
HUNA, HAKOMI, AND SPIRITUALITY

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IN THIS ARTICLE, STAN HARTMAN OUTLINES THE CONNECTION HE SEES BETWEEN HAKOMI AND THE HAWAIIAN FORM OF SPIRITUALITY TERMED HUNA. STAN IS A CERTIFIED HAKOMI THERAPIST WHOSE PRESENT PRACTICE IS BASED IN BOULDER, CO. HE IS A POET AND HAS BEEN A TEACHER AT THE URANTIA SCHOOL IN BOULDER.

In contrast to reductionism, which seeks the parts in order to explain the whole, wholism, as Ron Kurtz expresses it in Hakomi Therapy, "is the language in which the whole makes sense of the parts." If we accept the notion of wholism, then the greatest task facing us as individuals and as a species as we search for the meaning of our experience, is the comprehension of wholeness itself. Another way of putting it would be that to really understand ourselves--our needs, urges, hopes, fears, ideas, and ideals--we have to understand God. Good luck, right? We'd better have forever. But God is, by any serious definition, at least unity itself and wholeness itself, which means God, as so defined, is also the secret of our unity and wholeness as individuals, a species, and a living world of species. If we think of God in this basic way, then God can also be thought of as one of the principles of Hakomi. And it's perhaps comforting to realize that our knowing of God can long precede our understanding of God, just as we can know and love our parents long before we understand them, and we can experience the presence of unity-wholeness long before we label it.

How this relates to therapy is the purpose of this article. I need to stress from the beginning that all of the ideas here are being presented from a wholistic, both/and perspective. As a culture, we've been treated to enough self-righteous, absolutist, loveless religious preaching that we're rightfully touchy about it. I think the height of folly though would be to throw out God with the dogmatic bathwater.

While this article describes a way of looking at reality and therapy which I've found personally useful, it is only one of many ways. Plus, I realize that truth can't

be pinned down with words and reason. Truth can only be pointed to by language and logic. The actual experience of what's pointed to has to be done with the heart, and there's no one way to verbally express the heart's truth that's right for everyone.

Several years ago, I was loaned some books by Max Freedom Long on the subject of Huna, the traditional religion-medicine-magic of Hawaii. It is a system of belief that helped me put many strange healing episodes that I'd been experiencing in an understandable context from the perspective of both healer and healee. As I've become more deeply involved with Hakomi, it has begun to make a great deal of sense to me in the context of psychotherapy also. Huna intrigues me as well as a kind of bridge, both philosophical and geographically, between East and West.

Huna divides deep inner experience into two parts, the superconscious and the subconscious, both normally unconscious. The mind of the spirit and the mind of the body is another way of naming these parts. Another still is the self that's becoming and the self that's been; future being and past being. The way I like to look at them is as the inner parent and the inner child. Inner parent is understood in this context as a perfect nurturing inner parent--one with infinite love, understanding, and wisdom--not the kind of critical inner parent which is carried over from the past as a vehicle for the judgments, fear, and ignorance of actual parental attitudes. Superconscious here doesn't mean superego.

The actual Hawaiian words for these parts of the self are the aumakua (high self, utterly trustworthy parental self, the God who is a Father) and the unhipili (low self,

child self). The conscious mind, the decision-maker, is the uhané (middle self). The uhané, the will-owner, has great determining power in a directing, administrative sort of way, and its energy is called manámana, as distinguished from the special energy of the inner child, mana, and the special energy of the inner parent, mana-loa. None of these energies are really more powerful than the others, but each is distinct, with different, special qualities and functions. Mana, for example, though impotent to determine decisions, is the source of the other energies. Without the child's power, there is no conscious energy to make decisions nor superconscious energy to validate them. The inner child is one's connection to the earth, as the inner parent is one's connection to the universe as a whole, and as the conscious self is one's connection to other consciousness. Mind itself is thought of as the bridge between matter and spirit.

Predictably, this simple system gets very complex as one tries to describe it and analyze it. For example, the future self is actually the source, as well as the destiny, of the individual's being. Our real being flows from the future as much as from the past, and what we're becoming--our finished wholeness--is infinitely more than what we are at any one isolated moment. This future self is also present in these emerging moments right alongside the past and present self. This is a way of saying that we are perfectly whole at the deepest level of our being, and the process of maturing is a process of experiencing the emergence of this perfection, this wholeness.

But there are no value judgments here. Language itself is simply so steeped in such judgments that it's difficult to avoid an implication that the high self is more important than the others. This is true only in a process kind of way, that is, in the sense that the high self indicates the direction of growth. It's most important when driving a car, for example, to look where we're going. The subtle either/or of language might also imply that we should ignore where we've been, but this is not what's meant. A disconnected past is as undesirable as a disconnected present or future. Is a three thousand year old redwood tree more significant than a three days old one? Each has a self-contained perfection.

A common error of some religionists is

the illusion that by embracing God they can avoid themselves, get away from rejecting their past (present still as unnourished needs and uncounseled confusion) by mere force of will--that they can even kill their needs and confusion by blissing out, sacrifice, self-denial, self-torment, "holy" wars, or whatever. This rejecting and often violent attitude toward one's own "faults" and inevitably those of others also is a source of untold misery, and will continue as long as people insist on attributing to God qualities that they would hardly respect in a human being. Spiritually mature people are more recognizable as self-accepting, forgiving, loving, and joyful.

Most people who seek out psychotherapy come with a desire to spurn the past, in a way. To get free of it. To stop it from hindering them, so they can become the kind of people they've always wanted to be. But we can't experience wholeness while simultaneously rejecting a part of ourselves. The original trauma in childhood, which gives rise to our problematic view of ourselves, is perpetuated by the impatient, conscious, "adult" mind, which becomes at least partly self-judging and self-rejecting. The result is that the subconscious, lonely, inner child becomes more and more desperately miserable, resentful, and finally destructive.

To see even this destructiveness as valid and appropriate is one of the helpful lessons I have learned from Hakomi. If frightened or thick-headed parents, or a similar culture or conscious mind won't listen to the child's needs, then the child not only has the right but also the responsibility to get attention in any way s/he can. The alternative is to submit to a kind of psychic violence which is murderous to self-respect, the will, and any hope of achieving self-fulfillment and contributing one's full potential to the world. "Provoke not thy children to wrath," say the Judeo-Christian scriptures. If a parent, culture, or super-ego-driven consciousness is self-destructive and child-tormenting, then the child has the right to say, as Hamlet does to his mother, "I must be cruel only to be kind."

One of the healing--wholing--aspects of Hakomi is that it accepts even such "negative" emotions as anger, something traditional Western psychology has tended to treat as disease. From its wholistic perspective, Hakomi views the "disease" as one with the

"cure." It doesn't attempt to "resist evil" or even recognize "evil." It refuses to condone or condemn. In this sense, Hakomi assumes the attitude of a truly wise, accepting, loving parent--the attitude of the aumakua--and thus teaches in a non-judgmental, non-didactic way the message of the Spirit, the knowing of God.

Perhaps that last statement is a bit of a leap. Let me put it in more of a therapeutic than a philosophical, context.

The following excerpt from a Hakomi Therapy session may help to illustrate what I mean. The client, whom we'll call Nancy, is female, in her mid-thirties, with a history of very violent, long-sustained child abuse, inflicted physically by her father, verbally by her mother, and sexually by a friend of the family.

Therapist: Notice if anything in your experience changes when you hear the words (pause), Nancy, you have a right to be free.

Client: (after a pause) I sense a little girl...curled up in the dark...very still.

T: (after a pause) I'd like to know how you're aware of her now, whether you're feeling inside of her or outside of her.

C: Outside.

T: And she's being very quiet. (Client nods) What kind of quiet is it?

C: It's the only way she can feel...I was going to say free, but that's a joke. She doesn't feel anything. She shuts down...makes herself numb.

T: You know a lot about her, huh. You can see inside her a little, even though you don't feel inside of her. Is that true?

C: I am her. But she doesn't trust me.

T: What tells you that she doesn't trust you?

C: She's in the broom closet, under the stairs, with the door locked.

T: She feels safe there.

C: As safe as she can.

T: Safe from you.

C: Safe from everybody.

T: (after a pause) I'm wondering if it's okay with you that she doesn't trust you. (Client, after a long pause, looking down, shakes her head). How do you know it's not okay with you?

C: (sadness coming up) I want to hold her...I want to protect her...I want to take her away.

T: Does she know that? (Client shakes her head; after a long pause): What would happen if you told her what you want to do?

C: (a little surprised, considering it): I don't know.

T: Is it something you'd like to try?

C: I guess so.

T: You're not quite sure.

C: (nodding) I guess I'm afraid she won't listen.

T: Will she be able to tell that you mean what you say?

C: (nodding) She knows when people mean things.

T: It's okay if you don't want to try it.

C: I do want to.

T: Take you time with it, and be aware of what it's like for you to say those things to her. (She goes inside and is silent for a long while) Does she listen to you? (Client nods) How do you know?

C: She's not curled up anymore. She's standing close to the door now, on the other side.

T: But she doesn't answer.

C: No. (long pause) It's like I can see both of us, from above...as if I'm

looking down from above the closet, and there's no ceiling, or I'm seeing through it, and I can see both sides of the door.

T: So It's like a different part of you, looking down. (Client nods) What's that part of you like?

C: (considers her answer for a long time) Peaceful...sure.

T: Sure of something?

C: It's just sure. It knows. It's like...it's not strange...it's not new...but it's strange that it's not new.

T: I'm wondering what that part of you knows.

C: That we're going to be all right...that she is free, somehow...that she wants to be with me, but she's afraid...she's afraid because she wants to be with me.

T: She's afraid to put herself in your hands.

C: Yes. (long pause) I don't know what to do.

T: What does the part of you that's looking down want you to do?

C: (after considering this for a long time): To be honest with her...to tell her that I know she's afraid and it makes me sad...to tell her that I'm sorry for the way I've treated her. I am sorry. I've been hard on her, just like everyone else. I haven't liked her. I've abused her like everyone else (anguished crying).

Hakomi therapists know how valuable it is for the healing process--what a great opportunity is provided--when the child spontaneously emerges into the client's consciousness. It's a very touching moment, a kind of tentative reaching out of the subconscious for acceptance of its needs, despite the many rejections it's already suffered. This can be the beginning of healing. By their total response to the child's emergence, their attending to the child's hurt and what is needed for the child to feel better, therapists can be really teaching the

client's adult conscious self something s/he (the client) already knows and wants. The client's recognition and desire, often a kind of daze of insight, in relation to the therapist's response can be a reminder of something the client has felt before but forgotten; or a kind of prophecy, a sense of a way of being which will be familiar in the future. Mindfulness has timeless edges.

What is taught is an attitude which is, in its essence, that of an ideal parent. It's the attitude of the inner spirit, the "utterly trustworthy parental self," just as real and potentially vivid as the inner child, and certainly as powerful, but with a radically different kind of power and presence. It's like the culmination of the evolution that began with the child, and as different from it as a flower is from a seed. It's the filling out of the wholeness of the self. As Yeats put it at the end of "Among School Children":

O chestnut tree, great-rooted blossomer,
are you the leaf, the blossom, or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
how can we tell the dancer from the dance?

It's with the conscious recognition of this other presence within--the inner parent--that the client begins to be his/her own therapist. S/he begins to "grok" how to be in order to find nourishment for her/himself, and begins to act on that faith in her/himself that opens up a vast potential for self-fulfillment, creativity, joy, and that "peace which passes all understanding."

It doesn't happen all at once. It doesn't create a totally new world. It does slowly help the old world become new. It even has great potential for remaking the outer world too, since it allows the divine will for wholeness to enter civilization through the inner experience of the individual. It's the beginning of transformation and freedom--freedom in the sense of freedom to forget oneself, because one finally is certain of being taken care of in the deepest possible way. This, I think, is spirituality in a pure and personal sense, a spirituality that carries with it the awareness that one is never really alone, nor even has been.

In reference to this last idea, the Hawaiians had another high concept which refers to the relationship between all high selves, a relationship which they called the

Poe Aumakua--the "great gathering of aumakuas." They saw the high selves of all people as being in constant and immediate touch with one another, and with their Source, the Source of all things. This is the principle of unity expressed in a way that is both purely objective and purely subjective. Subject and object are no longer separate. I and Thou are no longer separate. Therapist and client are no longer separate. Parent and child are no longer separate. Friend and enemy are no longer separate. Past, present, and future are no longer separate.

I believe then, that the implications of Hakomi go far beyond psychotherapy, just as the possibilities in any given moment of a right relationship do. All things in the universe are a means to an end, and every right relationship is an end in itself.

The freedom to love and be loved, without restraint, is the individual's basic issue. When one person helps another to explore and address this predicament, all artificial relational barriers dissolve, including the barrier between psychology and spirituality, between therapy and friendship.

THIS IS ONE WAY THAT I THINK ABOUT HOW THE HAKOMI METHOD WORKS WHEN YOU'RE NOT GETTING WHAT YOU WANT, THERE CAN BE TWO REASONS: EITHER THE ENVIRONMENT ISN'T OFFERING IT TO YOU, OR YOU AREN'T TAKING IN WHAT'S AVAILABLE. HAKOMI THERAPY WORKS WITH THE SECOND REASON. WE HELP PEOPLE LOOK AT AND DISCOVER HOW THEY ARE ORGANIZED NOT TO TAKE IN WHAT'S OFFERED.

FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU HAVE A CORE BELIEF THAT YOU ARE NOT LOVEABLE, THEN IF SOMEONE TELLS YOU THAT THEY LIKE YOU, YOU WILL HAVE A HABITUAL AND PROBABLY UNCONSCIOUS RESPONSE WHICH WILL KEEP YOU FROM RECEIVING THE APPRECIATION BEING OFFERED. YOU MIGHT HEAR A VOICE IN YOUR HEAD SAYING, "OH, HE DOESN'T REALLY MEAN IT," OR YOU MIGHT TIGHTEN YOUR CHEST A LITTLE SO THAT THE MEANING IS NOT EXPERIENCED. AND THEN YOU GO ON EVEN MORE DESPERATELY SEEKING LOVE. IT'S AS IF YOU WERE IN A RESTAURANT AND SOMEONE BROUGHT YOU A PLATE OF FOOD AND YOU PUSHED IT ASIDE AND ASKED FOR MORE. OR AS IF YOU KEPT GOING TO A RESTAURANT THAT WAS CLOSED, NOT KNOWING THERE WAS ONE OPEN RIGHT NEXT DOOR. SO, EVEN IF WE COULD GIVE YOU A FEAST AND YOU'D EAT IT, IF WE DIDN'T HELP YOU DISCOVER HOW YOU WERE ORGANIZED NOT TO ACCEPT WHAT WAS OFFERED, YOU'D SOON BE STARVING AGAIN.

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