

# *Hakomi Principles in Relation to Systems Theory*

Sid Kemp with Greg Johanson

**Editor's note:** Sid Kemp wrote this article that integrates Hakomi principles with systems theory through his own knowledge of Hakomi, Bateson, Buddhism, systems theory and more, combined with a resource paper written by Greg Johanson. That paper titled "Psychotherapy, science & spirit: Nonlinear systems, Hakomi Therapy, and the Tao" is in press at the *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*.  
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**Greg Johanson's** biographical notes can be found with his article in this edition of the *Forum* titled "Humanistic Hakomi and It's Interface with Non-Linear Science."

**ABSTRACT:** In this article Hakomi Therapy is considered in relation to its principles as they interface with systems theory, broadly conceived. Hakomi roots in the work of Gregory Bateson and the sciences of complexity are outlined as well those in Buddhism and other spiritual traditions. A coherent philosophical-scientific theory is outlined that offers an underlying basis for doing therapy, and integrating multiple disciplines and perspectives.

## Introduction

General Systems Theory and other philosophical approaches that describe the nature of living organisms provide a framework for understanding the core principles of Hakomi therapy. In addition, general systems theory can be used to translate material from other realms, such as scientific research and spiritual traditions, into usable concepts that guide therapeutic process and therapeutic tools. In this chapter, references will be made to the more important and accessible literature in the philosophy of science. The large volume of material available precludes anything more than a brief introduction to the most essential elements of this material. See Johanson 2009 for a more extended discussion.

General systems theory allows psychological theoreticians and practitioners to do two things:

- *Provide a philosophical framework for therapy and its principles:* Philosophy addresses such basic questions as: Is there a model that justifies the notion that any therapy, or particular therapy models, are likely to have a transformative effect on the lives of clients? What principles guide therapeutic relationships and technique that are likely to maximize their effectiveness?
- *Connect psychological therapy to other disciplines and traditions.* General Systems Theory can provide a *pattern which connects* (Bateson, 1979) other patterns. For example, it is not obvious how to connect the results of research in psychoneuroimmunology to therapeutic practice. But they can be linked through general systems theory. The links are not as

robust as empirical experimental results, but they do guide therapeutic practice and future experimental design. General Systems Theory can also support us in making wider connections: it can suggest links between the human wisdom of ancient Buddhism, Taoism, Hindu yogic, and Jewish or Christian anthropologies, or abstract mathematics with the core principles of Hakomi Therapy.

The Hakomi principles are: Unity, Organicity, Mind-Body Holism, Mindfulness, and Non-Violence.

## Unity

The *Unity Principle*, states that each person or object is best seen as a system that is composed of sub-systems and is also itself part of a larger system. Although Bateson spoke of systems, the term *holon* was introduced by Arthur Koestler (1967), and will be used here. In general systems theory, a holon is the most fundamental unit of reality. It is a whole made up of parts, which in turn is part of a larger whole. The term unity indicates interconnectedness, stating that when one holon interacts with another, they are also a larger holon, and each holon within the larger holon affects the other in unpredictable ways.

Each holon has a self-consistency (agency), and also the capacity to interact with, and change other holons (communion). Further, in the biological realm, living organisms are complex holons that are self-organizing, self-directing, and self-healing (Bateson, 1979). Ilya Prigogine (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). won the Nobel Prize for

demonstrating that biological systems (including organisms, communities, and ecosystems) have a quality called negentropy, a capability to increase their complexity and the complexity of their environments (Cowan, Pines, & Meltzer, 1994). This is the opposite of entropy, a general Newtonian principle about the mechanical universe that indicates that complexity and available energy are reduced over time. As negentropic systems, organisms, individuals, societies, and ecosystems become inherently more complex, able to contain more information, more varied, more robust, and more stable over time. As diverse organisms and species interact, each adapts to its environment, and also changes the environment to suit themselves. The whole environment is both greater than the sum of its parts and also better for each individual, as well. Bateson's focus was to show that the principles needed to describe minds were fundamentally different than the principles used to describe physical systems. Prigogine took this work much further by identifying negentropy as a fundamental quality of living systems, of self-healing holons.

Applying this view of living systems to therapy gives rise to a sense of optimism. First, it supports a trust in a client's own ability to understand life, and integrate newer, more nuanced views of life. A client whose experience is shaped by the core belief "I am unlovable," may come to see, "love is difficult, but possible." This perspective is supported by research reported by Goleman (1996) that indicates that realistic optimism is the healthiest physiological and psychological state.

The other implication of the Unity principle is that a short interaction between a client and therapist can lead to a dramatic, lasting change in the life of the client. Because the two holons become one during the interaction, the client has an opportunity to experience a very different type of relationship with one other person (Cozolino, 2006). The client can then extend both this new experience, and also what is learned during this experience, to other relationships and other aspects of life.

Although *unity* was the term chosen in the Hakomi context, the term relates most closely to the Buddhist philosophical term *non-duality*, and also *interbeing*. The core teaching, which dates back to the Buddha (Macy, 1991), and is also core to contemporary Buddhist thinking (Nhat Hanh, 1987) is that it is a harmful error to think that we are separate from one another, and it is also a harmful error to think that we are all one and the same. Rather, interconnected diversity is a valid and healthy model for how holons interact. The Buddhist model suggests that all people should interact with one another different, yet not entirely separate. This can be a guide for the therapeutic relationship, and also a model for healthy family and social relationships. Compassion, as Thomas Merton once said, is the profound awareness of the interconnectedness of all things. The clients who stands across from us are not other. He or she is us, as well.

The scientific concepts most closely related to Hakomi's Unity Principle are found in quantum mechanics. Quantum mechanics has determined that the behavior of a photon cannot be described solely as if it is a particle, separate from everything else. Nor can the observed behavior of a photon be explained if it is a wave, interconnected with everything else. We can only explain all the things photons do if we view them simultaneously as independent particles and also as waves connected with the larger universe. That is, the fundamental nature of the photon is non-dual – it can only be described as both separate and also united with all things.

The other relevant concept from quantum mechanics is that the observer inevitably changes the object of observation. The act of observation is contact that transfers energy and information, and that transfer changes both the observed and the observer. No direct connection can be made between the behavior of photons in quantum mechanics and the behavior of clients in therapy. However, the perspective of General Systems Theory as a pattern that connects suggests that there are certain fundamental qualities that are true of all systems. From that, a therapist may make good use of the concept that she will inevitably change her client's lives. And, because the client is a negentropic, self-healing holon capable of learning and growth, that change is likely to be beneficial. The remaining Hakomi principles guide the therapist in increasing the likelihood of maximal benefit from the therapy.

### **Organicity**

Organicity distinguishes the qualities of living systems from those of non-living systems (Vallacher, & Nowak, 1994a, 1994b). The core defining work is Bateson (1979). Bateson uses the term "mind" for complex systems. As "mind" has a very different meaning in psychotherapy, we will use the term self-healing holon.

There is a hierarchy of complexity of systems, from a simple assemblage, such as a cart, up to complex, living, organic systems, and beyond. The simplest mechanical systems can be modeled without a need to introduce systems interactions at all. At the next level, we have the simplest homeostatic systems, where, in addition to describing each part, it is also necessary to describe interactions among parts at a systems level. Bateson (1979) demonstrated that the functions of windmills, thermostats, fire alarm bells, and regulators for engines all require the introduction of the timing of the system to explain their function. For example, two regulated generators with identical parts will behave very differently, depending on their system timing. One will run smoothly and handle variable loads. The other will build up pressure and explode.

This notion of multiple levels of description is critical to the understanding of complex systems. Bateson saw the same phenomena in an anthropological context, and presented a

model of *schismogenesis*. The implications for psychology are clear: an individual can function well and cope with life, or become overwhelmed and split apart, without anything more than a change of how the timing of communications within him occur.

The most basic systems that Bateson called minds had two levels – the level of parts, and the level of the system. Living systems are far more complex, demonstrating qualities of Organicity, including self-organization, self-direction, and self-healing. People, as holons with organicity, are capable of healing, and also of adaptation and creative growth.

The modeling of simple systems led to the concept of homeostasis, where a system can automatically adjust itself to return to a given set point, producing stability through constancy, as when a thermostat regulates the temperature of a household. However, the homeostasis model is too simple for self-healing holons. This concept has been applied inappropriately to the human body, individuals, families, and organizations as Bertalanffy (1968) cautioned years ago. More recently, Gottman, et. al. (2005, p. 166) concur that “when applied to the study of interacting systems such as a couple . . . the concept of homeostasis is highly inadequate.”

The concept better able to accommodate the features of living organic systems is Sterling’s (2004) theory of “allostasis” or stability through change. The system is seen as making predictions to adjust parameters to best function in the situation at hand. As opposed to maintaining some mythical normal setpoint, for instance, blood pressure fluctuates in an adaptive way depending on the activity anticipated to come next (Sterling, 2004, p. 6).

It is important not to assume that only biological organisms have organicity. Ecosystems and social environments that include life interacting with the physical environment have organicity and are self-organizing, self-directing, and self-healing. This thinking can link to theological views of social structures, such as the early conception of the church as many members of one body, to practical applications in contemporary sociology and psychology.

Self-healing holons are complex and unpredictable. They cannot be effectively modeled by reductionistic models. For example, it is possible to model the consequences of kicking a football by creating a simplified model of the foot, the football, and the force applied. However, the consequences of kicking a dog simply cannot be modeled in the same way. When a dog is kicked, its interpretation of the *meaning* of the kick comes into play. Is the kick perceived as hostile or playful? Is the person doing the kicking known to the dog, or a stranger? The dog has an internal perspective that must be considered in order to predict its actions.

Both Bateson and Bateson (1987) and Wilber (1995) recognize that complex, self-healing holons have an internal perspective that interprets meaning. Diagnosis is a form of prediction. To diagnose and support the healing of a therapy client, the therapist must honor and receive information from this internal perspective of the client.

Wilber (1995) proposes that an individual can only be fully understood if four quadrants of experience are all engaged as sources of information. The individual’s own inner experience of events must be addressed, not only outer behavior. The interior and exterior aspects are two of four quadrants relevant to describe a person. The other two quadrants are at the collective level. This level also has its interior aspect, cultural values, which can only be discovered by asking the collective about its beliefs. It also has its exterior aspect, the externally observable social structures. This is Wilber’s All-quadrant-full-spectrum model (AQAL) of Integral Psychology, in which Wilber also argues that all four quadrants develop or evolve together over time.

An excellent discussion of the implications of the need to address individuals in therapy at individual and social levels, and to also include internal and external aspects is found in *Metaframeworks* (Breunlin, Schwartz, & Mac Kune-Karrer, 1992). These models or metaframeworks seek to make a more rigorous definition of what it means to be a holistic therapist. To operate holistically, a therapist must address all aspects of the client and the client’s situation – individual and social, internal and external. This means that in addition to offering quality Hakomi Therapy when appropriate, the Hakomi therapist should seek to understand any and all tools that might be useful to the client. This implies understanding and working with multiple modalities of therapy (such as individual and family therapy), addressing cultural-social issues, and also being aware of the interaction between physical health and psychological well-being. Since single practitioners do not have skills in all these areas, an interdisciplinary teamwork approach is necessary.

Mathematics has models that can assist the therapist in working with organic complexity. In mathematics, mechanical models, even very complex, multidimensional ones, are called linear models. In linear models, a defined situation and set of inputs will lead to a predictable output. These models are fundamentally inappropriate to self-healing holons with the quality of organicity. It is not simply that we do not have enough information to plug into a mathematical model; linear models are fundamentally inappropriate to living systems. As Marilyn Morgan puts it, understanding the brain and mind in terms of “linear thinking involving cause and effect is inadequate. The brain is the most complex structure known in the universe. The human being is way too complex for simple logic. We need to turn to complexity theory for a better understanding” (Morgan, 2006, p. 14). Nowak & Vallacher (1998) agree

that the brain is composed of “100 billion neurons, each of which influences and is influenced by approximately 10,000 other neurons. . . . The range of potential mental states is unimaginably large” (p. 3), and “the same variable can . . . act as a ‘cause’ one moment and an ‘effect’ the next. This feedback process is at odds with traditional notions of causality that assume asymmetrical one-directional relationships between cause and effect” (p. 32).

Fortunately, mathematics has developed two other tools: non-linear mathematics and Chaos Theory. Chaos Theory was evolved to model natural systems such as weather, geological formation, and plant growth. A precise model of the growth of snowflakes in clouds is one of its most advanced applications (Gleick, 1988). We can now create a computer program that creates snowflakes very close to the snowflakes that will actually be created in nature. And this program demonstrates that miniscule changes in controlling variables produce radical, unpredictable changes in the results of complex systems. One of the most useful applications of Chaos Theory is a partial model of the neuro-electrical control of the heart. Although this model is not complete, it has proved sufficient to support development of new defibrillation techniques and pacemakers that are more effective at lower voltages.

At this point, it is not possible to formulate mathematical equations using Chaos Theory or non-linear modeling and apply them to psychology (Barton, 1994). However, it is possible to apply Chaos Theory metaphorically (Robertson & Combs, 1995). One example is this: Chaos Theory has a set of mathematical models called Strange Attractors. In these equations, a point moves in complex orbits tending to stay close to one, two, or three locations, and to rarely go elsewhere. A small change in the parameters of the equation will cause a shift from an orbit primarily around one attractor to an orbit primarily around a different one, or can even introduce a new attractor. This can serve as a metaphor that supports a holistic model of how to work with addictive, obsessive, or compulsive behavior. The person can be seen as orbiting around a limited set of behaviors over time. The person’s core beliefs would be the parameters that, if changed, would radically alter the orbit. A small change in a core belief might lead to a reduced tendency to remain near a less healthy attractor, and a greater tendency to spend more time near a healthier attractor, or might even open up the possibilities of new attractors, that is, behaviors the patient previously found impossible.

The analogy is quite robust and expansive. In both the mathematical model, and also in actual therapeutic experience, a small change in a parameter can lead to a large and permanent change in behavior. The change is unpredictable: that is, one small change in a parameter might make no significant difference, while another small change can make a large difference. Changes in parameters can cause shifts either towards one parameter or another,

just as changes in core beliefs can cause either an increase in healthy behaviors, or, unfortunately, an increase in unhealthy behaviors. However, the principles of Unity and Organicity give us reason for optimism. If the process engages the client holistically and brings core beliefs into awareness, the client is likely to be able to choose changes in belief that lead to a better life, and will naturally choose to do so. This becomes likely if the therapy includes mind-body holism, mindfulness, and non-violence, the three remaining Hakomi principles.

Many other tools are available for the therapist interested in applying non-linear models. The field is also called “the study of dynamic, synergistic, dissipative, non-linear, self-organizing, or chaotic systems (Thelen & Smith, 2002, p. 50),” or “dynamical systems (Nowak & Vallacher, 1998, p. 2).” John Holland (1995) in line with the work of the Santa Fe Institute (Morowitz & Singer, 1995, Cowan, Pines, & Meltzer, 1994) uses the term complex adaptive systems (CAS). Laszlo (2004) speaks of adaptive self-regulating systems, and Varela, Thompson, & Rosch (1991) also adopt the term dynamical systems.

It is crucial for the therapist to maintain the distinction between self-healing holons, that is, living systems, and mechanical systems. Hakomi has always been clear that neither therapy nor science is ever value free. We continuously work to inquire into our own values. We struggle to bring our values into meaningful coherence while acknowledging that we are always “involved participants” as opposed to “alienated observers” (Berman, 1989, p. 277). We seek to avoid harmful reductionisms (LeShan & Margenau, 1982) that may be present in our explicit models, or may implicitly influence us. *Organicity* provides the Hakomi therapist with a model of healing that is rich with possibilities:

- Fundamentally, individuals are self-healing, and also able to adapt to and change their environment, growing in healthy ways.
- The therapeutic relationship can provide brief contact leading to new visions of possibility, and therefore new potential, health, and habits for the client.
- The therapist’s role is a collaborative and supportive role, more so than a clinical diagnostic one. This means less work for the therapist. Relaxation and trust replaces the need to change or fix the client. Also, as the client is self-determined, the client has the central role of change agent.

### **Mind-Body Holism**

It is common in Western thinking to separate the mind and body. Hakomi corrects this view with a principle called Mind-Body Holism. The separation of mind and body proposed by Rene Descartes has not stood up in more recent centuries in philosophy, and has been thoroughly disproved by research in neuropsychiatry and psychoneuroimmunology.

By definition, a mind processes information, and a body processes energy. But all information is energy, and vice-versa. No aspect of human experience can be described as either purely mental or purely physical, and no sub-system of a person is purely mental, or purely physical. Therefore modeling a person as a “mind” and a “body” is inappropriate. What is the most appropriate model of a human being’s inner holons (sub-systems)?

Bateson and Bateson (1987) proposed that a science of living systems should have an alternate model for theory selection, replacing the classic Ockham’s Razor. Ockham’s Razor states that, if two theories have equal explanatory power, the one that introduces the fewest unknowns is preferable. Bateson proposes that, where self-healing holons are involved, if two theories have equal explanatory power, then the one that most closely models known sub-systems of the living system is preferable. This model will be easier to follow and use, and is likely to be a more accurate predictor of new phenomenon. For scientific inquiry and for therapy, the implication of Organicity is that determinism, or predictive power, is an insufficient and inadequate guiding principle. For complex systems, modeling is essential.

Within each person are subsystems – the nervous system, the endocrine system, the circulatory system, and so forth. We can also talk about mental and emotional systems, such as worldview, character, or complexes. But none of these systems can be thought of as either purely mental, or purely physical. A thought is meaning, and also is an electrochemical impulse in the brain. A feeling contains meaning, and is also a combination of neuromuscular tension and hormonal balance. A sensation is the translation of a physical change, such as pressure, heat, or cold, into a neural impulse. And that impulse is immediately interpreted, perhaps as comforting or hostile, by the person receiving it. So a person is a body-mind system, with mind (information) and body (energy and matter) so intertwined that they cannot be thought of as separate.

It is therapeutically powerful to work with information and energy (sensory experience) simultaneously, to use the mind/body interface. The body reflects mental life (Kurtz & Prester, 1976; Marlock & Weiss, 2006). The body is immediate and present, and has not been overused in therapy, as has verbal exchange (Johanson, 1996). The body’s revelations are more closely connected with the deepest levels of the tri-partite brain and the ways we organize experience. That is why it is necessary, as Ogden, Minton, and Pain (2006) suggest, to incorporate the body, titrating sensation and doing bottom-up processing when there has been trauma. Traumatic events can trigger the primitive fight, flight, or freezing mechanisms that will lead clients to dissociate if standard mental-emotional top-down processing reactivates the memories with inappropriate timing and preparation.

An effective Hakomi therapist will work with, and learn from, those who treat the body, as well as those who treat the mind. Mind-body holism calls the therapist to take a holistic and cooperative attitude, rather than an imperious one. Diagnosis of physical ailments, pain management, and proper nutrition will affect the mind, as well as the body. Effective methods for addressing the client’s bodily condition are therefore essential to holistic psychotherapy. For example, if people present themselves as depressed, we attend to metabolic issues through nutrition, biochemistry, movement, massage, and so forth, as well as the developmental, psychological issues that psychotherapists traditionally address, as well as employ cultural-social issues as necessary (Herlihy & McCollum, 2007).

### **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is a range of states of consciousness including witnessing, bare attention, and loving presence. In Hakomi therapy, mindfulness is used in two ways. First, the therapist enters mindfulness and loving awareness (Germer, 2006) before each session and remains in it. Second, the therapist induces the client into a state of mindful self-reflection as early in the session as is feasible, and helps the client return to mindfulness as appropriate.

The therapist’s mindfulness is a present-moment enactment of the Hakomi principles. Mindfulness supports awareness of unity as the therapist remains aware of both his/her own breath, body, feelings and thoughts, and those of the client. In this state, the therapist can gather much more information about how the client organizes meaning and holds energy. Mindfulness allows the therapist to draw information from all four of the quadrants in Wilber’s model (1995), moving seamlessly from one context to another. Mindfulness supports organic healing because it is a natural, healthy state of mind, and because it allows the way the individual organizes experience into meaning to become apparent. Once the limiting core beliefs become apparent, they can be changed. Since the limiting core beliefs operate at a very deep level of the client’s organization, a small change there can result in a large and lasting change in operant beliefs, feelings, habits, and behaviors.

Mindfulness interacts with mind-body holism in many ways. Nhat Hanh (1987) defines mindfulness as the state where mind and body become one. Being mindful, the therapist and client can pick up clues about the mind from the body’s posture, position, tension, and habits. This makes the body a royal road to the unconscious (Johanson, 2006). In Hakomi, experiments in mindfulness evoke mental patterns through triggering or taking over bodily reactions.

The core origin of mindfulness as applied in Hakomi is the Buddhist tradition. The Buddha himself taught mindfulness as the first of seven steps on the path to the liberation from

suffering. In both Buddhism and Hakomi, mindfulness is the first tool used to begin the work that will lead to the moderation of suffering. And the tool that follows immediately afterwards is self-inquiry. Buddhism and Hakomi have a common goal, the elimination of unnecessary suffering, and a common method, mindful self-inquiry.

Mindfulness is an aspect of many spiritual traditions, not only Buddhism. Self inquiring and witnessing are part of the Advaitist yoga of the Hindu tradition. In Orthodox Judaism, the practice of saying prayers during many common activities, such as the washing of hands, can be used to induce mindfulness. Catholic monk Thomas Merton found mindfulness so essential to the Christian contemplative tradition that he developed Centering Prayer, an adaptation of Zen practice that is now commonly used by Catholics and Episcopalians.

But the presence of mindfulness is far wider even than this. Mindfulness is expressed by being “in the zone,” in an optimal state of consciousness for athletic or artistic activity. Mindfulness has also been demonstrated to be a healthy, relaxed state, and a state that supports improved brain function (Austin, 1998; Davidson, 2003; Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, Schumacher, et.al., 2003; Fargoso, Grinberg, Perez, Ortiz, & Loyo, 1999.)

Gary Snyder, who spent ten years as a Zen monk, and is also an ecologist and naturalist, proposes that mindfulness is “hunter’s mind,” the optimal state of consciousness for finding and tracking animals in the wild. If so, mindfulness is more, even, than universally human.

From a developmental perspective, mindfulness may be a state of every healthy child enjoying a safe environment, particularly a natural environment (Siegel & Hartzell, 2003). But self-inquiry only becomes possible at around age eight (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

Even though mindfulness is a natural state, it needs to be induced and supported in most people (Johanson, 2006). For some, it is induced by time in nature, or in the practice of an art or sport. For others, intentional practice, such as Buddhist meditation or Hakomi therapy can be useful. Methods of inducing mindfulness, such as turning attention to the breath or to bodily awareness are discussed in numerous places. The most common barrier to mindfulness is fear arising from an experience of not being safe. This brings us to the next Hakomi principle, non-violence.

### Non-Violence

The 20<sup>th</sup> century concept of Non-Violence was developed by Mahatma Gandhi. He cited roots in both the Hindu tradition of equating love with *ahimsa* (literally non-harm), and also in the Christian tradition, both the teachings of

Christ in the New Testament and also Thoreau’s *Civil Disobedience* (2007) first published in 1866.

Non-violence is a way in which one holon can choose to interact with others. Gandhi proposed it as a quality of social, political, and military interaction to resolve conflicts between societies with no intent to harm, and with a minimum of injury. Non-violence is expressed in many spiritual traditions: the Buddhist vow of non-killing; the Hippocratic oath which includes the commitment “first, do no harm,” the tradition of conscientious objection in the peace churches and some Orthodox Jewish traditions, and the religiously based civil rights movement associated with Martin Luther King, Jr. are examples.

General systems theory allows us to generalize the social-political concept of non-violence so that it can be applied to relationships and to the inner realms addressed by psychology. Non-violence is also a position that states that the ends and the means are one, and therefore that the ends do not justify the means. Holons are fundamentally both mental and physical. Non-violence must not violate a holon on either level. Rather, non-violence supports the integrity of each holon. To support that integrity with clear boundaries and healthy contact (providing both information and energy) is non-violent. Violation (intruding inappropriate energy and information) and abandonment (failing to provide appropriate energy and information) are violations of healthy boundaries, forms of violence that result in injury (Whitehead, 1994, 1995). From a position of non-violence, the Hakomi therapist does not seek to push through a client’s resistance, or to impose a diagnosis or treatment on the client, or to promote an up-down position of doctor-patient or teacher-student.

This definition also distinguishes non-violence from passive resistance, or from any type of avoidance due to self-protection or due to a conceptual theory. The non-violent therapist is actively engaged in the elimination of suffering, and in the establishment of relationships based on truth and respect. (Gandhi’s term for his movement was *satyagraha*, which means “to grasp the truth.”) Non-violence is fundamentally engaged, not passive. It includes both a commitment to non-harm and also the development of skillful means that ensure that the original intent not to harm is carried through. Gathering information from the other holons through dialog, relationship, and mindfulness are powerful ways of developing skillful means. Skillful means can further be developed through observation and feedback, and through the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle of self-correction based on feedback developed in the field of Total Quality Management (Kemp, 2006).

Hakomi brings non-violence to the intrapsychic realm. It proposes first that we be non-violent, psychologically and physically, with others, and then that we go further, that we maintain a non-violent stance in relation to any part or state the client may experience. The recognition of each person

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as self-organizing, self-directed, and self-healing can best be expressed as respect for each person's inner wisdom.

This intrapsychic non-violence appears in the Hakomi approach of supporting resistance, and then inquiring into the nature of resistance, rather than trying to push through resistance. In fact, the defining moment in Kurtz's practice that distinguished Hakomi from his earlier practice of the hard body interventions (Roy, 2007) was a choice to support resistance, rather than try to press through it (Kurtz, 1990).

The non-violence of the Hakomi model has been extended in a clear way by Schwartz in his Internal Family Systems therapy method. In this model, each person is perceived as having human-like or intelligent "parts," and each part is granted the full respect that a non-violent person would grant another person. Furthermore, the therapist encourages each part to be non-violent with respect to other parts. This respects the fragile inner ecology, engages inner safety and improved inner communication, and often leads to rapid healing. This is supported by Wilber (1979) where he notes that one way of thinking about therapy in general is a matter of healing splits; splits between one part of the mind and another, between the body and the mind, between the whole self and the environment, and a final transpersonal split that overcomes all divisions.

### **Conclusion: Transformation Arising from Application of the Hakomi Principles**

All psychotherapy must answer two key questions: Is it possible for brief encounters between client and therapist to establish long-lasting, healthy changes in the client's experience of life, outlook on life, habits, and behaviors? If not, then therapy is not of value. If yes, then how is this done?

Of course, all those who engage in or promote therapy answer the first question, "yes." But what is the basis for that answer? There are many possible grounds for this assertion, and most of them can be expressed as a metaphor. The metaphor to the medical model either proposes psychotherapeutic medication, or suggests that the therapist can diagnose the client the way a doctor diagnoses an illness, then offer some treatment. Some treatment models suggest that the therapist, by modeling healthy relationship, inserts (or introjects) a healthy way of being into the client. This implies that the client is fundamentally lacking some essential human quality at the outset. The therapeutic work is analogous to a surgical implant.

Hakomi takes a different perspective. Each person is a self-organizing, self-directing, self-healing holon operating in a negentropic context. Furthermore, all holons are so complex that efforts to model them from without will always be more limited than efforts to observe them from within. Also, ill health and imbalance arise not from a missing or defective part (or sub-system), but from a failure

of communication between parts. If proper communication of information and energy is restored, then the system will heal itself. This perspective leads to a therapeutic approach that is collaborative. The therapist, in mindfulness, supports the client's mindful self-inquiry. Mindfulness allows the therapist to acquire extensive information about how the client processes experience. The client, with some guidance from the therapist, comes to contact his or her core beliefs. Together, client and therapist create the experience waiting to happen, causing an experiential shift in core beliefs. Core beliefs act as high-level parameters in the client's complex control system, so small changes can lead to substantial changes in behavior.

The collateral role of energy (Bateson, 1979) is significant in Hakomi therapy in two ways. First of all, all information is carried on a flow of energy. If the client cannot receive the energy on a bodily level, then he cannot receive the information that comes with it. This is illustrated when a client "rides the rapids." The energy associated with the information being processed overwhelms the client, and the client cries or yells or releases the energy in other ways. The therapist supports this and allows the client to complete the process. When the process naturally relaxes, the therapist guides the client first to mindfulness where information about the experience and new possibilities is integrated, and then to ordinary consciousness and further integration. Note both that the energy flow must be respected, and also that timing is a critical component to successful therapy.

The second way in which collateral energy is relevant is in the arena of the client's motivation. If a shift induced by therapy engages the client's attention and motivation, the client can do a great deal of work (Johanson, 1988) – during regular life, and not only in the therapy session – to grow, learn, and integrate the results of therapy. Exploration of core beliefs in mindfulness, and creating a single incident of the experience waiting to happen can unleash the tremendous healing and creative potential of the client.

On a physical level, most organisms will heal, even from relatively serious injury, given a safe environment and appropriate nourishment. Clearly, the same is not true as frequently or as fully on a psychological level for people. Why? One possibility is that the human psyche is complex enough to develop patterns that would be modeled as attractors in chaos theory. People internalize abuse from past experience. This is potentially a protective mechanism, designed to produce what Schwartz (1995) calls "managers" and "fire fighters" to help us avoid that which is dangerous. Sometimes the external danger is removed, but the pattern of behavior orbiting a protective attractor is still present.

Through a fresh experiential encounter in mindfulness, the core beliefs created by developmental trauma can be changed. A relatively small change to core beliefs can cause the pattern to move to abandon an old attractor. Of

course, there is usually a significant possibility of return to the prior attractor. But this model illustrates the kind of transformative healing that we often see with Hakomi therapy: The unpacking of a core belief, and the presentation of the experience waiting to happen, brings lasting transformation. It is practical application of Wilber's (1995, p. 48) observation that "We never know, and never can know, exactly what any holon will do tomorrow."

This transformation generally takes the form of an opening in the client's sense of the possible. Whereas before, a core belief "I can't trust anyone to support me" may have been present, it can be replaced with a more realistic perspective that finding support is difficult, but possible with some, though not all. Attitudes and beliefs are less polarized, less extreme. As a result, possibilities that were previously excluded by the client's perception and definition of experience now become possible experiences, and hope is restored (Johanson, 2006).

Hakomi Therapist/Teacher Laurie Schwartz cites extensive evidence that lasting recovery from substance addiction is far more likely to occur if the client has the opportunity to engage the original trauma that preceded the addiction (personal conversation, 2006). By engaging the original injury in non-violent, loving awareness, the client can see that this one event does not define all possible experience. The client can allow a healing event, the "experience waiting to happen" (Kurtz, 1990) that allows core beliefs to shift at the unconscious level where they operate. By shifting the core belief, the client releases the mind's orbit of thought (obsession) and action (compulsion) around a past attractor. The client can then leave behind old, ineffective habit patterns (addiction) and entertain new possibilities for a healthy life and healthy relationships.

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