

## **A TENTATIVE PHILOSOPHICAL APPRECIATION OF THE SATIR MODEL**

by

Stuart Pidocke (2016, edited 2020)

Energy is for support of the human soul as it moves towards its freedom. Freedom and its manifestation is the kind of perfection we are all destined to have.

Banmen and Gerber (Eds.) (1995). *Virginia Satir: Meditations and Inspirations*.

A note from the editor: I have enjoyed working on this paper by Stuart Pidocke. I don't think I would have read it under normal circumstances, but during the process of editing, I have found it thought-provoking. I have converted this paper from a pdf version to a word version for it to be uploaded to the website of the Satir Institute of the Pacific.

In the process I have changed all the formatting to APA.7 and added the abstract. There are some citations that I am unable to find and I have noted that in the text. I hope that you gain some insights and gifts of the Satir Model and perhaps enter into further discussion as to what else needs to be considered. I have not changed any of the content in this article, and it does not necessarily reflect my understanding and evolution of the work of Virginia Satir.

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**Abstract**

This paper weaves the Satir Model with philosophy; specifically ontology (the study of being and becoming), axiology (our values and beliefs), and epistemology (how we know what we know). Questions about the philosophical tenets of the Satir Model are asked and answered: What philosophies support the Satir Model? What philosophies might have influenced Virginia Satir? What philosophical changes have there been in the Satir Model? How does the author personally and philosophically, see the Satir Model? The answers to these questions are examined in detail. The author suggests that the Satir Model is a fragment of a larger world-view which is predominately implicit and that the model has a good deal of unfinished business to work with. The unfinished business is described in a number of lacunas in the Satir Model: The gaps in ontology and epistemology leaves the model's compatibility with various world-views wide open; the value of collectivism appears to be absent; the full extent of the power of choice and freedom need to be explained; the interactions between matter and spirit or brains and minds is limited; the relationship between individual, cosmic and group minds, requires development; the fundamental entities and relationships in the universe needs exploration; the place for assessing the "energy field" of the client requires more information; there are limitations as to the use of the iceberg metaphor; there needs to be rigorous exploration of the meaning of "Life Force"; further discussion on intuition is needed; an exploration on ways of thinking other than hierarchical and growth; exploring what political programs are compatible with the values and assumptions of the Satir's growth model; a study of how the Satir Model views the nature and different kinds of authority; and finally, there needs to be an examination of the identification between the "I" and body and mind. These are the lacunas in the Satir Model that are identified in this paper.

Keywords: philosophy, Satir, ontology, axiology, epistemology, life force, iceberg metaphor.

## A Tentative Philosophical Appreciation of the Satir Model

**The Question:** My good friend John Banmen has asked me to make a philosophical assessment of the Satir Model. In particular, he asks me to address the following five questions:

1. What are the philosophical tenets of the Satir Model?
2. What philosophies support the Satir Model, and how do they do so?
3. What philosophies might have influenced Virginia Satir in developing her model?
4. Do I see any philosophical changes in the model during the years of its development both by Virginia and after her death?
5. How do I personally, yet philosophically, see the Satir Model?

**Philosophy Defined:** In these questions, philosophy refers to the ideas concerning the nature of “Being” (no citation), the fundamentals of human nature, and the presuppositions concerning the “Good Life” (no citation) which are contained implicitly or explicitly in the ideas of the Satir Model. These presuppositions are sometimes caught under the labels of world-view or metaphysics. Metaphysics in this usage has nothing necessarily to do with the sorts of books and other things that may be purchased at any self-proclaimed metaphysical or new age bookstore. To a philosopher, metaphysics means the set of basic categories which we use when we think about or judge the world in which we live and our position therein.

Philosophy is not just metaphysics or world-view. More fundamentally it is a quest or search for an integrated and critically reflective answer to such questions as: What is the nature of Being or the Whole, and of human beings and their place within this Whole? For some people the answers are more important than the quest: they stop inquiry when they've reached their answers unless somebody else asks further awkward questions. For other people, the quest is more important than the answer. They treat each answer as an opportunity to ask more questions, and they welcome awkward questions as an adventure. But with both sorts of people, the goal of an integrated world-view is still part of the philosophic quest.

Academic philosophy (to recall an ancient term) is the tradition of such enquiry preserved and pursued in institutions such as universities and colleges. But philosophy can be pursued outside the academy.

This idea of philosophy is excellently portrayed in Durant, (1933), *The Story of Philosophy*, He says:

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... the philosopher is not content to describe the fact; he wishes to ascertain its relation to experience in general, and thereby to get at its meaning and its worth; he combines things in interpretive synthesis ... For a fact is nothing except in relation to desire; it is not complete except in relation to a purpose and a whole. (p. xxvii)

Then Durant shows this by tracing the lives and works of several famous philosophers beginning with Plato and Aristotle and concluding with William James and John Dewey. Durant's book was the book that showed me the delights of philosophy and drew me down the philosophic path.<sup>1</sup>

The philosophic quest has two aspects, the first analytic or critical, the second speculative or constructive. Together these produce the world-views or philosophic systems to which I referred at the beginning of this essay. But the primary meaning is the quest.

**Divisions of Philosophy:** Philosophy, world-view, or metaphysics thus conceived divides into three major concerns, namely (1) Ontology, or Theory of Being, (2) Axiology, or Theory of Value, and (3) Epistemology, or Theory of Knowledge.

(1) **Ontology** asks what are the basic and irreducible entities and relationships of the universe and how does human nature fit into this collection? Do the logical implications of these entities and the relationships between them explain the world in which we live? Is the world meaningful, or is it simply a random hodgepodge of accidental encounters? What is ultimate reality? Is the world one thing or two things or many things? What is the nature of mind? Of matter? Or of body? and how do these relate to one another? Or we might ask, what basic metaphor of experience does the worldview adopt as the key to comprehend and explain the world?

(2) **Axiology** asks such questions as: What is value? What is good and bad? Or right and wrong? What are beauty and ugliness? It leads on to ethics and morals, or the theory of the Good Life and of Right Relationship (no citation) between human beings and the powers of the world in which they live. It leads to political philosophy or the theory of the good society and justice. And it leads to aesthetics or the theory of the beautiful.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on this see, Hunter Mead, (1946, 1953), Randall, Jr., J., H. and Buchler, J. (1942) and Joad, C., E., M. (1936, 1944).

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(3) **Epistemology**, finally, asks such questions as What is knowledge? How do we know what we think we know? How can we ascertain truth and falsity? Is there just one way to knowledge, or are there many different ways? Is the world in which we live ultimately comprehensible or not?

We might think of ontology, axiology, and epistemology as the three comers or the three sides of a triangle. Each one implies the other two.

To these three we should add a fourth concern, namely **Philosophical Psychology** or **Philosophy of Mind**. This may be viewed as part of Ontology and/or as a bridge between Ontology and Epistemology. It investigates, among other things, the links between body and mind, the question of brain-mind identity (or non-identity), the nature of self, person, and personality, the nature of consciousness, conscience, and the relationships between reason (sometimes called intellect) and emotion (sometimes called feeling).

**The Satir Model.** By the Satir Model, I mean the ideas and practices presented by Virginia Satir and taught by her to a variety of family therapists and other followers, and duly written down by Virginia Satir and those followers in a variety of books and articles. Much of what she taught has been recorded in audiotapes and videotapes and is not recorded in written form. She taught by example and not by lectures. The model is more than Virginia Satir's s ideas alone. It indeed contains Virginia Satir's s own philosophy as one of its implicit but is not quite the same as that philosophy. Virginia Satir's world view or philosophy, in turn, involves more than the Satir Model, since she had other interests besides family therapy which is the focus of the Satir Model.

**My Sources.** My sources for this review are chiefly several books and articles written by Virginia Satir and her associates. I never knew Virginia Satir, but I have heard about her from John Banmen and other persons who did know her. I have also attended as an observer some of the therapist training sessions conducted by John Banmen, and I have viewed some of the videotapes of Virginia Satir at work.

But still, my chief sources are written (Banmen, 2003, Banmen and Banmen (Eds.), 1991; Banmen and Gerber (Eds), 1995; Banmen, (Ed.), 2006; Banmen, (Ed.), 2008a, 2008b; Satir, 1972, 1983,1988; Satir et al., 1991; Suhd, et al. (Eds.), 2000; Brothers, 2000).

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## **II: The Axiology of the Satir Model**

Now we come to an important philosophical question. Do you believe that all human life deserves the highest priority? I believe this with all my being. Therefore I unashamedly admit I will do everything I can to change closed systems into open ones. An open system can choose to be open or closed when it fits. The important word is choice. (Satir, 1988, p. 133)

If any single word can catch the enterprise of Virginia Satir and her associates, it is her book, *Peoplemaking* (1972). As Satir (1972) explained she moved into family therapy to consolidate the improvements achieved by individuals as a result of individual counselling. As Virginia Satir and her associates developed it, family therapy is much more than simply promoting the better adjustment of the client. It is an important means for promoting the personal growth of the individuals involved and eventually attaining for them and the therapist Right Relationship with the Universal (no citation). As the Satir Model (Satir et al., 1991) says, the concern is family therapy and beyond.

So with *Peoplemaking* (Satir, 1972) in mind, let us ask: What theory of value and the “Good Life” (no citation) does the Satir Model imply or presuppose? And what seem to be the fundamental ethical and moral assumptions of the Satir Model?

We may begin by quoting the list of Virginia Satir's therapeutic beliefs as given in Satir et al., (1991). It will help us to keep our feet on the ground. Note how important values are in these beliefs:

1. Change is possible. Even if external change is limited, internal change is possible.
2. Parents do the best they can at any given time.
3. We all have the internal resources we need to cope successfully and to grow.
4. We have choices, especially in terms of responding to stress instead of reacting to situations.
5. Therapy needs to focus on health and possibilities instead of pathology.
6. Hope is a significant component or ingredient for change.
7. People connect based on being similar and grow on the basis of being different.
8. A major goal of therapy is to become our own choice makers.
9. We are all manifestations of the same life force.
10. Most people choose familiarity over comfort, especially during times of stress.
11. The problem is not the problem; coping is the problem.
12. Feelings belong to us. We all have them.
13. People are basically good. To connect with and validate their self-worth, they need to find their own inner treasure.
14. Parents often repeat the familiar patterns from their growing up times, even if the patterns are dysfunctional.
15. We cannot change past events, only the effects they have on us.

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16. Appreciating and accepting the past increases our ability to manage our present.
17. One goal in moving toward wholeness is to accept our parental figures as people and meet them at their level of parenthood rather than only in their roles.
18. Coping is the manifestation of our level of self-worth. The higher our self-worth, the more wholesome our coping.
19. Human processes are universal and therefore occur in different settings, cultures, and circumstances.
20. Process is the avenue of change. Content forms the context in which change takes place.
21. Congruence and high self-esteem are major goals in the Satir Model.
22. Healthy human relationships are built on equality of value. (Satir et al., 1991, pp. 16-18.)

Looking over the resources (Banmen, 2003; Banmen and Banmen (Eds.), 1991; Banmen and Gerber (Eds.), 1995; Banmen, (Ed.), 2006, 2008a, 2008b; Satir, 1972, 1983, 1988; Satir et al., 1991; Suhd et al. (Eds.), 2000; Brothers, 2000), I find the following values and value-clusters showing through in the Satirian philosophy.

**(1) Human nature is fundamentally good.** Under this label, several ideas appear. Humans are always striving to do the **best they can** (whatever is the best?), given the situations in which they find themselves and their degree of knowledge or ignorance of the possibilities open to them. Humans are generally to be trusted (though not always). They generally prefer the options which open up the possibilities of the world to themselves, or so the therapist is to presume. This idea of human nature as good includes the idea that human beings are fundamentally creative or productive, open to the expression of previously unrealized potentialities. For Satir, being good does not mean docile, obedient, or conformist. It does mean loving and freely cooperative in common enterprises (no citation).

**(2) Evil or wrong-doing is due to ignorance and fear,** not to over-weening pride. There is no idea in the Satir Model that evil might sometimes be due to a willed hatred of Being itself, or that persons might knowingly choose evil. For Satir, evil is the paralysis of growth resulting from fear and ignorance and a sort of premature closure, a freezing of the individual and the family at a certain place in his or her development (no citation). Satirian therapy consists of releasing this paralysis so that growth may resume (no citation). But this therapeutic policy leaves the question of further depths of evil unaddressed.

**(3) Human selves are intrinsically worthwhile, and self-hood is good.** As a corollary, doctrines of self-negation are perniciously wrong. *The New Peoplemaking*, (1988) chapters 3 and 4, (pp 20-50) contains an eloquent affirmation of the value of selfness (not selfishness).

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(4) As part of these self-hood, humans have the power of **choice** and are **responsible** for the choices they make. They always have the power to choose their reactions to the external circumstances which face them, even when they cannot determine those circumstances. Hence, it is always possible to review one's life and to change a detrimental line of conduct. The Satir Model does not itself spell out the full extent of this power of choice, but understandably confines its discussion to family affairs and family therapy.

(5) As a corollary of this power of choice, the Satir Model insists on the value of **freedom**. Not only do people have the power to choose, but they also have the right to choose and to be allowed to choose and the duty to recognize this right in others. However, beyond this affirmation of freedom, the Satir Model does not go. It concentrates on freeing people from the burden of premature closures in their family systems.

Notions of constraint by external circumstances are largely left alone by the model. But they are not ignored. See, for instance, the chapter on the family in the larger society, (Satir, 1988, pp. 360-367) and the discussion of the social context of the changing family, (Satir, 1983, pp. 29-33).

(6) Allied to the emphasis on growth, creativity, and freedom is the contrast between the "hierarchical" and the "growth" models, (Satir et al., 1991, pp. 6-15) both in therapy and in human organization in general.

In the **Hierarchical Model** (Satir et al., 1991), relationships, persons, events, and change are defined in terms of submission and domination. Relationships are between superordinate's who command and subordinates who obey. Commands are enforced by threats and rewards. These hierarchical relationships generate feelings of emptiness, anger, fear, and helplessness, which in turn express themselves in bodily stances of "placating", "blaming", being "super-reasonable", and "coping irrelevantly" (Satir et al., 1991, pp.36-52) . These postures are discussed especially as four "coping" or "survival stances"(Satir et al., 1991, p.31). Such hierarchical relationships are usually construed in terms of roles, and persons tend to be identified with the roles. So Satirian therapy begins by distinguishing roles from persons. In the hierarchical model, people must be shaped to fit the roles, and are taught to judge themselves according to their performance of these roles. But, since people are not the roles which they enact, this conformity necessarily cripples a person's self-esteem. So persons rebel against the conformity which is expected of them. This rebellion, however, often bears the imprint of the roles against which it is



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directed. The hierarchical model also explains events by linear cause-effect relationships -- thus transferring the linear command-and-obedience social relationships to causal relationships. In the hierarchical model, there is only one right way to answer any question. So the mind becomes blinkered to the possibilities of existence. Ego and the preservation of ego, whether one's own or another's, become a primary mental concern.

One consequence is that we often act as though we do not see what we see, do not hear what we hear, and do not feel what we feel. To preserve somebody's ego, we behave as though what is false is true. That is often hard to do, and it gives us another reason to feel uncertain. (Satir et al., 1991, p. 11)

This hierarchic way of thinking resists change. People who work on dominance-submission, who insist on obedience, and who look for the right answer consider change undesirable. Playing it safe becomes the motto of living. Adventure and change and new possibilities are perceived as threatening and are therefore resisted.

Virginia Satir opposed this hierarchic view of human nature and social life. She declared for equality, individuality, non-linear multivariate causality, and openness to growth and change. In Satir et al. (1991) the authors call this view the **Growth Model** (p. 13). Persons are not their roles but are more than their roles. All persons are equal in value. In Satir's therapy, the therapist demonstrates this equality in the way he or she accepts the client, and so nudges the client towards such an acceptance. Persons should not be judged according to whether or not they conform to somebody else's expectations. Satir tried to help people to discover their inner sources of strength. Events interact with many other events, and no single-cause explanation is adequate. Satir considered the context and explored both inner and outer behaviours, attitudes, and contexts. She advocated looking for connections, but to not judge or blame the people involved. She saw that people have the potential to grow, to take risks, and to change and that such potential should be encouraged (Satir et al., 1991, pp 14-15).

This contrast between hierarchy and growth includes another contrast, namely, between **scarcity and abundance** (Satir et al., 1991, pp. 14-15). The hierarchic ideal as specified in the Satir Model is one of scarcity or limited good, implying conservation of resources and powers. The growth ideal emphasizes the creative powers of the individual, potentially unlimited and eventually always adequate to the situation. It emphasizes **opportunity** rather than **constraint**.

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The hierarchical ideal emphasizes constraint rather than opportunity (no citation). Satir (1988) contrasts these two models as "closed systems" versus "open systems" (pp.134-135).

In **closed systems**, self-esteem is low, and communication is indirect, unclear, unspecific, incongruent, and growth-impeding. Styles of communication notably include blaming, placating, computing, and distracting (Satir et al., 1991, pp 36-52). According to the Satir Model (Satir et al., 1991), rules in closed systems are covert, out-of-date, and inhuman; rules remain fixed, while people change their needs in order to conform to established rules; commenting on the rules is restricted. In a closed family system, especially, outcomes are accidental, chaotic, destructive, and inappropriate. Self-worth accordingly grows ever more doubtful and depends more and more heavily on other people.

In **open systems**, self-esteem is high, and communication is direct, clear, specific, congruent, and growth-producing. Satir calls this style of communication "leveling" (no page number). Rules are overt, up-to-date, human, and they change when the need arises. There is full freedom to comment on anything. In an open system, outcomes are related to reality, are appropriate, and constructive. As a result, self-worth grows ever more reliable, confident, and draws increasingly more from the self.

These two models appear in therapeutic styles, and I should like to quote a statement by Virginia Satir contained in the biography by Brothers (2000). Satir wrote:

I have noticed that, particularly in the people-helping professions, there is little direct emphasis on helping the individual teacher, student, or practitioner to discover his/her own personhood. Universities, for example, do not yet have any departments which focus exclusively on developing humanness. It is almost always incidental, and exclusively subordinated to the content. For me, personhood is basic to mental and physical health, and creative use of the self in the practice of one's profession. ...

... The first premise [to be examined and changed] is that all relationships need to be hierarchical, with leaders exercising total and continuing authority over the led, instead of relationships that shift and change, with no one person ever having a fixed power position over another.

The second premise is that the value of the self is based on conformity, namely that there is one prevailing right way to be, and all persons must judge themselves by how they are like or unlike that one model. Instead, each person, being unique, needs to develop uniqueness, so that personal development is in relation to one's inner core, and not subject solely to outside prescription.

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The third premise [that leads people to unnecessary hardship] has to do with linear thinking, a simplistic way of analyzing cause and effect (A causes B), instead of recognizing that all outcomes are the results of several factors all essential to each other, or a gestalt. ...

... I would like to substitute equality of relationship joining two or more wholes), uniqueness of individuals (featuring variations), and gestalt thinking (considering many parts which are essential to each other), in which hierarchy, conformity, and linear thinking are applied only when they fit.

The human usefulness of current concepts (Transactional Analysis, gestalt, psychoanalysis, etc.) ideas, and techniques relating to human education and the therapy professions have vastly different outcomes, depending upon whether the person using them operates under the hierarchical-conforming-linear model or whether it is the equality-uniqueness- gestalt model.

I believe the first model inhibits and often destroy[s] human growth, while the second model expands and nurtures human beings. (pp. 91-92)

(7) A major value of the Satir Model is **congruence** (Satir et al., 1991, p.69) Congruence ranges from consistency in one's communications (especially consistency between verbal and nonverbal communications) to Right Relationship (no citation), the capital letters are mine) with the cosmos and the Universal Life Force. Lee (2008) has distinguished congruence into **interpersonal, intrapsychic, and spiritual-universal** aspects (pp. 63-84, & pp. 72-79). The Satir Model (Satir et al., 1991) distinguishes three levels of congruence; two are intrapsychic and the third is spiritual-universal (p. 67).

Congruence as honesty in communication (see a definition in McLendon and Weinberg, 2006, pp. 243-254) may be separated from congruence as Right Relationship with the Universal Spirit or Life Force, and this idea of congruence as honesty in communication then becomes compatible with a wide variety of world-views and metaphysical systems. Congruence is then defensible simply as a practical advantage for organizations and is compatible with hierarchical as well as growth-oriented systems. But as Right Relationship with the cosmos, etc., congruence implies a moral universe.

Congruence implies two further values. One is the value of **truth and true dealing**. The other is the value of integration.

(8) In the near background of these values is another, namely what I will label the value of **Fellow-Feeling**. This is the value of caring for one's fellow humans and the other creatures - fellow-beings - of the world. Therapy itself is an act of Fellow-Feeling by the Satirian therapist. Its further dimensions are the values of Love and Peace. Fellow-Feeling expands into an

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aspiration for Human Unity, expressed in the slogan "Peace Within, Peace Between, Peace Among", among people and peoples and between humankind, the Earth, and the Universe.

(9) Congruence implies the possibility of **incongruences**, as a Right Relationship implies the possibility of a Wrong Relationship. What is a Wrong Relationship in the Satir Model? It would be ignorance and fear leading to being stuck or frozen or congealed into a defensive stance. Incongruence is a simultaneous lie and revelation of truth between different channels of information, such as verbal and non-verbal behaviours. One says one thing and displays another.

### III: The Ontology of the Satir Model

The creation of life comes from a power much greater than our own. The challenge of becoming more fully human is to be open to and to contact that power we call by many names, God being one frequently used. I believe that successful living depends on our making and accepting a relationship to our life force. (Satir, 1988, p.336)

The universe is orderly. We as human beings operate that way, too. We cannot always see the order of our humanness, mostly because we do not look or we do not look with open eyes. To find that order was important to me. I knew it was there somewhere. For me, the basis of that order is the Life Force. I also found that things follow certain things and that everything has a consequence, and in that sense, everything has a price and also a reward. And so, I began to look at things in that frame. (Satir et al., 1991, pp. 221-222)

Ontology asks, among other questions, what are the fundamental entities, relationships, and kinds of entities, in the universe? It also selects certain experiences as clues or even as paradigms (i.e. examples) to all the rest of experience and the hidden causes (if any) of experience. The Satir Model however, leaves most of these questions unexplored. The Satir Model focusses on human nature and the possibilities thereof, and the means whereby these possibilities may be released for good rather than bad/evil. But there are some ideas pointing to the larger ontology:

(1) The Satir Model is optimistic rather than pessimistic and holds that the universe is fundamentally friendly to human striving. Mead (1953) calls this approach "idealism" in contrast to "materialism" (no page number), which holds that the world is indifferent to human striving. By way of illustration, one may also contrast the optimism of the Satir Model with the pessimism of Russell (1927).

(2) The material and ordinary sensory realm is the expression of a **further and larger realm of powers**, such as the Universal Life Force, (Satir et al., 1991, p. 19) which can be

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touched and experienced by humans, and with which human beings may be congruent or incongruent.

Satir (1988) declares that the ruling power of the universe is a positive “Life Force” (Satir et al., 1991, p. 221) that humans can experience and participate in. Satir seems to presume that this Life Force is cosmic or universal and is not confined to Earth or the Solar System. This Life Force is not viewed as a personal being, that is, as having a character analogous to a human personality. But there is more than a hint that it could appropriately be called a Divine Will or a Divine Consciousness (Or might we call it Cosmic Purpose?).

(3) The universe is a **single interconnected whole**, although with many subsystems (such as families) within it. The emphasis of the Satir Model upon family therapy does not, however, allow the full implications of this idea to be explored.

(4) This brings us to the ideas of **system, interaction, and multiple causalities**, and an insistence on the importance of **context**, although Satirian theoretical development of these ideas is limited to their application in family therapy. We have already noticed the contrast between closed and open systems.

But what is a system? Satir, (1988) gives the following definition or description of a system:

All human life is part of a system. We hear a lot about beating the system, which would seem to say that all systems are bad. Not so. Some are and some are not. The implications of systems thinking for personal, family, and societal behavior are evident everywhere today; in the early Seventies, when this book first came out, they were just beginning to be apparent. An operating system consists of the following:

*A purpose or goal.* Why does this system exist in the first place? In families, the purpose is to grow new people and to further the growth of those already here.

*Essential parts.* In families, this means adults and children males and females.

*An order to the parts' working.* In families, this refers to the various family members' self-esteem, rules, and communications.

*Power to maintain energy in the system so the parts can work.* In families, this power is derived from food, shelter, air, water, activity, and beliefs about the emotional, intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual lives of the family members and how they work together.

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*Ways of interacting with the outside.* In families, this means relating to changing contents, the new and different. There are two types of systems, closed and open. ... (p. 131)

This is an open-ended definition of one kind of system, namely purpose-groups. If we were to apply it to eco-systems, for example, we would have to question the criterion of a purpose or goal. And we can describe the winds of the Earth as a system, for another example, but would it conform to these criteria? Satir's definition applies aptly to families. It also resembles the anthropologist, Malinowski's (1944) definition of an institution, which he regarded as a basic building block of societies and cultures. Malinowski wrote that an institution has (1) a "charter", (p.162) or statement of its purpose, (2) "personnel" (p. 162), (3) "a set of norms, rules and now knowledges" (p. 162), (4 ) a "material apparatus" (p.151), (5 ) "a set of activities," (p.164), or what the personnel actually do and (6) "a function," (p. 168). or contribution to the maintenance of the larger system of which the institution is a part. Families match Malinowski's definition of an institution too. But is a society an institution or a system by Malinowski's or Satir's definitions? Some further thinking about systems seems to be required.

These systems are systems of **actions and interactions**. Entities (in this case human beings) are doing things to one another and sending messages between themselves. This exchange of messages is described in Satir et al., (1991) where it is called the **Ingredients of an Interaction** (pp. 121-145). The schema given there analyzes steps in the person's reception and interpretation of messages from other persons and is used to help clients become more aware of how they interpret the inputs from their worlds. This schema is thus very practical. But it is only one part of **communication**, which in turn is an aspect of social interaction, which in turn is just one kind, though a paradigmatic kind, of interactions in general. The Satir Model does not explicitly analyze these larger aspects of interaction but concentrates on teaching the client to become more aware of his/her own meanings and ways of construing her/his world.

The discussion of communication by Satir (1988), opens by declaring communication to be "a huge umbrella that covers and affects all that goes on between human beings ... [and] ... *the largest single factor determining what kinds of relationship she or he makes with others and what happens to each in the world.*" (p. 51; italics Satir's). Satir (1988) declares that all "communication is learned" (p. 52). She then sketches briefly, communication between two people (pp. 52-53) and describes several exercises making people more aware of their

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communications (pp. 54-79). Next, the chapter on patterns of communication (pp. 80-100) introduces difference between verbal and non-verbal communication and describes four incongruent communication stances or styles, namely placating, blaming, computing, and distracting. The third chapter on communication (pp. 101-115) describes some communication games.

Interaction, sometimes called transaction, is an idea well explored, both large-scale and small-scale, in social and cultural anthropology, sociology, and social psychology. The Satir Model, however, makes no use of the resources offered by these disciplines; the idea of interaction in the Satir Model therefore remains rudimentary. To have elaborated the idea of interaction, however, would have been a distraction from the therapeutic endeavor at the core of the Satir Model.

(5) There is a hint, in the ideas of spiritual-universal congruence and of the Universal “Life Force”, (Satir et al., 1991, p. 221) of a division of the universe into **matter and spirit**. Matter and spirit complement but do not oppose one another. Matter includes energy, as in physical theory, and spirit includes the mind. But much of minds may be identical with brains, which are of course material. There is some reference in Satirian writings to the importance of right-brain thinking in contrast to left-brain thinking (no citation). The Satir Model, however, does not tackle the questions of the relationships between matter and spirit or brains and minds.

(6) In any ontology, the ideas concerning **human nature** are important. A paragraph by Lee (2008) seems to me to be most relevant.

Satir's view represents a depth humanism that has an essentialist base which differs from therapeutic models such as behaviorism, which subscribes to the sufficiency of external control that uses reward and punishment, and classical psychoanalysis, which focuses on instinctual drives. In the contemporary family therapy context, social constructionism has been proposed as a theoretical base for Satir's work (Cheung, 1997). However, in light of Satir's belief in the "essence" and spiritual nature of humanity as the fundamental premise in her therapeutic system, social construction can only be seen as that which supports or hinders the intrinsic creative dynamism within humanity, and hence is secondary to and at the service of or detrimental to essential humanity. A human core with spiritual roots expressed in universal human yearnings propels the growth and healing process. This philosophical position differs from the relativistic assumptions of constructivism that gives primary salience to socially constructed narratives and differs from constructivism based on the relativistic claims of arbitrary subjective preferences. Examination of Satir's implicit philosophy reveals that the source

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of her widely admired therapeutic success derives from her faith in the human spirit and the intrinsic human potential for healing. (pp. 73-74)

In short, there is in each human being a given potential nature that is seeking to discover and reveal itself to the world around it. This potential human nature is similar to all other human natures, similar to some but not to others and different from all others. I would call it an innate (but not instinctual) pattern for best actualization laid down within each human being as part of the character thereof. Aristotle's term "entelechy" (New World Encyclopedia, 2017) seems an apt name for this pattern where there is a difference between potential and actual.

But how are such entelechies discovered? The Satir Model does not directly tell us how, but it does show us some ways to enable persons to become more aware of their own deeper natures.

### **IV: The Epistemology or Theory of Knowledge of the Satir Model**

Knowledge depends on two things: the possession of faculties capable of bringing us into touch with reality, and the existence of a stable reality to be known. (Guthrie, 1950, pp. 66-67)

The Satir Model emphasizes experience and the constructive powers of mind as sources of knowledge. Experience includes **ordinary sensory experiences, intuitions**, and what I will call **parasensory experiences**. Virginia Satir herself was no theoretician and emphasized experiential encounters in her therapeutic procedures and her teaching sessions. This emphasis popped out once in a demurral over Brothers (2000) describing Satir's idea of the four coping stances as "theory" (p. 61).<sup>2</sup>

**Experience is an interaction between the observer and the observed.** In the Satir Model, this interaction is especially noticed for the relationship between the therapist and the client, and the relationship between the therapist and the trainer of the therapist. The therapist (who is supposed to be congruent) is changed by the interaction (or at least should expect to be changed). Training

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<sup>2</sup>Editor's note: To clarify, Brothers says that she used the term "theory" with misgiving as Virginia Satir said she was not a theoretician and had asked Brothers to not use the term to describe her description of human behaviour (p. 61).



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therapists involves opening them to such change and enabling them to benefit thereby. Training the therapist, in turn, should change the trainer.

The processes of perception and evaluation enter therapy, and theories of such are relevant to theories of therapy. The Satir Model implies a kind of constructivism. Therapy includes re-framing the client's experience. But this needs a complementary theory of how the person comes to encounter the world beyond the person and to test his or her ideas about the world. There is also a largely implicit idea concerning how persons experience their inward, mental, or intrapsychic natures. The possibility of self-knowledge and self-awareness is taken as given, but the means and process of this are only partly hinted at - notably in the image of the Iceberg (Satir et al., 1991, p. 29, p.67, pp. 172-173).

Experience for Satir included **more than the ordinary senses**. This enlargement is revealed in Satir's (1983) account of what happens when she meets a person.

There is an important element that I would like to mention. I call it the "energy field." I think it is important because it goes along with touching. Around any well-integrated person, there is a circular field that is about three feet in diameter. At the edge of this field, you can feel vibrations – at least I can! These vibrations are like unacknowledged territorial lines around the person. When a person is relatively well put-together, those lines feel like elastic. If you come up to them, first of all, you can physically feel them; you can feel that you are bumping against something. If it feels elastic, you know that you are there and that maybe you can reach over. I respect these lines. That's why I stay at arm's length. If I go closer to a person, I have already experimented as to whether or not his or her boundary will let me in. There seems to be a relation between the development of trust and the elasticity of this boundary. ...

...Sight is also a part of this. The distance at which you can see someone – really see him –is probably nine or ten feet. At ten feet the outlines are here; the nuances are not there. You can see fairly well at six feet; at about three feet you can see much better. I want to get where I can be seen and heard as soon as I can. (p. 257)

Here is a whole realm for further exploration.

### **V: Philosophical Psychology and the Satir Model**

The Satir Model has no doctrine of mind and does not distinguish (as I think it needs to) between personal mind and cosmic mind. In the concept of the "Self-Mandala"(Satir et al., 1991, p. 274), the Satir Model identifies intellect, thoughts, and facts with the left brain, and emotions,

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feelings, and intuition with the right brain (Banmen (ed), 2008b, p. 112 and pp.115-116). But this identification is, to my mind, not entirely consistent with Satir et al.'s (1991) assertion about matter and spirit, the "Life Force", (p. 221) and self.

(1) Considered simply as a psychology (albeit a fragment of one), the Satir Model belongs to a class of psychologies known as **self-actualizations psychologies**. These psychologies propose a human nature comprising a set of potentialities that are somehow to be made actual or expressed in manifest actions. The failure of the human being to actualize these potentials leads him or her to go astray in some way detrimental to his/her-self or to other persons. These potentials may include patterns for behaviour and needs or functional requisites. One such psychology that provides a ground for the Satir Model is the work of Maslow (1968).

Maslow (1968) distinguishes between "deficiency needs" and "Being needs" and matches these respectively with "deficiency cognition" and "Being cognition" (no citation). These needs manifest in a hierarchical order (not "hierarchical" in Satir's meaning) from survival (or subsistence) needs to security needs to self-esteem (or ego) needs to creative needs and presumably needs still "higher" (no citation). The Satir Model fits neatly enough into Maslow's frame. Virginia Satir, of course, knew of Maslow's scheme and refers to it somewhere in her writings. I suspect that Maslow's work did not influence Virginia Satir and the Satir Model directly. His ideas and terminology are not used by the Satir Model, except perhaps for the insistence on growth. My Satirian sources have only four explicit references to Maslow. Three of these are in Satir et al., (1991, p. 5, p.13, & p.330), commenting in passing on resemblances between Satir and Maslow. These three references could very easily have come not from Virginia Satir but from John Banmen, who was familiar with Maslow's work and had as early as 1965 written a summary of it for school counsellors governed by the Manitoba Department of Education (Banmen, n.d., pp. 30-50). The fourth reference is in the reference section of the last article in Banmen (Ed.), 2008b, p. 223), where Satir refers to Maslow's *Towards a Psychology of Being*. However, it seems almost an afterthought.

Now let me make some more specific observations.

(2) The term **self** in Satirian writings is used equivocally. (a) It sometimes refers to the **entire person**, namely, to the entire body, mind, and centre of awareness (which I like to name the "I", in quotation marks for emphasis). (b) It also refers to the Deep Self, the centre of the whole person. This is different from the "I" because it is possible for the person (that is, the "I")

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to become aware of this **Deep Self**. These two usages are fairly clear and explicit in, for instance, *The Satir Model*. (c) The third meaning of self is implicit. It is the "I", **the centre of awareness** which can observe the outside world and the inner mental and bodily states of the person and therefore cannot be the same as any of these. Self (c) can observe most of self (a), though not all and some part of self (b) precisely because it is not these. But the Satir Model does not seem to realize this.

(3) The discussions of the **Self Mandala** (Satir, 1991, 1998) show confusion between the image of spokes radiating from the hub of a wheel and the image of a series of levels building upward and outward from a common centre. The set of concentric circles in one diagram invites me to wonder if closeness to the centre means anything and whether the outermost circle has a special significance because of its position. But when I turn to the list of eight parts, or "eight different levels comprising health" (Banmen, (Ed.) 2008b, p. 112), I find nothing to warrant the distinction into levels.

I give this list as it appears in Banmen (Ed.), (2008b)

1. Physical; the body.
2. Intellectual; the left brain, thoughts, facts.
3. Emotional; the right brain, feelings, intuition.
4. Sensual; the ears sound, the eyes sight, the nose smell, the mouth taste, and the skin tactile sensation, touch movement.
5. Interactional; the I-Thou, communication between oneself and others, and communication between the self and the self.
6. Nutritional; the solids and fluids ingested.
7. Contextual; colors, sound, light, air temperature, forms, movement, space and time.
8. Spiritual; one's relationship to the meaning of life, the soul, spirit, life-force. (pp. 112-113)

This list is fairly comprehensive, but in my view is also rather muddled. The categories are not all of the same logical order. It is practical enough, however, as a reminder of significant concerns for a body/mind/"I" system in the midst of a world. Buckbee (2005) shows how serviceable the idea can be. His diagram of the mandala (pp. 1-25), however, is an **eight-pointed star** with each concern being one of the star's points. The idea of levels is dropped.

Satir (no date, pp. 43-47), first introduces the eight in the form of eight concentric circles, and then almost immediately offers an alternative diagram. This new diagram consists of eight circles arranged around a larger circle in the centre. This larger circle represents the self. The eight smaller circles are not concentric and do not overlap with one another. The diagram

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resembles an atom with a central nucleus (the self) and eight satellite electrons revolving one after the other in the same orbit around the centre. This is, I think, a much better diagram: the eight electrons then represent distinguishable subsystems mediating between the central self and the surrounding world. The eight, of course, are also interacting with one another, and we could represent these interactions by drawing lines from each circle to the others.

A good diagram is a sort of map revealing something of the structure of what it refers to. The details of the diagram are important. But if the diagram has meaningless or misleading details, it suggests that the maker's idea of the structure is muddled or unclear.

(4) I have similar misgivings about the image of the **iceberg** (Satir et al., 1991, p. 29, p.67, pp. 172-173). I have been told that this diagram is a great help in counselling, helping clients who are not very aware of their own selves to become more aware of their own inner states. But it would take a long time to explain my dissatisfactions and revisions, and so I will merely record here that I have these dissatisfactions.

(5) The reference in the spiritual part of the Mandala, to soul, spirit, and life force, suggests that the Satir Model needs to distinguish between **personal mind and cosmic mind**, and to develop some ideas about how these minds interact. An assertion such as "We are all manifestations of the same life force" (*Satir et al.*, 1991, p. 17), for instance, is just not good enough. Satir in Banmen (ed) (2008b), indeed, explained that she had had experiences that convinced her of the existence of such a life force. Satir, in Banmen (Ed.), (2008b) wrote.

As I have been evolving, I have had experiences that tell me that there exists something that could be called the life force or universal mind. I know that there are many dimensions in this force that are powerful shapers in human behavior. It seems to me a little like the presence of electricity. It was always there, yet it waited for someone to identify it, and then learn ways to use it for beneficial purposes. This probably could be referred to as psychic power, something all of us have experienced as atmosphere. There are already some ideas that each body is like an individual electrical generating unit. Our energy creator, and the amount and use of its own electrical power, is controlled mainly by belief and feelings of self-worth. I know that when I am in a state of low self-esteem, my energy is low and frequently misdirected – mostly against myself. For me, these experiences provide a very fruitful direction in which to go. In fact, I don't think I can help myself because so much is coming up that I am compelled to look at and investigate in this direction. (p.57)

This is perhaps a beginning. But what these experiences were, Satir does not say.

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(6) In between the personal mind (i.e. the mind of the individual) and the cosmic mind, we need to allow for the possibility of “group minds”, (no citation) that is, the minds of families, societies, and even, perhaps, civilizations. These minds would be more than the interlocking of personal minds which is accomplished through symbolic communication and imitation and known as culture in the anthropological meaning. See for instance the discussion by Taub-Bynam, (1984) regarding the group minds of families. Family cultures, of course, go a long way to create common expectations and purposes. These are well elicited by Satir's methods of family therapy.

Some other questions touching philosophical psychology are:

(7) **What is the real nature of Reason and its relationship to Poetic Imagination?** Our current idea of reason tends to reduce it to bureaucratic rulemaking and economic rationality. In these terms, it makes sense to label the "computing" stance "super-reasonable" (Satir, 1983, p. 256). But if by Reason (I use the capital letter deliberately) we mean the imaginative connecting power described by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1906,1947, p. 42, pp.48, 49, p. 76, p. 139, pp. 145-6, pp. 151,152), we would not call that stance reasonable at all. At best it would be pseudo-reasonable.

(8) **What is intuition?** I once made a collection of twenty definitions and descriptions of intuition and found as many as thirteen distinct (though connected) meanings for this word. Just what did Satir mean by intuition?

(9) The Satir Model contrasts two kinds of thinking, namely hierarchical versus growth-oriented. But it does not describe nor analyze the nature of thinking in general and does not seem to realize **how many different kinds of thinking** there are. (By thinking here, I mean the combining and recombining of ideas in the mind of the person.) In this connection, note the variety of "fast" and "slow" thinking's described in Claxton, (1998).

### **VI: (2) What Philosophies Support the Satir Model, and How Do They Do It?**

So much, then, for the metaphysical presuppositions and implications of the Satir Model, and some of the lacks thereof; The Satir Model is a fragment of a larger world-view and is not itself a whole world-view. What philosophic traditions support the Satir Model, and what contradict or oppose it?

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The incompleteness of the Satir Model, especially in Ontology and Epistemology, leaves the model's compatibility with various world-views wide open. Even traditional materialism may find usable notions in the Satir Model: the concern with the spiritual-universal will, of course, have to be put aside, but the advantages of interpersonal and intrapsychic congruence are as applicable in materialisms as in other views.

World-views other than traditional materialism will find more in the Satir Model ontologically because they recognize aspects of existence other than matter, or because they enlarge the idea of matter to include subtle levels of Being.

The main determiner of compatibility or incompatibility of the Satir Model with the given world-view is in the domain of axiology. The Satir Model rejects hierarchy as bad and declares for the option of growth and freedom. It favors individual expression and prefers voluntary cooperation to coerced cooperation. While the Satir Model favors human unity, it sees this as best coming about through individuals' own discoveries of that common feeling. Collectivism takes a back seat in the Satir Model.

Do any philosophies specifically support the Satir Model, even if they do not know about or mention the model? Some of the Romantic philosophies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which declares the importance of the creative imagination would find the Satir Model highly congenial the "philosophy of organism" (as it has been called) of Alfred Korzybski (n.d). Then, too, the philosophy in Walt Whitman's, *Leaves of Grass*, and *Democratic Vistas*, (n.d) shows a Satirian perspective in operation, with its emphasis on growth, freedom, and diversity. And a similar philosophy, albeit shadowed by an awareness of human folly may be found in the writings of Mark Twain (n.d.). I would say, too, that considerable support for Satir's perspective may be found in the writings of William James, including his *Psychology: The Briefer Course*, various editions.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Lockean legacy (Northrop, 1947) mingles "hierarchical" and "growth" characteristics. On the whole, though, the American experience through the 18th and 19th *centuries* was to develop the "growth" side of the mixture. The 20th century has been more ambiguous. The Lockean component in U.S. culture has been described and philosophically analyzed by Northrop, (1947, pp. 71-164).

**(3) What Philosophies Might Have Influenced Virginia Satir in Developing Her Model?**

To help me to answer this question I have four things:

(a) Satir was an innovative, independent thinker and scientist, and she reached outside the existing therapeutic practices and helped develop two new concepts related to helping people grow and be healthy. The first concept moved away from the old Aristotelian, linear, singular cause-and-effect approach and towards the systems thinking of Alfred Korzybski, Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, and, later, Gregory Bateson. The second concept was based on the positive existentialism of Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, and Martin Heidegger. This concept was that human beings are manifestations of “positive life energy, and that this energy could transform people's dysfunctional coping into high levels of self-care within the context of high self-esteem” (Satir et al., 1991, p. 3). I shall come back to this later.

(b) Bibliographies in Satir (1983), of which Satir described as "books and articles that have been particularly exciting, inspiring, and informational for me." (pp. 275-284) and in Satir (1988), pp. 388-393, with a similar comment.

(c) References mentioned in Banmen (Ed.) (2008a, 2008b).

(d) The biography written by Brothers (2000).

The Satir Model, (Satir et al., 1991), suggests two influences, namely systems theory and existentialism. But my question is, did these traditions of thought actually influence Virginia Satir or merely confirm what she had already arrived at? By the time Virginia Satir moved to California in the 1950s, where she would meet Gregory Bateson among others, she had already formed her basic approach and was rejecting the psychoanalytic tradition which she had been taught as a social worker. (And how much of that tradition was taught to her? She refers to Freud, for instance, in Banmen (Ed.) (2008b, p. 215), but in none of my sources does she refer to either Adler or Jung or any other persons in Freud's group. Why?). Gregory Bateson is mentioned in Satir, (1983, p. 235) in connection with the simulated family. Bateson and his associates discovered to their surprise the role-playing which led Satir to the techniques of Family Reconstruction and the Parts Party. But that is all. He is not mentioned in the essays and bibliographies in *In Her Own Words* (Banmen, Ed., 2008b). By the 1950s, indeed, general semantics was well established on the California scene, with a local leader being, Don Hayakawa (Banmen Ed., 2008b, p. 55) who was then the editor of the general semantics periodical *Etc.*, which would have given Satir much to ponder. Some of her poems appeared in *Etc.* I cannot

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trace Von Bertalanffy in Satir's writings at all. In the 1950s he was a special professor at the University of Alberta and one of the founders of the Society for General Systems, which included in its members numerous persons from the California scene into which Virginia Satir would come in the 1960s. It would be surprising if the conversations between Virginia Satir and her colleagues were not at least flavoured by ideas from the general semantics and the general systems movements.

The influence of existentialism is harder to trace. Neither Soren Kierkegaard nor Martin Heidegger is mentioned in the writings I have cited. And indeed the reference to Johann Heidegger in Satir et al. (1991) is mistaken. According to my Encyclopedia Britannica, Johann Heidegger was a Swiss theologian of the 17th century, while the existentialist philosopher of the 20th century is Martin Heidegger. In *Sein und Zeit* (1927), translated (in part) into English in 1949, Martin Heidegger says that human existence is grounded in care and dread and consists of projects brought to nothingness in death. Of the three existentialists mentioned in Satir, (1991), Martin Buber is the only one mentioned in Satir's writings (that I have seen, anyway), (Banmen Ed., 2008b, p. 218 & p.223). "I-Thou experiences," (Banmen Ed., 2008b, p.56) is used in a phrase that perhaps refers obliquely to Buber's idea.

Satir declares some of the persons and ideas who influenced her or provided material for her to think about.

My going to Esalen in 1964 opened up a whole new dimension for me when I discovered what can be loosely referred to as the affective domain. Here I met people who had made lifelong studies, part of which I had observed but which others had carried much farther. They all concerned themselves with understanding and bettering the human condition, which was my absorbing interest as well. There were people such as Fritz Perls and his Gestalt Therapy, Eric Berne and his Transactional Analysis, Al Lowen's Bioenergetics, Charlotte Selver and Bernie Gunther in body awareness, Don Hayakawa with general semantics, and George Prince and Synectics. I was introduced to hypnotism, EST, LSD, parapsychology, sleep research, altered states of consciousness, marathons, nude and clothed massage, and body image work, astrology, psychic healing, and finally to yoga and Alan Watts and Eastern ways of thought. This was a rich diet to digest. I ran it all through my three-layered hopper: What does this say about being human? What does it say about people becoming dysfunctional? What does it say about how growth can be rechanneled? I found that each of these persuasions had things to offer me, which in turn I could offer families. (Banmen, Ed., 2008b, pp. 55-56)



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This reveals something of the intellectual excitement in California in the 1950s and 1960s. Another clue to some of Virginia Satir's sources may be found in a paragraph from Satir, (1983).

If one approaches therapy from an integrational viewpoint, it becomes clear that many fields not labeled as "human relations" disciplines had much to say about parts of the human gestalt long before human relations fields emerged. In my therapy and training, I make use of principles and ideas gleaned from the disciplines of dance, drama, religion, medicine, communications, education, speech, the behavioral sciences -- and the physical sciences, from which the "system concept" ( on which my practice is based) first derived.\* Integration, in theory, and practice, of all the tools available to people for their growth is necessary before we begin to deal in fact with the "total person. (p. 231)

I daresay that such existentialism that influenced Satir, if any did, was filtered through the debates and conversations of this California excitement. The only Martin Buber book referred to in *In Her Own Words* (Banmen, Ed. 2008b) was published in English in New York in 1970. A casual mention of the I-Thou relationship does not suggest influence to my mind. Apart from these, I can find nothing to help me to answer the question: What philosophies might have influenced Virginia Satir in developing her model?

### **( 4) Do I See Any Philosophical Changes in the Model During the Years of Its Development Both by Virginia and After Her Death?**

I can only make a tentative estimate because I do not know enough of the history thereof. But my impression is that the chief change is making explicit what was implicit in the very beginning. The focus on family therapy left the larger social theory only vaguely adumbrated, but the latter was there. The reference to the universal/cosmic or Life Force was there in the beginning, though it was brought out most explicitly in her later years. The concerns for peace and congruence were there in the beginning, although some of their implications waited to be revealed later.

The lacks which I have complained about were also there in the beginning. John Banmen tells me that he has observed a shift in focus from family therapy -a means for improving communication within families in order to sustain and develop the self-esteem of the participant in the family -- to personal development (human potential development?). This includes opening up the person's spiritual growth – and thence to promoting personal and spiritual transformation and connection to a universal power, force, or principle imperfectly labeled Life Force; in other

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words a shift from moral improvement to spiritual growth and connectivity. Brothers (2000) biography of Virginia Satir confirms this movement.

This change is not so much a change in philosophy, however, as the bringing out of something that was already implicit in the beginning.

### **(5) How Do I Personally, Yet Philosophically, See the Satir Model?**

In a nutshell, I see the Satir Model as a fragment of a larger world-view that is largely implicit or potential. As a fragment, it points in more than one direction at once, to more than one possible world-view. It is a particular technique for enhancing the growth and unleashing the possibilities of individuals. It may remain as such. But if it is to be regarded as part of a larger world-view, then it has a good deal of unfinished business to deal with.

( 1) To begin with, an enlarged model must ask what kind of society and politics is implied by the growth model which the Satir Model promulgates? In freedom and self - development, there are two opposing poles. The first is the pole of exclusive zero-sum freedom, in which the well-being of one person is achieved through the servitude of all the rest. This resembles Satir's s hierarchic model. The second is the pole of inclusive mutual benefit: Freedom, in which people develop together and actualize their "Beingnesses" together. This is the freedom to which the Satir Model aspires. What sort of social organization is implied or required by inclusive mutual-benefit freedom? Can the social structures of the present-day meet these requirements? In other words, what political programs are compatible with the values and assumptions of the Satir Model?

(2) Allied to (1) is the question, what sort of education for both children and adults fits the Satir Model? What would an educational program look like which was constructed following Virginia Satir's ideals? Virginia started out as a teacher, after all, and she seems to have regarded herself as a teacher (though not an orthodox one) all her life, so this question sort of comes full circle. How, for instance, do you teach children and adults to think in a non-linear multi-causal way, such as Korzybski (n.d) and Hayakawa (n.d) tried to promulgate?

(3) The constraints within which families form and reform needs to be explored and the patterns of these formations sorted out as part of the context for what we may call "Satirian operations". There doesn't need to be more background than is already given in *Conjoint Family Therapy* (1983), but more would be a useful reminder of the importance of these Satirian

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operations. Family structures and family ideals differ from culture to culture, as any social anthropologist can tell you at length. But what is the relationship between ideals and actualities? Do the underlying processes differ as much as the outward structures? How do ecology and economics affect family structures and the possibilities for human growth provided by families?

(4) The issue of the nature of authority, and the different kinds of authority, will need to be addressed. Authority links families to larger social structures. What kinds of authority are recognized, implicitly or explicitly, as rightful by the Satir Model, and what not? To answer these questions, the model will have to develop a set of concepts about authority and social power. There are already many relevant studies, but I will only mention that this problem has been much exercised by Erich Fromm, (n.d.) some of whose ideas were known to Virginia Satir.

(5) A philosophic base for the Satir Model requires a full account of the nature of human minds. This account must describe and explain the structures and dynamics of those minds, and should tell how these minds may be observed and experienced and interacted with, and occasionally even controlled. It should also tell how the autonomy of those minds may be defended against brainwashers and other such nasties. This doctrine of mind should distinguish between the mind and the "I", and between the "I" and the personal ego which is a complex in the mind. (Here a good starting place would be William James, *Psychology: The Briefer Course*, various editions.) It should also distinguish between the brain and the mind, which are observed differently by the "I".

(6) There should be an examination of the identification between the "I" and its vehicles (body and mind) and of the disidentification. The metapsychology is known as Samkhya- Yoga (no citation) has something to teach us on this concern. So too does the psychological system of Gurdjieff (no citation).

(7) The model needs an enlarged theory of knowledge, including especially a rehabilitation of Reason and better recognition of the Poetic Imagination.

(8) Besides this, the model needs an exploration of the parasenses and the diverse interactions which are gathered under the label of intuition.

(9) The idea of the "Life Force" (Satir et al., 1991, p. 221) needs careful and critical examination. There are different ideas going by this label, and some of the "Life Forces" conceived are anything but benign.

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(10) Are there domains of existence beyond the material or physical world? If so, how many are there, and what are their characters? The Satir Model's reference to universal spiritual concerns poses this question, among others.

(11) Finally the goal of growth and self-development needs to be set within a larger frame. Self-development isn't everything. So what should be the overall direction of self-development, and what limits (there will be some) should be put on this development? These questions will sooner or later have to be addressed.

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### **Stuart Piccocke, MA, LLB, Ph.D.**

Before his retirement Stuart Piddocke taught cultural and ecological anthropology, and the anthropology of law. He focused his studies on the native peoples of the North American West Coast, and Central and southern Africa. He has taught at Sacramento State College, the University of Alberta, the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University. He has written a contributing chapter in *Meditations of Virginia Satir*, (ed. Dr. John Banmen, formerly Avanta network now Virginia Satir Global Network. He has also written four essays on the Satir Model for his high school friend, John Banmen. This is one of the essays.