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Thanks for Nothin', Timothy Leary: Reflections on Gantt and Thayne's *Safe Places*

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Gantt and Thayne's "Humanistic Psychology, Same-Sex Attraction, and Safe Spaces: A Latter-day Saint Inquiry into the Meaning of Love" (pp. 3–21) is a prime example of what Latter-day Saint counselors and psychotherapists should do. I have more reactions to their process than to their conclusions in this case. I will speak more to their process and recommend it for us to emulate.

Gantt and Thayne articulated a predominant model of psychotherapy and how it has been generalized to other domains. They critiqued the misapplication of the model. Then, rather than simply critique the model, they proposed a gentle alternative to the misapplied concept of safe spaces. Their concept of love unfeigned is a richly layered and gentle alternative that, when executed sensitively, is consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Love unfeigned would have us support our brothers and sisters in a challenging process. It invites us to uphold the Lord's standard and compassionate-

ly invite others to do so as well. If we truly love our brothers and sisters, we invite them to walk the path of exaltation. And we walk beside them. That is what the Savior does.

I have seen love unfeigned function in the life of my own family. My youngest brother walked a dangerous path that ultimately led to his death. Although he had a rich testimony of the gospel, after his LDS mission and while living in my parents' home, his behaviors in their home escalated to the point that, with most heavy and fearful hearts, they had to set a boundary. They told him that if he wanted to continue certain behaviors, he would need to move out. But my father embraced him and emphasized, "My son, my son, you can always come home." Of course, this was a layered message referencing both our earthly and eternal homes.

My brother moved to another city far away. After several years, my brother reflected on his relation-

ships, peace, and happiness. He reflected that he had been happy and at peace in his fathers' homes. This was a layered recollection. He decided to come home and start home. He was lovingly received. He met with his bishop who gently guided him through a sweet but difficult process. The ward members, who surely could read the situation, lovingly received him and welcomed him back. He set boundaries on his behavior and eventually, miraculously, was blessed with a beautiful wife and daughter. In the course of time he was able to have his daughter sealed to him in the temple. A few months later, he died from consequences of his former life. He died at peace, having had all the required ordinances of the gospel completed and restored in his life. I am convinced that love unfeigned, which others showed when they simultaneously pleaded for obedience to God's guidance and invited him to walk the path of exaltation and gently extended respect and compassion, was a key to my brother's eventual peace.

As I reflect on Gantt and Thayne's work, I am grateful and hopeful. They are disciples of Jesus Christ, not Carl Rogers. Gantt, Thayne, and others of their ilk (e.g., Richard Williams, Aaron Jackson, Jeff Reber) are brilliant treasures. They are trilingual. They deeply understand the gospel of Jesus Christ as well as philosophy and psychology. They ponder and critique the interface of the three to clarify and refine our understanding. This is hard work, but it has to be done. Failure to do so is fraught with danger.

As an example, consider the terrible influence that one actor on the academic stage had on generations of people. Consider Timothy Leary. Leary proposed that higher consciousness can be obtained by the use of psychedelic drugs. Whatever controlled research he proposed on the setting for safe use of LSD in psychotherapy was ingested uncritically by a generation of young people who were rejecting the materialism of their parents' generation. Socially popular catch phrases such as "Turn on, tune in, drop out" justified broad-based use of myriad psychoactive substances. While Leary might have started his work with a careful exploration of safe-setting use of LSD, by the time he was a celebrity, all caution seemed to have been thrown to the wind, and he seemed intoxicated with leading a hungry audience to turn on. Safe setting indeed! The damage done to lives across multiple generations by drug use is astronomical. The hedonism of

their parents' materialism was simply replaced by the hedonism of pleasurable drug-induced experiences under the guise of pursuing higher consciousness. In neither case was the underlying hedonic ethic questioned. And Leary's proposed consciousness model was not critiqued. But who was there to articulate, critique, and propose the alternative?

Gantt and others do the hard work of examining the misapplication of concepts and the flaws in the underlying philosophy and proposing a gentle alternative based on the gospel of Jesus Christ. In his chapter entitled "Hedonism, Suffering, and Redemption" in *Turning Freud Upside Down* (2005), Gantt shows how hedonism underlies much of modern psychology and psychotherapy, but he does not leave us without an alternative solution. He articulates a Christian perspective on the meaning of suffering. He states, "We need to re-envision 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" (p. 71). Gantt and Stan Knapp again did the hard work in their chapter entitled "Contracts, Covenants, and the Meaning of Marriage" in *Turning Freud Upside Down 2* (2017). They articulate the flaws in the prevailing view of marriage, which is based on instrumental egoism, and then offer a cogent alternative based on the concept of covenant. They say, "In contrast to the egoistic and contractual understandings of marriage, we argue that the nature and meaning of marriage can be more fruitfully understood in terms of covenant, an approach that acknowledges the spiritual foundations and moral obligations of the marriage relationship" (p. 103).

I am grateful for scholars like Gantt and Thayne. And I am concerned for those of us who are not as trilingual as they are. We do face real challenges, and we hear a cacophony of voices proposing solutions. What are we to do when faced with real issues and flawed but socially popular models and solutions? What should a young person in the 1960s have done when confronted with Leary's pronouncements from Harvard's pulpit or any of the other high places from which he pontificated after he was fired by Harvard?

True, Americans' materialism was a problem. But was exchanging one hedonic solution for another hedonic solution a real solution? Where might a better

solution have been found? Isaiah saw the same problem of materialism in his time. He even articulated the problem and consequences of materialism that have been evident in our modern world. Isaiah wrote as if he lived in our time. He saw the leaders of the people leading them astray and destroying their peace. He connected materialism with war and the death of young men and grief and desolation:

O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err,
and destroy the way of thy paths.

The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of hosts.

Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground (Isaiah 3:12–15, 25–26).

If someone were to be only monolingual, it would seem that fluency in the gospel of Jesus Christ is the language that would best lead forward through problems. Even without a robust breadth of trilingual scholarship, a faithful reader of the scriptures can sort through the myriad interpretations and solutions that are presented to us. Call (2017) articulates the need for faithful reading of the scriptures to navigate the conflicting interpretations of problems. As one example, he recounts the experience of Abish, who was the lone bystander that was not overcome when King Lamoni, King Lamoni's wife, Ammon, and others fell to the ground and seemed to be dead. Abish brought others to see the king, supposing that they would understand the overpowering spirit. Those she brought offered three explanations of what they saw, none of which was correct. When one of the interpreters attempted to kill Ammon and suddenly fell dead, four additional interpretations were proffered, none of which was correct. In sum, seven faulty explanations of the manifest reality were proposed. Because of her faith, Abish knew the true explanation and solution. She took the hand of the queen and raised her up. When Lamoni was revived, he gave the correct explanation. Even then, some believed and some did not (Alma 19).

Call gives numerous examples of faulty interpretations and solutions based on the failure to faithfully read the scriptures. In the end, he quotes Moroni's plea to read the scriptures, remember how merciful the Lord has been, ask God for guidance, and follow in faith. Even without Gantt and Thayne's trilingual abilities, a faithful reader of the scriptures can navigate the perplexities of life. But without a faithful understanding of the scriptures, we are frequently left with multiple erroneous explanations and proposed solutions.

Ponder Isaiah's description of the Lord's process, which is shorthand for Gantt and Thayne's entire argument: "The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people" (Isaiah 3:13).

Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father. He pleads for us. He pleads with us. And he judges us. He loves us enough to plead with us to pursue the path of virtue. He knows that path leads to exaltation. He knows the suffering involved in staying the course. He knows the purpose of our sexuality. He knows. He pleads, and he is the loving judge. He offers love unfeigned.

I think that Gantt and Thayne have found the right words: love unfeigned. Some people would have us say "safe spaces" without really understanding the philosophical underpinnings and spiritual implications thereof. Gantt and Thayne's trilingualism has led us to the words and behaviors that are consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Rather than create safe spaces, we practice love unfeigned. We hold up the standard of the Lord. We are compassionate with the struggle to meet the standard of the Lord. We love deeply enough to invite others to follow the path that leads to exaltation. And we are tolerant of those we love when they do not accept our invitation (see Hansen, 2013).

In the end, however, I think it behooves all faithful therapists to become more multilingual and to seriously ask themselves, Whose disciple am I? Where do these ideas come from? What are the philosophical tenets behind them? How do the scriptures inform us about this issue? Gantt and Thayne (and others) are exemplary in this regard, and we should emulate their work.

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