



THE EMERGENCE OF THE OTHER:

A Hakomi approach to the interpersonal

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1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, Western culture has emphasized and valued individualism and capitalism. Recently, however, a movement towards community and spirituality is emerging. It is as if we are slowly becoming aware that we are part of something larger. Today it is ecology, complexity, vast natural systems, and computer models that dominate scientific thinking. Attention is moving from the individual object to the system it is part of. We are slowly starting to understand important aspects of the immensity of nature and how we are part of it. Within the psychotherapeutic domain too, personal work and individual healing has been dominant. But in recent years, some have begun to question this focus and turned towards issues of community, spirituality and relationship.

This article describes and formalizes the aspect of relationship within a Hakomi framework, from the understanding that evolving relationships need special attention of their own. It is an introduction to the topic and therefore provides only an overview of the core elements. The whole approach rests on a **general relationship model (GRM)**, which is designed to explain all relationship situations, including one-on-one therapy, couples work, groups, family, or large organisations. The model allows us to understand each situation and suggests paths of action. A set of techniques and procedures arise from the GRM that should help a therapist to feel comfortable and competent. The article first presents an interpretation of the movement from intra- to interpersonal psychotherapy, then describes the Model, and how it can be applied to one-on-one therapy. The next section will deal with difficult group situations as an example for other applications. I will end with a general outlook on relationship.

2. A TIME FOR RELATIONSHIP

2.1. The Situation

Hakomi body-oriented psychotherapy presents a particular model for the therapeutic relationship. However, being in a client-therapist relationship over long periods of time brings up a whole set of needs and problems that seem to have not been addressed in the classical Hakomi approach. Often, there comes a time where ‘going inside’ again and again seems limited and can create a stuckness, while a lot is going on at the relationship level. As an example, the client may question certain qualities of the relationship that are related to real problems of the therapist. Let’s look at a section from a transcript:

Client: “... (talking about his relationship with the therapist) ... it is the same thing... uh,... same thing like... with Lisa (his wife). Whenever I am pissed... or upset, dissatisfied with her, she kind of... just leaves... kind of doesn’t show up, gets quiet... I can’t get to her...”

Therapist: “... you are unhappy with me...”

Client: “YES I am... I can’t show my... pissed self without you getting remotel...”

Therapist: “... You want more from me...”

Client: “... (upset)... it’s happening right now!”

Therapist: “... (thinks)... You don’t like the way I am with you.”

Client: “... (slower, more depressed)... you don’t get it.”

In supervision, the therapist admitted immediately that she was really angry at the client for constantly blaming her for “everything”, and that she really had a difficult time in general with being blamed as well as with expressing her anger. She felt stuck, a little “dead”, with fury underneath, and dreaded the times this client would show up.

She argued that contacting, or going inside was not working, actually evading something, and that she, on the other hand, was afraid to let the client know how angry she was. In the 1½ years of work with him, she had learned how much he had been victim to parental verbal abuse, and how much he had suffered from being his beloved older sister’s object of anger. She was afraid that this whole situation would stir up issues again that seemed to have been much less of a problem to the client in the last year. Discussion in the supervision group rotated around the therapist’s option to share her feelings and emotional background with the client, and if so, how to do it.

Typically, therapists report that situations like this arise more often the longer the therapy lasts. Also, as time passes they seem much more inclined to use their own observations, responses, and conclusions

for occasional confrontations the more solid and reliable the relationship seems to become.

Yet, classical Hakomi does not offer a set of procedures, or a theory that could guide a therapist into a realm where s/he brings forward more of her/his own material into the work.

2.2. The Therapist as Context

The Hakomi Method is defined as a way of working where the therapist gets out of the way of the client. The idea is to not interfere too much with what arises spontaneously from self-observation. A therapist who has preferences, who likes or dislikes something about the client, who makes suggestions or offers a point of view, is seen as disrupting the flow of emerging internal material and calling forth resistance. This cautious approach creates an extremely powerful place for clients. They are taken out of the context of a world where they are constantly under attack by expectations, pressures, and other influences that try to make them be a certain way. In a Hakomi session, they get a quiet acceptance that lets them find more of their tender innermost selves, those withdrawn qualities that do not come forward when they don't feel safe. Accentuating this, Hakomi becomes an extremely fast and effective method when it comes to exploring, discovering, exposing, processing and healing the deepest hurts.

When therapists are without preferences, they are without character bias, which means that large parts of their characterological self are not being expressed, but rather are being contained. The therapist appears not as a real person, but as a perfect **context** for self-observation and processing (as is usually done in Hakomi). At the same time, the client is not in a relationship with the real world, but a controlled world with certain very useful, almost perfect traits. Therefore s/he has a complete space just for her/himself, room for just **this one** self. The set-up is ego-centric, the work designed to recover **integrity**.

From the point of view of this author, these are the very special gifts for a client in Hakomi therapy: a controlled environment where the therapist appears as a healing **context**, with procedures that protect and enhance **integrity** like no other method.

2.3. The Therapist as an Other

Once a certain level of integrity is recovered however, other needs may emerge, as in the example above. At that point the therapist has a choice about whether s/he sees the work completed on the level of integrity, or whether s/he is willing to leave the relatively safe haven of a well defined relationship and move into an often threatening unknown: a world where the relationship becomes real, where s/he steps out of the mist of being a perfect context, and starts offering more of her/his character self as a reality out there (from the point of view of the client). This can be a very useful step, one that many therapists may be willing to risk. It is the point where ego-centricity has exhausted itself, integrity reached a level of satisfaction and safety, and now the next step wants to occur: how can the client relate this self to the real world? Interest is turning away from the self, and on to the **other**, it is

the step towards the *transpersonal*, a world that contains more than this world, but other worlds. It is the step up from the whole of this being to the larger whole, where you and I are just participants.

To be clear, there is no objective standard that would require a therapist to take this path. To do the classical “who am I?” Hakomi-research-and-transform work is absolutely useful, complete, and perfect in its own way. To leave this well defined terrain will create a lot of new problems and place much larger demands on the therapist. Ron Kurtz used to take the point of view that whatever happens inside of you (as a client) as a result of our relationship is part of how *you* process events out there. It can still be seen as your beliefs and your character forming your experience, and therefore an object of self-study in any case.

It is not necessary or some kind of moral standard that I, as a therapist, expose myself in my professional relationships and be everybody’s intimate partner. All that is needed is that I understand when my personality may be in the way of my client, and then hand the work on to others after informing my client truthfully about the reasons.

Yet there can be many reasons why a therapist may want to take the challenge and explore the healing potential in opening up the therapeutic relationship in a more equal manner. There may be the honest wish to respond to the client’s urge for a more real relationship. There may be the limitations of the intrapsychological approach that feel constricting and with a lack of life. There may be an understanding that what is being offered is not the best the client could get, as may happen in long-term-therapy or with borderline clients. And there may be the pull towards more transpersonal or spiritual dimensions of psychotherapeutic work.

2.4. In Search of a Map

Whether for these or other reasons, opening up the interpersonal dimension has huge healing potential in helping a person to relate to the rest of the world. But an important question arises at this point: Can it be done within the ethical and philosophical framework of the Hakomi Method? This framework is expressed through the Hakomi Principles, which, for instance, would seem to prohibit a therapist from expressing her/his own response to the client (Nonviolence), or to spend a large part of the time on a dialogue (Mindfulness).

Certainly, just sharing your feelings freely with a client, which some of our honored masters of the art have done, won’t do. For instance, in the example above, a less than enlightened intervention might have gone like this:

Therapist: “Yes, I am really getting angry at you. It’s time that you stop blaming everybody else, and take responsibility for what happens to you!”

Client: “Huh??”

So, what *can* we do? We first need to understand what relationship means, what it can do, and what it cannot do. We need orientation in this complex and confusing arena. From my point of view, we need a general relationship model that helps us understand each and every relationship situation in ways that unlock the door to helpful courses of action.

3. A GENERAL RELATIONSHIP MODEL (GRM)

I am proposing a particular point of view which interprets relationship situations in a useful manner. This point of view, the GRM, consists of four foundations to interpersonal work. The foundations are called Complexity, Communication, Truth, and Emergence.

3.1. The First Foundation: Complexity

Naturally, the model is closely related to the Hakomi Unity Principle, which addresses large natural systems and is based on the idea of wholes being organized as a web of relationships between parts. According to Gregory Bateson, wholes that have mind are made up from parts that communicate (in Kurtz, 1990). The Foundation of Complexity takes this approach a step further. It includes more recent scientific thinking from the theory of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS).

3.1.1. How a Whole Works

Waldrop (1992) points out the following characteristics of a CAS:

- Each of these systems, a group, a person, the planet, a national economy, and so forth, is a network of many “agents” acting at the same time. Each agent is constantly acting and reacting to what the other agents are doing. Because of that, essentially nothing in its environment is fixed.
- Control over a system tends to be highly dispersed. Coherent behavior arises from cooperation and competition among the agents (think of a national economy or of evolution). The behavior of the system is the result of myriads of “decisions” made by all participating agents all the time.
- Complex Adaptive Systems have many levels of organization, with agents on one level serving as building blocks for agents at a higher level, and so on.
- These systems are constantly revising and rearranging their building blocks as they gain experience. There is constant movement and turmoil while agents relate, inform, and learn.
- CAS anticipate future. They are organized in a way that they “know” the environment implicitly based on internal models that “predict” the environment. These models, too, are rearranged, tested, and refined; they learn as the system gains experience.

- These systems never come to a point of equilibrium. Instead, everlasting movement, change, dying, evolving, and rearranging create new situations constantly, with new niches and opportunities, but with no “optimum” state.
- Additionally, it is the point of view of the author, that all agents have boundaries of varying strength and clarity that maintain the integrity of each agent.

3.1.2. Wholes and Meta Wholes

In every relationship situation we deal with infinite complexity. There are myriads of parts on many levels that interact, bubble, hum and rearrange themselves all the time. At many different levels, parts and subparts are participants in an incredible web that produces its own characteristics with nobody ruling it. Nothing ever stands still, everything is moving all the time, and there are no finish lines. Both within and around a human being, interactions of parts and subparts are so vast that almost all of them happen outside of consciousness.

On every level of self-organization there are two questions: 1) how are parts/agents organizing this whole, and 2) how is this whole a part of the next larger whole/system?

The first question implies that it may be useful to look at a person not as a monolithic self, but as made up of parts that interact. These may be called inner parts, subpersonalities, trances, or being states. In the context of the GRM, I will call them *internal players*, who have complete personalities and who interact just like a real group of related persons.

In the Hakomi Method, as in many other methods, most therapists have intuitively assumed inner “parts”, and have built sequences of the work around this. For example, “this part wants to stay on the job, and the other wants to leave the place as soon as possible”. Here, I suggest Richard Schwartz’s (1995) Internal Family Systems model, which is more precise and useful than any other model of subparts that I know.

The second question will be very important when we do relationship work, because on the interpersonal level we are always part of larger wholes that develop their own unique qualities and their own character. These systems, like a marriage, also tend to maintain their integrity, their wholeness and their boundaries.

3.1.3. A Sensitive Ecology

Let us return to the idea of subparts of a person for a moment. It is important to realize that internal players of one person interact with internal players of another. People *are*, let’s say, a hurt child in one situation and a furious aggressor in a different one. These subparts function very much like trance states, they inhabit the person’s consciousness and make them *be* that internal player for some time (Wolinsky, 1991). Across the boundaries of two people in a larger whole the internal players may

support each other, be polarized, form coalitions, cooperate, reject each other, and so forth, just as they do inside one person.

The classical but murky term “projective identification”, which suggests that one person may manipulate another into feeling and acting out its own exiled parts, can be explained much better by looking at the phenomenon as subpersonalities cooperating: internal players taking over roles that are needed in the whole of the relationship. For example, in a couple’s group, a woman kept complaining about how her husband was not really interested in her, in the relationship, in sharing and talking. She was intensely pursuing closeness. Her internal player that needed closeness was very activated a lot of the time. In the whole of the partnership this demand was taken care of. So, in the husband another part was activated that was fighting for individuality, for clear boundaries. This part was also needed in the whole of the marriage. It was almost as if her internal player was taking responsibility for closeness, while his internal player was taking care of the integrity of the individual person. Each was taking over something that both of them had inside. In these roles they got more and more activated and polarized. In the course of the group, the woman first started to leave the polarized position more and more often and became very interested in individuality. She was actually spending a lot of the time in the state of a subpersonality that had very satisfying experiences exploring her own activities. Since no internal player was taking care of the closeness function for the whole now, the corresponding player in the husband became activated, who started pursuing *her* now.

I am suggesting an unconscious awareness of the whole that every participating element holds. Internally as well as externally, a sensitive ecology develops where roles and functions get distributed and balanced. Each member of a group, for instance, gets activated in certain ways *in this group*. A client is with a therapist in a way she is with *this* therapist. Although each may hold pieces within the larger whole that may be typical for him or her to hold in other situations, each part also gets activated as it is needed in this particular larger whole. A changing environment brings forward different internal players that are latent in many or most of its parts. A society that is sick will bring forward many healers, a group that is always friendly will bring forward a very angry person. A family with a very remote climate will activate internal players who do all kinds of things to establish intimacy.

3.2 The Second Foundation: Communication

Bateson as well as the theorists of CAS point out that systems (wholes) do their self-organizing by communication. Between the agents of a complex system the communication is happening in parallel, through various media, and is vast beyond imagination. Nevertheless, the constant flow of information links the parts, and lets them know what is happening in their environment. That way they can act intelligently and for their own benefit as well as for the benefit of the whole (which is obviously closely related). The essence of a whole is not to be found in its material make-up, but in its encoded structure, that is, the information flowing between the parts. Such structure reflects how all the parts are related in a unique manner.

3.2.1. Self Organizing

Wholes (persons, companies, flowers, kidneys, cells, etc.) maintain their integrity and health by internal communication. They also communicate to the outside, where this activity serves the integrity of the larger whole they are part of, as well as supporting their own place within that larger whole. Various kinds of information need to be exchanged in order for the parts to be integrated into the larger whole. If certain parts are not integrated by communication, the larger whole loses integrity and health.

If two people, let's say a couple, are in a deep relationship like a marriage, it is the marriage that makes up the larger whole. The man and the woman are participating in that whole, but the whole has its own life. It may produce all kinds of phenomena that are creative and would not be there if this couple had not married. There may be ways to live and to start the morning, there may be feelings that activate specific emotional patterns in both, there may be kids that show up and bring in their own personalities, there may be ways to speak, to think, to fight, to love, that are all completely unique to this combination of people and their subparts, an internal culture that develops and could not have been extrapolated from the personality of each partner added to the other. The constant flow of information, conscious and unconscious, between the two and their inner players influences everything inside them, and the changes influence other participating elements of that relationship in turn, and so on and on.

Yet there are huge areas in every participating person, again conscious and unconscious, that are systematically barred from sufficient inclusion into the flow of communication. This is probably the most common perspective among therapists of all schools: There are "shadows", "split off parts", "exiles" that lead a murky life within a person and have great powers even though they are poorly integrated.

One of the basics to relationship work is to include important "shadowy" internal players into the communications system of the larger system, in the example above, into the marriage.

3.2.2. Messages

In all relationships there are two important tendencies: One that moves towards giving each participant a lot of definition and individuality, and another that tries to make everybody similar and emphasize consensus. The extent of each tendency varies greatly with situations, participants, and group culture. While in times of great stress to the system consensus makes a lot of sense (think of war times), individual definition is a powerful path to create wholes when there is enough time for communication and growth.

At the individual level of interactions, the tendency towards consensus includes two complementary roles. First, a person may take on the role of trying to incorporate the other into his/her own world. It is the typical tyrant father attempting to define reality for the family, pressing for behavior, thoughts, and emotions in all the others that befit his own world. It is an attempt to make the world adapt to one's own needs. This is the role of the *definer*.

The complementary role is that of individuals trying to form themselves according to the world of another. I call them **adaptor** roles. They are ready to think, feel, and do what is needed to be part of the others' world. In meaningful relationships people tend to take on a mix of these complementary roles, often leaning to one side or the other to varying degrees. While one role is designed to make the other one fit the commonly shared world, the other shapes the self accordingly. Both roles communicate in ways that support their goals: in either a very dominating and definitive way, or by being adaptive and undefined. Much of this has been discussed before in the context of the theory of narcissism.

In Hakomi-type growth processes this form of interaction does not allow enough room for an emerging larger whole that includes all participating elements. Emphasis needs to be shifted towards researching all meaningful subparts of the system and letting them communicate so that self organisation can restructure the web of relationships that characterizes the whole.

That is a very tricky task: it involves an art that needs to be understood, practiced and developed: the art of conscious communication. There are several aspects to be aware of:

3.2.2.1. For this particular approach I will suggest two polarities, including two new creations: the information - “peraction” polarity and the perception - “effection” polarity, designed to characterize the different ways of participating in a communication process. Each of these polarities addresses one of the basic responsibilities in communication: **sending** and **receiving**. Without them, communication is impossible, so, as a participating agent in a system, it is useful to understand them deeply and to choose courses of action wisely.

In a marriage, for instance, both partners need to fulfill both functions for their communication to be successful. If one, or both, are neither able nor willing to take both roles, they must face the consequences of a possibly damaging lack of communication. They are still free to choose not to communicate, but they will have to bear the consequences for what that means in their marriage. Messages sent and received back and forth is one of the lifelines of a relationship.

3.2.2.2. There is no way for both to send at the same time. This is one of the most common problems in relationships: Two people are sending at an increasingly higher pitch, without anyone receiving the messages. Both feel desperate, not heard, lonely, and move into more and more extreme positions. The receiving role is often unattractive. It means being willing to hear the incoming message for what it actually means, and this message may be quite unwelcome.

In communication a rhythm of sending and receiving needs to be established. This rhythm can vary greatly between systems, times, and situations, but without it the system becomes unstable.

3.2.2.3. For both the sending and the receiving functions I see a polarity of actually filling this responsibility. For the sender, I will distinguish between “information” and “peraction”.

Information means to supply the other person with facts about the sender. These facts may address emotions, memories, thoughts, and all the rest. The goal is to let the other person know what is actually happening in and around the sender. The information polarity can best be supported by a functioning inner witness.

Coming forward with information is a very scary function, because all of the particularly important information is usually shadow material, or other elements that have meaning in the relationship without having been expressed properly, in short: all the stuff that seems to threaten the relationship.

- 3.2.2.4.** The other polarity in the realm of the sender I call "**peraction**". It is a piece of communication designed, in total or in part, to penetrate the boundaries of the other in an attempt to influence or lead the others behavior, feelings, thoughts, volition, etc. Just like information, this is also a totally legitimate path for the sender to choose. This legitimacy has to be emphasized, though, because very often manipulation, blaming, persuasion, and other such actions are seen as wrongful and despicable things to do. Yet, as a part of a self-organizing system, competition and mutual influencing are part of the game. The arena of learning is at a higher level: we need to observe and understand the **consequences** of our actions as clearly as possible. **Consciousness** will lead us towards more enlightened interactions.
- 3.2.2.5.** As for the receiver, the polarity I am suggesting is perception – "effection". **Perception** means to actively seek to see and understand the world of the **other**. It is based on the assumption that the world of the other is different than mine. In difficult relationships much of the exchange is about who is right and who is wrong. It is a struggle to be in the same world. A person perceiving starts seeing and comparing two worlds, both of which can be explored and understood. Perceiving is very close to active listening. It is not about making one's own case on the inside while seemingly listening, but rather being actively involved with decoding and realizing what is said.
- 3.2.2.6.** "**Effection**" is meant to describe the attempt of a person to merge with another person's world. Priority is given to the sense of oneness with the other, and one's own integrity is given up in order to be part of that world. As a consequence, there is also no sense of responsibility because the person is following somebody else's lead. Often boundaries are weakened while the person feels like being **at the effect** of the other. Contrasting realities are lost as the person has a difficult time differentiating between self and other. Nevertheless, a person in an "effecting" state can support a sense of oneness.

3.2.3. The Rule of Consciousness

This approach to relationship work would teach and train the art of conscious communication, which does not include any rules. All the above possibilities are seen as legitimate. Studying the effects of different types of behavior in different situations leads to an awareness of the pragmatic value of each.

Understanding the consequences of different behaviors is more likely to create the will to do what actually leads towards success. Rules like “speak for yourself” will only create new battlefields and tend to be used to outlaw elements that are really part of the system. Therefore I suggest replacing the commonly known rules of communication by the Rule of Consciousness.

The relationship situation is seen as two different worlds meeting, influencing each other, developing in parallel, yet there will always be two worlds within the larger whole. By communicating, the two gain awareness of each other, while the larger whole evolves, which has its own properties.

3.3. The Third Foundation: Truth

Epistemologically, truth is a very questionable term. There is obviously no objective truth to be found. Yet, everybody has a subjective sense of truth, almost as if people have an inner truth organ (which is mostly felt in the chest region) that can make them feel either very uneasy or very fulfilled. Many have a constant calling, a constant quest for truth that pulls and pushes them on and lets them find the strength to encounter very difficult situations. Maybe it is the promise of inner peace that urges the seeker, or maybe a spiritual sense of the larger whole that can only be felt when defensive interpretations are surrendered. In any case, it is there: a sense of truth in everyone, a path that can be taken and experienced.

Here, by truth I do not mean a struggle about who is right and who is wrong. It is not something to be easily shared by two people. Primarily it is an utterly subjective experience, a knowingness often beyond reason and proof. Therefore I suggest the term “truth” as a reminder of a direction that can be sought, and a willingness to call on and nourish the path of truth.

3.3.1. Where to go?

In the midst of relationships that may stir up the deepest hurts and call forward the strongest defenses, the sense of orientation and direction often gets lost. Panicked and blinded, people start grasping for rules and values that lead in all kinds of directions and may in turn end up as new subjects of quarrel and sources of isolation. Is being in harmony right, or do I have to be outspoken? Should I let go of my selfishness, or should I pursue satisfaction of my deepest needs? Are certain topics best untouched, or need we dig around at core issues all the time? Do I express my aggression freely, or must I contain it and avoid any kind of verbal abuse? Do we have to agree on core issues in a meaningful relationship? Do I have the right to demand some minimum requirements from my partner? And so on and so on.

From my point of view, there are no rules this side of the law that are generally true, or helpful, or have some value that cannot be disputed. The arrangements in relationships are creative and unique, especially since Western civilization does not have the power to draw people into some general consensus about the nature of relationships anymore.

What is left is the attempt to bring consciousness into the relationship. In doing this, we examine all the different parts and key inner players that are part of this relationship and try to understand how they organize themselves into this larger whole.

3.3.2. Identifying

In a sequence of regular intrapersonal Hakomi sessions a client learns to be mindful. That means s/he establishes an internal witness that is able to distinguish and identify internal aspects and elements. Some of us Hakomi teachers have called this the process of “identification-disidentification”: As the witness identifies, let’s say, a rage, the person places a distance between the observer and the observed rage. The witness notices this emotion within the person, who therefore stops *being* the rage. Instead, the person resides in the witness, who is not part of the rage. The client identifies a piece inside and disidentifies with it in the same moment.

It is a process of discovering truths about oneself, and not identifying with everything that happens inside. This is a classical piece of Eastern philosophy.

When interpersonal work is being considered for the future, a therapist should make a point about helping the client identify *trance states*, as well as the elements of the *hurt child* and the *strategic child*, name them as such, and make them OK. That is because those elements become almost insurmountable problems in relationship work, if a person identifies with them. For instance, if a person gets triggered and is pulled into a trance of an extreme world-view, along with all the associated feelings, sensations, etc., it is the capacity to know about trances and identify the fact that there seems to be one now that will help communication in the relationship. The process gets easily stuck when a person believes the point of view of the trance to be true, and the experience of the world in that moment to be the real world.

The hurt and the strategic child need to be readily distinguished, because the strategic (and defensive) child actually hides the hurt child. Without the level of the original hurt, though, a person cannot be understood by another. As an example, a furious and blaming (strategic) child is most likely to protect some kind of hurt or helplessness, which, if known, can relax the relationship. If the person believes that the fury and the blame is the truest level of the self, the relationship cannot move on.

3.4. The Fourth Foundation: Emergence

As Christopher Langdon, a leading scientist in the realm of complex adaptive systems, points out, global properties of a system are newly created by the effects of local interactions. Then, in a circular fashion, these global properties influence the local agents and interactions. This cycle is constantly creating change on all participating levels. For example, in a national economy, the inflation rate of a currency, along with all the instruments to monitor, judge and steer it, is a global property of the system and is not a part of any of its individual agents (persons for instance). Yet the individual agents’ constant interactions (buying and selling) lead to the emergence of the global property of inflation

rates, which in turn influence the agents and their interactions.

Analogously, a therapy group will create its own global properties which stem from the myriads of conscious and unconscious interactions of its members. Or a marriage grows to develop its own characteristics which arise from the chemistry of the partners. These global properties then form the environment for ensuing interactions and adaptations of the participants. Thus, the systems evolve continuously.

Since these processes happen *now*, at the ultimate cutting edge of evolution, there is no given future, no goal that has been divined. It's a creative evolution. No therapist can hand out general rules (they also evolve), set deadlines, tell people how a relationship works or how they need to be, or anticipate any future solutions. The marriage, the group, a therapeutic relationship will be a surprise. If a space is being created for all the participating elements to communicate and interact, global properties of the system will emerge and bring forth their own creation.

Since situations characterized by critical relationships may tend to get out of hand and enter chaotic stages, a therapist may ask for adherence to some temporary rules, but has to be aware that they cannot be seen as a goal. Global properties of the system will emerge. Interference in that process will tend to shut up elements of the system and therefore be counterproductive in the search for the whole.

3.5. The Large Picture

Now we can see Hakomi applied to the level of the larger whole: We study the elements, we hold the channels of communication open, we try to see the truth, we may arrange some experiences, and then trust in self-organization. Whenever we have a preference for one solution or a rule, we are most likely to suppress a piece of this relationship and make it 'less' in an attempt to avoid complications.

4. INTERPERSONAL ONE-ON-ONE THERAPY

4.1. Stepping out of the Mist

Doing intrapsychological work gives the therapist a lot of protection. Many therapists love the possibility of experiencing closeness without really having to come out and be in a relationship. Real relationships are often extremely challenging, painful, insecure, and push towards opening up one's own inner Pandora's box. It may be much easier to have some "intra" clients, or a wonderful dog, than be criticized, analyzed, loved, hated, and challenged to the core.

Therapists sometimes disclose their own experience when they are already deeply involved in adverse feelings and at their own limits. In such situations, they are fairly unlikely to really contribute well to the client's process. Being caught up in one's own defenses may actually make the situation much worse for the client.

So, very often, when therapists think they would like to open up the interpersonal field, they are already in a place of strong preferences and reduced curiosity. This is particularly true for Hakomi Therapists who were taught to work in an “intra” way rather than an “inter” way, and who do that work well but have few maps to move beyond that ominous boundary.

All of this leads to the first very big step that has to be taken if considering moving into the “interpersonal”: Analyzing the situation and determining whether such a step is in the best interests of the client. If it is just for the therapist, s/he should seek supervision, work on her/his own process, or, if that path is not feasible, refer the client on to somebody else; in which case the client should be informed of the therapist’s limitations, so that the unsuccessful ending is not experienced as the client’s failure.

What criteria then may serve for making the decision? When is it in the best interest of the client to open up the intrapersonal work and have the therapist step out of the mist of being a perfect environment to become a more realistic human being and partner?

4.2. When to move into the interpersonal

Here are six criteria to check:

- Is the therapist clear and calm about her/his own part, or is s/he heavily involved to a point where s/he wants to get in there for her/his own sake? If the last is the case, supervision should be sought first.
- Is the therapist mature enough to know his/her own inner processes deeply? Is this competency developed enough that s/he will not tend to get stuck in his/her own defenses, but can offer insight and information about his/her own core material? Is supervision available?
- Has the relationship grown enough so that it can support the impact of a therapist who is not totally accepting?
- Has the intrapersonal work grown to a point where the client has a sense of integrity and clarity about his/her own inner processes? And has the client’s interest shifted to the relationship as a result of a more transpersonal orientation? (In some cases, like with borderline clients, this criterion may not apply.)
- Has the intrapersonal work established a strong enough witnessing capacity, and has the therapist had some time to teach the client something about the hurt and the strategic child, and about trances?
- Is the therapist sure that s/he is acting in the best interest of the client?

4.3. Two Worlds

If these criteria are met, the therapist is in a position where interpersonal Hakomi-type work could be tried. In the process, the client will get an idea about what her/his behavior is triggering in the therapist. Having spent many sessions in **this one world**, studying how it is made up and how it works, **another world** will appear in contrast to this one world. That is why we call it two-worlds-therapy: Cautiously, the therapist's world is also coming into view, it is emerging as an example for Another. It will be different, therefore it will question and challenge the client. It will be hard to understand at times, and it will evoke discomforts and preferences about how the client is. If the therapist uses his/her character skillfully and compassionately, the client will have an opportunity to study the encounter, study what it means to bring his/her own being forward into the world, study the skills involved in doing that, and learn how to be a part of a larger whole. There will be two worlds to be understood, two very different worlds that relate and share this larger whole with good and with bad feelings. An understanding will develop that both worlds have a right to live even though they cannot make each other happy all the time. Needs will not be met, wounds will be stirred, and a larger whole will emerge, along with the Other.

Of course the therapist will never be totally equal to the client. The therapy contract where one person acts for the benefit of the other prohibits that. The therapist will always have to choose the course of action wisely and for the sole purpose of contributing to the client's health. The client is not constricted in the same way. S/he has a right to count on the therapist's experience and readiness to forgo selfish motives. In many ways the therapist will not be a perfect context anymore, but a partner. Yet, through his/her responsibility in the work, freedom is restricted and the therapist partly remains on a meta-level, monitoring and guiding the process until the end of the therapy.

4.4. The Process

The job of a therapist working interpersonally will be to allow glimpses into this Other as it relates to how the client is behaving. In the example from the very beginning of this text, the therapist responded at a similar point some sessions later:

Therapist: "... I think indeed that I am being somewhat remote with you."

This statement did relax the client a little bit, for at least his perception seemed to be correct, and his observation was being acknowledged. Still, a few minutes later he started pursuing the topic more deeply, asking why she was so remote and continued:

Client: "... is something wrong with me... that you stay clear...?"

At this point the therapist needs to have insight and understanding of her own process, for, having started with self-disclosure, she is now responsible to provide information that is sufficient to give the receiver insight into the world of this other:

Therapist: “... uh, the problem is... I feel... there is some anger that I don’t want to blame you for...”

As the client got very still and looked as if in a quiet kind of shock, she continued:

Therapist: “... it’s... I’m sorry... it’s that I seem to get more and more angry the more you let me know that you feel... that I... am... seem responsible for all the things that don’t work... (pause)... now you’re shocked?”

Here, after showing a difficult piece of the “other” (from the point of view of the client), the therapist moves back into making contact immediately. She has kept tracking, so she can shift the focus easily. The session proceeded around the shock, the hurt, and eventually the anger of the client. There was a short sequence about the angry child, then the client turned back to the therapist:

Client: “... I notice... I kind of don’t like to look at you... now... I think I’m afraid...”

Therapist: “... that I am harboring more anger?”

Client: “(pause).. I am really afraid about what you feel.”

Therapist: “(pause).. right now I am not angry anymore ... but I know that I have this whole issue about guilt... my own core character stuff... and when that gets touched... I... build up this negative... anger, and all I do is try to contain it.”

After a few more smaller questions about specifics of her anger and her guilt the client became thoughtful and quiet, and when she contacted that, he remarked with a little smile:

Client: “yes... kinda like me, huh?”

Even when the process flows easily, like in this example, it is still obvious that the therapist needs to be able to explore and share herself well on a deep enough level. Here, if she had not been willing or capable to go beyond her anger and inform the client about the hurt that the anger is protecting, the client would have felt wrong. Instead, he started understanding another world that had similarities with his own, and he began to understand how the two interact. Neither of them needed to change.

4.5. Co-evolution

For the therapist, the demands were much higher than in the intrapersonal work. She not only had to follow the process, track, contact, keep overview, etc., but she had to keep a truthful eye on her own process, and manage to interweave it slowly and consciously, so that the client could process the information for himself.

Being an interpersonal psychotherapist demands that you know yourself, or, if you get into territory that is uncharted, that you have developed the personal power to open up to the issues that get touched, in the session, at home, in your own therapy, or in supervision. Then you have to have the skills to bridle,

shepherd, and unfold your own issues, and present them in ways the client can digest. Since nobody knows all of their issues well enough, this path will lead the therapist through her/his own growth processes in very challenging ways. Eventually both client and therapist will be participating in a mutual healing experience, a process of co-evolution (5), even if equality is only partially possible.

What is not okay is if the emotional response of the therapist basically lets the client know that something about her/himself needs to be changed. Even though this approach is the one most commonly practiced in relationships, it is worse when a therapist does it than in most other cases. The therapist is in a position of power. S/he seems to know more, seems to be aware of the standards. Therefore, if an interpersonal therapist tries to adapt the client to her/his own preferences (they are never objective!), s/he is violating the healing process. The way out is to firmly embrace the awareness that **two worlds** are interacting, that both of them can be seen and understood, that neither of them has to change for the benefit of the other, and that they are both part of a larger whole which is just now creating itself.

4.6. Guidelines

On the level of procedures in an interpersonal session I suggest the following twelve guidelines:

- 1) Evaluate the six criteria for moving towards interpersonal work.
- 2) When sharing your experience or emotions, take small steps. Never give a long monologue, but explain one aspect at a time. Then stop.
- 3) Holding the special responsibilities of a therapist-sender of communication, try to send information, not peraction.
- 4) Never stop tracking.
- 5) After sharing a piece of yourself, move right back into contact.
- 6) Be ready to do some intrapersonal work with the client in between.
- 7) Be prepared to go deeper where your own process is concerned. It will not be sufficient to open up on the level of your defenses (anger, drawing away, boredom, etc.). Whatever is being protected will have to become visible and clear for the client.
- 8) Be prepared not to be understood, even disregarded, for periods of time.
- 9) Show or communicate that you are not going to leave the relationship when the going gets tough. Be reliably there - don't leave, either internally or in reality.
- 10) Support and nourish an attitude of curiosity to how things are, rather than being pulled into the idea that something is wrong and needs to be changed. An intervention that illustrates

this attitude when a difficult interpersonal situation arises, interpersonal work is established, and the therapist's emotions get triggered, could go like this: Being shook by something the client said, the therapist responds: "When you just said that I felt a whole wave of pain and anger run through me... can you say that again... I want to study it."

- 11) Support and nourish an attitude of "what is truly there needs to be there". It is all about understanding and seeing all the parts that are participating. Do not try to suppress or disregard any elements. They all want to contribute something important to the whole. We will have to learn to live with what is truly part of this relationship.
- 12) Make sure supervision and/or therapy is readily available for you.

5. OTHER APPLICATIONS

5.1. Many Variations

The General Relationship Model applies to all sorts of situations in which people are part of a larger whole and organize it by exchange of information. For therapy - or training groups, couples work, families, and organizations - procedures and techniques vary according to practical considerations. Yet, the underlying principles are the same.

This article has given a brief overview of one-on-one therapy. There are many potential applications of the GRM but it is not possible to describe the methods for each application fully within the context of this overview. Couples work, for instance, involves a large number of possible techniques that would be compatible with the GRM.

5.2. A Wild Group Ride

To give an idea of how the Hakomi approach applies to a slightly different relationship situation, one with a lot of equal participants, I will outline one other interpretation of the GRM: the group dynamics process.

In a training group, for instance, a lot of the time participants will work together, share, listen, and interact with satisfaction. There are times, though, when reactions and interpretations of other people's behavior and emotions create an atmosphere within the whole group that creates an unpleasant experience needing special attention. Usually many participants do not feel good and there is an overall sense within the whole that something is wrong and a problem needs to be solved. If the group leader follows the same interpretation, the group will try to solve the problem. Intuitively, everybody tries to identify what is wrong and what needs to be changed, which ends in a search for cause, effect, responsibility, and victims. Usually, emotions get heated, people fall into their trances, interactions

speed up, and all kinds of suggestions are made about what should be done to end the unpleasant feelings. Just as in individual therapy with the internal players, no proposed solution finds solid support from everyone. People get frustrated and helpless.

Looking at this situation from a Hakomi perspective, no resolution with any preference to one part of the whole or another will really heal. Following any kind of suggestion for a solution will tend to ignore or suppress another important force within the whole. So the Hakomi therapist is in the same, essentially helpless, situation as in one-on-one therapy when it comes to move towards a transformation. The solution will have to come from the whole, as a spontaneous movement which includes all parts. That perspective requires a lot of nerve, skill, and guts from the therapist, because s/he will be under a lot of pressure to provide just that: the solution. Yet, in reality the search for a solution is the problem.

5.3. Chaos Process

So what is the procedure for a group leader in this situation? My map, which I term “chaos process”, has seven phases:

1) Expression phase:

Participants express their experience and emotions. The leader encourages truth, clear and straight communication, and tries to move deeper than just the defense level. Many people are seen and information is flowing.

2) Chaos phase:

People work themselves up. The leader continues as above, slows the process, lets things stand clearly against each other, and refrains from offering any solutions, rules, or courses of action.

3) Solution phase:

Since the leader is not offering it, people start looking for solutions. Anger rises against the group leader, who researches every proposal with the group. It becomes clear: no solution embraces all forces of the group (if one does, go for it).

4) Surrender/powerlessness phase:

After entanglement has lasted long enough, and a few people start relaxing and enjoying again, the leader contacts the group process by showing that there seems to be nothing anyone could do that would solve the situation without losing a piece of the whole. Input about organicity, unity, parts into wholes, non-doing, grace, right and wrong, etc., may provide a larger-whole perspective.

5) Self-exploration phase:

After surrender has set in and lots of people start relaxing into beingness, it's time for an intervention. The leader turns everybody inward and focuses on a core issue. For instance: probes like: "I want to understand you", "everything inside you is OK", "it's OK to show yourself", or "I'll stay with you". Or other types of inner exploration with the help of the body, images, the child, family roles, etc., all of which focus on the central issues.

6) Intimate sharing:

Then the leader gives plenty of time for people to share in dyads or triads. They now touch the deeper issues without necessarily pushing to change anything.

7) Group sharing:

The leader gets the group back together again and invites sharing. If the dynamics start up again, go through the phases again. Usually everybody is very touched though, with more boundaries, definition, clarity, and real selves being visible. Larger whole awareness grows. Often very deep beingness states set in.

6. DIMENSIONS

This Hakomi approach to the interpersonal is actually a fairly large project. We have created a 2-year ongoing-training format around it which is being taught at the Hakomi Institute of Europe in Heidelberg. All trainees have studied Hakomi and are used to and comfortable with intrapersonal work, and they became very interested in relationship.

The training shows that interpersonal work can be done completely within the Principles, and can actually be guided by the Principles. Unity and Organicity are at the very base of the work. Nonviolence is found in the therapist's attitude, who may share some preferences, but views them from a meta-perspective, where a preference is just something else to be studied. Mindfulness shifts slightly towards a mindful dialogue, with islands of mindful intrapersonal work embedded in the session. And Body-Mind Wholism is continually alive within the techniques that include and use the bodily experiences.

Taking this path, interpersonal work moves us more directly towards the transpersonal. You and I appear as participants in larger whole. It is a path that moves the narcissistic drama towards its conclusion: the understanding and coming to terms with Otherness.

Discovering the Other guides interpersonal processes towards comprehending the relativity of the Self, sensing the larger whole, and eventually the largest whole, the One.

It is certainly no coincidence that it was a theologian who explored the I - Thou potential most deeply: Martin Buber (1958). Buber, a deeply religious Jew living in a Christian-German environment, saw in the encounter with the Other the encounter with the One.

Differentiating between you and me means also discovering you and me, both of which are traditional spiritual paths as well. This is one sense in which moving into the interpersonal also means moving into the unknown. An adventure well worth taking.

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