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# BRIEF PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

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WHAT FOLLOWS IN THIS SECTION ARE A SERIES OF BRIEF PERSONAL RESPONSES TO THE ISSUE OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF HAKOMI TO SPIRITUALITY. AMINA OFFERS AN ACCOUNT OF HOW SHE PERSONALLY INTEGRATES THE SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE IN HER WORK. REBE AND JOHN WRITE ABOUT SOME THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES THAT HAVE COME TO THEM AS THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED HAKOMI, AND DYRIAN OUTLINES A CONCRETE EXERCISE HE HAS USED TO HELP PEOPLE EXPLORE THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION IN A WORKSHOP SETTING.

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## INCORPORATING SPIRITUAL AWARENESS IN HAKOMI SESSIONS

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*AMINA KNOWLAN*

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AMINA KNOWLAN IS A THERAPIST CERTIFIED IN HAKOMI WORK. HER BACKGROUND IS IN THE ACTIVE, BODY-MIND THERAPIES, TRADITIONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY, GROUP WORK, MOVEMENT, DANCE, AND RITUAL. SHE WORKS TO HELP PEOPLE DISCOVER AND RE-SOLVE THE (OFTEN UNCONSCIOUS) BELIEFS WHICH LIMIT HAPPINESS AND EFFECTIVENESS. SHE THINKS OF HER WORK IN TERMS OF EMPOWERMENT, LOVE, SELF-HEALING, CELEBRATION, AND THE REMEMBRANCE OF GOD AND SPIRIT.

This is an article to illustrate the incorporation of "Spirit" into Hakomi therapy sessions.

- I. As Magical Stranger
- II. As Probes
- III. As Ritual for Creating Options at the Nourishment Barrier

When I first encountered Hakomi, part of my attraction to it as a system of therapy was its foundation on spiritual principles. The language reflected an integration of mind, body and spirit. In my now three years experience with Hakomi, I have come to experience both in my own practice and in supervising and training other students, the absolute importance of these principles guiding the process.

The principles represent in essence a profound attitude of respect for the client as a unique person on his/her own path toward healing and wholeness whose well-being is essential to our own.

For the purposes of this article, I will

assume that students and practitioners of the Hakomi Method are thoroughly grounded in these principles and are each on their own path toward being able to live and work from them. The heart (and take "heart" to have many levels of meaning) of these musings, then, is to investigate and postulate the further direct utilization and incorporation of "Spirit" into Hakomi work. I suppose the first question is what do I mean by "Spirit"?

I began thinking about this subject when students who assisted me consistently gave me feedback such as, "You incorporate so much Spirit in your work," or "You really work with Spirit so directly." So, in the Hakomi fashion, I began to notice what I do. The following paragraphs represent my beginning awareness and hoped-for initiation of dialogue around this concept.

What is it people are responding to when they say I incorporate "Spirit"? I know they see me offer spiritual "wisdom" in the form of probes and in the role of the magical stranger, particularly (both of which I will detail later). But more often I know that

they are responding to my "presence." And here is the key: it is not my presence they are responding to, but the presence of Spirit, God, Higher Intelligence (whatever name you like) coming through me. I know about (notice) this Presence in myself chiefly in two ways.

First, there is a quality of heart-fullness, of being thoroughly opened into the kind smile and soft arms of unconditional love or compassion. It is, for me, a wise-grandfather-warm-grandmother image. It is not sympathy. It is profound respect and joy in witnessing someone's humanity: their suffering giving birth to God-consciousness, to Union, to the place of knowing themselves as a child of God, as perfect with their predicament, as having everything they need, as being grateful for everything which comes their way as opportunity to learn and grow, as seeing the half-full rather than the half-empty cup....(and you see it is this spiritual awareness which generates phrase after phrase of what is perhaps another assessment system to overlay character theory, another strategic map to see the client through).

It is not a place of mushy compassion. As I mature in my own spiritual development (and thus as a therapist) it is more and more a place of severity. **Severe Compassion:** (a phrase I take from Elizabeth Coghburn, New Song Ceremonialist). **Severe Compassion:** Being willing to tell the truth as you/I see it without shame or blame; being willing to stay centered in the heart while wielding the sword of discrimination.

Another way of understanding how a therapist functions from this heart-centered place is a willingness to enter into "real relationship" with the client. This is a distinction made by Gelso and Carter (The Counseling Psychologist, 13: 2, April 1985) in describing three kinds of therapeutic relationships: transference, therapeutic alliance, and real relationship.

Hakomi works mostly in the realm of a therapeutic alliance. I typically cross over much more into the realm of the real relationship which means a lot of things, but most simply put, I am willing to express and offer my love to and for the client not just as a probe, but from full recognition of the place where we are One, where their predica-

ment is just like mine, where I win if they win, where I am also a human being who screws up, gets frustrated and doesn't know. (Then of course, there needs to be another article written here on managing the boundaries of the therapeutic relationship....) At any rate, perhaps this is enough for you to get the idea of this heart-centered place. It is the place to listen and speak from.

The second way I know about this Presence is easier to describe. I simply experience myself as saying things I didn't know I knew (usually at the stage of creating probes, options at the barrier, being the magical stranger, or in integration work). It's a direct sense of hearing words come from another (higher, up right, for me) source. It's intuition, attunement, guidance, third eye.

It's probably worth saying that I directly (usually silently) ask for such guidance early on in each session. A private ritual for "turning it over to God". I ask the guides of this person to come forward, speak through me; I call on the Great Spirit...basically, I pray.

Other people call on the Light, meditate....the form doesn't matter. Whatever works. It's the intention that counts. Since we're about being body-centered, I should also say that I breathe, visualize and feel my heart, mind and spine opening, energy flowing free, etc. In these New Age days, everyone "knows" this. How many, I wonder, really take the time to ask, to consistently center in this way? And how often is our asking really another badge to hang on our ego? I can only say that when I remember myself as an instrument in this way, the difference in the quality and effectiveness of my work is dramatic. When I am "on" or "in tune", the words come through me with a quality of wisdom, with a profound simplicity that people take home and make posters of.

Now let me distill these abstract concepts of spiritual presence and awareness down into specific examples of what you might hear in the therapy session itself. A common place in the session for this awareness to be translated into concrete effect is in/through the "magical stranger."

For example, in a session with the client I will call Sally, I determined that

she certainly believed in angels. Then, to the "child" who is in kindergarten, "That's good, because I am an angel. I know you can't see me but I have a very special job. My job is to be your friend and to protect you from your mean teacher. And I am with you all the time even when you can't see me." To the witnessing adult, with one hand over her heart on her chest and one on her back, "The angel lives here in your heart. Breathe and let the angel into your heart." Her body shifts from a slumped, cowered, submissive posture which represents wanting to hide, be invisible, a "flight" response to new situations; to an up, straight, head high posture. With the angel (spiritual presence), she knows she has help and is protected.

It is, simply put, a matter of cultivating spiritual awareness in the client. In terms of the process of the session, it might go something like this: Once the child is accessed and feels safe with you, s/he often returns to a state of innocence: a state of open wonder and curiosity. This state offers a remarkable opportunity for differentiating from the traumas and dilemmas of that child (maturing or "transforming") through overlaying the wisdom of spiritual awareness available to the adult.

The child in its original state of innocence could not know about the abstract matrix of spirit, was not capable of knowing about the "bigger picture." So, much in the same way that the therapist creates an option by using a probe that begins with, "I am not your mother....", there are probes that offer another "view" such as, "There is another reality", "You have always been protected," or "You suffered a lot in order to learn...." Essentially they take the client out of his or her local particular movie into a "higher" perspective where it's all grist for the mill.

Obviously the timing and construction of such probes is very precise. If the adult consciousness is not available, it will only confuse the child to use abstract concepts. (At such times, I am more likely to funnel it through the magical stranger: angels, wizards, fairy godmothers, etc.)

It's as if the child who developed with her roots in the Earth (through the matrix of the mother in the notions of Joseph Chilton Pearce) can now, as an adult, understand and develop her roots in heaven (a Qabbalistic

notion) where there is another source of support ("You are a child of God"; "Love is inside and all around you" which is a chant that I personally am prone to sing).

If the moment is right, I will often use a concept that is deliberately hard to understand with our ordinary consciousness, e.g., "Gratefulness is the key to Will". This asks the client to shift out of his personal reaction (e.g., feeling sorry for himself) to a transpersonal perspective (being grateful for the lesson, surrendering to the perfection of Divine Will, etc.).

So again, the timing is critical: first felt experience (the child, often) accessed, feelings contacted and supported; then, and only then can the differentiation to adult spiritual awareness or perspective (the transpersonal) occur.

The last concrete example I want to mention is the incorporation of ritual, usually at the stage of creating options at the barrier or in the integration stage.

For example, in a session with a client I will call Torry, (a woman with a strong nourishment barrier manifested as colitis), I created a ritual eating of an apple as the "first food". Food as accessed in her child consciousness, was a poisonous substance offered by her evil mother. (For a stimulating treatment of the concept of evil in psychotherapy, see M. Scott Peck's The People of the Lie.)

After determining that Torry was open to the possibility of food being nourishing now (she saw images of wonderfully appealing foods, and said, "If only I could believe that food could be this pure and good," meaning free from her mother's poison), I said (as a probe), "The food you eat now is blessed." When her response indicated an openness to this possibility, I asked her if she would like to taste the first blessed and truly nourishing food. I then pulled an apple out of my endlessly available bag of props, sliced and arranged it with appropriate decorum onto a plate.

Though I do not remember my exact words, the ritual went something like this: I asked the Great Spirit, the Source of all Life, to bless and purify this food. I asked that this food bring new life and healing into the cells of Torry's body, that she re-cognize

this as the "first food" offering the possibility of nourishment from henceforth. I then fed her the apple one slice at a time asking her to chew and eat very, very slowly; to notice the nourishment, the life, etc. that she is now taking into her body. I also talked to her (certainly she is in a trance state by now) about relaxing and allowing this wonderful food to be absorbed into her body.

Watching her was amazing: she was glowing, delighted, clearly tasting food for the first time. I integrated it some by talking to her about creating her own rituals of blessing food every time she ate during the next week. (Just to report the power of calling Spirit into the session, Torry's colitis symptoms disappeared and she gained ten pounds within the next two weeks.)

In summary, it seems I am talking about helping the client connect with and develop his or her own spiritual awareness. I am

offering the transpersonal spiritual matrix to help her re-solve and differentiate from her past local particular movie. (Even to know/see that it's all just a movie and we're all just playing our parts, for example, lends an ability to be out of and thus, free from, our "stuff".)

I want to add here, that in my belief, this is appropriate only after the shadows and traumas of the core beliefs have been danced with in the court of felt experience; else it is just more distance and defense. The therapist can only do this if s/he is representing Spirit, connected, using his/her self as an instrument. That happens with clear intention and conscious action (centering and invoking) and is directly dependent upon the spiritual development of the therapist. Luckily, as with all life, it is perfect and essential to simply begin with who you are; love what is, I like to say. In other words, don't wait to become a Yogi to begin this process!

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# ALL ROADS LEAD HOME: NOURISHMENT, TRANSFORMATION AND GRACE

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*REBA TOWNSEND-SIMMONS*

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REBE TOWNSEND IS A WHOLISTICALLY ORIENTED PRACTITIONER IN EUGENE, OREGON WHO COMBINES A NUMBER OF HEALING MODALITIES INCLUDING HAKOMI, AND MASSAGE.

Nourish: 1. to feed or sustain (any plant or animal) with substances necessary to life and growth

2. to stimulate; foster; develop; support (a feeling, attitude, habit, etc.)

Transform: 1. to change the form or outward appearance of

2. to change the condition, nature, or function of; convert

3. to change the personality or

character of

Grace: 1. a disposition to grant something freely; favor; good will

2. in theology: the unmerited love and favor of God toward man and woman.

Hakomi has been different for me than other therapies because it grows out of the principles of Unity, Mindfulness, Non-Violence, Organicity and Mind-Body Holism which roots it in a spiritual matrix. Other psychotherapeutic techniques come from

modalities based on varying views of reality and personality, but Hakomi goes beyond this. The Principles point to a sense of wholeness, oneness, integration and unconditional love which is very close to my idea of God. Thus, I am inspired to write about my own experience of Grace which I have contacted in Hakomi workshops.

I began to be aware of this idea of Grace during a Beginning Phase Training when we talked about the difference between communication with the child state and the adult. There is a certain directness, a simplicity and a deep caring and concern which help the magical stranger contact the child. The emphasis is away from concepts, big words, intellect. The child is prereflective. It is an intensely aware and volatile feeling state. In this state the child can share its feelings with the magical stranger, receive nourishment that was previously unavailable, and transform its world view from a negative or impoverished belief state to one more positive, realistic and abundant. It is not necessary for the individual to intellectually understand all the details of their past or present experience in order to be moved by the therapy. This is where I first started to think about Grace: a disposition to grant something freely--no need to understand, to see all the details, to wallow in the pain forever. Nourishment is now available, transformation is now possible--and through this Grace we are a little freer to experience the pleasurable foundations of life.

My second real contact with Grace was at my first Hakomi Bodywork training. Ingrid was massaging my neck as I had asked her to do. As she probed with her fingertips into the tight muscle tissue and asked me to describe the tightness, I became aware of a metal band around my neck which I identified as a slave collar when I focused on its meaning. Going further into mindfulness I saw myself in a dungeon with a heavy metal collar and a chain attached to the collar and to a ring on the wall. Ingrid asked me some clarifying questions about this scene and I resisted. I didn't relish looking at this painful and unpleasant scene any longer. Suddenly I felt a powerful wave of energy and warmth coming through Ingrid's hands and I knew my neck was healing. I felt this healing was available to me just by opening to it. I didn't need to delve any further into the pain of the past but only be receptive to the warmth and energy that was coming

to me through Ingrid's hands, exploring any barriers to letting them in if they appeared. Again Grace was there, blessing.

Today, watching Greg Johanson work with Berta, I understood Grace even more fully. Just as in theology, Grace is the unmerited love and favor of God toward humanity, Greg assured Berta, the child, that we would like her even if she wasn't always a good girl. He explained how when people he loved sometimes hurt him, he would still love them and had faith they could work things out. The only people who could hurt him deeply were the ones he loved.

The unconditional love and forgiveness that we experience in therapy which allows us to let go of our own pain, mistakes, and transgressions of the past and go on more joyfully with our lives, is the same message of Grace that we as Hakomi therapists can offer our clients. We can listen to their pain, help them assimilate nourishment, support their unfolding. Grace is the piece of magic which is always available to us and to them without effort or performance. Through this dispensation of Grace, freely given, we all receive a second chance, again, and again, and again.

LET CHILDREN WALK WITH NATURE,  
LET THEM SEE THE BEAUTIFUL BLENDINGS AND  
COMMUNIONS OF DEATH AND LIFE,  
THEIR JOYOUS INSEPRABLE UNITY,  
AS TAUGHT IN WOODS AND MEADOWS,  
PLAINS AND MOUNTAINS  
AND STREAMS OF OUR BLESSED STAR,  
AND THEY WILL LEARN THAT DEATH IS STINGLESS  
INDEED,  
AND AS BEAUTIFUL AS LIFE,  
AND THAT THE GRAVE HAS NO VICTORY,  
FOR IT NEVER FIGHTS.  
ALL IS DIVINE HARMONY.  
-JOHN MUJR

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# SPIRITUALITY IN HAKOMI

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*JOHN LLOYD*

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JOHN LLOYD IS A LONG TIME STUDENT OF MANY RELIGIOUS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SCHOOLS OF HEALING. HE IS CURRENTLY WORKING FULL TIME IN ENGINEERING IN THE BOULDER-DENVER AREA.

In Hakomi we talk a lot about the mind, body and emotions. However, very little is said about spirit. Since, to me, it is obvious that all four of these aspects are present in human beings in an interactive and inseparable way, this would seem to be an oversight. This was my first impression when I started studying Hakomi. Now, after a year of study and a lot of Hakomi therapy on myself, I have changed my mind. I would like to share with you some of the thoughts which have lead me to a new viewpoint.

Let me start by introducing the concept of human essence. Beneath the artificial layers of ego, personality, and "core material" is the human essence. The essence is in complete harmony and expression on all four levels: mind, body, emotions, and spirit. This is the natural state of a human being and the birth right of all of us.

I quote Oscar Ichazo: "In essence, every person is perfect, fearless, and in a loving unity with the entire cosmos; there is no conflict within the person between head, heart, and stomach or between the person and others. Every human being starts in pure essence. Then something happens: the ego begins to develop; karma accumulates; there is a transition from objectivity to subjectivity; man falls from essence into personality."<sup>1</sup>

Hakomi theory does not speak directly of the essence (which I feel is an oversight), however, it alludes to the existence of the essence in the following ways:

1. The unity principle implies that the natural state of a human being is wholly and harmonously integrated with self and all the universe.
2. Mindfulness is a receptive and objective state of consciousness which is a quality of the essence.

3. Nonviolence is again a quality of the essence which is in natural harmony and "in the flow" with the environment.
4. Organicity directly implies the existence of the essence by stating that humans have innate in them a self-regulating character which works to bring them into alignment with the other principles.

This concept of essence is not new to Hakomi but is simply a solidification and naming of something already described and alluded to in Hakomi theory. Furthermore, the Hakomi idea of core material organizing experience is analogous to the fall from essence into personality that Oscar speaks of.

I see Hakomi psychotherapy as being profoundly spiritual. When we study the organization of experience in mindfulness, access core material, and seek to integrate conflicting parts into the whole, we are encouraging the essence to come forth and be recognized. So, without saying much about spirit and yet being guided by very spiritual principles, Hakomi avoids much of the prejudice and subjectivity associated with "spirituality" and allows a deeply spiritual work to proceed in an objective and scientific way.

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1) Interviews with Oscar Ichazo, Arica Institute Press, NY, NY 1982, p.9.

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# IN THE SPIRIT OF HAKOMI

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*DYRIAN BENZ*

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DYRIAN BENZ IS A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST WHO IS A TRAINER ON THE STAFF OF THE HAKOMI INSTITUTE. HIS PRACTICE IS CURRENTLY MOVING HIM BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE, ESPECIALLY GERMANY.

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The two men formed a serene and eye catching statue. Frank stood with feet apart, arms outstretched to the side and slightly forward at shoulder level, with an expression of inward quietness on his face. Tony stood in front of him with his attention completely focused on Frank. Tony had his arm raised and delicately touched Frank on the top of his head. There was that one place of contact connecting the two men into one quiet, breathing statue.

In another part of the room a man was standing thoughtfully in the center of a women's extended arms which encircled him without actually touching him. Not far from them two women lay on the floor embracing tightly. In other parts of the room various other configurations of two people could be seen. They all had one thing in common. They were exploring their relationship to their spiritual, religious life.

One of the first things about Hakomi that captured my interest many years ago was its respectful attitude about spirituality. It seemed different than many psychotherapies which might have an attitude of either complete denial or some sort of uneasy truce with things religious.

There are exceptions to this generalization. I personally have been exposed to a few therapies modeled on eastern or meditation practices. But they somehow seemed like a "forced fit" to me. They simply could not move easily between spiritual, psychological and bodily concerns. It was as if they were propagating a kind of spiritual practice in psychological dress.

I can certainly appreciate the difficulty encountered in giving psychological/emotional relevance to Eastern (or Western for that matter) spirituality, to being able to apply these concepts to an

effective practice of psychotherapy. Most therapies developed from a spiritual background are never able to shake the dogmatic religious concepts from which they arise. Usually some form of meditation, affirmation, or imagery practice was considered to be "the answer" in the final analysis. I am not suggesting that this may not actually be correct or appropriate. However, when this approach turns out to be a "cure all" demanded of every individual in every circumstance, then even such a time honored, effective practice as meditation can become one more limiting demand.

The genius of Ron Kurtz was to base Hakomi on the practice of non-directive, non-forceful inward observation (which is the essence of most spiritual as well as a number of psychological practices) without bringing dogmatic spiritual concepts into play. This is what gives Hakomi a sense of adventure and openness in exploring any area of life.

In the summer of '85 we had our first, and affirmingly successful, Hakomi general conference. One of the outcomes of the conference was an immense amount of interest generated in the topic of Hakomi and spirituality. Consequently, I was inspired to put some of the feedback generated by the various participants to work in a subsequent workshop. So, let us return to the beginning of the article.

The exercise the group was engaged in was to focus on their relationship with God, or the inherent life intelligence, if you will. The exercise (which is based on a question posed by the spiritual teacher Da Free John) went something like this:

As a group we first discussed that there seems to be a factor, (some innate intelligence, god, or whatever you like to call it) which is not consciously available

to us, but nevertheless keeps us alive. Something or someone keeps our heart beating, keeps the breath going, keeps digestion going, etc., essentially keeps us alive even without our conscious input. So there is something or someone, if you will, that is living us! The point of the exercise was to experience: What is your relationship to that?

After dividing into pairs, one partner became mindful and let the question, "What is your relationship with 'that'?" become alive, lived, relevant, experiential. When some clarity emerged, the person was directed to make the answer "physical". That is, they were to arrange their partner in such a way as to physically, experientially express the relationship, thus making it a kind of outward, symbolic example of the relationship, including any connections which were manifest through touch.

This is where we found our group at the beginning of the article. Physically representing their relationships to "that".

After the necessary time was allowed for the representations to be expressed and experienced, one final step was added. The individuals exploring their relationship asked the inner question, "if 'that' could speak, what would the words be?" When the words emerged, their partner then said the words as a verbal probe, and the explorer noticed what occurred inside them in response.

The words that Frank arrived at were, "I am always with you, you don't even have to think of me." And everything about him showed how right these words were for him, and how deep they went.

