Response to Freud and Jung

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Note: The following responds to two articles on Freud and Jung in Dialogue, *Vol XI, No. 3, Autumn 1978. Because of its length, it is included here rather than in Letters to the Editor.*

THE TWO FIGURES cleverly depicted on the cover of the Autumn, 1978 cover of *Dialogue* are unquestionably among the most important individuals in the field of psychoanalysis. Both were trained in the medical profession and both considered their research and theoretical work to be scientifically grounded. Neither tolerated being labeled a theologian and yet both devoted a considerable amount of work to the study of religion. Thus it is inevitable that a comparison be drawn between certain of the insights of Freud and Jung and aspects of Mormon thought. These articles represent a beginning—but only a beginning.

The author of the article on Freud, Owen Clark, rightly resists the inclination to interpret Mormon beliefs from a Freudian perspective. He even stresses a number of fundamental differences between Mormon doctrine and Freudian thought. Clark wants to emphasize the value of Freud's insights and techniques to the discerning Mormon, but in doing so he raises a number of troubling questions.

Clark seems to be arguing that Freud was not a positivist because he refused to reduce our understanding of man to physical and chemical forces alone, thereby affirming "the importance of internal psychological processes." The fact is, Freud was a positivist par excellence. He tenaciously held to the positivist view of the three stages of man: mythical, religious and scientific. He acknowledged the efficacy of reason only in the quest for truth, and he claimed that only the enterprise of empirical science was truly objective. If one wants to broaden his understanding of scientific theory and method, should he follow Freud? Clark himself is clearly the better guide. He holds a much more enlightened view of science than did Freud.

Clark believes that a Mormon would say, with Freud: "Man is more than his observable behavior or conscious rational faculties." However, there is a world of

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difference between the Mormon "eternal" perspective on man and Freud's "psychological" perspective on man.

Clark also sees a parallel between Freud's view of psychic determinism and the Mormon belief in "orderly principles of causality in the universe." But I would suggest that this is only a surface resemblance. The dilemma persists as to whether or not there is agreement between the two parties on the nature and interpretation of these causal principles. Clark has not shown this.

Consider Clark's view of psychoanalysis. He carefully points out the chief characteristics of the discipline as a distinctive form of psychotherapy, and in doing so helps to dispel many lingering misconceptions about the practice. He holds that the technique is "morally neutral" and that religious belief and behavior are only threatened by psychoanalysis when they have a neurotic basis. Even if this last point is granted, isn't the issue more deep-seated than this? Philip Rieff argues, for example, that when dealing with the claims of science and religion, Freud's customary detachment failed him. "Confronting religion, psychoanalysis shows itself for what it is: the last great formulation of nineteenth century secularism." (*Freud: The Mind of the Moralist,* p. 257.) In *The Future of an Illusion,* Freud implies that the abandonment of religion is necessitated by the practice of psychoanalysis and that this is true of the practice of any other science. Surely the question of whether or not psychoanalysis, or, for that matter, the whole of Freudian theory, functions as an ideology or as a competitive world-view needs to be addressed in any comparative study of Freud and Mormonism.

Lastly, Clark seems hard pressed to indicate which, if any, of Freud's views on religion a Mormon might find helpful. But this is not a challenge just for Mormons. Freud's metaphysical speculations on the origin and nature of religion are among the most troublesome of his ideas. Freud dealt with the phenomenon of religion in a restricted fashion—dealing only with religious beliefs or with religion as a social, cultural institution. There seems to be agreement that when Freud deals with "popular religion"—not the deep sources of religious experience but the common man's view of religion—his psychological theories help us to understand something of the phenomenon of superficial religiousity. And there are many who feel that his description of the unconscious and the mechanism of repression are definite contributions to the psychology of religion.

The fact remains that many of Freud's claims about religion are no longer upheld even within the professions of psychology and psychiatry. His anthropological and historical speculations about the origins of Judaism and Christianity as well as the origins of monotheism are all generally suspect. Many of his psychological and metapsychological explanations fail the test of being falsifiable. Most problematic about Freud's views on religion is his inclination to dismiss the whole phenomenon as an *illusion*, as a universal obsessional *neurosis*, or as a mass *delusion*, especially when the conceptual confusion in Freud's use of these crucial terms is uncovered.

By raising these questions, I do not mean to impugn the merits of Clark's article. Indeed, it is an excellent illustration of the very thing he calls for, a selective use of Freudian insights, if not Freudian metaphysics, to enable the Mormon who is interested in psychology and who cultivates his own spiritual life to better understand human motivation and character development.

The article on Jung represents a totally different way of comparing the thoughts of a major psychologist and Mormon beliefs. Adele B. McCollum explicitly tries to intepret Mormonism from the perspective of C. G. Jung. In this regard she goes further out on a limb than does Clark, and therefore her conclusions are all the more dubious.

The author sees the basis for a comparison between the "theological" view of salvation taught by Joseph Smith and the psychological or "secular form of salvation" advanced by Jung. By using the Jungian notions of *coniunctio* (a "theme that permeates LDS thought with the hope and promise of 'getting it all together'") and *centroversion* (the idea of learning to live at the intersection of opposites, or what Jung referred to as *individuation*) but without specifying in any detail how she understands these key Jungian terms, McCollum provides an imaginative (she would say mythopoeic) interpretation of various Mormon beliefs.

For instance, McCollum renders the Mormon concepts of salvation and exaltation in the following manner: Body (matter) and spirit are said to realize a "first order" *coniunctio* in mortality; this is realized again when the spirit and body are united in the resurrection. Further, the doctrine of Celestial Marriage represents, in her reading, a "vastly superior" *coniunctio*—a *double coniunctio* or quaternity (the ultimate symbol of wholeness for Jung), namely, a uniting of the female/male and the historical/mythological dimensions. "The wholeness or fullness of salvation can come only when the male and female aspects of being are unified, that is, when male and female convenant to be bound together in both the historical and the eternal (or mythological) realms." When this is brought about, "it becomes as god and goddess being given their own planet or world to create and populate." Following this McCollum can conclude that, "wholeness, individuation . . . in Jung's work entails the conjunction of consciousness and unconsciousness and is comparable to exaltation in LDS doctrine."

Comparable in what sense? All we have been shown is that Joseph Smith taught that a man and his wife need to be "joined" in celestial marriage in order to gain the promise of exaltation and that Jung taught a person needs to learn to "live at the intersection of opposites" in order to gain psychic health. Presumably this is the kind of "blunting" of radical dualism that McCollum sees in both Mormonism and Jungianism. But surely here the comparison ends, unless a reinterpretation of the former is attempted. This is what she does.

The author states that her intention in writing the article "is not to show that there is something of Jung in Joseph Smith, or of Joseph Smith in Jung." But this turns out not to be the case. The article is clearly a one-way street. The author finds elements of Jung in Joseph Smith but not vice versa. And consequently, she gives us an unusual rendering of certain of the latter's ideas. Armed with her favorite Jungian notion, McCollum suggests a different reading of an important passage in the Doctrine and Covenants, 131:7-8. Rather than follow the suggestion of the text that the dualism between matter and spirit is overcome by seeing the latter as a type of matter, our guide asks that we visualize the two elements "as being paired, or as forming a *coniunctio*." She gives us no indication as to how she arrives at this rendering, and we are left wondering what on earth she means.

Carrying this hermeneutical principle further, she attributes to Mormonism a metaphysical dualism, curiously enough, since this is what she says Mormon

thought overcomes. According to McCollum, the "New Dispensation philosophy" requires a distinction between two planes of existence—history and myth. B. H. Roberts is made to assert that there must exist a realm of mythic experience, eternity, cyclical time, absolute time, or timelessness, if you will, and a realm of historical experience, history or linear time. LDS thought is said to be grounded "in the conjunction of myth and history, and it is expected that time and eternity are in necessary dialogue within another." Whatever happened to the suggestion that the Mormon concept of time is best understood in the biblical sense; that is, that there is no distinction between time and eternity, that the latter is meant to suggest simply endless time?

My point is that in order to follow McCollum on the Mormon doctrine of exaltation, we need to reconsider what is meant by such terms as "spirit" and "eternity." And we need to entertain new ideas, for example, notice it is the *coinunctio* of a husband and wife in time and eternity, that "becomes as god and goddess . . . ." Likewise, when McCollum turns to other theological topics, we are told that God the Father and the Christ symbolize something higher, "a perfect God-image." And not only must there be opposition in all things, we are now informed, in strict Jungian fashion, that "the LDS Church has squarely faced the opposition between good and evil and pronounced that *evil is not without its benefits.*" (emphasis mine.)

It will not do to be told that these ideas must only be taken psychologically. They have their origin in the Jungian notions of a God-image and in such archetypes as the Shadow, and clearly Jung meant more by these terms than that they merely represented psychological truths. What is one to make of this article? This much seems clear: McCollum's view of Mormonism is a view seen exclusively through Jungian glasses. And it must be judged accordingly. I find it hard to recognize what is depicted. I remain unconvinced that she has shown us anything about Mormonism other than that it can be made superficially to resemble certain Jungian claims.