. Because this is an ontological reality, it cannot ever be lost, changed, or stolen from us. Nothing can happen to us to change us from the type of beings who act to the type which are acted upon. How this plays out in our lives—how our freedom is manifest—given our choices, our sins, and other challenges we face, is, in each individual, yet to be determined. Thus our freedom, but not our agency, is a fragile thing.

3. Agency and freedom require truth. Even though we are always the kind of beings who act, who must actively assent to their own actions, we might still ask what we need to empower us so that being this kind of being matters and exalts. We need truth. The foregoing analysis demonstrated that agency cannot be understood simply as choice. Agency will be manifest in its most meaningful form as living truthfully if for no other reason than choices made without truth are neither moral nor meaningful, and thus agency would lose its purpose and, therefore, cease to be agency. Understanding agency as living truthfully, however, does not complete the analysis. We must do more than just turn the question of agency into the question of truth and leave it there. We need to push the analysis a step further and talk about the kind of truth that can serve as the catalyst for agentic living. An adequate analysis of truth is beyond the scope and reach of this paper. Here we can make only the most important points—and these only by assertion.

Agency as living truthfully is an activity more profound than the mere possession of information. I assert this because we are more than information-processing mechanisms and because the possession of information that can be judged as truth still requires a person to decide that it is true and then act upon it—which process is an agentic one. Thus suggesting that agency arises from the mere possession of information begs the question of agency because agency must be invoked to explain how information can be evaluated and judged such that it might result in agentive action.

The knowledge of truth that is constitutive of agency is much closer to the sort of knowledge Socrates described in his famous declaration that "to know the good is to do the good." Knowing itself is an agentive act. It requires our assent and our active participation. I take this to be part of what is meant in the scriptural passage (D&C 93:24), "And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come." Later in the same section (D&C 93:39), we learn that "that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers." If the loss of truth results from our disobedience and our participation in traditions, then we can reasonably entertain the presumption that

we apprehend truth through obedience and participation in other traditions (D&C 93:27). These are active processes far beyond the simple possession of information and propositions.

Given that agency is integrally bound up with truth, our agency requires a source of truth. Because the sort of truth that pervades our agency transcends mere information, the source of truth must transcend propositions and arguments—the forms of information. The ultimate source of truth, and thus the ultimate guarantor of agency, is God, and this truth is rendered available to us through the actions of the Spirit. Again, in section 93 (v. 26) the Lord proclaims, "The Spirit of truth is of God. I am the Spirit of truth." The embodied God of the Restoration is the ultimate grounds of truth. He intervenes in the world and in our lives, and through the medium of the Spirit, the truth entailed in his doing so is apprehended. Surely one of the most profound and welcome messages of the Restoration is that truth is restored through the intervention of the living God, who has established the fullness of the gifts of the Spirit through which truth can flow freely.

There are other media through which truth is made available to people. Some of these are prophets and scriptures. We also, as we enter into truthful conversations with others, provide truth. In this way, we are the guardians and nurturers of others' agency. We can also interfere with others' agency as we become sources of untruth and invite others to construct, inhabit, and maintain false worlds. Thus to Latter-day Saints the understanding of agency is much more than an interesting intellectual project. It is an essential part of our Heavenly Father's plan. We are called to move beyond analytical understanding of agency. We are called, as fully as we are able, to cause agency to increase in the lives of our brothers and sisters.

4. Agency requires a moral sphere in which to operate. Once we recognize that agency is bound up in living truthfully, it becomes apparent this cannot happen except in a world where truth and falsity are ever before us (2 Ne. 2:11–30). This is to say that we must occupy a moral world, a world in which things matter, in which things, including our actions, can be judged as good or bad, right or wrong—a world of qualitative distinctions. If this were not the case then our "living truthfully" would have no meaning and we could

not be agents. In such a world, we might be confronted with a bewildering array of choices, but we could not discern any of them as "worth choosing" (Rieff, 1966). In a world where nothing is worth choosing, agency has no meaning. We are reminded here again of the work of Charles Taylor (1985). He argues that the hallmark of human freedom is the making of "strong evaluations." That is, human freedom is grounded in the capacity not only to make judgments and choices but to make judgments that one thing is to be preferred over another—one action is better than another.

We see here why contemporary relativistic doctrines not only erode our sense of community and our moral compass, but they destroy our agency as well. If there is no moral grounding in human life, manifest in the making and having of strong evaluations, there can be no agency in human life either. If we loose our morality, we lose our agency. This understanding exposes the tragic and cynical lie perpetuated by contemporary doctrines suggesting that the overthrow of morality is the path to freedom and enhanced agency. Without a genuinely moral world, strong intentions would be impossible and actions would have no moral cast. There would thus be no basis for agentive acts. The ultimate act of freedom is the act of giving ourselves over to a moral authority greater than our own because this is the strongest kind of strong evaluation (Williams, 2002).[8]

5. Agency requires freedom of choice of a particular kind. The final requirement for the manifestation of agency, as well as for the understanding of agency, is that we must have a certain freedom of choice in our actions. It must be clarified, however, that freedom of choice is not the same thing as "free choice," defined as the capacity for completely ungrounded choices. As we have seen, that type of ultimately free and ungrounded choice is both undesirable and impossible.

Perhaps more descriptive than the phrase "freedom of choice" would be "freedom of action." I refer to the type of freedom spoken of in Helaman 14:30–31:

8. The phenomenologist, Emmanual Levinas, talked about freedom as surrender to the moral authority inherently resident in the face of the other (1981). The analysis presented here is informed by his work (see also Williams, in press).

> And now remember, remember, my brethren, that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free.
>
> He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil, and he hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death; and ye can do good and be restored unto that which is good, or have that which is good restored unto you; or ye can do evil, and have that which is evil restored unto you.

If we were not permitted to act, if our choices—which reflect the breadth and depth of our knowledge of truth, our agency—were not respected, our capacity for moral action would be eliminated. We should remember here that we are considering not only overt behaviors but the acts of desiring, judging, and assenting to thoughts, feelings, and understandings. If these were not respected by God, and to varying extent by others, there would be no possibility in our lives and no moral action. If we were not allowed to act as agents and put into effect our understandings, desires, and feelings in many kinds of overt, as well as more subtle, actions, our agency would be impotent, and we could have no moral effect. If we had no moral effect on ourselves or others, there would, in effect, be no moral world, and thus no place for agency.

Freedom of choice is a great gift. I believe this is part of what we should understand from Alma's discourse on the atonement of Jesus Christ, the plan of salvation, and the meaning of "restoration" (Alma 42:10–28). In part of this discourse (vv. 17–22), we read the following:

> Now, how could a man repent except he should sin? How could he sin if there were no law? How could there be a law save there was a punishment? Now, there was a punishment affixed, and a just law given, which brought remorse of conscience unto man. Now, if there was no law given—if a man murdered he should die—would he be afraid he would die if he should murder? And also, if there was no law given against sin men would not be afraid to sin. And if there was no law given, if men sinned what could justice do, or mercy either, for they would have no claim upon the creature? But there is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and a repentance granted.

And later we find the conclusion of Alma's analysis and a statement of the effects of God's plan allowing for freedom of action (vv. 27–28).

> Therefore, O my son, whosoever will come may come and partake of the waters of life freely; and whosoever will not come the same is not compelled to come; but in the last day it shall be restored unto him according to his deeds. If he has desired to do evil, and has not repented in his days, behold, evil shall be done unto him, according to the restoration of God.

Only a world of moral consequences, made salient to us by actual consequences, can sustain and preserve moral agency. Otherwise our agency is impotent, stripped of a crucially important aspect of its morality and thus of its essence. There are of course bounds set by the Lord beyond which we are not allowed to go (D&C 88:38; 122:9). But within those bounds, we are permitted to act for ourselves, and our doing so is honored by God. We should recognize, as God does, that these acts are sacred because they are performed by eternal intelligences, within the auspices of the plan of salvation itself, and because they can have eternal consequences. We should also recognize that these acts, performed by us as moral agents within a moral sphere of action and honored by God, are the very acts which necessitated the suffering of Jesus Christ as he brought about the Atonement: "God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice" (Alma 42:15). There would have been no need to atone for nonagentic and meaningless acts.

What Should We Do about Agency in Our Professional Work?

I conclude with the question "What should we do about agency in our professional works?" In psychology, as in other academic fields, we are sometimes unclear as to how fairly abstract theoretical issues can be meaningfully applied to our work both intellectual and applied. We are sometimes unclear about how the restored gospel impacts our disciplines and our academic or professional conduct. I am convinced that we will not understand ourselves, our students, or our clients unless we understand them as moral agents. It will be much easier to do this if we have a coherent understanding

of human moral agency. This understanding must be intellectually as well as spiritually satisfying and cogent. If we have such an understanding, we can understand people with whom we work and those whom we teach. We can understand what they are going through. More importantly, perhaps, if we understand what they are and why, we can help them understand themselves in ways that can open their lives to their own view and move them toward nobler and more meaningful lives.

In the classroom and in therapy, we must teach people that they are eternal intelligences, that they are beings who act, and that they are not acted upon as natural organisms are. We must teach people that they are living in a moral sphere, that they are here to have moral experiences, and that there is moral purpose to their lives and their experiences. We must help people understand that they not only have the capacity to act but that they both need and can achieve access to truth, which makes their choices immeasurably better and more effective. Furthermore, they must understand that their choices to act will be honored—within bounds—by that same God who is the source of truth. We must teach them that agency is having the world truthfully and that truth is available to all who will seek. The understanding of human moral agency is the path to healing. It opens us more completely to the workings of salvation.

This can be taught to members of the Church who share our fundamental understandings, commitments, and our knowledge base. I assert, however, that it can also be effectively taught to persons not of our faith because it arises from an ontology common to all. We must take up the challenge of doing so. It will require our best efforts and our most rigorous thinking. It will require us to challenge the canon and the culture of our disciplines. It will require us to stand against the tides of opinion and practice in our broader culture. But people of good will and judgment will stand with us. And all people will benefit.

If we who are informed and enlivened by the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and the magnificence of the light it sheds on every aspect of our lives do not defend and promote human agency in our intellectual projects, in our therapeutic work, and in our civic lives, I submit we have failed to appreciate our heritage. We will find our-

selves, I fear, cursing the darkness and suffering with the world at large under the burden of failed understanding rather than lighting the candle of restored truth and holding it aloft as an example to the world.

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Part 4

The Nature of Truth

There are no sources of knowledge of the universe other than carefully scrutinized observations—in other words what we call research—and along side it no knowledge derived from revelation.

Sigmund Freud, *The Question of Weltanschauung*

Traditionally, psychotherapy has eschewed not only religious values but also divine sources of help and knowledge. In part 4, Scott Richards discusses the role of truth, or the Spirit of Truth, in counseling. He proposes that helping clients access such Truth is a critical aspect of counseling. Brent Slife and Jeffrey Reber draw distinctions between traditional secular conceptualizations of truth and Christian conceptualizations of truth. They suggest that adopting a Christian perspective on the nature of truth will have profound implications for who counselors are and how they practice.

P. Scott Richards

The Spirit of Truth in Personality

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

The light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men.

—*D&C 93:9*

During most of the twentieth century, religious and spiritual perspectives were excluded from mainstream psychological theory and practice (Bergin, 1980). The major therapeutic schools, including the psychodynamic, behavioral, humanistic-existential, cognitive, and family systems traditions, ignored the possibility that theistic spiritual influences could promote healing and change. The central dogma of the behavioral sciences was naturalism, the belief that human beings and the universe can be understood and explained without including God in scientific theories (Honer & Hunt, 1987; Leahey, 1991; Richards & Bergin, 1997).

During the 1980s and 1990s, a new, more spiritually open zeitgeist, or "spirit of the times," arose in science, medicine, and the mental health professions (Appleyard, 1992; Benson, 1996; Richards & Bergin, 1997; Templeton & Herrmann, 1994). Numerous professional articles and books were published by mainstream publishers on the topics of religion and mental health and spirituality and psychotherapy (e.g., Bergin, 1980, 1991; Emmons, 1999; Jones, 1994; Kelly, 1995; Lovinger, 1984; Miller, 1999; Pargament, 1997; Richards & Bergin, 1997, 2000; Richards & Potts, 1995; Shafranske, 1996; Worthington, Kurusu, McCullough, & Sandage, 1996; Wulff, 1997). Professional ethical guidelines were revised and for the first time included religion as one type of the diversity that mental health professionals are obligated to respect and obtain competency in (APA, 1992; ACA, 1995).

In an effort to help bring spiritual perspectives into the mainstream mental health professions, my colleague Allen E. Bergin and I proposed a spiritual strategy for psychology and psychotherapy that is based explicitly on a theistic view of human nature and of the world (Bergin, 1980, 1991; Richards & Bergin, 1997). Our strategy is consistent with Latter-day Saint theology and doctrine but is written in ecumenical language so that hopefully it proves helpful to colleagues from diverse religious traditions.

The most important assumptions of our theistic spiritual strategy are that "God exists, . . . human beings are the creations of God, and . . . there are unseen spiritual processes by which the link between God and humanity is maintained" (Bergin, 1980, p. 99). We elaborated nine additional assumptions as follows:

> First, God exists; is [our] Creator; embodies love, goodness, and truth; and acts on people's behalf and for their sakes. Second,

> human beings are beings of body and spirit, both temporal and spiritual. They are the offspring of God, created in the image of God, and carry within them the germ or seed of divinity. Third, human existence is sustained through the power of God. Fourth, human beings are able to communicate with God by spiritual means, such as prayer, and this inspired communication can positively influence their lives. Fifth, there is spiritual evil that opposes God and human welfare. Humans also can communicate with and be influenced by evil to their detriment and destruction. Sixth, good and evil can be discerned by the "Spirit of Truth." Seventh, humans have agency and are responsible to both God and humanity for the choices they make and the consequences thereof. Eighth, because theistic, spiritual influences exist, their application in people's lives should be beneficial to [each individual's] well-being. Ninth, God's plan for people is to use the experiences of this life to choose good, no matter how painful life may be, to learn wisdom and develop their potential to become more like God, and, ultimately, [to become] harmonious with the spirit of God. (Richards & Bergin, 1997, pp. 76–77)

In my view, all of these assumptions have important implications for a theistic and Latter-day Saint view of psychology and psychotherapy. The focus of this article, however, is on the sixth assumption, namely, "good and evil can be discerned by the 'Spirit of Truth'" (Richards & Bergin, 1997, p. 77).

I believe the Latter-day Saint doctrine that human beings have the capacity to discern good and evil through the Spirit of Truth is relevant for theories of personality development and functioning and for the practice of counseling and psychotherapy. In the remainder of this article, I will discuss why I think this is so.

The Spirit of Truth in Latter-day Saint Theology

To communicate with colleagues from diverse religious perspectives, Allen Bergin and I used the term *Spirit of Truth* in our book to refer to God or "the Divine Intelligence that governs or harmonizes the universe" (Richards & Bergin, 1997, p. 77). In Latter-day Saint theology, the term *Spirit of Truth* is a general title that can refer to Jesus Christ, to the Light of Christ, or to the Holy Ghost (Brewster, 1988; McConkie, 1966).

Latter-day Saint doctrine teaches us that Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost can help us spiritually discern good from evil. The Book

of Mormon states, "The Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil" (Moro. 7:16).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1966) explained:

> Every person born into the world is endowed with the light of Christ (Spirit of Christ or of the Lord) as a free gift (D&C 84:45–48). By virtue of this endowment all men automatically and intuitively know right from wrong and are encouraged and enticed to do what is right (Moro. 7:16). The recognizable operation of this Spirit in enlightening the mind and striving to lead men to do right is called *conscience.* It is an inborn consciousness or sense of the moral goodness or blameworthiness of one's conduct, intentions, and character, together with an instinctive feeling or obligation to do right or be good. Members of the Church are entitled to the enlightenment of the light of Christ and also to the guidance of the Holy Ghost. If they so live as to enjoy the actual gift of the Holy Ghost, then their consciences are also guided by that member of the Godhead. (Rom. 9:1; pp. 156–157)

In summary, human beings can receive assistance in discerning good from evil through the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost. Through the influence of his spirit, Jesus Christ invites and entices us to "do good continually . . . and to love God, and to serve him" (Moro. 7:13). As we hearken to his invitations, we receive "truth and light, until [we are] glorified in truth and [know] all things" (D&C 93:28). Then our "whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in [us]; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things" (D&C 88:67).

Implications of the Spirit of Truth for Personality Development and Functioning

I believe that such doctrines have a number of implications for personality development and functioning. Allen Bergin and I hypothesized the following:

> Personality is influenced by a variety of systems and processes, but the eternal spirit is the core essence of identity. Healthy human development occurs as people hearken to the enticings of the Spirit of Truth. The Spirit of Truth helps people understand, value, and regulate their lives in harmony with universal principles that promote human growth and healthy functioning. Personality development and functioning are optimized when

> people are able to affirm their eternal spiritual identity; follow the influence of the Spirit of Truth; and regulate their behavior, feelings, and thoughts in harmony with universal principles and values. (Richards & Bergin, 1997, p. 100)

Thus, if people listen to the enticings of the Light of Christ and of the Holy Ghost and live in harmony with eternal, universally true principles and virtues such as honesty, fidelity, love, service, forgiveness, humility, patience, and faith, they will develop and grow in a healthier manner. They will tend to enjoy better physical and mental health. This is not to suggest that a healthy personality and healthy spirit are equivalent. People who follow the influence of the Spirit of Truth will still have problems and may at times experience physical and psychological pathologies that are caused by genetic and environmental influences outside of their control, but overall they will tend to function better than they would otherwise.

People who do not hearken to the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost will be more likely to experience problems and pathology caused by disobedience and violations of eternal moral and mental-health values and principles. Although not all psychopathology and disturbance is caused by sin, some of it is, and people will be more susceptible to those pathologies and symptoms caused by violations of their consciences. Interestingly, my colleague Tim Smith and I have found that those college students who scored lower on a measure of moral congruence tended to report higher levels of anxiety and depression than did students who were more congruent (Richards & Smith, 2000). This finding does not suggest that all anxiety and depression is caused by sin; however, sin clearly causes some anxiety and depression (Mowrer, 1967).

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss in detail how this theistic view of personality relates with secular theories and research about conscience and morality, but there is a large body of secular literature, much of which is consistent with the hypotheses I have just described. Although I do not know of any mainstream behavioral scientists who have discussed the notion of the Spirit of Truth as it pertains to conscience or moral development, many scholars have written about the influence of congruence, authenticity, morality, sin, and guilt on mental health and personality

development (e.g., Conn, 1981; Mowrer, 1961, 1967; Nelson, 1973; Rogers, 1980). Many of them agree that congruence between our moral values and behavior is essential for healthy functioning. What most of them do *not* suggest is that there are also universally true moral values that influence healthy human functioning. Our theistic spiritual strategy is distinctive from secular theories in that it hypothesizes that healthy functioning depends on both congruence between moral values and behavior *and* congruence with universally true moral principles and values.

A belief in the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost influences the way we work with our clients. In our book, Allen Bergin and I explained that the core therapeutic goal of our theistic spiritual strategy—a goal that logically flows from our view of personality and therapeutic change—is to "help clients experience and affirm their eternal spiritual identity and live in harmony with the Spirit of Truth" (Richards & Bergin, 1997, p. 116). We further explained:

> When therapists succeed at this goal, the healing, change, and growth that clients experience will be more profound, complete, and long-lasting. Clients will grow in their feelings of self-worth, capacity to internalize healthy values, ability to regulate their behavior in healthy and productive ways, and capacity for benevolent and productive contributions to kinship and community. (Richards & Bergin, 1997, p. 116)

But how do we help our clients understand the importance of living in harmony with the Spirit of Truth in light of professional ethical guidelines that stress that we should "respect the rights of others to hold values, attitudes, and opinions that differ from [our] own" (APA, 1992, Standard 1.09)? Historically, such guidelines have often been interpreted to mean therapists should keep their values out of therapy. Many therapists have adopted an ethically relativistic stance, which assumes that all client values are equally good and valid and that therapists "should not question their clients' values. Values, they also assumed, were irrelevant to mental health and therapeutic change" (Richards, Rector, & Tjeltveit, 1999, p. 134).

Fortunately, most therapists are now aware that the belief that therapists can and should keep their values out of therapy has been discredited. Research has provided evidence that therapists' values

influence every phase of psychotherapy (Bergin, 1980; Bergin, Payne, & Richards, 1996; London, 1986; Lowe, 1976; Tjeltveit, 1986; Woolfolk, 1998). Many professionals now also recognize that ethical relativism, as a philosophy for guiding the practice of psychotherapy, is problematic. Ethical relativism

> creates a dilemma in therapy because it sometimes becomes clear that clients' values and lifestyles have negative emotional, social, or physical consequences (e.g., a married man who values abusing drugs and engaging in promiscuous, unprotected sex increases his and his spouse's risk of contracting AIDS). Ethical relativists cannot logically challenge such values without contradicting the premise that all values are equally good. (Richards et al., 1999, p. 136)

Most mental health professionals now recognize that therapists cannot keep their values out of therapy (Bergin et al., 1996). I believe that therapists *should not* keep out their values. Rather, they should "accept [the fact] that they are value agents and purposely attempt to model and communicate healthy moral and ethical values to their clients" (Richards & Bergin, 1997, p. 131). It is possible for therapists to both respect client diversity and also adopt a strategy for therapy that helps "clients learn to listen to their conscience[s], follow the Spirit of Truth, and internalize healthy values that will help optimize their development and growth" (Richards & Bergin, p. 131). I believe

> it is important for therapists to be open about the values that influence their therapeutic decisions and recommendations throughout the course of therapy. . . . They . . . should openly discuss and help clients examine the values that may be affecting the client's mental health and interpersonal relations . . . by being explicit about values and actively endorsing consensus values that promote healthy functioning, while also communicating to clients that they have the right to disagree with the therapist's values without fear of therapist condemnation, clients' freedom of choice is maximized. (Richards & Bergin, 1997, pp. 132–135)

I recognize that there are dangers in deliberately endorsing and promoting values in therapy. I agree with Bergin (1991) who cautioned that

> a strong interest in value discussions . . . can be problematic if it is overemphasized. It would be unethical to trample on the values

> of clients, and it would be unwise to focus on value issues when other issues may be at the nucleus of the disorder, which is frequently the case in the early stages of treatment. It is vital to be open about values but not coercive, to be a competent professional and not a missionary for a particular belief, and at the same time to be honest enough to recognize how one's value commitments may or may not promote health. (p. 399)

Value themes, therefore, should not always be the central focus of therapy. On some occasions, value discussions may actually be contraindicated. Some clients may have such severe pathology or acute symptoms that they are not capable of rationally responding to value issues.

Finally, my beliefs that there are universally true moral principles and values and that therapists should share their understanding with clients about what they are do not mean I think therapists should tell their clients how to apply these values in a given situation. Ultimately, therapists must permit clients to make their own choices about what they value and how they will apply these values in their lives, but it would be irresponsible for therapists not to share what wisdom they can about values when it is relevant.

Treatment Techniques and Approaches

After making an effort to be clear about their values during the course of treatment, therapists can use a number of other techniques and strategies to help clients explore, clarify, and modify their values, as well as to help them learn to recognize and hearken to impressions from the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost. For example, therapists can ask value-related questions during assessment. What gives your life meaning? What is most important to you in life? What moral, ethical, or spiritual values, if any, do you use to guide your life? Do you feel that your behavior and lifestyle are consistent with the values you profess? Do you think moving in with your boyfriend would be a healthy choice for you (emotionally, spiritually, physically)? If you move in with your boyfriend, is this a decision that will feel congruent with who you are and what you value? Does this decision feel morally right to you?

Therapists may also wish to invite clients to rank-order the values they give priority to in their current lives, using the following

list of values (see Miller and C'de Baca, 1994): achievement, attractiveness, career, care for others, equality for all, fame, family, forgiveness, fun, God's will, growth, happiness, health, honesty, intimacy, justice, knowledge, love, pleasure, popularity, power, rationality, romance, self-control, self-esteem, spirituality, and wealth. After clients have rank-ordered the values they are currently giving priority to, therapists can ask them to rank-order what values they would prefer to have the most priority in their lives. Clients can then be invited to consider where discrepancies exist between current and desired value priorities. Additional values clarification exercises described by Gerald Corey (1983) that I have found helpful with some clients include the Last Year of Your Life exercise, Write Your Philosophy of Life exercise, and Prepare Your Tombstone Inscription exercise. Steven Covey's (1989) Personal Mission Statement exercise can also be helpful.

When religious clients are struggling with difficult lifestyle choices, encouraging them to seek spiritual enlightenment by praying, meditating, reflecting upon their patriarchal blessings (if they are Latter-day Saint), and reading sacred writings can potentially help them spiritually focus and center on the values most important to them. Spiritual enlightenment about the meaning and purpose of their lives and the values that are most important may come to clients as they seek such guidance.

When clients admit confusion about what their values really are or manifest discrepancies between their professed values and their behavior, therapists can explicitly help clients examine and explore their confusion and incongruencies. As they do, therapists can encourage clients to listen to their conscience or inner feelings about what values and behaviors they feel are right, moral, and healthy. With Latter-day Saint clients, therapists may wish to share their belief in the spiritual source of such inner feelings (i.e., the Light of Christ, the Holy Ghost).

When clients lack an understanding of healthy and moral values, therapists can explicitly teach clients which spiritual values and virtues are healthy and desirable. With Latter-day Saint clients, therapists can discuss Church teachings about value issues or encourage clients to visit with their bishops about these issues. With clients of other faiths, therapists can give encouragement to seek

moral guidance from their own religious leaders and sacred writings. Therapists can also share with clients a list or description of the values that mental health professionals regard as healthy (e.g., Jensen & Bergin, 1988; Richards & Bergin, 1997).

As therapists use such interventions with religious clients, it may be appropriate to periodically encourage them to "listen to their hearts" or "consciences" about what values and lifestyle choices feel right to them. Expressing faith in clients' capacity to spiritually discern between good and evil, right and wrong, as well as healthy and unhealthy choices, may be appropriate. Above all, Latter-day Saint and other Christian clients can be encouraged to seek guidance from God and Jesus Christ about their choices.

Case Study

The following case study illustrates my belief that the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost can play a central role in the recovery and healing of many clients. As I have worked with clients, I have often felt that they seem to have an inner sense of what they need to do in their lives in order to work through their pain, heal, and get better. I believe that this inner sense is the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost giving them direction about what they need to do to choose between right or wrong, health and disturbance.

Client Description and Presenting Problem. Frank[1] was a 28-year-old Latter-day Saint male of average height and weight. Frank informed me that he had a history of relationship problems and had decided that perhaps the relationship failures were his fault. He said he wanted to work on himself and gain more insight into why his relationships kept failing.

Background and History. Frank had grown up in a Latter-day Saint home. He said that during high school he had become popular because he was a successful athlete. He became sexually promiscuous and had a number of short-term sexual relationships. In retrospect he recognized that "scoring sexually" had boosted his self-esteem and made him feel he was important and worthwhile. Soon after high school, he made a young Latter-day Saint woman

1. The client's name has been changed to help protect his identity. This case study is shared with the permission of the client.

pregnant, and they got married. After a short time, this marriage ended when she divorced him.

Frank resumed his promiscuous lifestyle and was eventually disfellowshipped from the Church. A couple of years later, he remarried. His second wife was also a Latter-day Saint and had recently divorced the man she had married in the temple because she believed "God wanted her to be with Frank." Frank and his second wife were married civilly but were separated at the time Frank started therapy. They had one child. Frank said that he felt their marriage was a mistake and that within a few months after they were married both he and his wife realized that they really did not like each other, let alone love each other.

Diagnosis. Frank was experiencing dysthymia (chronic moderate depression) when he began working with me. He also met Patrick Carnes's (1989) criteria for a level-one sexual addiction. He used sex to boost his self-esteem and to get away from feelings of depression and from other bad feelings. He had severe marital conflict and dissatisfaction. He did not trust women. He had very low self-esteem, felt unworthy, and said that he perceived himself as morally degenerate. He felt alienated from God and from the Church. He was not happy in his blue-collar job because it did not challenge him intellectually.

Summary of Treatment Process. As I have described in detail elsewhere (Richards & Bergin, 1997), my theistic spiritual strategy is integrative in that I incorporate perspectives and interventions from some of the mainstream secular therapy traditions that can be reconciled or theoretically reframed in a manner consistent with the theistic assumptions I describe at the beginning of this article.

My core theoretical and spiritual assumptions, which include the beliefs that God lives and that my clients are children of God, were at the core of my work with Frank. Another core assumption that influenced my work with Frank was my belief that it would be important for Frank to eventually begin living more in harmony with his values. Even though Frank was not active in the Church and his membership was on probation because he had been disfellowshipped, Frank acknowledged that his sexual promiscuity and pornography addiction conflicted with his core beliefs about what was right and wrong. He felt guilt and shame whenever he engaged

in these behaviors. From the outset of therapy, I assumed these issues would need to be dealt with in order for him to fully heal and grow.

In my treatment, I used several interventions that secular schools of psychotherapy have advocated. I provided an environment of safety and acceptance and listened and responded empathetically. I also explored Frank's childhood and early experiences with his mother and with other women. I helped Frank identify and modify some of his dysfunctional assumptions about himself, women, and God. I also asked Frank to bring in his wife, but the session was a disaster. It blew up into a major conflict, and Frank refused further marital sessions. That was the least effective intervention I tried, but the other things I mentioned did seem to help.

I also used a number of spiritual interventions with Frank. We had numerous discussions about his spiritual beliefs and how he felt about his alienation from the Church. We discussed the Atonement, grace, and forgiveness, and I suggested readings on these topics, including the book *Believing Christ* (Robinson, 1992). Frank initially did not believe that he could be forgiven and found it difficult to accept that the grace of Jesus Christ could apply to him.

On many occasions, I affirmed Frank's worth as a child of God and helped him recognize the importance of living in harmony with his values. I did not have to preach. All I did was affirm what Frank was already saying to me, namely, that he did not feel good about violating his beliefs and values. I occasionally encouraged Frank to listen to his heart and inner feelings about what was right for him to do with his life, including his marriage, career, and involvement in the Church. Frank started to pray more and began to report that he did have feelings and impressions about what was right and wrong and about how he should live his life. He began to follow these inner impressions more and more often.

A major milestone for Frank in listening to the prompting of his conscience occurred when an attractive woman propositioned him. Frank was tempted by her proposition and took her phone number, saying he would call her. After he got home, he said, he had a powerful, dark feeling come over him. The feeling of darkness was so strong it frightened him, and he realized he should not see the woman. In the past, Frank had always given in to such sexual opportunities, so such self-denial represented a major change in his behavior.

A number of other important changes occurred in Frank's relationship with the Church and with God. He reported that he felt closer to God and to the Savior. He stated that he felt more peace and forgiveness regarding the many mistakes he had made in the past. He began attending church again, and a major spiritual milestone occurred when his Church court reconvened and he was reinstated in the Church. About a year later, he was ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood, and a few months afterward, he received a temple recommend. This was another major milestone because it had necessitated that he overcome his pornography and masturbation problems.

During the course of therapy, Frank's depression became less frequent and less severe. He eventually quit his blue-collar job and went back to college. Frank did so in spite of the objections of his wife, who did not want him to quit because of the good income it provided for the family. But Frank was very unhappy in the job and felt it did not permit him to use the talents and gifts God had given him. Frank earned very high grades during his last two years of college, graduated, took the LSAT, received very high scores on it, and was admitted to several of the top law schools in the country.

Frank was not able to salvage his marriage. Despite his efforts to improve his relationship with his wife, their relationship continued to have no intimacy, no closeness, no shared interests, and no trust. Frank had no desire to go to the temple with her, nor, it appeared, did she with him. Frank believed that his wife cared more about his ability to provide financial support for her than about having a loving, close relationship with him. After over two years of agonizing about it, Frank finally decided he should get divorced. This was the toughest decision I saw Frank make, and he made it only after many months of careful deliberation and prayer. Ultimately, Frank did it because he believed it was the right thing to do.

Before we terminated therapy, Frank wrote the following, in which he shared with me his feelings about his progress:

> I have gained a much greater self-esteem. I now have the confidence necessary to make difficult decisions and stick with them. Due to this increase in self-esteem I like myself more, which helps me love others more. I have also learned to be more open in my communication and to stand up for myself in positive

ways. I have learned to forgive myself and to recognize and accept my nature instead of constantly trying to fight it. Spiritually I have grown immensely. I have learned how to use prayer and recognize its answers and to trust in powers greater than mine. All of these things combined have given me a much greater peace of mind, not that things are perfect by any means, but I believe all will be well if I stick to my standards and do what I know to be right.

God lives. Through the influence of the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost, we can receive guidance and help in our lives—help to do what is right, help in our pain and troubles, and help in our journeys of healing and growth. I hope that as professionals we can help our clients discover and affirm this wonderful reality.

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Comparing the Practical Implications of Secular and Christian Truth in Psychotherapy

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

—John 14:6

It is a sad fact of the psychotherapy profession that truth is rarely discussed, at least in any formal way. We recently sampled a number of psychotherapy journals in the ample library of Brigham Young University and found no article to have the term *truth* in its abstract, let alone in its title. Consider this for a moment. These journals presumably contain the formalized concerns of the discipline, and these abstracts supposedly summarize the main ideas of these concerns. Yet none of them evidenced any formal concern for truth. This lack of formal concern is probably not a surprise to many psychotherapists. Nevertheless, it is, we believe, a profound indictment of the psychotherapy discipline.

This is not to say that truth is never discussed or that truth does not underlie the many activities of therapists. Indeed, therapists deal with truth every day as they talk about what is right or good for their clients. Even when they avoid dictating truth for their clients, this avoidance is itself a type of truth. As Webster's dictionary (1981) tells us, truth is whatever is the "actual state of the matter" (p. 1245)—the actual state of goodness or rightness. Consequently, anything that therapists might consider good or right in therapy, including strategies that help clients discover their own truth, involves truth in this sense. Our contention is that these truth considerations are rarely acknowledged explicitly. They are rarely brought into the open for disciplinary discussion.

This, we submit, is a dangerous situation. Sidestepping the explicit discussion of truth is probably dangerous for any discipline, but this is not our primary concern here. Our primary concern is the therapist who is Christian. Christian therapists are typically trained in the most popular understanding of truth in the social sciences. Our main contention is that this popular understanding of truth is not Christian truth. Christian therapists need to know that Christian truth is not only different from this understanding but radically different (Marshall, 1990; Palmer, 1983; Slife, 1999c; Slife & Calapp, 2000). We hasten to add that this radical difference is not merely philosophical or theological in nature. This radical difference is pivotal to who therapists are and how they practice (cf. Richardson, Fowers, and Guignon, 1999; Slife, Williams, & Barlow, 2001), as we will attempt to demonstrate.

To do this, we must first sketch our culture's common notion of truth. We could use several labels for this particular brand of truth, but let us call it secular truth for the purposes of this chapter. Secular truth originates primarily where a lot of Western intellectual culture primarily originates—Greek philosophy and culture, and thus Hellenism (Slife, 2000).[1] We will not bore you with the historical details, but suffice it to say that when the noted philosopher Alfred North Whitehead said that all Western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato, he was thinking about truth, among other things. Consequently, we outline how this popular notion of truth in Western culture has affected psychotherapy theories and practices.

Actually, secular truth has four distinct, yet overlapping, characteristics (see table 1; Slife, 1999a).[2] We realize that some of the terms contained in this table are not in the common parlance of psychotherapists, but bear with us. We plan to explain them carefully, one by one, and then attempt to show how each has influenced psychotherapy theory and practice. As one can also see in this table, we have outlined four contrasting characteristics of Christian truth, as verbalized primarily by C. S. Lewis (1940; 1942; 1947; 1952; 1955; see also Slife, 1999a). We also describe these four contrasting Christian characteristics and review their implications for theory and therapy.

A few words of caution before we begin: we are not trying to indict individual psychotherapists and counselors, nor are we indicting others who may use psychological theories, such as ecclesiastical leaders and clients. Indeed, we are betting that many who are Christian have instinctively moved away from these secular characteristics of truth. Rather, we are trying to indict the *formal* understandings of psychotherapy. As we will attempt to show, it is

1. Hellenism is also an important historical ingredient of modernism (Gunton, 1993). Therefore, this account of secular truth is more akin to modernism than postmodernism (see Slife, 1999b).

2. The list of characteristics described here is not intended to be comprehensive. Indeed, we recognize there are a number of other contrasting characteristics of secular and Christian truth that have important implications for psychotherapy, such as reducibility versus irreducibility, comprehensiveness versus incompleteness, and so forth (see Slife, 1999a).

TABLE 1

Comparing the Practical Implications of Secular and Christian Truth in Psychotherapy

Secular Truth			Christian Truth		
Attributes	**Theory**	**Therapy**	**Attributes**	**Theory**	**Therapy**
Propositionality	Truth is a set of abstract propositions found in theories, ethical codes, and diagnostic systems.	Therapists must focus more attention on theoretical abstractions than on the actual client and must teach clients to focus on abstract principles as well.	Concreteness	Truth is embodied in the concrete being of the living Christ, with whom we can all form real relationships.	Therapists focus on the actual client through sensitivity to the Spirit of the Lord present in the therapy room.
Contextlessness	Truth lies outside all locations and eras and enters particular contexts only when it is applied or translated.	Therapists and clients must learn both abstraction and application skills to use theories and techniques in the particular contexts of therapy.	Contextuality	Truth is a fully contextual, divine being who can communicate with us in our particular contexts and our particular hearts.	Therapists must allow their own conceptions to be disrupted by the particular client and the Spirit of the Lord. Clients must also be sensitized to divine communications.
Unchangeability	Truth has not been changed, and it cannot be changed. It does not change across time, and it does not change across cultures.	Therapists must attend primarily to the unchangeable aspects of therapy rather than the frequently overlooked, momentary changes in the client.	Changeability	Truth may be unchanging in some respects, but it is not unchangeable. Truth can change as the context of our lives change.	Therapists should attend to momentary changes as much as the unchanging and should be prepared to momentarily change their conceptions of the client.
Passivity	Truth does not extend itself to us and can be known only through the correct application of the right method or technique.	Therapists must rely on therapeutic methods that have implicit biases about the world, which may prevent a truthful conception of what is right or good for clients.	Activity	The Truth of Christ reaches out to us in our particular context and actively seeks us as much as we might seek it.	Through continual revelation, therapists can know what is right or good and teach clients to be receptive to this revelation as well.

these formal theories and strategies that are founded upon secular truth and that are distinctly dissimilar from Christian truth. However, those who use these formal theories and strategies are not off the hook entirely. We also contend that many of these formal theories and strategies do affect the practice of such therapists, perhaps in subtle ways, but affect it they do, particularly if they are not readily recognized. In this sense, describing these characteristics and their Christian counterparts should effect a kind of consciousness raising, if not sensitivity to how a Christian therapist might uniquely proceed.

Propositionality versus Concreteness

The first characteristic of secular truth is its propositionality (Gadamer, 1995; Kemp, 1998; Lewis, 2001; Slife, 1999a; Slife, 1999b). That is, truth is thought to exist as a set of logical propositions or, more popularly, as a set of principles. This aspect of popular truth is readily seen in our culture's rendition of ethical codes. Most professional organizations, for instance, represent their ethics in written principles, because principles are thought to be sufficiently abstract to be applicable to all the situations in which professionals might encounter ethical questions (Kimmel, 1996). In this sense, the abstract nature of such propositions makes them seem ideal for the universal nature of ethics.

Of course, the ethics of our professional organizations are not the only aspects of our disciplines to depend upon abstract principles. Indeed, virtually all theories of the social sciences partake of this propositionality. Virtually all our diagnostic and therapeutic systems consist of abstract and logical principles. This property of our theories is so pervasive that it is presumed to be the way all theories are, rather than the way a particular philosophy of truth has implied our theories should be.

If, in fact, such theoretical abstractions are truth, then the obvious practical implication is that therapists should focus their primary attention on these propositions. In other words, if the therapist is interested at all in the "actual state" of the client—the truth of the client—not to mention what is good or right for the client, then the real truth of the client is manifested in a set of propositions.

We may not know which set of propositions—which theory—but we supposedly know that it is propositional in nature, because truth, whatever it is, is propositional in nature.

In this sense, the concrete clients themselves are secondary to the abstract principles that supposedly underlie them. Clients are merely where the principles occur, the vessel through which these abstractions are manifested. Psychoanalysts, for example, are interested in the clients' ego or superego—theoretical abstractions, to be sure. Likewise, behaviorists understand clients only insofar as they understand the principles of reinforcement and punishment. Cognitivists, too, understand their clients through their cognitive structure and beliefs. And for humanists, the truth of the client lies in the principles of organismic valuation and self-actualization. The point here is that what is ultimately important to these theories is their abstractions, not the concrete clients themselves.

The propositionality of secular truth will also lead therapists to teach their clients to focus on principles. Secular therapists must ultimately assume that their clients' well-being depends on their learning the principles of "healthy" behavior. Consequently, psychoanalysts will inevitably instruct clients on how to maintain a healthy ego; behaviorists will teach clients that reinforcement and punishment are the guiding principles of life and will endeavor to teach clients to apply those principles appropriately, and so on. Yet again, the focus is removed from clients as concrete individuals, and the emphasis is placed instead on the abstract principles that are supposed to underlie their behavior.

To even imply that Christianity violates the familiar and, in some sense, cherished secular notion of propositions and principles may be provocative. Indeed, many may assume that propositions and principles are the essence of Christianity. If so, we ask them to consider the possibility that this assumption is the encroachment of the "philosophy of men" (in this case Greek philosophy) into Christianity (Barbour, 1997; Palmer, 1983; Slife, 1999a; Slife, Hope, & Nebeker, 1999). Actually, Christian truth is easily distinguishable from secular truth, especially in light of Christ's astounding pronouncement "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Notice that Christ did not say that he *knows* the truth or that he *carries* with him the principles of truth or that he *exemplifies* these

propositions. Christ said that he *is* the truth. Jesus Christ is the Word or Truth made flesh. Needless to say, this concrete, embodied truth is a radical departure from Hellenistic and Western traditions of propositional truth.

C. S. Lewis (1942) was very aware of the concrete nature of Christian truth. In the *Screwtape Letters,* for example, Lewis described the divine presence as "completely real" and there "in the room" with him (p. 22). This concrete truth is not necessarily an empirical substance, with truth having to be a sensory experience. However, as Lewis (1955) showed, this truth is an "objective" presence nevertheless (p. 221), one that allows us to converse with it and form a relationship with it. We have, declared Lewis (1955) in *Surprised by Joy,* "a commerce with something which, by refusing to identify itself with any object of the senses . . . proclaims itself sheerly objective. Far more objective than [conventional] bodies, for [the living Christ] is not, like them, clothed in our senses" (p. 220).[3]

Such a claim should not be surprising to a Christian. Christians consider the historical Christ, as the Word Made Flesh, to continue to live, so a real relationship can be formed with an objective and divine presence, even today. One cannot form a personal relationship with an abstract set of propositions. Some therapists may have enjoyed learning their favorite theory of therapy. However, few would consider this a personal relationship with the theory itself. It is an abstraction, after all, and thus does not possess the necessary concreteness with which to form a relationship.

Another way to understand the embodied truth of Christianity is to understand ourselves as Christ's "body." In this sense, the Truth of Christ is literally in and operating through us as concrete beings. Consider Lewis's (1952) writings in *Mere Christianity:* "Let me make it quite clear that when Christians say the Christ-life is in them, they

3. Lewis's quotation here may appear to differ from some Christian perspectives. However, Lewis's point is that Christ can be more objective (more real) than conventionally understood, and this objectivity does not have to occur through our senses or accord with the philosophy of empiricism. Lewis's position could be consonant with a "glorified body" that is not commonly experienced through our eyes or our touch.

do not mean simply something mental [or propositional]. When they speak of being 'in Christ' or of Christ being 'in them,' this is not simply a way of saying that they are thinking about Christ or copying Him. They mean that Christ is actually operating through [their bodies]" (p. 49).

In this sense, Christ can operate through therapists by leading them to focus on their clients, rather than on any abstraction of their clients. Just as Christ supersedes any principle that might be ascribed to him, therapists' clients supersede any theoretical abstractions ascribed to them. Therapists know their clients not by knowing their reinforcement histories or their repressed libido or their irrational beliefs. Therapists know their clients by forming a relationship with the client as a person rather than as a manifestation of abstract principles.

Still, this move away from abstractions is easier said than done, especially in view of our strong Western intellectual heritage. Such a move is accomplished only with the help of Christ himself, through the Holy Spirit. That is, the living, concrete being of Christ must be "in us," as Lewis said, to form the type of relationships of which we are speaking. We read in John 1:9 that "the light of Christ lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Therefore, whether or not Christ's presence is acknowledged, he is nevertheless present in the broad therapeutic context and in our relationship with the client, inviting both of us to the good, inviting both of us to truth. As Christian therapists, we must become sensitive to His invitations, which can occur only if we first reject the idea that truth consists of abstract theories.

We do not advocate the rejection of theories altogether. We need theories to help organize and make sense of things and events. However, we do not have to make our theories into truths. We do not have to reify our pet principles, making our own organization of reality the actual state of the matter—truth. Still, it is tempting in our Western culture to think of the most fundamental things, the most truthful things, as abstract principles—whether theoretical or religious. The problem is that such principles can ultimately hamper our recognition of the truth that is there (concretely) in the therapy room with us—the Holy Spirit.

Turning Freud Upside Down

Consider the example of Peter who was commanded in a vision to slay and eat animals that were unclean according to Jewish law. Initially, he refused to do so because it violated his principles (Acts 10:14). Indeed, it violated a widely accepted theory and principle of his day described in Leviticus 11. Like many cherished therapeutic principles, this principle was considered truth, even the God-given truth. Yet Peter was not stymied by this moral dilemma because he knew that the concrete, experienced Christ superseded any principle, even a principle that Christ himself may have offered at one time. Thus, when a voice in the vision told Peter, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts 10:14), he was prepared to obey the Lord, even if it violated this cherished Jewish principle. Later, when Peter was invited by Cornelius, a Gentile, to preach the gospel to him and his household, the meaning of the vision became clear, and he went and did so, saying:

> Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for. (Acts 10:28, 29)

If Peter had relied solely on his principles—whatever their source and however helpful they might have been—he would have been closed to the moment-by-moment commandments of Christ. Peter's experience helps us to see that there are two types of commandments: the abstract propositions of secular truth and the concrete, moment-by-moment, promptings of the Spirit. The former is easily revealed to be non-Christian because a complete knowledge of such propositions would imply that we no longer needed Christ; we could rely on just the commandments themselves. The latter, however, requires a constant contact with our Lord and Savior because these commandments come directly from his "voice" (Acts 11:9), as Peter put it, and not from a list of abstract principles.

Therapists must be as sensitive as Peter to the Lord's guidance and equally ready to violate our cherished theories and case conceptualizations. Good therapists already know this antiprinciple, because they know how easy it is for them to be fixed on a particular logical strategy in therapy and to become less responsive to their

clients and our Lord. One of us (Slife) was blessed recently by a client's anger because it took this client's anger to burst through Slife's conceptual bubble. With the help of the Lord, however, Slife was able to transcend his own abstractions of the client to remain more constantly in touch with Him and the client.

The concreteness of Christian truth also means that we do not teach our clients to rely exclusively on abstract principles. Instead, we teach our clients relationship skills that facilitate their contact with truth. Helping them to be more loving and sensitive to others in their families, workplaces, and communities will make them more available to the invitations of the Lord, whether or not they are Christian. Indeed, if we teach our clients to become meek, submissive, and humble, as admonished by James (ch. 4), the clients' relationships with others will inevitably become more truthful because they will be filled with Christ's presence (as discussed above) and more open to his moment-to-moment influences.

Contextlessness versus Contextuality

The second characteristic of secular truth is its contextlessness (Baudet, Jean-Larose, & Legrose, 1994; Bernstein, 1983; Slife, 1999a; Slife, 1999b). By contextlessness we mean that the propositions of secular truth cannot be located in any particular context or situation. Although ethical codes can be represented on a particular piece of paper, the truth of these propositions does not exist in any unique location or era (e.g., the piece of paper) because it must be applicable to all locations and eras. Secular truth, then, does not reside in any particular situation; it exists in some metaphysical realm outside all situations. Therefore, this truth enters particular contexts only when it is translated and tailored to the unique situation at hand, so it cannot already be part of that particular context.

This lack of context for secular truth has important implications for therapy. Perhaps most importantly, all therapy takes place in a particular context—perhaps many particular contexts. However, therapy is never conducted outside of particulars, whether they are the particulars of the physical context, historical context, social context, or spiritual context. There is always some essential uniqueness to the context. Consequently, therapists must contextualize and particularize their theories and techniques for

these abstractions and universals to be of any use. That is, therapists must tailor or translate these theories and techniques into the unique context of the therapy session.

As most therapists will attest, this tailoring and translating are not easy tasks (Austen, 1997; Slife & Reber, 2001). In fact, the abstractions and propositions of secular truth (e.g., validated theory) offer no help in this contextualizing. Because theoretical propositions must be universal and transcendent of particular situations, they cannot by their very nature instruct us about how to be particular and concrete. This is the reason supervised experience is so essential to therapy training; it provides a contextual bridge between the universal abstractions of theory and the particular concretenesses of practice.

The difficulty of this arrangement is that therapists must learn two distinct sets of skills: abstraction skills and application skills. One must first learn how to understand and develop theoretical propositions that are contextless and impractical by their very natures. Then one must learn a completely different set of skills to apply these propositions. If this arrangement sounds familiar, it is because this is the popular theory-practice distinction that secular truth has fostered. Theory is an abstract set of principles, and practice is the application of those principles to a particular context. However, this familiar arrangement is not itself a truth; it is a Hellenistic implication of truth and thus of theory and practice.

This approach to theory and practice might make sense if the principles of theory functioned as advertised (i.e., they were applicable to everyone in every specified situation). However, therapists have increasingly discovered a problem: the particulars of their therapeutic experiences reveal that these principles are not and can never be as universal as they are supposed to be. Because these principles were formulated by particular individuals in particular circumstances for particular client problems, their range of domain is inevitably too narrow. This shortcoming is why, as we have shown in another article (Slife & Reber, 2001), so many therapists have moved to eclecticism; they have sensed that traditional single theories are not as universal as they first thought, so they have combined these theories together into an eclecticism.

To complicate matters further, the therapist must also teach the client two sets of skills. Clients must first learn abstraction skills to understand the principles that supposedly underlie their behaviors. Then, clients must acquire application skills to know how to effectively tailor the correct principle to the unique context at hand. Our personal experience is that clients typically have trouble with one set of skills or the other; they seem to be either too theoretical or too practical. In either case, they must eventually learn both sets of skills to know and use secular truth in their lives.

Let us now turn to the Christian counterpoint to contextlessness to see how it relieves us of the need for these skills. Perhaps it goes without saying that a concrete, embodied truth, such as Christ, cannot be a contextless truth. After all, the historic Jesus existed in a particular time and a particular place and thus was a fully contextual being who claimed to *be* truth. As Lewis (1940) noted so persuasively in his book *The Problem of Pain*, "Either [Christ] was a raving lunatic of an unusually abominable type, or else He was, and is, precisely what He said [truth]" (p. 21). And, as we noted above, in the eyes of Christians, Jesus lives. If Jesus was a fully contextual and divine being historically, why would we presume that he can no longer be such a being after his resurrection?

Does not Christ promise us that he is with us *in* our particular contexts? His truth is not some abstraction, which we then have to translate into a particular context; his truth is part of the context itself—through the Holy Spirit and through the people who have him in their hearts. If Christian truth provides us only with abstract principles or abstract divinities, then we are truly lost, because the details of how these principles get applied are crucial to what is right and wrong in a particular context. As the saying goes, "The devil is in the details."

The contextuality of Christian truth means that it is present in the here-and-now of the therapeutic context; it is directly accessible to the therapist, with no abstraction or application skills necessary. Indeed, from this perspective, it is only by letting go of case conceptualizations and theoretical principles, at least as primary authorities, and attending to the present context of the therapeutic relationship that therapists can truly know and help the client. Just as Saint Paul let go of Pharisaic law on the road to Damascus

because of a disruption by the Truth (Acts 9), therapists must also allow their own ideals and theories to be disrupted by the Spirit to permit the fully contextual Christ to be acknowledged.

This acknowledgment need not be understood in explicitly religious terms. No religious rhetoric is necessary to sensitize clients to the Holy Spirit or Light of Christ. This sensitivity may be framed as "developing a conscience" or facilitating one's "moral responsiveness." The point is that even nonreligious clients can take advantage of this truth and probably already do, whether or not they realize it. Consider pianists who must let go of their concerns for the sequence of the notes—the individual movements of their fingers—to let the spirit of the music swell into their performance.

Likewise for therapists and clients, the abstract principles of theories can get in the way of their therapeutic relationships and their "natural," taken-for-granted sense of what to do in a given context. All people, religious or not, can experience what Terry Warner (1992) described as a "sense of what others need from us and how we ought to act toward them" (p. 12). Indeed, this may be the primary calling of the Christian therapist—helping the client to develop this sense. The first step in this development is to know *what* we are to sense. We are not intended to sense abstractions that supposedly exist outside the unique situations of our lives. We are intended to sense the divine being of Christ, who knows the very hairs on our heads and thus the very uniqueness of our particular situations and can advise us accordingly.

Unchangeability versus Changeability

The third characteristic of secular truth is its unchangeability (Guthrie, 1975; Russel, 1972; Slife, 1999a). This characteristic implies that truth is the way it is because it is the way it has to be. It cannot be any other way. Truth has not been changed, and it cannot be changed. It does not change across time, and it does not change across cultures. Ethical codes cannot be otherwise than they are if they are truthful. People can, of course, lie or misrepresent truth, but truth itself is unchangeable.

This unchangeability has subtle, but dramatic, effects on psychotherapy. For instance, all good theorists have presumed that a valid theory of psychotherapy is unchangeable. Although such theories

often consider how people change—how they develop and become the way they are—true and valid theories concern the more basic, supposedly unchangeable, patterns that govern this development or becoming. Theorists Freud, Skinner, and Rogers were all concerned with change, yet all three men postulated theories and techniques regarding this change that were themselves supposedly unchangeable and universal across time (different eras) and space (different cultures). Whether ego, reinforcement, or actualization on the theory side or transference, conditioning, or facilitation on the therapy side, the basic principles and techniques of clients and their therapy are presumed not to change. The reason is that the truth of change itself—the reality "behind" change—is thought to be immutable.

Unfortunately, this immutability focuses the therapist's attention on the unchangeable rather than the changeable. Because truth is the actual state of things, the actual state of the client is unchangeable, even though the expressed purpose of therapy is to effect change. The paradox is that the unchangeability of truth leads to a focus on the stable and static aspects of clients, when the main task of the therapist is to facilitate change. If therapists focus on their main task, they cannot focus on the truth—the actual state—of the client. If, on the other hand, therapists focus on the truth of the client, then this supposed immutability prevents the therapist from changing the client's actual state—the therapist's main task. This paradox is the reason that clients who are diagnosed as schizophrenic and are later free of their symptoms are still schizophrenic but "in remission." Their schizophrenia is viewed as the truth of their condition and thus unchangeable in principle.

The problem is that people with schizophrenia never really "have" schizophrenia all the time. It is only our conceptions of them, as fostered by our understanding of unchangeable truth, that never really change. People with schizophrenia change constantly. Even those who exhibit the most psychotic of schizophrenic symptoms are often symptom free for certain periods of time. The reason we give them the label of "schizophrenic" as opposed to "intermittently schizophrenic" is because therapists have been schooled to think that the real truth of the patient is constant and unchangeable. Consequently, we attend primarily to their schizophrenic

episodes, rather than their lucid episodes, and think of the patient's condition as being constant.

D. L. Rosenhan (1973) demonstrated some of the problems with this therapeutic emphasis on unchangeability many years ago. Rosenhan asked several perfectly normal people to tell different psychiatric hospital staffs accurate information about themselves, except for one thing—he asked them to say that they were "hearing voices." Immediately after being admitted to separate hospitals, these people reported that they had ceased hearing voices and exhibited no other symptoms of abnormality. However, the average stay of these "pseudopatients," as recommended by the hospital staff, was nineteen days. During this stay, their normal behaviors were constantly pathologized, and all ultimately left the hospital with the diagnosis of schizophrenia in remission.

We could debate the methods of the Rosenhan (1973) study, but it seems clear that diagnoses and theories do color our professional thinking and our perceiving. In fact, there is a large program of social-psychological research (e.g., Beyers & Slife, 2000) that shows how frequently we confirm our own biases and how frequently we assume that our own therapeutic propositions—from diagnosis to treatment—are unchangeable, in spite of evidence to the contrary (see Myers, 2002 for a review).

These findings apply to our clients as well. One of us (Slife) supervised a student therapist many years ago whose client listed her symptoms in a sad and slow manner and confessed that her symptoms were completely puzzling to her. At the end of this list, the student therapist told his client that these were the symptoms of depression, at which point the client sat bolt upright and shouted with sheer joy, "That's it! I'm depressed." Within a few seconds, this client was back to her sad speech, and the therapist was back to his original line of questioning. Neither therapist nor client seemed to notice the momentary change that had occurred.

When both the therapist and the client were asked about this incident following the session, neither seemed to have any awareness of the change. The therapist was looking for the things that made his client a "depressive," and the client was looking for whatever fit her conception of herself. Both held the unrecognized belief that the most profound aspects of human nature—truth—are

unchangeable. Momentary changes are at best secondary and more likely irrelevant.

Secular and Christian Truth

Interestingly, this widespread belief within psychotherapy is inconsistent with Christianity. If the living Christ, as embodied truth, is himself unchangeable, then his actions would have no meaning because he would not be able to do otherwise than he did. What would Christ's love mean, for instance, if he were not able to do otherwise? How meaningful would your spouse consider your pledge of love if you could not pledge otherwise? We could program our computers to say, "I love you," but this phrase would have no meaning because the computer could not say otherwise. Similarly, how much stock would we put in Jesus's healing of the sick or his compassion for the poor, if every action and attitude was programmed—without any choice? His agency, his ability to change, is crucial to the meaning of his actions.

It is true that we do not usually think of divine beings as being changeable. In fact, most religious people consider such holy entities to be steadfast and faithful. How, then, can we say that Christ, as the truth, is changeable? The key is that the ability to change one's own actions and attitudes does not preclude commitment and covenant.[4] That is, Christ can be unchang*ing* without also having to be unchange*able.*

As C. S. Lewis (1947) expressed it in his book *Miracles*, "The living fountain of divine energy . . . does in fact, for us, commonly fall into . . . patterns. But to think that a disturbance of [such patterns] would constitute a breach of the living rule and organic unity [of] God . . . is a mistake" (p. 97). In other words, the truth of Christ can form unchanging patterns, such as his trustworthiness. However, this does not mean that Christ himself is unable to change or unable to minister to changing situations. Christ, as truth, ministers to us

4. We would argue that covenants and commitments require this ability. A divine being that is changeable can truly love because he does not have to love. He may feel he has to love in the sense of keeping his commitments, but he does not have to love in the sense of being forced to love. If he were forced, his love would be no different from that of a robot that is forced by its programming to act lovingly. If, on the other hand, he has real choices and possibilities, then he can truly be a moral being and thus be praised. Indeed, this is part of the wonder of the Lord's continual love for us as sinners—he does not have to love us.

where we are—in our particular context—and if this context changes, then the way he ministers to us changes as well.

In this sense, truth itself, from a Christian standpoint, can vary from situation to situation. We are not arguing a relativism here, where ultimately "anything goes." We are arguing a changeable, absolute truth, where what is right and good and appropriate can change from context to context, with the truth of Christ as the deciding factor. In most situations, one should not steal the bread, but in some situations, it might be the right thing to do. This changeability applies even to previously decreed "commandments," as we noted earlier in the example of Peter and the Gentiles. The point is that our eyes have to be constantly on this embodied truth. We cannot assume that our knowledge of moral principles will work in the next context; the next context could be just enough different from the previous situation for the principles to be wrong. Only a constant contact with the Truth Made Flesh will suffice.

For the Christian therapist, this means first that the changing can be as much a part of truth as the unchanging. Christian truth is fundamentally changeable—able to change—though not required to change. Second, the context of the situation must be taken into account to decide truth; what is good for one client is not necessarily good for another. What is good for one session, even with the same client, is not necessarily good for the next session.

Third, momentary changes can be fundamentally important. The brief moment of joy experienced by the depressed client (above) could have been monumentally important. Why was she so jubilant? Why then? How was it possible for her to move so quickly from despair to elation? Why did she overlook this change? How often did she overlook it during the day? Any one of these questions could have been pivotal to treatment, yet our focus on unchangeability prevents our gaining answers to them.

Passivity versus Activity

The fourth and final characteristic of Western, secular truth is its passivity. That is, truth is not something that acts on its own accord. It has no will of its own nor any means of extending itself to us. Truth principles, such as ethical codes, presumably lie "out there" uncaringly, waiting for us to discover them. In much the

same sense that truth is unchangeable, it is also quite passive and does not intervene in our affairs or reach out to us on its own. It can perhaps change us or suggest important implications for our lives, but it cannot do so until we discover and comprehend it. Secular truth does not discover and comprehend us; we must discover and comprehend it.

This need for discovery was the original impetus for methods. The passive and concealed nature of truth implies that some means are necessary to "dig" it out. Consequently, methods have become one of the hallmarks of the modern age (Polkinghorne, 1990). Some critics have even accused social scientists of methodolatry, that is, making an idol of their methods (Danziger, 1990). The scientific method is, of course, the most prominent of these, as it was formulated to discover and comprehend the truths of nature (Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Slife & Gantt, 1999; Slife & Williams, 1995). Because these truths do not reveal themselves, we needed a method to bring these truths to scientific light.

The same rationale is given for therapeutic method. Indeed, for many people therapy is synonymous with the notion of method. Some type of technique is considered necessary to discern the truths of the client. For example, one of us (Slife) has known whole departments of psychology that did not know what to do with existential psychotherapy because it consisted of no formalized method (Yalom, 1980). This lack of formalized method made existentialism not only difficult to understand as a valid therapy but also difficult to view as a possible truth. The point is that the passivity of secular truth has led to the seeming necessity of some step-by-step method or treatment system.

Another implication of passivity is that the therapist and client can never be certain of the truthfulness of what the method reveals. There is an "in principle" problem that prevents this certainty: methods have to be formulated *before* the subject matter is investigated (and truth can be known). This sequence of method before truth means that researchers have to make assumptions about the nature of the subject matter—biases about how and what to study—before its investigation can even begin (Gadamer, 1995). Therefore, method and investigation are not only necessary, from the perspective of secular truth, but also inherently biased. Just as a

screwdriver is configured to fit screws, so, too, a scientific or a therapeutic method has to be configured to fit a particular investigative world, which is assumed before the world can be known.

Problems occur, of course, when we attempt to pound nails with a screwdriver or when we attempt to treat clients with an inappropriate therapy technique. One might hope that the misfit of technique and client would be immediately detected and another "tool" employed. Certainly, this quick detection would seem to be the case with a screwdriver and a nail. However, the problem is more complicated with a technique and a client because the technique comes with an implicit, if not explicit, worldview.

The psychoanalyst, for example, actually appears to experience egos and superegos, whereas the cognitivist actually seems to experience rational and irrational beliefs. The point is that the worldview implicit in a particular method often prevents us from knowing that the tool or technique is not fitting the task or client. Because the theory underlying the technique must be presumed before seeing the client and because the theory directs our attention away from and toward certain events, we may never know that our technique is wrong. This bias of a theory is another reason that many psychotherapists have moved to eclecticism—to avoid being so biased.

The difficulty is that this avoidance is impossible (Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Slife & Reber, 2001). From the perspective of secular truth, all of us, including the eclectics, must be presumptuous about our methods. We are all caught in the trap of presuming our methods of investigation before we can know the subject being investigated (Taylor, 1979). Even a series of seemingly successful investigations can still be misfit and biased. (For example, a screwdriver could pound a few nails.) It is as if the process is backwards: common sense would seem to say that we should get a feeling for the truth of our subject (or client) before we choose a method. However, the passivity of truth makes this common sense impossible. We have to adopt a method to reveal the truth of the client even to get a correct feeling for the client. The technique cart is always before the subject-matter horse because the truth or appropriateness of a method can only be revealed once a method has been applied.

Thankfully, these problems do not arise with Christian truth. Jesus Christ, *as* truth, is not only alive but also active. Truth, in this sense, is seeking us as much as we are seeking it. It is—or rather, He is—not waiting for us to formulate certain methodologies. He is not waiting to be discovered in the passive secular sense. As Lewis (1952) put it in *Mere Christianity*, "When you come to know God, the initiative lies on His side. If He does not show Himself, nothing you can do will enable you to find him" (p. 144).

From Lewis's perspective, Christ—via the Holy Spirit—is alive and active. God has intervened through his Atonement and is continuing to intervene in our particular lives, whether or not we recognize this Truth. Indeed, none of us would know truth without this activity, because no human-made method would ever reveal this Truth without the Truth's willingness to be revealed. Certainly, none of us could form a personal relationship with this Truth without Him reaching for us as we reach for Him.

In therapy, this type of activity implies that no special technique or method is necessary for discerning the truth of Christ. If he wishes to reach us, and we have faith that he does, then no lack of method or even an inappropriate method will stop his reaching us. This is the reason that uneducated and unsophisticated people can be so holy and discerning; they do not need sophisticated methods and education to know truth. They need only what the therapist and client need—receptivity to the Lord's ever-present invitations.

No explicit prayer is even necessary to invite the Lord into the therapy context, because he is already present in one way or another. This presence is evidenced by the fact that we so often sense what is right and good in the various contexts of our lives. Although we sometimes have ethical dilemmas, the vast majority of the time we know exactly what we should do because he is always with us. Our continual sensing of rightness and goodness is from our Lord, from the Truth. This sensing does not demand an explicit recognition of Christ as truth. Indeed, we see in Western culture where this sense of the ethical and spiritual is taken for granted. It is so natural, in a sense, that it is thought to be our own sense of things—our intuition or our conscience (Slife & Richards, 2001).

This lack of dependence on methods has many benefits. First, we escape the trap set by the secular notion of truth. We do not have

to pick a method before knowing what we are investigating. We have a continually revealed truth that can tell us which method or technique is needed for a particular client, if any method is needed at all. Second, we are not caught in the web of pretherapeutic worldviews (or biases), at least not in the same way. We may be biased, in a sense, but with revelation we can know the right biases. Christ, as the truth, can break through all our inappropriate theories and conceptualizations—if we allow him. He can instruct us in how to change with every changing context if we are receptive to him.

From this perspective, our main job as therapists is to facilitate or enhance this receptivity in our clients. Therapist humility is also crucial, because real change—real "cure" in the therapeutic sense—stems ultimately from our Lord and thus from therapist receptivity to Him. Again, this facilitation of receptivity with clients and therapists need not be explicitly religious in nature, such as the use of prayers and religious rhetoric. This would allow clients who are not formally religious to partake of this receptivity. The main task is to teach clients, however religious they may be, to love and to serve, for loving and serving others hones and refines our receptivity. Of course, the more that therapists and clients learn about Christ's love (through this receptivity), the more that therapists and clients will desire to love and serve others. We have the testament of many saints as evidence of this loving method, from Mother Teresa to President Hinckley. Our relationship with our Lord is facilitated by our relationship with others (and vice versa). As we learn how to truly love and truly serve, we learn how Christ, the Truth, is truly loving and serving us.

Conclusion

At this point, we have reviewed four major differences between Christian and secular approaches to truth. These differences manifest themselves not only in therapeutic theories taken but also in therapeutic interventions employed. Secular approaches are frequently presented as if they are neutral to religion—as if they are value free or take no position contrary to religion. This presentation is a mispresentation. Secular approaches not only take a very definite, value-laden position on therapeutic and religious issues but also have very specific consequences that are often inconsistent,

if not antithetical, to Christian approaches. Christian therapists, therefore, may wish to consider an approach to therapy that is more consonant with their own beliefs and values. These therapists should be appropriately sensitive to the explicit use of religious rhetoric in therapy, especially with clients who are not religious. However, this sensitivity does not preclude the use of assumptions and values that are more reflective of the therapists' own assumptions and values, particularly because neutral or value-free approaches are not really available.

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Part 5

The Nature of Human Identity

I have found little that is "good" about human beings on the whole. In my experience most of them are trash, no matter whether they publicly subscribe to this or that ethical doctrine or to none at all. That is something that you cannot say aloud, or perhaps even think.

Sigmund Freud, *Psychoanalysis and Faith*

Without using the scriptural term *natural man,* applied psychology has nonetheless operated on the assumption that humans are carnal. In part 5, Tim Smith and Matthew Draper oppose these assumptions. Instead, they embrace inspired perspectives on the divine nature of human beings. Such perspectives expand both an individual's possibilities and the potential for change in counseling.

Questioning the tendency to adopt philosophies and theories focused on the individual, Aaron Jackson proposes a philosophy of relationships. This philosophy can serve as a foundation for counseling that is consistent with the gospel's fundamental assumptions. Randy Moss explores how the change of heart as explicated in the gospel can shape our understanding of changes in counseling and the ways to facilitate them.

Timothy B. Smith
and
Matthew Draper

Beyond the Study of the Natural Man

A GOSPEL PERSPECTIVE ON HUMAN NATURE

Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow.

— *D&C 58:3*

One of us (Tim) had the following experience:

> I once heard a story of a bright, young Buddhist priest who studied the meaning and purpose of life for many years under a famous master. More than anything else, this student of life was troubled with the one question that seemed central to all other concerns. After many years of deliberating the issue, the young scholar finally worked up enough nerve to ask this most central question of the great master: "What is human nature?" To this, the master replied, "I do not know."
>
> As a student of psychology, I was struck by the contrast of this scholar's experience with my own training as a mental health practitioner. Not only had I failed to consider the clear implications of the question "What is human nature?" for my work in therapy, but I had never even thought to raise it, although each psychological theory I studied seemed to have very clear assumptions about human nature. Besides, I had never known a professor to say, "I do not know."

As others in this volume assert, our assumptions about human nature do matter. Such assumptions become the foundation for our beliefs and practices. Fortunately, we are blessed as students of the gospel with a firm foundation (Hel. 5:12) on which to build our beliefs about human nature and our practices of healing. Although we do not know the answers to all questions about human nature, we are invited by the Master to seek, ask, and eventually "know as [we] are known" (D&C 76:94). A psychology built upon gospel teachings about human nature can transform our practice and our profession (Williams, 1998).

Gospel Perspectives on Human Nature

The scriptures reveal that there are at least two ways to view human nature: in terms of our fallen state or in terms of our divine potential. This article will briefly review these two doctrinal perspectives on human nature and draw implications for the science and practice of psychology.

The Natural Man. The doctrine that humans now exist in a fallen state is central to all Christian religions. It pervades the sacred writings of the restored gospel, particularly the Book of Mormon (e.g., 1 Ne. 10:6; Mosiah 16:4–5; Alma 42:10). Indeed, our fallen nature is perhaps best summarized by the following passage: "O how great

is the nothingness of the children of men; yea, even they are less than the dust of the earth" (Hel. 12:7). Given the image evoked by the metaphor "less than the dust," one can assume that our fallen state is indeed a spiritual reality.

From the scriptures, we learn that the fall of Adam "was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil" (Mosiah 16:3). With our fallen nature, we are inclined to trust our physical (carnal) senses more than our spiritual ones. We are naturally sinful and weak (Hel. 12:4–5).

Unlike many other doctrines of the gospel, the scriptural portrayal of "the natural man" does not seem to conflict with the way human nature is depicted in many of the major theories in psychology, which often view humans as determined by biology or history (Slife & Williams, 1995). Rather, the selfish natural person is assumed in what some critics call the "bounded, masterful . . . self," the working model of human nature utilized by psychology (Cushman, 1990, p. 604; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). Such a perspective assumes that humans ideally function autonomously (are masterful) and in isolation (are bounded).[1]

The self-focus and self-reliance emphasized by mainstream psychological theories seems to capture the very essence of the natural man. In fact, one cannot readily imagine a better definition of the id's pleasure principle—each person looking out for his or her own survival, following selfish interests, and ultimately disregarding the needs of others except where one's own needs interconnect (Rychlak, 1981)—than what the scriptures teach us about our fallen state. Similarly, one cannot readily imagine a better description of fallen man's tendencies than "stimulus-response, stimulus-response." Thus, without the light of the other doctrines of the

1. This perspective that psychology perpetuates of the "bounded, masterful self" may actually (and ironically) damage far more than ameliorate the human condition because it assumes that the self can look only to itself for love and soothing, thus perpetuating a sense of emptiness and fragility. Such an inward and selfish focus leaves individuals fluctuating between "feelings of worthlessness and grandiosity that are often said to be the hallmarks of neurotic psychopathology in our day" (Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999, p. 5; Kohut, 1977).

gospel, extensive study of the natural man could very well lead one to believe that agency is illusory, truth is relative, and meaning is contextual when not entirely irrelevant. As students of the natural man, psychologists have often reached such conclusions (Slife & Williams, 1995).

Anyone limited by an exclusive trust in the accuracy of physical (carnal) senses would probably reach similar conclusions. Physical evidence reveals and supports physical principles. And if our natural tendency is to avoid pain and seek pleasure, it is no wonder that psychotherapists seek to assuage clients' discomforts and generally improve their emotional and social condition. Clearly these efforts benefit the client. However, they may not *bless* the client. That is, they may not enlarge the human capacity to deal with suffering, to focus on others, or to rise above the natural, fallen state to exercise divine potential and power.

Thus, although psychotherapy largely succeeds in reducing pain and enhancing pleasure, its limited perspective of human nature restricts its capacity to nourish the soul. It is as if a one-dimensional perspective of our physical nature has been imposed upon a multidimensional reality. Although much of the multidimensional world can be broken down into one-dimensional units, sometimes even consistently and with empirical precision, a physical (carnal) perspective cannot ever capture a multifaceted spiritual reality. For "what natural man is there that knoweth these things?" (Alma 26:21).

God knows the whole of reality, and his works are always in line with all aspects of our nature. Therefore, his "commandments are spiritual; they are not natural nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual" (D&C 29:35). In contrast, psychology often mistakenly accepts as ultimate reality what Christ would ultimately change within each of us, "for the natural man is an enemy to God" (Mosiah 3:19).

In sum, this perspective explains why many theories in psychology conflict with the gospel. *Psychology is the study of the natural man.* It has not yet considered our divine origin and potential.

Divine Potential. Despite the multiple scriptural references to our fallen nature, there are many more references to our divine potential (e.g., Ps. 8:5; Matt. 5:48; D&C 132:20). The good news of the gospel—and the perspective missing from a one-dimensional psychology—is that we can "put off" the natural man and take on a

different nature altogether (Mosiah 3:19). The good news is that we can change.

Turning Freud Upside Down

In fact, we can do more than simply change behaviors or reduce symptoms. The Lord desires a complete reversal of the natural man: "The Lord said unto me: 'Marvel not that all mankind . . . *must* be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state" (Mosiah 27:25; italics added). Or, as President David O. McKay has quoted, "Human nature must be changed on an enormous scale. . . . And only Christ can change it" (see Nichols, 1971, as quoted in Benson, 1985, 6).

Only Christ can transform the soul. By implication, only Christ's therapy is permanent. This recognition gives us a renewed sense of humility about our work as counselors and about our success if we partner with the Savior. Using Christ as our role model, we can attempt to serve our clients as he serves others. He is not concerned merely with behavioral change or symptom remission but rather with the eternal blessing of those he serves. Even when his meetings with people have been brief, they have always been intended to *bless* the recipients. Christ's work enlarges the human capacity to deal with suffering, to focus on others, and to rise above the natural, fallen state by exercising agency proactively in building his kingdom. Although his work during his mortal ministry did remove temporal barriers of pain and disability, his form of healing was focused on confirming faith. Changing the very nature of those he touched was his greatest work. His work lifted their faith and hope, so that they could in turn lift themselves and others. Emulation of Christ's charity is often the greatest healing influence of all.

Recognition of how Christ practiced can lift our vision of what we can do in therapy. Rather than assuming, as many mainstream theories do, that we as "experts" direct clients' healing processes through our insights and interventions, we can interact with clients in the spirit of humble compassion (Taylor, 1989, pp. 451–453) and true charity (1 Cor. 13:1–13). With charity we see others for who they really are and focus on their divine potential (Moro. 7:48). As we see beyond our clients' natural (fallen) condition, they will be more likely to see beyond their immediate problems and concerns: "Recognizing the other's capacity for change, one provokes or

invites him [or her] to reveal and outgrow himself [or herself]" (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 242). God works this way. When we feel his love, we also begin to realize our divine worth. And when we realize our divine worth, we begin to act accordingly. As President Ezra Taft Benson (1985) reminded us, it is not psychology but charity that transforms the natural man: "The Lord works from the inside out. The world [read *traditional psychotherapy*] works from the outside in. . . . The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change *human nature*" (6, italics added).

Again, psychology often works "from the outside in" because psychology often assumes that external forces determine our actions (Slife & Williams, 1995). But if people have no internal control over external influences, they can have no hope or potential for anything better or different. By robbing people of the very core of their being, their potential, this form of psychotherapy theory renders all humankind mere "pretenders" at the task of living a moral life (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 31).

A deterministic psychological approach contrasts with the moral embeddedness and ethical understanding people have of each other through their lived experience, which assumes a moral context and agency (Bakhtin, 1984; Taylor, 1985). More to the point, this approach directly conflicts with the gospel, which teaches that we are not natural objects responding to external forces (2 Ne. 2:26) but rather *beings* in the ongoing process of *becoming.* The gospel teaches that we are both fallen and divine. Thus human nature, at its very core, is *potential.* We choose for ourselves the degree to which we realize our divinity (Alma 41:7).

The transformation of our carnal nature to a divine nature is possible because we have been given two precious gifts that are essential to a Christian psychology. The first is the gift of agency and the ability to distinguish good from evil (Moses 6:56). Without agency and moral meaning, we would be unable to transcend environmental or subconscious determinants. The second is the gift of God's Son, whose atonement is available for us if we submit our wills to his (John 3:16). Without the Redeemer, we would be unable to be anything but human.

Gospel Perspectives on the Transformation from Natural Man to Child of God

Turning Freud Upside Down

Given the contrast of our fallen versus divine nature, along with the doctrinal necessity of transforming our nature from the one to the other, principles of a Christian psychology will be in opposition to much of what we have been taught in our profession. It is therefore our responsibility to use the foundation of the gospel to reeducate ourselves and change our profession (Williams, 1998). To explore this process, in the following section we will distill four principles, ways of "transforming our nature" (many others, however, are present among the doctrines of the gospel).

Becoming Agents of Christ. As stated above, we have been given two essential gifts: agency and the Atonement. In order to receive the fullness of the second gift, we must use the first to become Christ's agents. The gift of agency must be made sacred by using it in partnership with God. Only then can our nature return to him who would free us from the shackles of our fallen state, including the lowly and selfish vision of who we think we are.

Thus it is our role as children, as counselors, to match our desires with those of the Father and not struggle against his purposes, which are higher than our own (Isa. 55:8–9). Although it is our fallen nature to struggle against the unknown, we can be still and know Him, that he is God (Psalm 46:10). Our agency will be best suited to our nature as we let go of our own pride and insecurities to rely on the Lord in quiet faith, even amid apparent turmoil.

A story is told of an old man who was walking with his friends along a river, lost his balance, and fell into swirling rapids that carried him swiftly toward a waterfall. His friends lost hope, certain that no one could survive the horrible course. They raced downstream expecting to recover his broken body, but to their amazement, the old man stood calmly on the shoreline, wringing out his clothes. "How did you live?" they asked in wonder. The old man smiled and said, "I just stopped struggling and went with the flow of the water."

Once we change our thoughts to flow consistent with God's thoughts, his ways become easy and his burden becomes light (Matt. 11:28–30). No matter how deadly or baffling our course may

appear to others, our divine nature can adapt itself to its environment, despite the pain that may be involved. It is not the buffeting of the rocks in the stream that destroys the Christian soul, for these turn and polish as they knock off the rough edges of our fallen nature (Smith, 1938, p. 304).

As others in this volume have asserted, pain itself is not evil. Nor is it necessarily good. But pain will usually accompany or precede the adaptation of our desires to God's will. To let go of the natural man requires sacrifice: our relinquished will and the accompanying sense of loss or pain as our egotism abates. This principle was taught by Elder Neal A. Maxwell in a discussion of the symbolism inherent in the ritual sacrifices of the Old Testament temple rites. The Mosaic Law, he observed, symbolized not only the ultimate sacrifice of the Lamb of God but also the personal offering each of us must bring: "The real act of personal sacrifice is not now nor ever has been placing an animal on the altar. Instead, it is a willingness to put the animal that is in us upon the altar—then willingly watching it be consumed!" (Maxwell, 1987, p. 94).

The transformation of the natural man apparently requires some cutting as well as a purifying flame. Returning the gift of agency to God truly makes us "as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, *willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon* [*us*], even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:19; italics added).

Becoming as a Child. To become the man or woman that God would have us be, we must come to feel the intimate nature of our relationship with him. We are his children (Rom. 8:16). Assuming this familial relationship to be literal, we may perhaps apply some principles of developing a quality human relationship in attempting to improve our relationship with the Divine. First, as with all human relationships, we cannot achieve intimacy unless we truly understand the other person. As taught in the Lectures on Faith, once we believe in God, we must develop "a correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes" (Lectures on Faith, 3:4). As we come unto God, we will know who he is and what attributes are best suited to our interactions.

Second, any relationship is only as close as we allow it to be. Fear of God is often learned from childhood experiences that

caused fear of parents (e.g., Rizzuto, 1993), and defenses learned to protect ourselves from others often prevent us from achieving intimacy with God. As we work with our clients, we can keep in mind that the best route to undoing this harmful cycle is to take the reverse approach. By first learning to trust in God as a child trusts a perfect parent, clients can more easily learn to live with the threats presented by their fellow humans.

Third, increasing the amount and quality of interaction strengthens any relationship. Although we have often associated prayer with the habit, learned in childhood, of kneeling at the bedside, communication with God entails much more. We can assist our clients to reach out in new ways to their Father in Heaven—in their thoughts, in their hearts, in their tears. A self-critical, cognitive monologue can be replaced by a supplicant's dialogue.

Fourth, the quality of a relationship usually depends on the degree to which one recognizes the other as being essential to his or her own well-being. In children, this perspective is nowhere more present than when one is suddenly lost in a public crowd and does not have the comforting presence of the parent. In the gospel, this perspective is nowhere more present than when guilt is replaced with the peace of forgiveness. Gratitude to God can replace both self-condemnation and self-importance. Indebtedness in a relationship is a strong motivator. The more indebted to God our clients feel, the more they will be motivated to learn of him and follow his ways.

Fifth, God would have us not only learn of him but also follow his example—the only true standard of action that can serve as a guidepost to clients who sometimes feel alone, even completely lost. There seems to be no greater tendency among children than to carefully observe their environment and then imitate the actions they see in others. Following the actions of others is often the best form of permanent learning.

Some time ago, as one of us, along with his wife, was trying to make it to church on time, we were getting the kids dressed, telling them to brush their teeth, and get ready to go. To our amazement, we found our two-year-old daughter with several white threads in her mouth and, in her lap, a pile of white thread that a few minutes before had been her tights. When asked what she was doing, she replied sweetly, "I'm flossing my teeth!"

No doubt God must sometimes chuckle at our attempts to follow in his footsteps. But by stumbling and each time shaking off the dust, we follow him nonetheless. Seeing ourselves and our clients as children making some errors, stumbling in the path of life, we can replace any tendency to prejudge our clients or to lose hope of their recovery with a sense of perseverance and even some sense of humor.

Losing Ourselves to Find Him. By "feeling after" God (Acts 17:27), we inevitably must lose ourselves: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25). And that is a secret that psychology has not yet found. Happiness and well-being do not reside in the "self" at all.

Terms such as *self-esteem* or *self-appreciation* appear nowhere in sacred texts. In fact, references to the self are quite sparse, perhaps because such terms do not accurately reflect the true nature of our existence. Indeed, we are not placed as individuals upon this earth to run through a test, much as a rat through a maze. Rather, we are placed in family units, each a representation of the fact that we are members of God's family unit. As brothers and sisters, we are linked in a family web not always visible on this side of the veil, but we can occasionally see how each of our individual actions can affect those around us. Hence, any focus of psychotherapy that minimizes our extended familial context by focusing exclusively on the concerns of the individual cannot yield a maximally beneficial outcome. A Christian therapy is essentially a relational therapy, regardless of the symptom.

All the teachings of the gospel connect us with others and with God (Matt. 22:37–40). Therefore, any practice of psychology will be healing and helpful to the degree that it promotes love of God and love of others. Conversely, any focus in therapy that centers on the self as the locus, or even the cause, of happiness will not yield the desired permanent effect. By emphasizing self-esteem, self-appreciation, and self-acceptance, we fail to provide for our clients the larger perspective. An old Japanese saying is relevant: "At times I go about pitying myself, while all the while, I am being carried by great winds across the sky." A client who can catch that vision will lift his or her sight from the dust to the heavens.

Receiving God's Vision of Our Divine Nature. Admittedly, not all clients will be capable of seeing the world outside their immediate suffering, let alone the "great winds that carry them across the sky." In those cases, our role in therapy may be to facilitate a change in perspective by helping them to see the stains and smudges on the glass through which they see darkly. In fact, many Latter-day Saint counselors and psychotherapists already do this. In a 1993 survey of American Mormon Counselors and Psychologists (AMCAP) members, many described situations in which the principles of repentance and forgiveness had facilitated therapeutic gains (Richards & Potts, 1995). Many also described the powerful shifts in clients' perspectives once their actions began to match their values.

Even for the client whose actions seem fairly consistent with his or her values, therapy can facilitate a clearer and more useful perspective. Too often the Spirit of God is lost through the tendency of the natural man to rely exclusively on the physical senses to perceive and interpret experience. Specifically, too often we fail to recognize as spiritual the consistent but seemingly insignificant acts that raise our nature from one that is selfish and carnal to one patterned after Deity. We do not see the spiritual reality that surrounds us because we fail to see the spiritual in the commonplace. Consider the following exchange between two people talking about their spiritual role models. The first person says that his mentor is one of the most spiritual men he knows. In fact, he is so spiritual that he raised a person from the dead. The second person replies that her mentor is also spiritual, so much so that when her children are sick she stays up with them all night and in the morning feels like *she* needs to be raised from the dead.

Can we assist our clients to recognize the difference in these perspectives? Spirituality is not something "out there," a power or sudden event; it is simply *being*—being true to our divine nature, leaving the natural man to die upon the altar of our sacrifice, even one moment or one sleepless night at a time.

This principle is illustrated by the story of a monk and a scorpion: Two monks were washing their clothes near a small stream when they happened to see a scorpion struggling in the pool nearby. The creature would have drowned had not one of the monks reached in and pulled it out. As he did so, the scorpion stung him on

the hand and fell back into the water. Again the monk reached in, pulled out the scorpion, and placed him on the shore but not before receiving another painful sting. Seeing his friend's action, the other monk exclaimed, "Why do you continue to save the scorpion when you know that it is his nature to sting?" "Because," replied the monk, "it is my nature to save."

We as therapists have sometimes been stung. But our tears cannot compare with Christ's experience of the sting of the scourging, the nails, or the drops of blood welling from every pore. To the degree that Christ is our model, it is in our nature to save. For is he not called "Wonderful, *Counsellor*" (Isa. 9:6; italics added)?

Ways to Build upon the Foundation of Christ

At times, we may wonder exactly how it is that we might emulate Christ and lift the vision of our clients from the natural world to the reality of their life-changing relationship with him. Although there are many ways to assist clients to do so, a relational, dialectic perspective of therapy emphasizes the notion of *openness.* In being open to our clients' experiences, we assume that they are full of potential, living and growing as they engage meaningfully with others (Morson & Emerson, 1990). However, sometimes people restrict their meaningful interactions with others and hold ideas that are not open to dialogue and that are perhaps difficult to express in language. These thoughts or expressions can be called *monological* and are the root of many potential problems facing our clients (Morson & Emerson, 1990). For example, clients may hold the monologic belief that they are alone, sinful, and unworthy of our attention or the love of Christ; they become closed, trapped without potential, and sunk in misery.

As counselors, we may engage with our clients openly and begin the work of uncovering where they are closed, to bring a dialogical light to their dark and painful monologues. Similar to the way psychotherapists use cognitive therapy to expose irrational beliefs, the counselor can uncover monologic ideas and question them with the client, and then together they can explore new and better ways of relating with others and with God. For example, if clients see themselves as too imperfect to be worthy of the love of others, the counselor may begin to gently question that harshly self-critical

monologue and offer alternatives after the consequences of such a monologue are explored. By assisting clients in examining painful ideas that have remained unquestioned for so long, we can open up hope and possibility. And as we break down these monologues through our own openness to alternative perspectives, we can assist clients as they begin engaging with the ultimate dialogic partner, Christ himself (Bakhtin, 1984).

We believe that it is the emotional nature of meaningful interactions that facilitates client change (Morson & Emerson, 1990). At the root of all meaningful interactions is that ultimate power to heal, the love of Christ. People are transformed profoundly through the love of God and the love they accept and give to others in meaningful and value-grounded engagement (Taylor, 1989, p. 452). Whether or not spiritual principles are ever articulated verbally, they are at the core of any therapeutic relationship. Taylor related, "What will transform us is an ability to love the world and ourselves, to see it as good in spite of the wrong. But this will only come to us if we can accept being part of it, and that means accepting responsibility." It is our role as counselors to model perfect love to the best of our abilities, assisting clients to expand their responsibility and their sense of interconnectedness with others. By doing so, our clients will recognize that they are worthy of love and connection, a realization that transforms their ability to love others and, by implication, love Christ (Matt. 25:40).

A Case Example

If we are serious about following a divine role model in our therapy and research, then perhaps we could learn best directly from divine interventions found in the scriptures. Let us consider the following clinical case: Picture what it would be like to work with someone who was abandoned by his family and deceived by those who raised him. He is a man unsure of his heritage but spoiled in the most luxurious of circumstances. The client is referred to you because he recently lost his temper and killed another man. How would you respond?

In the first chapter of the Pearl of Great Price, we see exactly how the Lord worked with such a man. First, the Lord established very quickly the nature of their relationship, declaring himself as

God and Moses as his son. He then expanded Moses's vision of the nature of that relationship. In a developmentally appropriate way, the Lord explained his expectations for Moses; then he allowed Moses to watch him work, modeling for Moses the divine traits and attributes that he expected Moses to emulate. He shared with Moses a love and acceptance that were so powerful that Moses keenly felt their absence the moment God departed, leaving Moses to ponder the experiences of their meeting. God then allowed Moses to pass through temptations and to face Satan without interference. When Moses succeeded (by calling upon God), God strengthened him and gave him even greater knowledge and insight, line upon line, until Moses understood his own role clearly as the deliverer of Israel.

A simple model for therapy could follow similar principles. First, we work to establish and clarify the nature of the therapy relationship. In ways that are appropriate to the client's emotional readiness and understanding, we can then focus our work on clarifying expectations, both our own and those of the client. Specifically, we should convey expectations that our clients can and will benefit others, and we should work on minimizing any self-centered expectations we or they hold. While showing forth a pure love, we can then model ways in which the expectations may be realized. When clients have captured a strong perspective of who they are and how their individual actions fit into the scheme of their relationships, they need independent practice of the skills learned and subsequent tutoring through natural consequences. With each success, increased insight can motivate further gains.

Conclusion: Creation and God's Image

Although seemingly rudimentary, these small and simple actions should be recognized and approached as spiritual. After all, psychology is literally *psyche* and *ology*, or the study of the psyche, the soul. We are not as interested in the natural man as in what he can become, in what we must become. In working with Moses, the Lord changed Moses's image by changing the prophet's perception of who he was—and what his relationship with the Divine was.

In a rough paraphrasing of what it must have been like for Moses to see all the works of God, "even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore" (Moses 1:28), we can imagine the following:

As if under a microscope, you see a grain of sand, with its many contours and textures reflecting a myriad of details. Then you examine another, then another, each one unique and varied. Each one is unlike any other. And then you try to count the number of grains of sand in a teaspoon, numbering in the thousands. You ponder the amazing intricacy of creation and the value of each unique human soul. As your vision extends from the sand sifting through your fingers to the endless beach stretching out before you, with each grain numbered and known to God, you perhaps gain a new perspective of creation. And as the sands of every beach on every seashore across the world flash before you and you recognize that each grain of sand upon that incomprehensibly vast panorama represents a human life, you may be led to exclaim with Moses, "Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing" (Moses 1:10). Thankfully, the vision closes with a gentle correction, as the Father explains otherwise: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

To conclude where we began, perhaps none of us—like Moses before the experience of his vision or like the young Buddhist priest searching for an answer—knows very much at all about human nature. Of ourselves, we can safely say that we are nothing, even "less than the dust [sand] of the earth" (Hel. 12:7). We are fallen, natural man. But the gospel reveals that we are much more. We are divine. We are the children of God, the Creator of all. As with Moses, only when we have seen the nature of him who created us can we know the true nature of our being and apply that understanding to our practice of psychology. And then can we see in God's image the embodiment of the name "Wonderful, *Counselor!*"

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Aaron P.
Jackson

Relationships

PHILOSOPHICAL AND SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR COUNSELING

As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.
—Proverbs 27:19

At some point, every thoughtful student considering work in applied psychology asks the question "Does counseling really do any good?" Individuals considering seeing a counselor wonder the same thing as they explore the myriad of personalities and approaches available to them. Hopefully, experienced professionals periodically ask the same question and its counterpart, "How is it that counseling actually helps people?" More specifically, the epistemological question might be, "Why is it that a client is helped by talking with a counselor—more than (or as much as) one might be helped by taking a drug, reading a book, going to a workshop, or sitting down and talking to some other person for free?"

These questions and their nebulous answers have led a good many students, clients, and professionals alike to abandon applied psychology altogether. They also contribute to ongoing uncertainty among many about the efficacy of counseling. In my view, many clinicians seem to suffer from a combination of an impostor syndrome and an inferiority complex. They live in fear that someday someone is going to expose the entire effort as a hoax or that counseling will be proven to be relatively ineffective in comparison with drugs or other approaches.

These fears and associated defensiveness can discourage us from asking hard philosophical questions about our approach to counseling. I believe the only way to overcome our underlying fears is to become better philosophers. Only by addressing these difficult issues can we hope to develop a more solid philosophical foundation that directs and accounts for what we do.

The philosophical questions are multiplied (or so it seems) for Latter-day Saints and other Christians who contemplate work in applied psychology. Not only do we have to develop a rationale for the counseling enterprise, we also have to try to reconcile it with the philosophy inherent in the gospel. The self-contradictory nature of psychology's underlying philosophies and the somewhat paradoxical nature of the gospel make the task of developing an integrated philosophy that accounts for both rather formidable. The purpose of this volume is to provide a forum to address these issues in a systematic way. Realizing that the task is large and our initial steps are small, I will begin by addressing the most fundamental assumptions we make as counselors. In order to do that, I would like to share a

metaphysic or metapsychology that will provide a framework for articulating my ideas about the fundamental nature of the counseling relationship.

Levels of Explanation

The underlying assumptions of a given theory or approach can be outlined by their level of abstraction (Patton & Meara, 1992). We can consider a theory from its most abstract assumptions about what is (ontology). These most abstract assumptions are related to certain philosophical and theoretical assumptions that are less abstract and more focused on specific phenomena. Finally, there are more concrete dynamics and observations that are related to the philosophical and theoretical constructs. Table 1 illustrates a way of conceptualizing these levels of explanation.

At level five, we identify a fundamental ontological commitment—a belief about fundamental reality. There is a long-standing debate in psychology and philosophy about whether human beings are fundamentally physical or mental creatures. This question is often referred to as the "mind-body problem" (Robinson, 1981). Aristotle, Locke, and B. F. Skinner are examples of philosophers and theorists who seem to rely on a physical ontology. Plato, Kant, and George Kelly are examples of mental ontologists.

At level four, we find basic philosophical assumptions such as determinism, hedonism, constructionism, positivism, and agentism. Such assumptions provide a foundation for a theory. However, they may be either explicit or tacit. Level three is the theoretical level. Included here would be the system of ideas that focus on the counseling process. At level two would be any laws or relationships that are part of the theory. Finally, at level one we have the observations and interventions that are inherent to the theory and the assumptions at the other levels. Like most models, this one has its flaws. For example, theoretical and philosophical constructs cannot always be neatly segregated into levels. Likewise, the number of levels is somewhat arbitrary. However, the levels of explanation model can still serve as a useful heuristic in evaluating one's theoretical orientation and philosophical assumptions.

One way of evaluating a theory is to examine the consistency and integrity of that theory across the levels of explanation. The levels of

TABLE 1

A Metaphysic for Evaluating Theories

Levels of Explanation			Relational Ontology–Based Psychology as Described by Levels of Explanation
Level	**Type**	**Description**	
5	Ontological commitment	Assumptions about the fundamental reality	Relationism
4	Philosophical principles	A set of assumptions that guide inquiry and theory construction	Holism, contextualism, agency
3	Theoretical psychology	The "system" of personality with its elements, processes, and relations and with its devices for maintenance and change	Primary dynamic is the tension between the inherent isolation and narcissism of the participants and the desire for connection. The system that informs and describes the counseling process would include a focus on the counseling relationship and other significant relationships—similar to the approach of some psychodynamic and existential models (e.g., Kohut, Sullivan, Yalom). The means of change is, at least in part, the mutually discovered contextual truth that is articulated in the relationship.
2	Empirical psychology	Empirical laws or law-like statements of relations among the categories and concepts of level 1	I-You perspective, working alliance, empathy, identification of lacunae (holes) and inconsistencies, focus on patterns of relating vis-à-vis the counseling relationship; the symbolic and dialectic nature of language
1	Observations and interventions	The level of scientific protocol, terms, interventions, and the client's phenomenal report	Resistance, insight, truth, honesty, hope, leaps of faith

Adapted from Patton & Meara, 1992

explanation can also be used to help identify the implicit assumptions of psychological theories (cf. Slife & Williams, 1995). While considerable time could be spent exploring the philosophical inconsistencies of modern psychological theories and the common contradictions between a given theorist's theory of personality and her or his theory of treatment, these topics are beyond the scope of this paper. The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the philosophical issues underlying theories of treatment. Accordingly, I will focus on the ontological assumptions that underlie our approaches to doing counseling.

I have two primary purposes in this paper. The first is to make an argument for a relational ontology in applied psychology. This proposed perspective will be contrasted with physical and mental ontologies and supported by gospel and philosophical sources. My second task will be to use the levels of explanation to describe a philosophy and theory of treatment that are consistent with a relational ontology and to outline the principles and interventions consistent with such an approach. I will illustrate the implications for counseling by means of a case example.

A Relational Ontology

The debate as to whether humans are most fundamentally physical entities or mental ones has raged since the times of early Greek philosophers. The mind-body problem has been an inherent dilemma in psychology since psychology's inception as a science (Robinson, 1981), although most psychological theories and most psychologists choose to ignore or otherwise avoid these issues. This reluctance has led to a predominance of theories that have mixed ontologies. That is, they invoke a physical ontology for part of their theory, usually the part of the theory that describes personality or pathology, and use a mental ontology as the foundation for their theory of treatment (cf. Rychlak, 1981).

The classic example of mixed or contradictory ontologies is found in Freud's theories. He proposed that ultimately a person's behavior could be reduced to physical terms. He was clearly mechanistic and reductionistic in his personality theory (Hall, 1954). However, when talking about doing psychoanalysis, Freud switched his motivational construct from a drive to a wish. He also proposed

that insight is the key to change, thereby founding his theory of treatment on a mental ontology (Freud, 1943; Patton & Meara, 1992).

Both physical and mental ontologies pose inherent problems for applied psychology. On the one hand, if human action is ultimately reducible to biology, chemistry, and Newtonian physics, psychologists should be actively seeking prescription privileges because the usefulness (or putative usefulness) of counseling will be short-lived and will eventually be replaced by biochemical and/or other physical cures. On the other hand, we find primarily mentalistic approaches somewhat lacking. In their simplest form, such interventions are reduced to saying, "Think differently," or in some other versions, "Feel differently." The means of change seems to be primarily a matter of individual will. It is difficult to identify the need for a counselor (or any other relationship) in such systems. In either system, we are left with my original question, "Why is it that a client is helped by talking with a counselor—any more than (or as much as) one might be helped by taking a drug, reading a book, going to a workshop, or sitting down and talking to some other person for free?"

An alternative to the mind-body problem is to consider a relational ontology. In addition to providing a foundation for counseling, a relational ontology is also more consistent with the philosophical assumptions inherent in the gospel than either a physical or mental ontology (cf. Slife, 1999). I believe there are both doctrinal and philosophical grounds for a relational ontological commitment. I will first outline the doctrinal foundation and then move to the philosophical foundation.

Doctrinal Foundation. The restored gospel is replete with evidence that argues for the necessity of relationships in the process of salvation. We learn from the various accounts of the Creation that it was not good for Adam to be alone—he could not progress in that context. The divine design is for individuals to learn in the context of relationships. The story of the Fall, or the Leap as we might refer to it, illustrates the value of having two perspectives in approaching a problem. This process is referred to in Proverb 27:17, which states, "Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend," and likewise in 27:19, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." More than mere poetic images, these

verses hint at the fundamentally dialectic and dialogical nature of relationships. They suggest a basic notion of relationism—that truth is found in the context of relationships (Slife, 1999).

The social nature of learning is also supported in Doctrine and Covenants 50:22: "Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth *understand one another,* and both are edified and rejoice together" (italics added). We learn from this verse that understanding one another is an inherent part of being edified. Incidentally, if relationships were not essential to the process of edification, I expect the Church would quickly move to become a virtual church and each of us could get all of our instruction and ordinances via a grand "distance-learning" effort.

Interestingly, we have not been so foolish in our society as to adopt a physical ontological stance in our educational system. We still seem to believe that there is a reason to have teachers and coaches, colleagues and mentors. Unfortunately, many in applied psychology have adopted a medical (i.e., physical) model that has, almost by definition, greatly reduced the legitimacy of our work.

The importance of knowing each other and knowing God is perhaps most forcefully made in the well-known scripture John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It is not surprising that the Jews idiomatically used the term "know" to refer to sexual intimacy. The inherent symbolism of the sexual union implies a great knowledge of the other. It also symbolizes an alignment of wills and a mutual willingness to "be true" to each other (Solovyov, 1985). A willingness to relate to God at a personal, intimate level seems to be inherent to the process of learning to become like him. Again, the process of growth appears to be, in large part, the process of relating to others, of knowing one another. Interestingly, in Mormon theology there is no such thing as an individual God. Godhood does not exist outside the context of a relationship (cf. 1 Cor. 11:11; D&C 131:2).

Finally, a scriptural description of what it means to "be celestial" gives us some additional insights into the role of relationships in human growth. In his vision of the three degrees of glory, Joseph Smith includes this definition of celestial beings: "They who dwell in his [God the Father's] presence are the church of the Firstborn; and *they see as they are seen and know as they are known*" (D&C 76:94,

italics added). Apparently the process of becoming like God includes gaining the capacity for both enough empathy and enough self-honesty to see as we are seen by others and to know others as we are known by them. Again, the only means to such ends appear to be in the context of relationships. It may be that honesty and empathy are the keys to discovering truth in the context of relationships. If so, the implications for doing counseling are obvious and profound. However, before proceeding to the implications for counseling, I will review the work of a few philosophers whose arguments support a relational ontology.

Philosophical Foundation. As discussed earlier, the question of what is (ontology) has traditionally focused on two possibilities: the physical as reality and the mind as reality. My thesis here is that we can more readily reconcile the gospel with applied psychology by considering a third alternative: relationship as reality. Before addressing that alternative more fully, it is important to address the possibility of a spiritual ontology. One might suggest that the ultimate reality is spirit or the soul. The scriptures are clear in declaring that all things are spiritual (Moses 3:6) and that all spirit is matter (D&C 131:7–8). I certainly would not dispute the fundamentally spiritual nature of all God's creations. However, in order to determine what is *most* basic I would ask the following, "Does the spiritual nature of human beings (or premortal or postmortal beings) have any meaning without assuming that relationships exist?" I propose that someone's or something's spirituality has meaning only in the context of a relationship—at the most basic level, of a relationship with God. Establishing relationships as the most fundamental reality does not preclude the reality of physical things, mental constructs, or spiritual presence and connections. Rather, having relationships as one's fundamental reality implies that physical things, mental constructs, and spiritual experiences are to be understood in light of relationships.

One philosopher who tried to reconcile the physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual aspects was Vladimir Solovyov (1985). He proposed that physical realities serve as both a metaphor and a barrier to our attempt at "true being" (p. 106). He said that our physical being imposes two seemingly impenetrable barriers. The first is impenetrability of time. We are tied to a linear temporal

existence, in which we have access only to the present. Secondly, we experience impenetrability of space. We are distinct and alone as physical beings. Solovyov proposed that sexual love is the metaphor that demonstrates how we can overcome these apparent physical barriers to true being:

> If the root of false existence consists in impenetrability, i.e., in the mutual exclusion of beings by each other, then true life is to live in another as in oneself, or to find in another the positive and absolute fulfillment of one's own being. The basis and type of this true life remains and always will remain sexual or conjugal love. (Solovyov, 1985, p. 112)

Solovyov (1985) proposed that a fundamental "egoism" or narcissism is inherent in the human condition. That is, one's physical separation from others (i.e., impenetrability) requires that we each deal with the paradox of our separateness and connectedness to each other. He argued that the degree to which one is able to overcome one's narcissistic isolation and invest oneself in others is the measure of one's truthfulness in being:

> Recognizing in love the truth of another, not abstractly, but essentially, transferring in deed the center of our life beyond the limits of our empirical personality, we, by so doing, reveal and realize our own real truth, our own absolute significance, which consists just in our capacity to transcend the borders of our factual phenomenal being, in our capacity to live not only in ourselves but also in another. (Solovyov, 1985, p. 45)

Solovyov also introduced an important aspect of a relational ontology—the construct of faith. He argued that relationships are essentially ongoing leaps of faith. In fact, hope, charity, and faith are all aspects of a relational ontology. True faith, hope, and charity have meaning only in the context of relationships. The constructs of faith and hope will be discussed later as theoretical constructs within a relational ontology that have implications for our interventions with clients.

Emmanuel Levinas (1998) proposed that human relationship is the most fundamental philosophical construct. He argued against the ontological assumptions of modern cognitive theorists and even questioned the assumptions of the phenomenological philosophers

because they relied primarily on a mental ontology. That is, they supposed the mind, or some other individual aspect, to be the most fundamental construct. While these cognitive theorists suppose that human relationships are dependent on the mind or being of the individual, Levinas proposed that the mind (including one's sense of self, language, etc.) was dependent on the relational nature of human being.

Levinas's philosophy has a number of implications for the philosophy and theories of applied psychology. One of the implications of an approach to being that requires relinquishing one's separateness and narcissism or egoism is that human beings can be viewed as equally valuable. Levinas (1985) argued that the capacity for unity or closeness in a relationship is a function of individuals' sense of (or hope for) equality. Because we can, by our approach to another, either create or limit opportunities for more truthful being, Levinas suggests that "facing" another person is by definition an ethical situation. Each person we encounter presents us with the dilemma of either honestly engaging him or her as a human being or engaging that person as something else.

Buber (1970) delineated the ethical nature of human encounter by proposing two ways of being. He suggested that either we engage others as valid, legitimate beings with whom we share an ethical responsibility or we view others as objects and thereby limit the authenticity of our encounter with them. In his seminal work, *I and Thou,* Buber used two phrases or word constructions to articulate his point. He referred to a relational way of being as "I-You" and the more distant and objectifying way of being as "I-It." These are not merely semantic constructions to Buber. Rather they are linguistic reflections of a fundamental (ontological) difference in the ways that we engage others. Buber (1970) articulated the I-You way of being as follows:

> When I confront a human being as my You and speak the basic word I-You to him, then he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things. He is no longer He or She, limited by other Hes and Shes, a dot in the world grid of space and time, nor a condition that can be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities. Neighborless and seamless, he is You and fills the

firmament. Not as if there were nothing but he, but everything else lives in his light. (p. 59)

Another basic tenet of Buber's thesis is that inauthentic, or I-It, relationships are the bases for self-deceptions and self-contradictions. He wrote:

> When man does not test the *a priori* of relation in the world, working out and actualizing the innate You in what he encounters, it turns inside. Then it unfolds through the unnatural, impossible object, the I—which is to say that it unfolds where there is no room for it to unfold. Thus the confrontation within the self comes into being, and this cannot be relation, presence, the current of reciprocity, but only self-contradiction. (p. 119)

In other words, Buber proposed that one's reluctance to honestly engage others in the I-You relationship not only limits one's growth but actually damages one's self by compounding and expanding self-deceptions. This pattern is often obvious in clients who descend in the vicious cycle of social isolation and self-deceptions.

Buber leads us back to my original question about the legitimacy of counseling. To review, the question is, "How is it that a client is helped by talking with a counselor—any more than (or as much as) one might be helped by taking a drug, reading a book, going to a workshop, or sitting down and talking to some other person for free?" The arguments made in this paper suggest that human relations are the fundamental reality of our existence. They are the means of spiritual growth and emotional and mental learning. Finally, one's refusal to do honest relationships leads to self-deceptions and self-contradictions. Accordingly, the counseling relationship can be seen as a means by which clients can return to doing I-You relationships. Relationships like the counseling relationship may be the best, and for some things the only, context in which truth can be ascertained. I now turn to some specific implied dimensions of an applied psychology based in a relational-ontological commitment.

Theoretical and Practical Implications of a Relational Ontology

The levels-of-explanation model will be used to articulate the more concrete implications of a relational ontology. I will first outline the philosophical constructs that are consistent with a relational

ontology. Then, I will outline the theoretical constructs and possible interventions at levels three, two, and one.

At the level of philosophical assumptions, there are a number of constructs that are consistent with a relational ontology. Perhaps most importantly, the dialogical and dialectical nature of relationships creates the philosophical space for agency. This agency is not a simple freedom to choose, as it is sometimes defined, but rather a contextually grounded sense of possibility and the means of identifying truths in context (cf. Williams, 1998). Agency can be sharpened and expanded in the context of truthful relationships. Additional philosophical constructs inherent to a relational ontology are holism and contextualism. Holism is the proposition that an entity has primary meaning as a whole and that meaning is lost if the entity is broken into parts or reduced. Contextualism is the idea that meaning is made or imputed to situations and contexts rather than the other way around. Things and situations do not have any inherent meaning; rather they are interpreted in the social context. Both holism and contextualism support an atemporal and nonlinear approach to relationships and human being.

Level three is the comprehensive theory of treatment (see table 1). Though articulating an entire theory is beyond the scope of this chapter, a few theoretical constructs can be suggested. First, a relational ontology suggests that the relationship is the primary means by which we have meaning. As such, the relationship can be the primary means of change in counseling. One of the means by which the relationship operates to facilitate change is by establishing a context for expanding and heightening one's sense of agency. A second function of the relationship would be to provide a context for increased honesty. The intimate nature of the counseling relationship can make one's tacit self-contradictions and self-deceptions more explicit (Polanyi, 1962). Accordingly, the counseling relationship can serve as a means to help someone appreciate his or her own context and establish a truthful way of being within it.

Level two is the level of subtheoretical constructs and simple dynamics. The approach proposed here would include the dynamic relational tension inherent to all human encounters. The fundamental dialectics of being known versus being unknown and trusting versus doubting are played out in the counseling dyad. The dialectic

nature of language and the symbolic nature of human communication would be dynamic principles operating at this level.

Level one is the level of specific interventions. At this level, a note of caution is warranted. Perhaps it is human nature to focus on the observables, the concrete. More likely, to do so is an artifact of a positivistic and reductionistic cultural norm. A relational ontology is not limited to a finite or prescriptive set of interventions. The uniqueness of each human encounter allows for a myriad of interventions that might be true in that specific context. However, there are likely some interventions that would typically be consistent with the assumptions proposed here and true for most counseling relationships:

1. The use of hermeneutic or other qualitative interpretation techniques to identify themes and inconsistencies in a person's narrative (Kvale, 1996).

2. Interpretation of the symbolic nature of the counseling relationship and other significant relationships. Constructivism assumes that language and human interaction will be symbolic. As such, the counseling relationship itself will likely be symbolic. While such an intervention is similar to Freud's notion of interpreting resistance or transference, it would not have the theoretical limitations imposed by Freud and his theoretical descendants (e.g., Sullivan).

3. The use of silence and restraint. By using restraint and allowing silence, the counselor can exaggerate the inherent social tension in the situation and thereby encourage the client to take the leap of faith into describing her or his experience.

4. Empathy. This encourages the client to honestly explore her or his experience. Coupled with restraint and/or silence, empathy creates the paradoxical context of risk and safety.

5. Immediacy. The counselor confirms the reciprocal nature of the relationship and invites honesty by commenting on aspects of the relationship that are left tacit in other interactions.

Case Example

Mary is a 55-year-old woman who reported to counseling because of long-term symptoms of depression. She reported that she had first

experienced these symptoms about one year after two of her daughters were killed in a car accident. She reported that she had been more or less depressed since that time, a period of about two years. She said that during the year immediately following her daughters' deaths she was involved in her church and "felt closer to God than she ever had." However, after that initial year, she became less involved. She also said that she and her family had grown more distant. She indicated that her other three children were all experiencing problems with substance abuse and sexual acting out. She reported that her relationship with her husband had grown distant and somewhat surly. Mary came to counseling at the recommendation of a friend.

Mary's initial approach to counseling was not atypical. She reported her problem and looked to me for an answer. Mary's language and style in the initial sessions were somewhat deferent and even subordinate. It was clear that she expected me to criticize her and/or give her advice. Her accounts of her interactions with her children and her husband followed a similar paradigm. She reported endless examples of how she had told them what to do and their failure to do it had led to pain—just like she told them. Her I-told-you-so's were typically followed by her family members telling her what a lousy mother she was. These accounts were as shallow and lifeless as our counseling relationship. I proceeded with the hypothesis that Mary's pain was related to her reluctance to engage other people and other aspects of her life with an I-You perspective.

Slowly, as I refused to engage Mary as an object, she began to respond to my willingness to engage her at a more honest level. She began to talk more about her fears for her family members and her sadness about the distance between them. Over time we began to identify some possible truths for her and her family. First, we concluded that she and her family had been so hurt by the loss of their two family members that they had tacitly colluded to never be hurt that way again—because they were afraid they would not be able to deal with such pain again. This loss of faith and hope had shifted their previously genuine relationships to the realm of I-It. The distance between them had steadily increased, and each member had adopted a self-deceptive approach to life. Mary's personal approach

was to eat enough and reduce her activity enough to gain over one hundred pounds in the two years she had been depressed.

Our work centered on her being able to honestly engage me and focus on the essence of her life rather than launch into a monologue about the woes of being a good mother or a bad mother. Gradually, Mary was able to return to the risk of honest encounters. She began by renewing a friendship that had waned since the deaths in the family. She reported considerable anxiety about approaching her friend despite knowing that this friend would be very unlikely to reject or abandon her. This positive engagement was followed by some changes in Mary's approach to mothering. We determined that what Mary really cared about and hoped for was to have close relationships with her family members again. She began approaching her children and her husband as human beings rather than objects or roles. Her initial attempts were questioned and even mocked. But Mary persisted and eventually was able to encourage some of her family members to reenter a close relationship with her. Sadly, some of her family were not willing to be close to Mary. However, Mary's heightened sense of agency allowed her to understand the reasons for their reluctance and respect their right to be that way. It also increased her hope that they might change in the future.

I suppose that many clinicians will resonate with my experience with Mary. My account of how counseling was helpful to her will "make sense." It will be tempting to account for the changes in counseling in terms of existing theories. However, what I want to highlight is the fact that no existing theory of counseling would account for the changes in Mary's life in terms of her relationship with me and her relationships with others. Some theories would see the counseling relationships important, perhaps even critical to the process. But none would see it as the means of change or see Mary's willingness to relate with others as the primary indicator of improvement. Instead, mainstream theories would appeal to insight—either cognitive or emotional, or some other individualistic conceptualization. What I am proposing is a radical reconceptualization of human beings—one that sees the individual or self as secondary to the relational aspect of human being and posits relationships, along with their inherent ethical responsibilities, as the

ultimate given. Oliver (2001) provided an apt description of this reconceptualization: "We *are* by virtue of our relations with others. Our sense of ourselves as subjects and agents is born out of . . . relations. We can speak only because we are spoken to and only because someone listens" (p. 183, italics added).

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RANDY K. MOSS

The Nature of Change in Counseling

A CHANGE OF HEART

And it supposeth me that they have come up hither to hear the pleasing word of God, yea, the word which healeth the wounded soul.

—*Jacob 2:8*

As a practicing psychologist and as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I hope to engage in a gospel-based discussion of a most important topic. The process of change and how it occurs is the crux of my profession and our everyday lives. I wish to explore the relational aspects of "being" therapeutic as well as "doing" therapy.

Almost immediately an example arises of how this concept is ignored and swept away in favor of the performance, or doing part, of the industry. In the commerce of professional counseling, I have noted the trend to emphasize the products and not the relational aspects of those engaged. Conference speakers, workshop facilitators, supervisors, and clinicians all highlight the accomplishment aspects of their personal portfolio more than the connective and defining relationships that constitute the soul and the intrapersonal context. This is a misdirected focus that belies the true nature of change.

Having worked among the American Indian and Native Alaskan peoples, I have learned that introductions should be about who we are and not what we have done. The Inuit elders always start their introductions with a brief genealogy of their grandparents and family constellation and clan affiliations. This interdependent nature of identity is a turning of the heart (Mal. 4:6) and is also the power demonstrated in counseling. This relationship concept is the foundation of this article.

Those who seek services from practicing counselors often are seeking comfort and understanding. I have been touched over the years by the awesome privilege of being with and being in relationship to those seekers. As a scriptural beginning to this topic, I share with you three citations. The first summarizes many clients' silent reachings during difficult times, for the Psalmist represented the ineffable longings of many of those seeking help: "My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word. Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?" (Ps. 119:81–82).

The second scripture articulates the desired outcome of counseling. Here Paul's description of change is complete and refreshing. He clarified both the process and the "being" aspects of change: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Paul told us that we must discover ourselves in Christ, a process of seeking, knocking, and responding to simple, quiet presentiments. He also admonished each to be new, to let the new creature enfold the past. Being constantly new and present is the source of influence in changes of heart.

The third verse captures the whole of my presentation. Here Alma invited us to witness the true change process: "Behold, he changed their hearts; yea, he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God. Behold, they were in the midst of darkness; nevertheless, their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word" (Alma 5:7).

Exploring the process of change in the art of counseling and the application of therapy will be challenging. Merely translating scripture and gospel-informed understanding into "psychologized" vocabulary is dangerous. Concepts from within the profession fall short of comprehending the subtle, yet powerful, wisdom and perspective the gospel extends.

In the word of God, the pure change phenomenon is most familiar as "conversion" or the "mighty change of heart." *Conversion* is rarely a term used in counseling, and when used, it is only with trepidation and obliqueness. I will attempt to show that conversion (into someone different, not to some thing) is the real change. Psychology, on the other hand, has some difficult and distorted concepts of change. Since counseling is not only a vocation of caring but is also a large corporate business, the understanding and application of the change process is corrupt and, many times, self-serving.

However, as Richard Williams reminded us, the root meaning of *therapy* is "to fight alongside, together with." Likewise, he points out that the "server in this case (therapy) is neither slave nor hired-person" (Williams, 1994, pp. 345–346). While the business concerns of counseling would balk at free services, the concept of being in relationship to, becoming comrades with, and walking alongside the client is a good foundation and the one I will explore further.

Pocket, Oil, and Altitude Change

Those of us practicing the art and business of counseling witness three types of change. These categories are not exact, mutually

exclusive, nor comprehensive. They do provide a common vocabulary for this presentation.

The first common type of change I label reactionary change. This type of change is a response to exterior demands and expectations and results from a fear-inducing or coercive method of intervention. Rather than being a genuine change, this type is a pseudo-switch, an accommodation. More cosmetic than substantive, reactionary changes tend to be superficial, generally insincere, and mostly transient. Maintenance of reactionary change can be facilitated only by strict exterior forces or deeply seated fear. This is a change that at best brings about compliance but usually produces only limited movement toward joy (do not read "happiness") and authentic relationships.

The second category of change I label functional change. This type complies to professional standards and societal goals. Functional change attempts to (a) increase productivity in the workplace, school, or elsewhere; (b) match or conform to demands consistent with standards or wishes that have been foreclosed on and/or partially internalized; or (c) regain a previous level of functioning lost because of tragedy. Many functional changes are merely internalized duty and serve to moderate guilt and real or perceived social obligations. This change is a rearrangement of external relationships among objects, people, and emotions, a more mechanical and developmental progression that structures change as a binary process involving on-off behaviors. The goal of most therapeutic enterprises, this type of change is generally positive, beneficial, and desirable but remains susceptible to the transformation of tragedy into trauma and pain into misery. This potential transformation can lead clients to identify the tragedy as the source of personal will, meaning, and life station.

The final type of change I describe as dynamic change. This is the mighty change of heart, the change that brings about the new creature. This is the transformation of relationships, not just a rearrangement. This type of change is the realization of internal relations with the world and all creation—a connection beyond mechanics, organizations, and context. Dynamic change is the literal awakening unto God spoken of by Alma, the engraving of His image on one's countenance, the taking upon one the name of

Christ and literally loving and seeing neighbors as oneself. I believe dynamic change allows an abiding thankfulness. This change is the conversion of one's being, the reality of divine love made manifest in a person—the sudden and revolutionary mighty change. This type of change transforms pain into acceptance and joy and empowers action and compassion in the face of raw existence and tragedy.

The mighty change or dynamic change is not a stage-based progression. Rather, it is what theorists would call a discontinuous event. The event is not predictable nor manipulatable in the skill-based presentation of psychology and modern therapeutic ventures. This is a sudden shift, a momentary decision point, a networkwide transformation that transcends the expertise of the counselor and the presently employed theoretical framework. While beyond the control and direct application of the counseling content and context, this type of change sometimes occurs within formal counseling. What, then, are the actions and attributes the counselor can offer that optimize the possibility of dynamic change occurring? From gospel foundations, I will offer what I think are the tangible ideas and concepts of "being" that are essential to encourage dynamic change: in short, the offering of self in the use of the other.

Patient Practice

Persuasion is the language of heaven. Persuasion is the invitation to conversion, the universal tool that brings about the mighty change. In 2 Nephi 2:16, Nephi described the method of heaven that brings about joy and salvation: "Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other." I think that this scriptural truth is the best beginning to being effective in dealing with ourselves and those that invite us to walk with them.

Godly enticement transcends the pejorative common usage of the term. Heavenly enticement is a luring through attraction to something inherently divine, some way of being, that resonates subtly within each child of God. In mainstream psychology, the study of persuasion is conceptualized as an interchange game, not as enticement. There is ample evidence of a general disregard for individual capability to act, the belief that that capacity is not an acceptable

ontological fact. It follows that much of the purported technology of counseling is a mechanistic model of acting upon the client. Theory-driven interventions, specially honed skills, targeted objectives, and other therapeutic devices become tools wielded in sculpting the client to an externally preconceived design. In contrast, persuasion and partial self-creation through acting on persuasion places the process and tool of change in clients' hands. This is an uncomfortable realization for most professionals.

Persuasion needs further elaboration. I will use some phrases that come from process theology, based on the cosmology of Alfred North Whitehead. For this discussion, persuasion is described as creative divine love, which invites responsiveness to life, enjoyment, and novelty. Man is partially self-creating by acting within the divine love—otherwise known as God's subjective aim. Such an aim, mediated through divine love, can be defined as God's desire for all creation to reach the fullness of their divine nature. It is God's urge for harmony, balance, and relationship. This divine love is the abolition of coercion through an immediate and imminent relationship with God and with the many God-imbued creations. In the scripture quoted earlier, persuasion is relational and enticing, just the opposite of man's attempts to force change through control and coercion.

The limited damaging misunderstanding of God as a controlling and punitive despot or unflinching exactor of souls has led to humankind's using coercive methods. Humans use power and coercion as a distorted reflection of a misunderstood divine process. That power and control reside at the heart of many counseling activities is underscored by therapists' belief that they can produce change through interpretation and their professional status.

"Do You Hear What I Hear?"

Persuasion in counseling is not causally instituted through the "talk" of counseling but rather by the presence of the listener. Creative invitation supports interaction and internal relationships rather than extrinsic consequences and better "doings." Whitehead stated that Jesus's message dwelt upon "the tender elements in the world which slowly and in quietness operate by love." The Apostle John simply said, "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). Interestingly, the

Doctrine and Covenants tells us that "the elements are the tabernacle [body] of God" (93:35) and that God is "in all and through all things" (88:6). If immanence is God's body, persuasion his message, and love his method, then ought not those engaged in giving comfort and fighting alongside others adopt these qualities?

God is an uncomfortable term and topic within psychology and academia, and God's subjective aim even more so, with its inherent philosophy of the nature and destiny of man. Most scientifically trained and empirically oriented practitioners would bristle, if not rage outright, at such a notion. Loosely translated into gospel terms, God's subjective aim is the literal answer to the Lord's prayer: "As in Heaven so on earth." This is the clearest articulation of God's wish or subjective aim for all creation.

And It Came to Pass . . . Not Stay

I subscribe to a process of metaphysics that holds that God's subjective aim in the universe is the narrative of persuasion and the process of ever-becoming. Process philosophy and, I believe, the message of Jesus, introduce revealing concepts of becoming and perishing. While neither surprising nor unfamiliar concepts, these rich ideas posit change as basic to every instance and every event. Simply stated, each moment, whether measured or divided, is both a birth and death. This process is informed and imbued by a collective past and a rich actual future realized in an immediate present.

This circular nature of becoming is a departure from the strong linear developmental or mechanical causality currently sustained by the hidden assumptions of psychology. The change we seek is more a quantumlike event, not fully determined by the past or measurable constraints. This change maintains a shadow and lessons of the past and the totality of the future, providing a near infinite possibility of a new "now." The moment the now is actualized, it moves directly into informing and enriching the next now. The past and now perish, and a qualitatively novel now comes about with a qualitatively different future and a comprehensive collective past.

This concept undermines the "fixed" state of much of current psychological theory and assumption. If in the now the actor (that is, the client or clinician) partially self-creates toward "heaven on earth," the next now includes a different future—not simply a

theoretically different but an actually different future. This is participation in God: a divine contained now. Such a change is a partial realization of a greater "en-joy-ment," "at-one-ment," and peace. God's aim and the self-creator's aim are persuasively moved in a harmonizing action within divine love.

This nature of being is the key concept to a process and gospel-informed counseling that privileges persuasion over coercion and the "doing to" presentation of most modern psychologies. Acknowledgement of the circle of becoming, with its constant organizing of novel and creative nows, acts as a catalyst of the mighty change of heart. We can then realize the "new creature" at any juncture in our life. Such liberation from "fixedness" is the meaning of sacramental living, baptism, and repentance.

Object(ing) to the Subject

The change of heart becomes actual when people change how they identify themselves. It happens when their subjective identity (as conceived in the perceptual world, the world out there) becomes an objective self within a connectivity of others experiencing their own subjectivity.

We commonly objectify others based on our own subjectivity. Such internal relationships (subjectivity) and interpenetration (connectivity) transcend the long-held, me-others split in the world. There is no more outside/inside: we are all inside. We come to realize the singular nature of being in God. The other person becomes self, and the collective selves become God identified and a direct manifestation of God. The conceptual artifact of the objective therapist and the therapist's subject (client) and the subjective client and the objective other is exposed. "Love your neighbor as yourself" (John 13:34), all "the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27), and "elements are the tabernacle of God" (D&C 93:35) take on new significance and meaning.

This shift in relationships illuminates Alma's words that "they awoke unto God" (Alma 5:7). The realization of the internal and eternal relationships that everyone has with all others and all creation constitutes the mighty change of heart. This awakening, this change, is a joyful comprehension of life and becoming. We can then exclaim to God that "it is good."

With persuasion and love acting within the client, there is an exciting unfolding and consequential enfolding of greater perspectives and quiet knowings. These knowings are different than thought monitoring, symbolic rearrangement, or insightful gestalt. The mighty change brought about through invitation and enticement is manifested as learned and lived love, felt wisdom, and tragic appreciation. The person intuits, if not consciously understands, the nested ecologies of being. These ecologies are formed of greater inclusions and recognitions of relations: a move toward a circumscribed whole. All the afflictions besetting the client trailing this egocentric world of "done unto," "incomplete," and "alone" (all understood as manifestations of separateness or the "fallen state") are transformed and erased. The afflictions become, as described in Alma 31:38, "swallowed up in the joy of Christ."

Presence Present

A second factor influencing mighty change is an extension of relationship. Healing presence with attending persuasion transcends the current panoply of theories. In 1 Kings 19:11–13, Elijah was in the mountains attempting to find out the will of the Lord. From within a cave, he witnessed many impressive demonstrations of power. The story relates how Elijah did not respond to such a demonstration; rather, he awaited invitation. This story teaches that the flash and bluster of impressive action does not indicate potency or changing power; rather, it is the still, small invitation that elicits response and motivates to action.

I see an analogy between the fire, wind, and earthquakes in this scripture and the many theories and technical skills used in counseling: lots of referential power and impressive show but little instrumental effectiveness:

> There is no doubt that research poses threats to the therapist. He may discover that what he actually does differs considerably from what he thinks he does, that changes in patients are not caused by the maneuvers he thinks cause them and that his results are no better than those obtained by practitioners of other methods. (Frank, 1974, p. 331)

Consider the numerous theoretical schools and applications of counseling techniques and the lack of any definite superiority of one

over any other. This fact leads to the alternative of elucidating common factors underlying effective therapeutic exchange. Some common elements have been discussed in diverse journals, books, and conferences (see Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 1999).

I have experienced the evidences of authentic change potential in the "healing attentive presence." By being wholly present and attentive to the relational interpenetration of the moment, the client and clinician find true changing energy and potential. John Cobb's (1976) comment on this subject is seminal: "We try to persuade them to actualize those possibilities [the self-creative act of novelty and en-joy-ment] which they themselves find intrinsically rewarding. We do this by providing ourselves as an environment that helps open up new, intrinsically attractive possibilities" (p. 54).

Nephi also believed that the presence of an attentive healer is essential. Some 600 years before Christ appeared in the Americas, Nephi, quoting Zenos, anticipated the misery and separation of the children from their Father and prophesied a healing by an attentive presence (see 1 Ne. 19:11–17). Consequently, when Christ visited the new land, His presence brought about much healing. Third Nephi 10:9–10 describes the appearance of this changing:

> And it came to pass that thus did the three days pass away. And it was in the morning, and the darkness dispersed from off the face of the land, and the earth did cease to tremble, and the rocks did cease to rend, and the dreadful groanings did cease, and all the tumultuous noises did pass away. And the earth did cleave together again, that it stood; and the mourning, and the weeping, and the wailing of the people who were spared alive did cease; and their mourning was turned into joy, and their lamentations into the praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord Jesus Christ, their Redeemer.

Note that those things which were separate and rent apart (reminiscent of the lives of clients) were brought together. The at-one-ment, the universal reconnection, occurred with attentive, caring presence and quiet awakening. Even the fabric of the earth came together as one. The parallel to attentively being with and walking alongside the client seems remarkable and exemplary.

Mark Epstein (1995), a noted psychiatrist and philosopher, also concisely and accurately articulated the power of the healing presence: "The lesson for psychotherapy is that the therapist may well

have as great an impact through her *presence* as she does through her problem solving skills" (p. 186). Being alive and available without fire, wind, or earthquake demonstrations invites the client from the cave of shame and despair and into the light of change and wakefulness.

Shhhh . . . hhhhh . . . hhhhh . . . hhhh

A third practical factor that helps facilitate the change of heart is what I call expanding space and silence. The mighty change rushes forth from contemplative space and profound silence. The power and necessary posture of the counselor is not that of the "answer" but only that of a grace-infused relationship providing the expanding space the client needs. This space is the distance between painful separateness and attentive presence. It is within this relational space that persuasion effects self-creation. The more space the therapist can comprehend with unassuming, attentive presence, the greater the possibility for the client to find healing for the rent parts of his or her existence.

A crucial and complementary aspect of this relational space is profound silence. This is not a bored, disinterested, or confused quiet filled with conceptual questions and judgments, which constitute unproductive silence. Rather, it is an evocative silence full of permission and manifold outcomes. The terror of silence, which many see as signifying universal indifference or personal meaninglessness, can be quieted by the inviting silence that conceives introspection, assessment, meditation, and transformation. Silence is essential for the mighty change. Note the paralysis of Alma the Younger during his conversion and of the silence spoken of in 3 Nephi 10:1–2:

> And now behold, it came to pass that all the people of the land did hear these sayings, and did witness of it. And after these sayings there was silence in the land for the space of many hours; For so great was the astonishment of the people that they did cease lamenting and howling for the loss of their kindred which had been slain; therefore there was silence in all the land for the space of many hours.

This particular silence, which punctuated the astonishment generated by the message, allowed the listeners to accept the transformation of lamentations and separations into healings through

the inviting call and mercy of Christ. Epstein (1995) acknowledged the value of silence:

> We are all hungry for this kind of silence, for it is what allows us to repossess those qualities from which we are estranged. . . . When a therapist can sit with a patient without an agenda, without trying to force an experience, without thinking that she knows what is going to happen or who this person is, the therapist is infusing the therapy with the lessons of meditation [silence]. (p. 187)

The counselor must neither fool him or herself nor deceive the client by pretending to know the future or by being the repository of "the answer." Simple and pure presence and experiencing the internal relationship with the "other as self" creates the necessary space and silence the client can productively occupy. These concepts underscore the posture the counselor should have in the interpenetrating "walking with" the client toward the mighty change of heart. A counselor would do well to follow what this Tibetan master stated:

> Do not think, scheme or cognize,
> Do not pay attention or investigate; leave mind in its own sphere . . .
> Do not see any fault anywhere,
> Do not take anything to heart,
> Do not hanker after signs of progress . . .
> Although this may be said to be what is meant by non-attention,
> Yet do not fall prey to laziness;
> Be attentive by constantly using inspection. (Epstein, 1995, p. 188)

The role of the counselor is to prepare the space and silence that elicits and invites the remembrance to connection and wholeness.

Are You Myself?

Surrendering the objective stance is the next important counseling aspect. Can we be unrelated if we hold that God is in all things and through all things? If we hold that each person is part of the body of Christ and that all the elements are the tabernacle of God, then the answer is a resounding no. Relatedness necessitates mutual influence, points to constant unfolding and enfolding of experience, and therefore is bidirectional.

Many theories of therapy along with ethical codes separate the

client from the counselor. I believe that often this separateness is internalized by practitioners as a qualitative difference between them and those seeking their help. This is the sad state of "doing unto" and not "being with."

When internal relationships are realized, the counselor and the client experience not a mere rearrangement of status or an exchange of information but a peculiar transformation. Participating in this connected world allows everyday encounters to be germinal for the mighty change of heart. The scope of influence is no longer held by a select and papered few. Influence is reciprocal and mutually changing and efficient.

Papers, Permissions, and Ph.D.s

The self-professed ownership of "truth," of the way or the "answer," is professional arrogance, and it detracts from and blocks the healing presence. This clinical arrangement fills the room with chatter and shrinks the space of discovery. The Apostle Paul has some harsh words that could apply to the business-oriented and condescending attitudes of counseling: "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Titus 1:10–11). In the people-are-broken worldview of mental health (this is not to suggest that there are not structural anomalies, biological analogues, and true mental illnesses) is an advertising ploy where every person outside ourselves (our subjectivity) becomes a client (object) to feed the insatiable appetite of the therapy industry. "Psychotherapy is the only form of treatment which, at least to some extent, appears to create the illness it treats" (Frank, 1974, p. 8).

I believe that our certificates, degrees, and objectification of the client through scholarship and diagnosis sometimes preclude us from fully participating with those seeking dynamic change. Sadly, psychotherapists have been taught to be separate, to be objective, to not experience a relationship with the client outside the sterile prescriptions of theory, law, and ethics. The miseducation continues in outlining the concept that influence (change and alteration) is only unidirectional, a movement flowing from the therapist to the client. The client gains something substantial and meaningful, but the

counselor comes away only with another case study, another billable service, and an addition to the "saved" tally.

True therapy is attentive, internally connected, and mutually changing. If we walk out of the session without awareness of having been moved and enriched with increased personal and collective perspective and relationship, then we are practicing priestcraft and empty professional games.

Tied with Fancy Hope

Finally, the counselor and client must team with hope, not what I call binding hope, but enlivened hope. Binding hope is experienced as a façade of escape and counterfeit freedom. Due to the perception of undeserved pain, a person who binds hope seeks justification through anticipated revenge, debilitating excuses, or smug beliefs in a greater reward in the worlds to come because of their suffering. This hope binds one to wishful thinking and spiteful redemption (which is not redemption at all).

Giving clients binding hope through an exterior flood of excused interpretations, vain promises of ideal outcomes, and false understandings that arise from a relationship developed through strategic empathy is wrong. If a life narrative fictionalizes tragedy or overindentifies with trauma, should counselors bind clients to a hope that is meaningless and absurd? Counselors must be cautious not to promote an empty hope that mutates into a binding separateness; unbinding people from such false hope is the righteous goal of counseling, as it has been for existential writers and religious teachers and prophets.

The second kind of hope is enlivened hope, a term I base on Paul's teachings. This is the hope arising out of awakening unto God. Again, this awakening is the realization of a universal internal relationship with all creation. Enlivened by responding to the relationship with the whole body of Christ, all others, our own desires, and all possibilities folding into "now," the client and counselor "become new creatures" (Mosiah. 27:26) from which to inform the next frame of being. Our grace-infused incompleteness made whole in the immanence of God, our intimacy with our pain, anxiety over consequences, and shaky subjective aim are nested within the subjective aim of divine love. This reality makes up enlivened hope.

The mighty change of heart arises from the symbolic baptismal cleansing of soiled relations and from enlivening hope that wakes the client to strength and joyful acceptance and knowing. This hope swallows up affliction in the joy of Christ. This is the hope that bears the fruit of at-one-ment and en-joy-ment through interdependence, attentive presence, space and powerful silence, and understanding the gospel. It awakens all of us from a dark and distant slumber and invites us to act with compassion, deliberately and unhesitantly. It prepares us to hear the Word. Hope allows man to have joy and therefore peace. Counseling can provide a place for the change of heart that produces comfort and godly peace.

Peace is the final fulfillment. It is the hallmark of process development and gospel labors, the mighty change of heart. It is harmonization with the universe. Peace is the culmination and fulfillment of each person's subjective aim comprehended in the divine period. Peace is the destination of God's enticement: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Peace is the deconstruction of personal ego into the whole fabric of creation. Such is the aim of development, personal becoming, and change of heart; in counseling, it is the goal of therapeutic persuasion, presence, silence, and space. Crowned with an enriching hope and shared experience, the client finds the thread of peace in the fabric of life.

In closing I wish to leave a summary thought from Alfred North Whitehead. He referred to the desired outcome of all these processes and captured the intent of gospel-informed psychology, the change of heart and the point of this presentation:

> Peace is the removal of inhibition and not its introduction. It results in a wider sweep of conscious interest. It enlarges the field of attention. Thus Peace is self-control at its widest—at the width where the "self" has been lost, and interest has been transferred to coordinations wider than personality. . . . As soon as high consciousness is reached, the enjoyment of existence is entwined with pain, frustration, loss, tragedy. Amid the passing of so much beauty, so much heroism, so much daring, Peace is then the intuition of permanence. It keeps vivid the sensitiveness to the tragedy; and it sees the tragedy as a living agent . . . surrounding fact. . . . Peace is the understanding of tragedy, and at the same time its preservation. (1933, pp. 368–369)

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Conclusion

By the forcible imposition of mental infantilism and inducing a mass-delusion—religion succeeds in saving many people from neuroses. But little more.

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

An increasing number of psychotherapists, among them the authors in this volume, reject Freud's (traditional psychology's) marginalization of religion. Rather than ignore religion, they look to Christ's gospel for direction. With a gospel perspective, they have turned upside down some of psychotherapy's standard assumptions. More importantly, they have proposed some of the features that should be found in gospel-based psychotherapy.

To sum up the authors' contributions, Aaron Jackson considers four paradoxes commonly faced by psychotherapists. These paradoxes are revealed by the authors as false dilemmas. Jackson then identifies some of the remaining questions about the interface between morality and mental health—between one's righteousness and one's social or emotional well-being. How, for instance, is counseling within a gospel philosophy different from just being a good Christian in any other role or setting?

Jackson calls on thoughtful readers to consider how they might contribute to answering these questions and thus further reconcile applied psychology with the gospel.

AARON P. JACKSON

Reconciling Paradoxes at the Interface between the Gospel and Psychology

Wherefore, take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil.

—*Moroni 7:14*

I teach a doctoral course entitled "Philosophy and Theories of Counseling Psychology." In the course, my students and I discuss many of the issues addressed in this book. Students come to the class with varying degrees of experience and varying degrees of openness to questioning the assumptions and validity of mainstream counseling theories. Often, students who come with the most experience and already see themselves as "therapists" are the most reluctant to call these existing theories into question. I have been somewhat intrigued by this reaction because in my own counseling experience I have found mainstream theories to be sorely lacking.

On a different front, I will sometimes work with clients who have had considerable experience in counseling. These clients have often adopted a diagnosis or some other theoretical conceptualization about themselves. This adopted self-conceptualization may be part of their self-deception—their way of being that keeps them from being more real and present. However, like the counselors in training, they often hold fast to their conceptualization "because it works." Now, when pressed, both the student counselors and the clients will agree that their ways of being do not really work all that well. They will confess confusion, desperation, and even pain because of the inadequacies in their "theories." However, they have a certain comfort in their way of being, and calling it into question is unsettling at a very basic, existential level. I have often wondered why we hold so fast to things that we know, at some level, are not really working and are inconsistent with other things we know to be true.

I think that we tend to cling to our inadequate conceptualizations when we fear that to debunk them would leave us with nothing. Some clients live with tacit fear that if they give up their "theory" they will be left with no means of explaining themselves—they will lose their identity. Likewise, I believe many counselors live in fear that counseling is not legitimate at all. Or more accurately, they fear that someone will come along and say counseling is not legitimate and they will not be able to articulate how it is legitimate and will have to skulk off in shame and embarrassment. Most counselors know through experience that something very important and powerful goes on in counseling, but they find

traditional explanations of it rather inadequate. The purposes of this volume have been (1) to shake the foundations of our assumptions or, as Williams (1998) proposed, to "turn things upside down" and (2) to begin to provide some of the alternative foundations that will guide our explanations of how counseling works.

In my experience, shaking the foundations of existing theories has proven much easier than providing alternatives. In my theory class, my students and I examine the philosophical foundations of mainstream theories. It is a relatively straightforward exercise to point out both their internal inconsistencies and their contradictions with the gospel. However, our attempts to articulate alternative conceptualizations are typically more frustrating. Once students have critiqued existing theories, they often ask, "So what do we do then?" This book is an attempt to focus thoughtful responses on that question. We have "turned things upside down," and we have provided some alternatives.

Rather than simply reiterate and review what has been proposed in the previous chapters, I will frame what we have done in terms of four paradoxes that counselors typically face. I choose the term paradox because one of its definitions is "a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true" (Merriam-Webster, 1986). I propose that these paradoxes are false dilemmas, seeming contradictions that are reconcilable.

One paradox that counselors face is between determinism and agency. Counselors are constantly hypothesizing how their clients' histories have contributed to their challenges. At the same time, counselors are instilling hope and supporting clients in their efforts to show that they are not merely products of that history. On the one hand, if a counselor defines a client's concerns simply in terms of its antecedents, the risk is that the client will define her- or himself in those terms. On the other hand, if the counselor advocates a radical free-choice philosophy, the danger is that the client will be blamed for having chosen his or her pain in the past.

This dilemma has largely been the product of thinking of agency and determinism as opposites. The dilemma is also fueled by our traditional reliance on positivistic models rather than dialectic conceptualizations. The alternatives proposed by Williams and Judd in this volume are means to reconciling this paradox. Their ideas

free counselors and clients to see that, while clients' histories have determined their present and may restrict their future, such restrictions do not mean that clients cannot live more honestly.

A second paradox is between truth and dogmatism. Counselors constantly struggle with the challenge of treating each client as an individual while bringing into therapy theoretical assumptions that provide models for how to understand and help the client. One risk is that counselors will emphasize the uniqueness of the individual to the point of dismissing theory, effectively becoming nonscholars—bringing nothing more to the enterprise than subjective hunches or a bag of techniques. This approach leads counselors to objectify clients or digress into mysticism. Alternatively, counselors might adhere to a theory or model so strictly that there is no room for alternative, creative explanations and methods. This monomethod approach also leads counselors to objectify clients and dismiss issues and concerns that do not fit preconceived notions.

Slife and Reber provide an alternative approach to the traditional aspects of this paradox. Their proposed focus on truth allows for both inclusion of the individual and the proposition of principles, patterns, and models. Likewise, Fischer as well as Yanchar and Smith have provided us with alternative ways of thinking about models that will allow us to theorize without objectifying.

A third paradox is between manipulation and nondirection. Historically, counseling theorists have struggled with the issue of whether they should have a clear set of values, a "truth" of sorts, that they impose upon clients or whether they should try to have no values and trust that some inherent aspect of the individual will be a guide to truth. The article by Slife and Reber and that by Moss propose systems that reconcile this dilemma. By focusing on interpersonal truth and alignment with transcendent truths, counselors and clients can more easily avoid the power issues inherent in traditional models. The chapter by Jackson also speaks to this issue. By using relationships as an ontological foundation, counselors can more easily avoid either objectifying their clients or projecting their own values in counseling.

A final paradox is between effect and efficacy. Counselors struggle to know what their purpose is—what the goal of their work with

clients is. With the imposition of business values through managed care over recent years, the measure of success in counseling has been defined as rapid alleviation of symptoms. This goal is consistent with the medical model of treatment. Most counselors are familiar with the dangers of this pole of the dilemma. If the purpose of counseling is efficient elimination of symptoms, other aspects of the person become marginalized. The possibilities that some people might take longer to feel better, feel worse before they feel better, or not "feel better" and yet find counseling meaningful and worthwhile are discounted. This dehumanizing effect has fueled the strong reactions among counselors and clients to the managed care system. On the other hand, if a more relativistic, individualistic approach is taken, it is difficult to account for the social benefit of counseling. If the only measure of counseling is efficacy—that is, the degree to which clients are satisfied with counseling or the degree to which individual counselors see it as necessary—it is difficult to see why employers, government agencies, and religious organizations should support counseling.

The chapters by Gleave and Gantt on hedonism provide some alternative ways of understanding the purposes of counseling. Likewise, the chapters by Richards and by Smith and Draper provide frameworks for including spiritual dimensions as legitimate counseling outcomes. These approaches provide an outline for understanding the personal, social, and spiritual benefits of counseling without dehumanizing the outcome or minimizing the positive moral effects for society.

Though the contributing authors of this volume have made significant strides toward reconciling theories of applied psychology and the gospel, there is much yet to do. There are certainly areas and aspects of theory that are left untouched by the authors. Moreover, the issues addressed in this volume are still deserving of considerable attention. Accordingly, I will point out a few questions that I believe are particularly worthy of additional thought.

1. *How is counseling within a gospel philosophy different from just being a good Christian in any other role or setting?* What makes counseling, counseling? We have proposed that effective counseling might include love and truth in the context of a relationship. But that still does not answer the question of what makes counseling

qualitatively different from any other relationship with someone who is loving and truthful. Perhaps there is no qualitative difference. If not, then we must ask ourselves if the enterprise is justified at all. The sense of most counselors and clients is that there is something qualitatively unique about counseling. We are just not sure how to differentiate it.

2. *What are the differences between being righteous and being socially and emotionally well?* We often slip into describing psychological well-being as spiritual well-being. While I am sure there are some correlations, I am also certain there are some differences. Can't someone be psychologically troubled but still be a righteous individual? Aren't there social-emotional problems for which the solution has little to do with being more righteous? Until we can more fully separate these issues, we run the risk of oversimplifying both social-emotional health and the gospel.

3. *How much can we reasonably expect from our theories? Can we expect a model, a set of principles, or a handbook of how-to interventions?* Most of us have come to think of a theory as something that covers the levels of abstraction from philosophical assumptions to observations and interventions. We need to determine whether we are asking too much. Is it reasonable to expect our theories to cover so much ground? Are there alternative ways of thinking about theories that do not require so much of them? On the other hand, if we are pushing for philosophical integrity, isn't it reasonable to expect that our observations and interventions be grounded in a sound and consistent philosophy?

4. *What is the connection between one's human relationships and one's relationship with God?* We regularly imply that there is a connection between one's relationships with others and one's relationship with God. We may even suggest that having a "good" relationship with God behooves one having good relationships with other humans. However, this statement does not take us much farther than the argument that being righteous will eliminate social-emotional problems. If there is in fact a connection between how we relate to God and how we relate to others, we need to articulate that connection more fully.

The purpose in asking these questions is not just to point out how much we do not know. On the contrary, I view the fact that we

have identified many significant questions and begun answering a few of them as a major accomplishment in the process of reconciling theories of applied psychology and the gospel. However, we do have much work left to do. Dr. Fischer and I originally conceived of this process as a series of symposia, which would generate volumes such as this one. We intend to continue the process. We encourage anyone interested in being involved in future scholarly work directed at reconciling applied psychology and the gospel to contact us.

Reference

Williams, R. N. (1998). Restoration and the "turning of things upside down": What is required of an LDS Perspective? *AMCAP Journal, 23*, 1–30.

Appendix
List of Cited Scriptural Passages

General Application
Isa. 29:13–16
2 Ne. 27:24–27*
Moro. 7:14
D&C 88:7

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John 8:31–32
1 Cor. 6:19–20
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2 Ne. 2:3, 11–30
2 Ne. 9:9
2 Ne. 25:23
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D&C 84:51
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1 Ne. 19:11–17
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2 Ne. 2:26
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Mosiah 27:25
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Alma 42:10
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D&C 58:3
D&C 76:94
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Moses 1:10, 28, 39
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Nature of Law
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Ps. 1:1–2
James 1:25
Alma 41:8

*The title of the book alludes to this passage.

Alma 42:23, 25
4 Ne. 1:5
D&C 19:5–12
D&C 29:34
D&C 76:77, 86
D&C 82:3
D&C 88:20–26, 29–31, 36–39, 41–43
D&C 93:30–31
D&C 130:20
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1 Cor. 10:13
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2 Ne. 31:20
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Acts 11:9
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Moro. 7:13, 16
D&C 84:45–48
D&C 88:67
D&C 93:9, 28

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Subject Index

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ISBN 0-8425-2594-7