CONGRUENCE IN SATIR'S MODEL: ITS SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

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ABSTRACT: This article casts into relief the essentialist-existential philosophy implicit in Satir's model of healing using Paul Tillich's systematic philosophical framework. Parallels between Satir's model of the person are drawn with Tillich's ontological categories of essence and existence, individualization and participation, and destiny and freedom. Congruence as the integration of elements in three vital human dimensions: the interpersonal, intrapsychic, and spiritual-universal, is correlated with Tillich's philosophical understanding of "salvation." The religious quest is understood as a systemic, multidimensional process that brings the interactive and interdependent personal, interpersonal and spiritual dimensions into a restored unity. Thus Satir's rehumanization project and Tillich's religious quest are shown to coincide.

KEY WORDS: Satir; Tillich; congruence; essentialism; salvation; religious; spiritual.

Although Virginia Satir's (1916–1988) place as a pioneer and major figure in family therapy is well established (Becvar & Becvar, 1996; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1996; Guerin & Chabot, 1997; Hoffman, 1981; Luepnitz, 1988; Nichols & Schwartz, 1998; Sprenkle, Keeney, & Sutton, 1982), a number of authors have noted the under-valuation of Satir's contribution and her marginal status in the field of family therapy (Duhl, 1989; Luepnitz, 1988; McGoldrick, 1989; Schwartz, 2000). Satir's success has been cited mostly in historical terms and attributed to her personal "warmth," "artistry," and "charisma" as a clinician rather than in terms of any substantive theoretical contribution (Guerin & Chabot, 1997; Nichols & Schwartz, 1998; Schwartz, 2000). Those most familiar with Satir's work saw her as a "visionary" whose contributions have

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global and spiritual significance (Brothers, 1991; Duhl, 1989; Loeschen, 1998; Satir, Banmen, Gerber, & Gomori, 1991). However, the case for the spiritual significance of Satir's contribution remained to be articulated and characterized systematically and philosophically.

One reason that Satir's model has not been subjected to critical analysis and appraisal for its ideas and theory is that she chose the route of experiential workshops to teach her model. This she did for important reasons which would be the subject of another discussion (Lee, 2001). Representations of Satir's work in family therapy textbooks are thereby limited mainly to her early typology of family "communication stances" (Becvar & Becvar, 1996; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1996), whereas Satir's integrative, systemic understanding of the person and the elaboration of her construct of congruence in the 1970s and 1980s have not yet been adequately explicated as centrally important to her model. Satir's references to human beings as "sacred," "unique manifestations of life," and "miracles" (Banmen & Banmen, 1991; Satir, 1987; Satir, 1988) resonated more with religious than scientific discourse which seemed to have put her out of step with the trend in the field of family therapy in the 1970s (Pittman, 1989). However, the Zeitgeist that marks the opening of the 21st century is ostensibly more hospitable to inquiries into religion and spirituality than the 1970s and 1980s. In this contemporary climate of resurging interest in religion and spirituality, it is timely to rethink the relevance of Satir's model in terms of its spiritual and religious significance.

The purpose of this article is to bring to the fore the coherent philosophy of religious and spiritual significance underlying Satir's work which revolves around her key concept of congruence, a key concept in her model that has not been elaborated fully in the literature on Satir. The meaning of Satir's congruence will be articulated in terms of the goal of the religious quest as explicated by Paul Tillich, a preeminent theologian of the 20th century. A comparative analysis of Satir's understanding of congruence pivotal to her therapeutic goal and Tillich's philosophy of religion will be drawn. The purpose of this analysis is to illuminate the religious and spiritual significance of Satir's model in its vision of healing and restoration of humanity's wholeness manifested as reconnection with self, others, and one's spiritual essence.

DEFINING RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Words mutate in their meanings and connotations over time. "Religion" and "spirituality" are words whose meanings have been in flux

in recent years (Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, et al., 1997). Therefore it is important to begin with a clarification of these terms as used in this article.

Etymologically, the word "religion" comes from the Latin root *ligare*, meaning "to bind" or "to connect." Spirituality derives from the Latin words *spiritus* meaning "breath." In contemporary usage, the word "religion" is generally associated with institutional beliefs and practices, whereas spirituality is understood in individual and experiential terms, such as in relating to a higher power (Wulff, 1997; Zinnbauer et al., 1997). Although "spirituality" is part and parcel of "religion" in some usage, a disjunction between "spirituality" and "religion" is implied in others (Wulff, 1997; Zinnbauer et al., 1997). More polarized definitions of "spirituality" and "religion" are reportedly found among those who tend to have a negative view of organized religion, and for whom the word "religion" carries distinct authoritarian and institutional overtones (Zinnbauer et al., 1997).

For the purposes of this article, the term "religious" will be used with a meaning that goes beyond its narrower, institutional connotations in contemporary usage. "Religious" will be used with a broadband, multidimensional meaning that is inclusive of the personal, interpersonal, communal, and spiritual. The spiritual is therefore a subset of the religious. At the risk of going against the current linguistic and conceptual trend that favours the word "spiritual" with its more positive, private, and individualistic connotations and a contrasting narrow understanding of "religious" with its restrictively mundane and institutional meanings, this article uses the word "religious" intentionally to enlarge our understanding of "religiosity" and "religion" as a multifaceted phenomenon that embraces both personal and interpersonal, material and spiritual, vertical and horizontal, earth-bound and transcendent dimensions. Thus this article attempts to restore to an understanding of "religiosity" its complex, systemic interconnections and connotations.

SATIR'S MODEL AND TILLICH'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Paul Tillich (1886–1965), German-American philosopher and theologian, is recognized as one of 20th century's most influential theologians (Livingston & Fiorenza, 2000). In systematic fashion, Tillich demonstrates in philosophical terms humanity's existential "ultimate concern," which in the end is the substance of the religious quest.

Tillich regards psychotherapists as contemporary theology's "allies" in exploring the character of existence in all its manifestations (Tillich, 1957). In turn, humanistic and existential psychologies recognized Tillich's contributions. Humanistic psychotherapist Carl Rogers finds Tillich's ideas congenial to the discoveries of modern humanistic psychology at many points (Rogers, 1970). Existential psychotherapist Rollo May both contributed to and drew from Tillich's existential understanding of anxiety in his framework of existential analysis (May, 1967).

All psychotherapies carry implicit assumptions about human nature and the human condition. The hallmark of Satir's model is the explicit primacy it places on health, spirit, and human potential as the starting point of healing. This positive orientation suggests a compatibility with Tillich's essentialist philosophy in its affirmation of a positive, intrinsic order and structure implied in human nature that is not arbitrary, but potential and creative (Tillich, 1961). The essentialist pole in the essential-existential tension is often overlooked in the formulations of existential therapies, although order and structure to human nature are implied in the goals of humanistic and existential therapies. Tillich's essentialist philosophical theology offers a "philosophical matrix" for psychotherapy that takes into account not only existential principles, but the implicit reference to a larger essentialist framework implied in existential propositions (Tillich, 1961). Therefore it seems that comparing key dimensions of congruence in Satir's model with Tillich's philosophical and ontological categories can cast into relief the religious significance and meaning of Satir's healing model.

THE HUMAN CONDITION

Tillich: Estrangement and Essentialization

According to Tillich, human existence is marked by estrangement: estrangement from ourselves, from each other, and from the mystery and depth of our being (Tillich, 1948). However, Tillich argues that estrangement implies a prior state of ontological unity from which existence is estranged (Tillich, 1959, 1961). Tillich describes the human condition as one of fragmentation and distortion deriving from the separation of humanity's essence and existence. Separation of existence from what one is essentially manifests as existential "anxiety" (Tillich, 1952). Salvation, the goal of religion, stems from the Latin root *salus*

or *salvus*, which means "to heal" or "to make whole" (Tillich, 1959). The philosophical term Tillich uses for this process of "making whole" fragmented and separated parts that originally belong together is essentialization (Tillich, 1963). Thus salvation is the process of essentialization, of reuniting essence with existence. The religious quest for salvation is the process of *religare*, "rebinding," or restoring humanity to its true essence in its vital dimensions. A purposeful dynamic, or *telos*, is at work in human nature aiming towards the reunification of the essential and existential, although this reunification is necessarily partial and fragmentary and falls short of its complete fulfillment in history (Tillich, 1963).

Satir: Disharmony and Health

When there is a blockage of innate human resources and energies, and the potential health of the human being is untapped or inaccessible, symptoms result (Satir, 1986). If ill-health is blocked-up energy and disharmony in the human system, then health means a harmonious interplay between all levels within a person intrapsychically, between a person and others interpersonally, and contact with one's deep resources spiritually. Satir recognizes in each person a "positive life energy" that seeks to manifest itself in a life-giving direction (King, 1989, p. 32). Her therapeutic enterprise is based on looking beyond symptom and pathology to activate a person's propensity toward health, which means in the first place to make contact with a person's spirit or essence:

> The question for me was never whether they had spirits, but how I could contact them. That is what I set out to do. My means of making contact was my own congruent communication and the modeling that went with it. It was as though I saw through the inner core of each being, seeing the shining light of the spirit trapped in a thick black cylinder of limitation and self-rejection. My effort was to enable the person to see what I saw; then together, we could turn the dark cylinder into a large, lighted screen and build new possibilities. I consider the first step in any change is to contact the spirit. Then together we can clear the way to release the energy for going toward health (Satir, 1988, pp. 340–341).

Contacting a person's spirit or essence is central to Satir's therapeutic work. Satir believes that people are "basically good" and she aims to bring out the possibilities and resources within the self and

its potential for growth (Satir et al., 1991). Satir's essentialism is thus revealed in her affirmation of humanity's spiritual nature and its goodness, and the human potential for growth. To Satir, humanity's essential nature is dynamic. Dynamic metaphors and references abound in Satir's descriptions as she speaks of growth as "life force revealing itself" (Satir, 1988, p. 334), of life coming from "a power much greater than our own" (Satir, 1988, p. 336), and of our having a "pipeline" to universal intelligence and wisdom. Restoration of health consists of making contact with an energy underlying existence and bringing the multiple dimensions of the human being into alignment and harmony with this dynamic source.

Tillich's and Satir's Essentialism

Both Tillich and Satir operate out of an essentialist framework that affirms an underlying order, norm, and structure to human nature. Satir is clear on this point:

> The universe is orderly. We as human beings operate that way, too. We cannot always see the order of our humanness, 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 (Satir et al., 1991, p. 221).

Likewise, Tillich maintains an essence intrinsic to humanity. Essence means the nature, the pattern, the norm—that which makes a thing what it truly is (Tillich, 1951, 1959). Hence separation from one's essential nature results in existential anxiety, guilt, and suffering. Similarly, Satir views symptoms as frustrated attempts to express health that has been blocked, covered up, or put out of reach to the person. The main therapeutic task is therefore to help a person rechannel bottled-up energy into useful and productive purposes (Satir, 1986).

CONGRUENCE: THE GOAL OF SATIR'S MODEL

Congruence is a core construct in Satir's model (Davis, McLendon, Freeman, Loberg, et al., 1996; Loeschen, 1998; Satir et al., 1991). Congruence began as a motif in her early work with communication, and eventually became the organizing principle and the goal of her therapeutic system. How this construct of congruence has evolved is set out as follows (Satir et al., 1991):

(1) In the 1950s, congruence referred to the awareness, acknowl-edgment, and acceptance of feelings and their expression in a non-reactive manner. Congruence characterizes communica-tion that is "straight" when a single, unambiguous message is conveyed verbally and nonverbally.

(2) In the 1960s, congruence was seen as a state of wholeness, inner-centredness, and self-acceptance corresponding to high self-esteem.

(3) In the 1980s, Satir began more explicitly to speak of a third level of congruence in relation to the realm of spirituality and universality as connecting with "universal life force" that cre-ates and supports growth in humans and other natural forms.

These progressive formulations of congruence capture the state of wholeness, awareness, openness at the interpersonal, intrapsychic, and universal-spiritual dimensions of the human being. Beyond a concep-tual level, congruence for Satir has energetic and physiological manifes-tations noted in body relaxation, skin colour, breathing patterns, and as the unobstructed flow and manifestation of one's life force (Loeschen, 1998; Satir et al., 1991). Therefore, congruence according to Satir is not merely a concept, but a bodily, wholistic experience of energy flow that accompanies a systemic openness of the person in multiple dimen-sions.

To summarize, congruence is a state of awareness, acceptance, and openness manifested as a harmonious flow of life energy through all levels and experiential dimensions of a person at a given moment. The goal of therapeutic change is to transform the flow of a person's energy from a blocked, dysfunctional pattern to a more open, free, and healthy pattern. The goal of healing is greater congruence (Satir, 1986; Satir et al., 1991). In a state of congruence, a person has greatest access to one's own resources. Congruence in Satir's model can be understood more specifically in terms of Satir's description of the human being in its key dimensions.

THREE KEY HUMAN DIMENSIONS: THE ICEBERG METAPHOR

The Iceberg (Figure 1) is one of Satir's chief metaphors to illustrate the various layers that make up the human being. In this representa-tion, the person is viewed as a multidimensional system. A system is defined as "a set of actions, reactions, and interactions among a set of
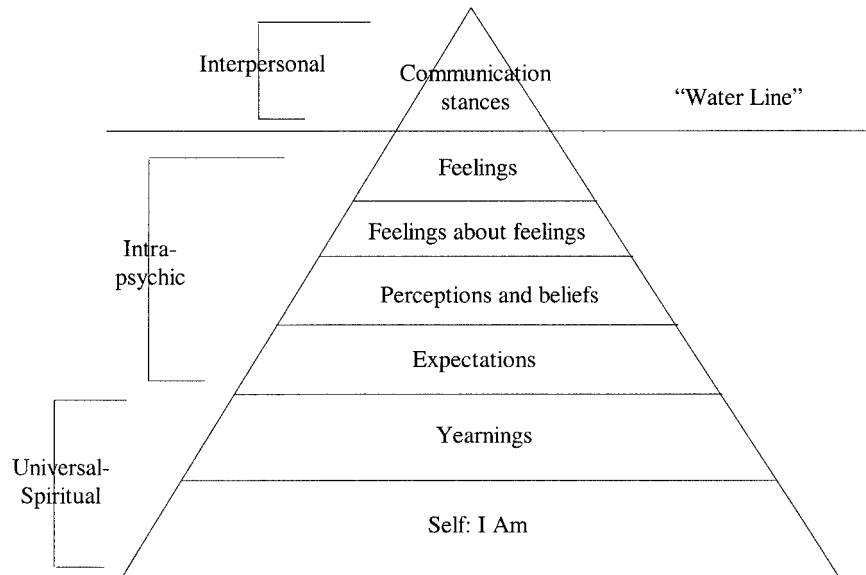
FIGURE 1

The Iceberg

The Iceberg: Three Dimensions of the Satir Model (adapted from Satir, Banmen, Gerber, & Gomori, 1991).

essential variables that develop an order and a sequence to accomplish an outcome" (Satir, 1986, p. 287). In other words, a system is an interactive set of variables and dimensions that exert influence on one another leading to an outcome that is more than the sum of its parts. In a system, the change in one part or dimension is related to change in the other dimensions. Behaviour and communication represent only the tip of the Iceberg in the multilayered totality of personality. The author further conceptualizes Satir's Iceberg as three dimensions: the interpersonal, intrapsychic, and universal-spiritual. These dimensions are related in systemic fashion such that the change in one element is related to changes in the other elements. Congruence is the harmonious interaction of these key dimensions within a person. Each of these key dimensions will now be elaborated in greater detail.

Interpersonal Dimension

Satir's five communication stances depicting the interpersonal dimension are the best known aspect of her model. For communication to be congruent, Satir postulates that the three components of self, other, and context have to be honoured and represented. The four stances of blaming, placating, super-reasonable (computing), and irrelevant (distracting) represent an imbalance of self, other, and context in a communication (Satir, 1988; Satir et al., 1991). These communication stances are also known as "survival stances" learned by children in their family systems in order to gain love and acceptance. Blaming protects one's self-worth at the expense of other. Placating involves the surrendering of self to other. Super-reasonable communication discounts both self and other, paying attention only to context. Irrelevant communication abdicates from self, other, and context. Congruent communication, or straight communication, reflects a match between verbal and non-verbal messages, and a consonance in word, affect and meaning. Congruence is a choice at a conscious level based on awareness, acknowledgment, and acceptance of self, other, and context (Satir et al., 1991).

Intrapsychic Dimension

The intrapsychic dimension is constituted by a set of internal events that give rise to behaviour and communication. According to Satir, these internal events consist of feelings, feelings about one's feelings, perceptions and beliefs, and expectations. Typed as an experiential model of therapy, Satir's orientation has been commonly understood as working primarily with emotions (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998), a view which fails to recognize the integrative multidimensionality of Satir's model in its maturity. In its later development, Satir's model is an integrative model that challenges, unblocks, and transforms multiple internal variables including perceptions, beliefs, feelings, feelings about feelings, and expectations that impede the flow of one's life energy (Loeschen, 1998; Satir et al., 1991). To transform these intrapsychic constructs, they are first exposed through verbal exploration and "sculpting," a means of externalizing through enactments of internal constructs. Perceptions, feelings, and unmet expectations from the past are brought into awareness, experientially worked through, and new choices are made. When a new perception, a new feeling, a new expectation is added, a new coping pattern emerges that allows for greater

congruence (Satir et al., 1991). For example, a father who adjusts his inordinately high expectations about his son is able to feel more warmly towards his son and form a closer relationship with him. This in turn affects their communication and the son's behaviour. Hence a shift in expectations can alter feelings and perceptions in the intrapsychic dimension, leading to a shift in the interpersonal dimension.

Universal-Spiritual Dimension

The last two strata of the Iceberg, namely human yearnings and what Satir calls the Self, or the "I Am," constitute the universal-spiritual dimension of the person. Yearnings consist of the universal human longing to be loved, accepted, validated, and confirmed (Satir et al., 1991). Yearnings are universal to human beings and reflect essential human needs and aspirations. To be congruent with our yearnings is to acknowledge and accept our humanity. What is also universal to human beings is the human connection to a dynamic spiritual base which Satir calls the universal "life force." As spirituality assumed increasing prominence in Satir's system in the 1980s, Satir spoke of congruence as harmony with one's Self, life energy, spirituality or God (Banmen & Banmen, 1991; Satir et al., 1991). Yearnings and connection with a universal life force constitute the universal-spiritual dimension of Satir's Iceberg model of the human person.

Congruence

Congruence is a phenomenon that can be facilitated or impeded by each of the three dimensions described above. In other words, the interpersonal, intrapsychic, and universal-spiritual dimensions are interrelated and interactive. To move a system towards higher congruence, Satir's therapeutic interventions aim at "second-level" deep structural change rather than just surface behavioural change in the three dimensions (Satir et al., 1991). This involves changing a person's expectations, perceptions, feelings, and the acknowledgment of one's yearnings, and becoming reconnected to one's life force or life energy.

Congruence as the goal of Satir's model brings elements in the interpersonal, intrapsychic, and universal-spiritual dimensions into an integrative, harmonious relationship. The establishment of an integrative, harmonious relationship of elements in these three central dimensions parallels the process of essentialization described by Tillich as

the reunification of ontological polarities and the goal of the religious quest.

CONGRUENCE: UNIVERSAL-SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

Tillich: Essential Goodness and the Divine Ground of Being

Tillich begins his theology with the affirmation of a creation that is good. In counterpoint to existential being, Tillich places priority on the goodness of essential being. Essence is the hidden potential that seeks to be realized in existence. Despite the destructive distortion of existence, the power from the essence of being urges irrepressibly to shine through.

Furthermore, in its essence, humanity is rooted in the "creative ground of the divine life" (Tillich, 1951, p. 256). Hence, in its essence, humanity participates in the divine. The divine is envisioned as the depth dimension of humanity, the "depth" in human life which "gives substance, ultimate meaning, judgment, and creative courage to all functions of the human spirit" (Tillich, 1959, p. 9). Tillich argues that it is this prior experiential participation in the divine or spiritual ground that makes it possible for humanity to raise the question of "God" and sparks the quest for wholeness (Tillich, 1959). Therefore, Tillich's understanding of religiosity is rooted in his premise of divine immanence native to humanity. God is not "out there," but in humanity. Religiosity for Tillich is not an intellectual assent to a set of propositions or content about God. Rather, religiosity is an existential quest involving the whole of personality for the reconnecting experience with one's divine "ground" and essence of being (Tillich, 1957, 1959).

Satir: Essence, Spirit, and Universal Human Yearnings

In her theory and practice, Satir makes an important distinction between a person's "behavior" that was learned as a coping response to a specific situation in the past for the sake of survival, and the "essence" of a person, which is "perfect and pure" (Banmen & Banmen, 1991, p. 22; Satir, 1986). Satir affirms that people are essentially good and that dysfunctional behavior comes from "woundings" when something in the human being is denied, projected, ignored, or distorted (Satir, 1986). Satir believes in the human ability to grow from an inner core of strength and motivation (Satir et al., 1991). In the later stages

of her work, Satir arrives at the conclusion that human essence is in the final analysis "spiritual" (Banmen & Banmen, 1991). Satir describes human beings as "spiritual beings in human form," and as "divine in our origins" (Satir, 1988, pp. 336, 338). Grounded in her belief that spirituality is "our connection to the universe" and is "basic to our existence," Satir's healing work concentrates on finding ways to affirm and nourish the spirit.

Having a "reverence of life" and "learning to love the spirit unconditionally" are the cornerstones of her therapeutic approach (Satir, 1988, pp. 334, 338). To regard human beings as "sacred" (Satir, 1987, p. 24) means to respect, cherish, and value human beings for their intrinsic worth. Satir believes that contact with one's life force gives one the impetus to change (Simon, 1989). Hence her therapeutic manoeuvers aim at accessing the power and potential of humanity's "higher nature" and "spirit" as the basis for change (Satir, 1988, p. 383). Satir speaks of the human person as a "manifestation of life". Growth is the "life force revealing itself, a manifestation of spirit" (Satir, 1988, p. 334). Providing the optimal context for nurturing growth, nourishing our relationship with our life force to release the inner "healing potential" (Satir, 1987, p. 24) is central to Satir's approach to healing (Banmen & Banmen, 1991; Satir, 1988).

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 constructionism 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 of her widely admired therapeutic success derives from her faith in the human spirit and the intrinsic human potential for healing.

Satir believes that the "life force" could be called by many names (Satir, 1988). The naming of the life force is less important to Satir than the ways in which one could make contact with it and experience it within oneself. Using evocative words and imagery, Satir attempts in her meditations to help people open up to their own spirit and to be in contact with a universal spirit dimension (Banmen & Banmen, 1991). Satir believes that human beings possess an "inborn spiritual base and sacredness" (Satir et al., 1991, p. 14). The aim of her work is to create a context to transform previous limited copings and internal constructs to enable people to live out of an inner source of strength and validation as unique manifestations of the universal life force.

Satir identifies "yearnings" that are universal among human beings. Yearnings include the longing to love oneself, to love others, to be loved by others, to be accepted, validated, and confirmed (Satir et al., 1991). When a child's yearnings are satisfied, the child will thrive, develop high self-esteem, a harmonious sense of self, and the ability to cope with stressful situations (Satir et al., 1991). Yearnings point to that which the person seeks in order to thrive. They point to the potential natural human order that has yet to be realized. Satir validates human yearnings and encourages their expression. She believes that acknowledgment rather than denial or suppression of one's yearnings gives the opportunity for their being actualized (Satir et al., 1991).

Instead of focusing on problems, Satir's approach is to tap into human yearnings and their energy to provide the motivations and actions for change in a positive direction (Satir et al., 1991). For example, instead of finding out more about a client's depression and what family members are depressed, Satir asks how the client would like to feel and suggests that together they can put all their energies into working toward that positive state of being for which the client yearns (Satir, 1998, Tape 1). Through affirmation of strengths and resources and tapping into positive expectations and yearnings, Satir opens up hope, motivation, and energy for change. The process of transformation includes helping people to become aware of, acknowledge, and accept their yearnings, which Satir believes is a basic process of connecting with a person's inner core or life force (Satir et al., 1991).

Summary

Both Tillich and Satir subscribe to a universal in humanity's ontological structure that precedes and supercedes cultural and historical conditioning. They point to a solution of the human predicament from

a source within humanity itself, made possible by a reconnection with a power from within that can be released as a healing and transformative potential. Dysfunction, pain, and suffering found in existence are expressions of humanity's deep yearnings for a lost state of wholeness. Human suffering and pathological symptoms are consequences of the disruptions and violation of an essential order. For both Tillich and Satir, the distortions of existence and pathology are set against a larger, positive, spiritual, essentialist potential that presses for its own actualization and manifestation in existence. Hence, Tillich's theology and Satir's therapeutic philosophy are eminently hopeful. Both hold the position that humanity's essential nature participates in a spiritual dimension that is immanent to humanity. "Recognizing the power of spirit is what healing, living, and spirituality are all about," states Satir toward the end of her career (Satir, 1988, p. 338).

CONGRUENCE: INTERPERSONAL DIMENSION

Tillich: Individualization and Participation

According to Tillich, a person as a centred self develops out of relatedness to other selves. The person as a fully developed individual self is impossible without other fully developed selves (Tillich, 1951). Participation, to be a part of community, is essential to full individualization (Tillich, 1951). Ontologically, according to Tillich, individualization and participation, to be a self and to be related to others, are interdependent (Tillich, 1951). However, in the state of existential estrangement, these interdependent elements that formed an original dynamic unity become separated from each other (Tillich, 1957). Solipsistic self-affirmation poses the threat of loneliness in which connections with others are lost. On the other hand, in seeking acceptance by the group and drawing support and energy to exist by being part of a collective separates one from oneself. The tension is manifested in many psychological and sociological problems, Tillich observes, and for this reason reconciling the tension between self-relatedness and other-relatedness is "a very important subject for research for depth psychology and depth sociology" (Tillich, 1951, p. 199).

Satir: Self and Other

In her early work on communication, Satir discovered that when people do not feel good about themselves, or have low self-worth, under conditions of stress, they resort to ways of communication that either

elevate oneself over the other, or depreciate oneself in deference to the other, or leave both self and other out of the picture. From these observations, Satir developed her well-known communication stances discussed earlier in relation to the interpersonal dimension in the Iceberg. Each stance represents a missing piece of self, other, or context in a given communication. Most notable among these four stances of blaming, placating, super-reasonable, and irrelevant are the first two. In the blaming stance, only the self counts but not the other. It represents a domineering or condescending position that is often hostile, angry, and threatening towards the other. Assuming a blaming stance gives a person a sense of power, but it hides a lonely and vulnerable self within. The placating stance disregards one's own feelings of worth and hands one's power over to someone else. It keeps peace at the expense of self-worth and self-respect. The placating person is usually apologetic, helpless, and begging. Both super-reasonable and irrelevant stances are non-personal stances where self and other are dismissed. These four stances are seen as incongruent because they represent the absence of self, other, or both, thus compromising the fullness of congruent relating.

The four communication stances are developed in childhood as ways to meet existential survival needs. These are a child's needs to gain love, acceptance, and belonging. Hence, they are also known as "survival stances." Satir notes differences in breathing patterns, body tensions, and postures that accompany these different stances. Thus these communication stances have effects on the person and others at physical, physiological, and emotional levels.

To hold both self and other in balance in relationship so that both self and other are acknowledged and allowed to exist fully, one needs a secure sense of self, or high self-worth. In her work, Satir challenges family rules, beliefs, and expectations that maintain a low sense of one's worth. She uses meditations to mediate one's sense of connectedness to one's intrinsic spiritual and essential worth. One's sense of worth also reflects the extent to which one accepts one's humanity, with one's human yearnings and fallibility. A secure sense of self makes possible congruence in communication, when both self and other are present and valued. Congruent communication validates both self and other.

Summary

Tillich and Satir identify a paradox in human nature: we are fundamentally alone and set apart from others, yet are inescapably in the world with others and attain a sense of self only in relation to others.

Under conditions of existence, these two poles of the paradox are strained and we are compelled to resolve the tension by gravitating to one pole or the other. Congruence reflects the essential nature of being where the polarities of individualization and participation are united. Blaming and placating stances in communication are transcended in an interpersonal congruence that honours both self and other.

CONGRUENCE: INTRAPSYCHIC DIMENSION

Tillich: Destiny and Freedom

Human freedom is "finite freedom" as all the potentialities that constitute one's freedom are limited by one's destiny (Tillich, 1957). Destiny refers to the limits and necessity imposed on existence by virtue of heredity, biology, history, and society (Tillich, 1957). Destiny and freedom are distinct but not separated, in tension but not in conflict in essential being (Tillich, 1957). One depends on the other to be meaningful. Destiny without freedom is fate—meaningless and mechanical necessity. Freedom without destiny falls into arbitrariness and unrelatedness, as what one chooses is purely the whim of the subject, unrelated to the destiny of the total person who acts. Freedom separated from the awareness of one's destiny is compromised by internal compulsions that condition one's acts and decisions, and parts of self overtake the centre, truncated from other parts. Thus, finite freedom falls under biological and psychological necessities without the awareness of the subject (Tillich, 1957). True freedom is found in the "creative act" in which a person can act centrally and centredly to deliberate and decide with awareness of the impinging contingencies of destiny (Tillich, 1957). Essentialization is the optimization of freedom in the context of one's destiny.

Satir: Compulsion and Choice

Satir recognizes that human beings are often limited in their range of present options for coping with life because of learning developed as a specific response to a context in the past (Satir, 1986). Compulsion results from a lack of awareness of past events that influence us in the present. The impact of past experience is often manifested in our automatic and often charged reactions to events in the present. Healing consists of becoming aware of how our learnings from the past influence

our present reactions, and claiming for ourselves the power to choose a better way to respond based on the knowledge available to us as mature adults. Many past learnings consisting of feelings, feelings about one's feelings, perceptions, expectations, coping, and communication may be at the root of our limitations today. Problem creation and resolution lie in our interpretation and framing of the situation and our chosen response to it. To exercise the choice of how to respond rather than to react to situations is an important goal in healing (Satir et al., 1991). Many of Satir's therapeutic vehicles for change aim at "de-enmeshment," that is, to separate people's past-contaminated material, which conditioned them, from their experience of the present. De-enmeshment is a process of appropriating the past and its influences to free up resources and choices for the present and the future:

> Growing up does not necessarily reduce the impact of the our childhood rules and relationships. The present is the only dimension we live in physically, but when the past contaminates the present, Satir knew, we continue repeating old patterns. One goal of therapy is to change this contamination to illumination: to use the past to see and live in the present more fully. This helps us move from being compelled to being able to cope, and from coping to recognizing our choices and our freedom. (Satir et al., 1991, p. 221)

Most notable of Satir's vehicles to separate a person from the limitations of past learnings is Family Reconstruction. The process of family reconstruction externalizes internalized constructs from the past so that new perceptions and choices can be made. The impact of old learnings in childhood "prevent us from defining ourselves holistically because they keep us focused in the past and using the incomplete perceptions we had as children" (Satir et al., 1991, p. 221). We carry the constructs of our families inside us and it is the interpretation of these earlier experiences that need changing to free up new perceptions and ways of being. Family Reconstruction aims at second-order change that involves an internal structural change and transformation of energy. Negative energy transforms into positive energy at the level of feelings, perceptions, and expectations when we no longer strain to suppress or defend against past pains and disappointments. Energy used in suppression and denial can then be released to meet current needs and desires. Simultaneous with reworking one's learnings from the past is the emphasis on being conscious of one's life energy, freedom, choices and inner resources that come from the Self (Satir et al., 1991,

p. 233). One's history that shaped one's destiny is thus brought into consciousness and its negative effects transformed.

Challenging and discarding the chains of limiting human constructions, both external and internal, is one part of healing. Yet another part involves a connection with one's deep "wisdom" as emergent knowledge of life's movement that can be accessed through one's bodily sense, or what Satir refers to as the "wisdom box," situated two inches below the navel (Banmen & Banmen, 1991). The interiorly directed emergent or becoming character of existence is central to humanistic and existentially oriented therapies (Greenberg & Rice, 1998). Satir regards each person as a life energy that seeks to be manifested into the world, energy that is drawn to connections with other beings (Banmen & Banmen, 1991). Thus, freedom has two aspects: freedom from the past and its conditioning effects, and freedom to become what one essentially is within the frame of one's destiny.

Summary

Tillich's understanding of salvation as the restoration of the unity between one's destiny and freedom parallels Satir's congruence as compulsions give way in the exercise of choice. Freedom that is compromised by internal compulsions is enlarged as a conscious, deliberating, deciding self chooses to act with awareness, in line with one's essence and life force. The past is not negated, cut off, or denied, but its influence on one's intrapsychic functioning is brought to awareness and its impact transformed. Satir's congruence thus parallels Tillich's essentialization as the optimization of freedom through the acceptance and integration of one's destiny.

THE HUMAN AND RELIGIOUS QUESTS:
A SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE

The Person as a Multidimensional System

Satir's view of the person as a multidimensional system, which she depicted in the Iceberg metaphor and the Mandala with its eight interactive components of the Self (Satir, 1986; Satir et al., 1991), is remarkably similar to Tillich's understanding of the person as a "multidimensional unity" (Tillich, 1963). In their views, the person is a complex interrelation of many parts, as opposed to a hierarchy of

disjointed parts. The multidimensional view respects the autonomy of each contributing element, while remaining mindful of the interrelationship among the elements, and how the elements affect one another in the system. A systems understanding of personality avoids reductionism that gives primacy to one part to explain away or subsume another part. Hence the spirit is not superior to matter, or the intellect superior to emotions. A "centre" of awareness, deliberation and decision orchestrates the relations of the parts, not imperially, but by attending to and in consultation with what each part indicates. Therefore, the whole depends on a "centred self" that is the seat of consciousness (Tillich, 1963) which converses with and manages the various parts of personality.

In a systems framework, any partial view that privileges one dimension over another leading to the denigration of other dimensions runs the risk of upsetting an essential balance, the basis of health in the system. A systems view of the person shakes up many established categories that have been dichotomized and separated from each other, such as body and spirit, human and divine, secular and religious, historical and eternal. A systemic, multidimensional view of life affirms the interpenetration and interrelation between the material and spiritual dimensions. Put differently, human beings are seen not only seeking salvation in a spiritual dimension, but spiritual beings seeking salvation in a human, historical dimension.

Healing, Congruence, and Wholeness

Healing ushers in a new creation, a new reality of being where the structures of destruction are broken (Tillich, 1955). The New Being is the new reality of humanity in history, made possible by an "event" of radical "acceptance of the unacceptable" (Tillich, 1996, p. 53). The New Being makes actual what is potential, and is the undistorted manifestation of the essential being within the conditions of existence. Hence, the fruit of salvation, for Tillich, does not lie only in a supernatural future or eternity, but is realized, albeit in fragmentary fashion, in the midst of history and human existence. As such, the New Being represents the living manifestation of humanity's "essential truth" as the integration with self, with each other and with the depth of one's being, a "manifestation of the divine" in the world (Tillich, 1996, p. 51).

Congruence reconnects and brings into harmony elements in the intrapsychic, interpersonal and universal-spiritual dimensions of the person. Elements and dimensions of the human being that have been

separated are brought into awareness and integration, or "made whole," which harks back to the original meaning of "healing," and "salvation." Elements that have been disrupted are restored and brought into proper relations with one another.

The Human and Religious Quest

As noted at the outset, the scope and coherence of Satir's vision and its spiritual and religious significance have not been sufficiently recognized or amply articulated. Tillich's philosophical theology supplies a lens that magnifies the underlying ontological assumptions and salvific nature of Satir's vision, at the same time that Satir's model gives flesh and historical specifications to Tillich's vision of the religious quest. The religious quest and the human quest are seen to coincide in a life lived in increasing alignment and flow in its three principal relationships with self, other, and the spirit or divine. In Tillich's vision, the religious quest is not merely spiritual, but material and historical, as in Satir's vision, the human quest is at once personal, historical, and spiritual. Religiosity is a multidimensional quest that seeks to restore personal, interpersonal and spiritual dimensions to an interactive and interdependent unity. Congruence, in Satir's model, as reconnection with one's self and one's origins, with others, and with the spiritual essence of being is therefore simultaneously a rehumanization and religious process.

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