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Laura Dodson

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Insights

What's the World Trying to Do Now? Reflections on Cultural Transformation during President Trump's Days as President

Laura S. Dodson, M.S.W., Ph.D.

Energetically speaking, narcissism represents the extreme over-determined yang energy of the masculine or hero archetype. The USA, as I see it, has chosen a President with that energy. He represents the hero archetypal energy of our nation long in need of transformation. This energy in its long overdue need for change has turned into narcissism. The very fact that the people of the USA elected Trump, is evidence of a narcissistic nation resisting change that is fundamentally needed in the USA.

While the hero archetypal energy has served an important purpose in establishing the USA—to move west, to separate from mother Britain, and to establish its own constitution and a great democracy—this archetype is now in need of transformation. The hero or masculine archetype must integrate the emerging feminine energy and this integration must evidence itself in the psyches of individuals and in our cultures.

In her opening talk to her organization, the International Human Learning Resources Network (IHLRN) in Vista Hermosa, Mexico, Satir (1987) said, “I don’t want to die with the world thinking that what I did was unique to me! There is a new energy alive in the world today and I am a part of that energy.” She went on to describe the change needed as men and women and all persons regardless of race or occupation become of equal value as humans.

Through my years of study with Virginia Satir from 1964 until her death, and my 13 years of study of Carl Jung from 1971 to 1984 toward becoming a Jungian Analyst, I believe that Satir and Jung were speaking of the same energy. Jung used the word “Energy” (spelled with a capital “E”) as equivalent to his use of the word, “God.” He coined the word “archetypes” to describe aspects of the godhead (as cited in Edinger, 1987, p. 3).

Jung (1964) described the new energy coming upon us as a union of masculine and feminine; a movement toward the archetype of wholeness. The energy of this emerging archetypal energy is like standing in the face of a living God; therefore, difficult for people to take in the powerful impact and integrate it into their psyches and cultures. What is required as this new energy emerges, Jung stressed, is a “sufficient number of people with strong enough egos to integrate the emerging Energy ... lest we destroy ourselves” (para. 623). While Satir (1987) did not speak of doom, she did feel an urgency for the integration of this new energy in saying that “... to this end I commit my life. Won’t you join me?”

Satir (1987) gave descriptive images of the masculine archetype now dominant in our culture (Table 1, see left column). She calls it the “hierarchy model” of perceiving the world. In her list of attributes, one sees a clear picture of how many, if not most, systems operate when the masculine archetype is the dominate energy. This model of leadership in its extreme is represented in a leader with a narcissistic personality.

If you carefully read the left column of Table 1, and consider these descriptions to be that of the yang energy dominating our world today, then perhaps you, like me, are not surprised that the world would

be in great need of a shift or at least a modification to this way of perceiving and its resultant behavior! This shift is what Satir and Jung spoke of as the new energy coming upon us at this time.

Table 1
Ways of Perceiving the World

Hierarchical Model	Growth Model
Definition of a relationship (How we perceive a pair)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are of unequal value • People dominate or submit to each other. • Roles and status are confused and blurred with identity. • Roles imply superiority and power, or minority status and powerlessness. • The hierarchical view implies superiority and submissiveness. • People have power over each other but feel isolation, fear, anger, resentment, isolation, and distrust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are of equal value. • Relationships are between equals in value. • Roles and status are distinct from identity. • Roles imply a function in a specific relationship, at a particular time. • Equality is manifested in: equality of persons, connection, interest, and acceptance of sameness and difference. • People feel love, ownership of self, respect of others, freedom of expression, and validation.
Defining a person	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People need to conform and obey “should” for physical and emotional survival and acceptance. • People are born with the potential to be evil. • People are expected to think, feel, and act like each other, and to live up to external norms by competing, judging, comforting, and imitating. • People devalue or deny their feelings and differences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each person is unique and can define himself or herself from an inner source of strength and validation. • People have an inborn spiritual base and sacredness, and they manifest a universal life force. • Combining and respecting sameness and difference, people delight in discovering themselves and others by cooperating, observing, and sharing. • People articulate their feelings and accept their differences.
Defining an event	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A causes B in a linear, cause-and-effect fashion. • Only one right way exists to do something, and the dominant person knows what it is. • People deny their own experiences, so as to accept the voice of authority. • Thinking, such as “That’s the way it is” and “It’s black and white,” generates manipulation and shuts-down originality and discovery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any event is the outcome of many variables and events (e.g., $A = B + C + D$, etc.) • Many ways usually exist, and we can use our own criteria to choose an approach. • People look beyond an obvious event to understand its context and its many contributing factors. • Circular thinking and a systems approach (action—reaction—interaction) generate relevance, discovery, information, order, and connection.

Hierarchical Model	Growth Model
Attitudes toward Change	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security requires maintaining the status quo. • People view change as undesirable and abnormal. They therefore reject and resist it. • The familiar is more valued than the comfortable, even if the price is painful. • People fear the unknown. • People judge changes as being right or wrong. • People feel fear and anxiety when they face the prospect of change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security grows out of confidence in the process of change and growth. • People view change as ongoing, essential, and inevitable. They therefore welcome and expect it. • People view discomfort or pain as a signal for change. • People take risks and opportunities to move into the unknown. • People delight in discovering new choices and resources. • People feel excitement, connectedness, and love when they encounter the prospect of change.

Note. Adapted from “Ways of Perceiving the World,” by V. Satir, J. Banmen, J. Gerber, & M. Gomori, 1991, in *The Satir Model: Family Therapy and Beyond*, pp. 5-8. Used with permission.

Jung (1964) spoke of the “feminine archetypal energy” (para. 783) coming upon us from the universe in the Age of Aquarius. He spoke of this emerging energy joining with healthy aspects of masculine archetypal energy which would move the world toward joining of yin and yang, thus toward the archetype of wholeness. This archetype, of course is never fully achieved, but movement toward it Jung saw as essential to the survival of our world.

There is evidence of integration of this archetypal shift in psyche and culture in the last 70 years in the USA. Note the changes that have occurred through the women’s movement, in movement toward equality of power between the sexes and equality of races, and equal rights of all people including gays and other sexual minorities. Such change is reflected in the fact that we could elect a Black President and had a woman run for President. If you are a counselor of couples, individuals, or families, you see the struggle of your clients to integrate the emerging feminine in your office every day—marriages are trying to adjust to the emerging feminine as is parenting, sexual and gender identity, family roles, etcetera.

Since Germaine Greer’s (1971), *The Female Eunuch*, and Rachael Carson’s (1962), *Silent Spring*, we can see the value of feminine qualities of yielding, gestating, reflection, compromising, holding, and listening; a sense of being *one with* (with the earth and food [Carson, 1962] as well as relationships [Greer, 1971]) gaining a place in our culture. We can hope that these emerging energies grow and maintain balance with masculine qualities of conquering, building, thrusting, dominating, controlling—each energy in the foreground as is appropriate to the time/place/situation, with other energies ready to take the lead as needed.

This represents a major shift in the fundamental energy that stands behind collective and personal psyches and behavior. Such a shift is no small matter. All change has its difficulties, even changing a personal habit or adjusting to a child becoming a teenager. The change trying to happen in our world now affects all individuals and all cultures, all at the same time. Jung spoke about this to educate people of the power of this change in the hope that enough people would have strong enough egos to integrate the change trying to happen.

Transformation on this scale must be seen with a different time table—a gradual trend (hopefully upwards more of the time than not) to the change—taking years, decades, if not centuries. Change on a large scale requires one generation standing on the shoulders of the one before it and going further, and each of us doing our part within ourselves, in relationships, and in active participation in our culture. Change

will have ups and downs, resistances, and breakthroughs. Status-quo cannot be maintained forever as those trying to maintain the hero archetype would hope; decline or growth are the only alternatives.

I have developed Figure 1 below, "Process of Transformational Change." In developing it I placed in a circular form ideas from Virginia Satir's process of change, Satir et al (1991). Also incorporated are Satir's ideas of resistances to change or copings (called defense mechanisms by Freud, and blocks to growth by Jung). Edward Edinger's (1987) work on ego and self-development also impacted my thinking in developing this figure. On the left-side are characteristics and attitudes that further change, many of which came from Satir thinking. I shared this chart with Virginia Satir in 1983, and she smiled her approval after adding her practical, down-to-earth, and necessary, "Practice," toward the top on the left-side.

Let us reflect on cultural change happening in the USA today using "The Process of Transformational Change" presented in Figure 1. As I suggested in my article in the last issue of *Satir International Journal* (Dodson, 2016), the USA election of Donald Trump represents the country's fear of the process of change that is upon us. His election represents our coping mechanism of attempting to restore the old order in the face of fear of change (see coping mechanisms). "Make America Great Again" and "Make America Number 1" are campaign slogans that I hear as Trump offering to a frightened American people a return to the old order. He appeals to our nation's narcissism to always be Number 1 in the world rather than finding ways to consider being one with. As Figure 1 indicates, "restoring the old order" is a way of going off the circle of change or transformation that is trying to happen in our world at this time.

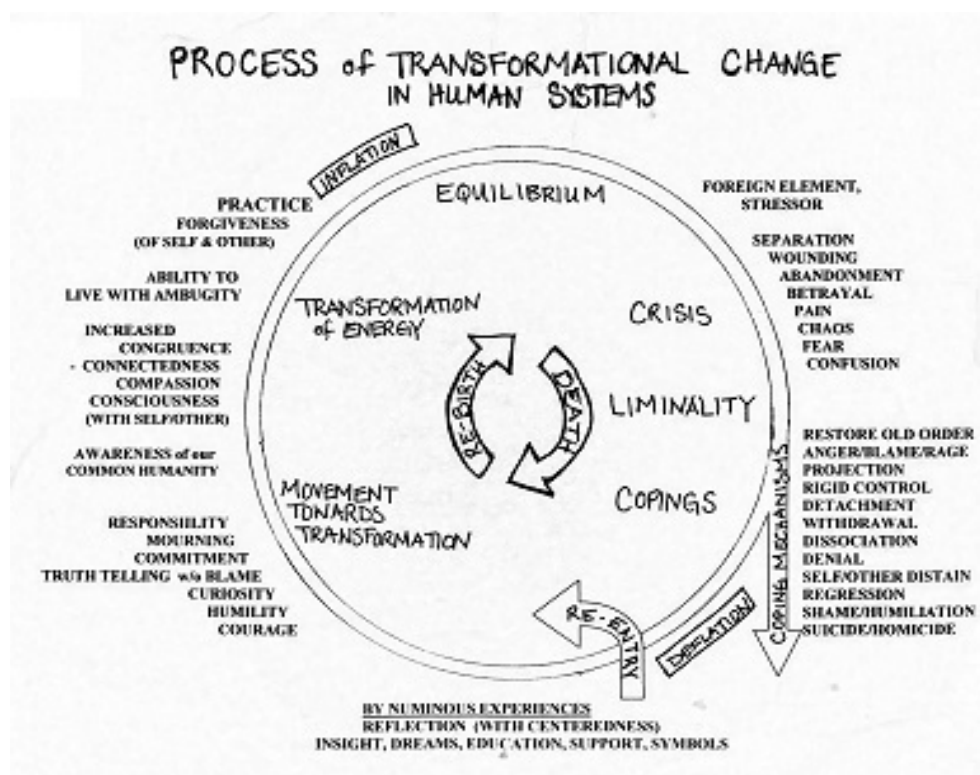


Figure 1. The process of transformational change in human systems. Copyright 1981 by Laura Dodson.

At this time, we as a nation are trembling in the face of change. Change is frightening. Almost nothing is the same—by 2050 the USA will not be a nation of largely Whites. Immigration is changing our nation to be a nation of multi-religions including Muslims, not just Judeo/Christians. We have moved in recent years toward shifts in male/female roles: Who has the power is not as clear, and who we are sexually is no longer determined by the sex into which we were given at birth.

To cope with the pain that is inevitable in change is not easy. (Note that, in the upper right of Figure 2, the pain of chaos is described as feeling dismemberment, being pulled apart. This can, for some people, be sheer agony.) Satir would often tell me that there are different kinds of pain and we must differentiate between them. There is pain in the service of growth and pain in the service of death; for example, childbirth is a pain in the service of growth. There seems to me to be no differentiation about pain of change in our country occurring in the minds of the Americans who elected Donald Trump. Instead, electing Trump represents our effort to block change—block difference by deportation or blockage of entry of Muslims into the country—be Number 1 in the world again and always.

Despite America's election of Donald Trump, or maybe because of it, the opposite has been mobilized in the public! We have since the election mobilized a stronger than ever public involvement in political issues, a well-organized and effective public carrying what Satir (1987) spoke of as the "new energy alive in the world today."

The stronger-than-ever public involvement in politics is being called "resistance" but, energetically, I see it as more positive than the word resistance would suggest. It is a movement toward diminishing the power of narcissistic/hero energy to make room for the emerging feminine!

Though the new administration promotes return to an even more determined hero—a narcissistic nation—it seems we have come too far toward transformational change to follow Trump's lead. A stronger-than-ever tension has developed between the President's decisions and his cabinet choices in his first 100 days in office and America's extremely active public (with the help of our democratic system of checks and balances in the judicial system and Congress). Examples of this follow:

- challenging the President's projections of blaming killings in our country on Muslim immigrants (which is not statistically true); Trump attempted to create a fear-based population based on his idea of Muslims as a core problem to our country's safety, and to use his belief to restrict Muslims' entry into the country;
- demanding women's rights in marches;
- challenging the President's reality through fact checking;
- challenging the President's language becoming a norm or acceptable way of speaking (like "pussy");
- challenging the President as he has made his choices of members of his cabinet, resulting in some resignations;
- keeping check on Trump's deportation of Mexicans.
- demanding unbiased investigation of Trump's possible participation with Russia in influencing the presidential election;
- rendering Trump ineffective in getting Trump-care passed in the legislature;
- bringing into focus among the resisting public a renewal of American values.

We don't have collective or societal imprints from history accessible to our consciousness of what feminine/masculine united could look like. For at least 5000 years, the masculine principle has ruled the world. Since the language of the unconscious is images, pictures, and symbols, and imagination, the more we can enter this dimension to grasp what the change of energy that is alive in the world today might look like, the more we can consciously move toward transformation. Satir and Jung expressed some of what this level of evolution on the part of individuals and a nation would look like. Here are some of their ideas.

According to Jung (1964), wisdom comes when opposites connect and maintain creative tension between them. All opposites simultaneously holding creative tension would be a description of the archetype of wholeness in a complete form, which likely will never exist on earth but is an ideal to imagine (para. 784). Satir expressed a similar concept in her practical way, of course. I heard her often speak of strong/needy as needing to be one word. We have not reached the place of *creative* tension between the

hero and the feminine energies, but tension of these opposites in my opinion got stronger and more the forefront of the American people's everyday lives since the election of Donald Trump.

The second part of Satir's ways of perceiving the world she called the growth model (see Table 1). Consider viewing the growth model as a model of what we as a nation could move toward to the extent that we integrate masculine/feminine, yin/yang in ourselves and in our government and culture. To the extent that this occurs, we will see in the majority of individuals, families, organizations, and in the government itself, exhibition of the qualities on the right of Table 1. What a dramatic healing image Satir's growth model is as a way of perceiving and behaving in the world!

Another image of movement toward wholeness that Satir offers is in her teachings and diagrams of communication. Again, she is presenting to us complex issues in simple ways, which is her specialty. I include only the last of her communication charts and a brief explanation of it (Figure 2).

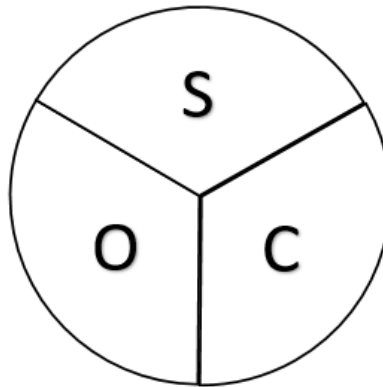


Figure 2. Congruent communication. Adapted from the “Congruent Communication” by V. Satir, J. Banmen, J. Gerber, & M. Gomori, 1991, in *The Satir Model: Family Therapy and Beyond*: p. 121; used with permission.

In the circle, “S” represents the Self, “O” represents the other person or persons involved in the communication, and “C” represents context in which the communicating is done (context refers to time [past, present, and future], place, and situation). The circle around these three represents *whole* or *congruent* communication.

Congruent communication has equal room for the person who is speaking, the person or persons spoken to and the context of the communication. Imagine that international relations as well as communications between family members or persons in a business dealing had equal space in the awareness of the person speaking, the other(s) spoken with, and both were fully conscious of all aspects of context! It could be laborious and time consuming and likely could never be fully achieved, but imagine this simply as a value in the mind of persons who are wanting to communicate as a conscious value we could seek to move toward. This is an image of movement toward integration of yin/yang, masculine/feminine energies.

In conclusion, rather than the election of Donald Trump moving us strongly toward his ideas and ideals (though some things have gone that way), it has moved us in the direction of increasing creative tension between attempts to gain control to halt change, to restore old order, and efforts to manifest feminine aspects of holding, gestating, yielding, compromising, nurturing, while having masculine aspects of being powerful, conquering when needed and, creating, thrusting when needed.

The process of collective transformation toward integration of the emerging Feminine Archetype continues to occur in the culture of the USA! With its bumps and hard places, the transformation needed at this time in history recognized by Virginia Satir and Carl Jung continues, in spite of, or maybe because of Trump's presidency and the public's reaction to it. What a drama we are having in that process!

Laura S. Dodson, MSW, PhD, Senior Jungian Analyst, is a founding member of the Avanta Network (1975), now called the Satir Global Network. When she was 23 years old, she met Virginia Satir and continued to study and later to co-work with her until Virginia's death. Laura taught jointly between the University of Denver and the Iliff School of Theology in Denver Colorado. She was co-director of the Evergreen Institute which organized Virginia's first month long training program in 1971 in Glenwood Springs, CO. Virginia Satir asked Laura to work in the leadership of Satir Family Camp in 1983, and Laura continued in this position through the camp this year.

In 1989, Laura founded the Institute for International Connections, (IIC), an affiliate organization to Satir Global Institute, to continue Virginia's work in the Soviet Union. IIC continues to work in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and has expanded its work to Asia where Laura has been training professors of psychology in Satir/Jung work for the past 8 years. Laura had a clinical practice in psychology for 57 years, retired from that practice in March 2016, and continues to consult and teach.

Laura wrote, *Family Therapy, A Systems Approach*, (1977), has edited numerous books and written many articles related to Satir and Jung work. She is currently working on a book with Maureen Graves to be entitled, *The Practical Spiritual Psychology of Virginia Satir*.

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