

# *The Principles of Hakomi*

Inge ‘Mula’ Myllerup-Brookhuis Cand. Psych.  
LPC, CEAP, CHT, CHTe, CHTr,

**Editor’s note:** In this article Dr. Inge Myllerup-Brookhuis explores foundational Hakomi principles, bringing a lot context and depth through references to contemporary science as well as ancient spiritual traditions.

**Dr. Inge ‘Mula’ Myllerup-Brookhuis, Cand. Psych.** is a Licensed Professional Counselor, psychotherapist and yoga teacher in full-time private practice at “theZenter” in Carrollton, Georgia. She has a Master’s degree in psychology from the University of West Georgia, and a Ph.D. equivalent degree in psychology from the University of Aarhus, Denmark. Specializing in experiential body-mind-spirit integrative therapies, she is certified in Hakomi therapy and as Hakomi Faculty, trained as a NLP practitioner, an EMDR practitioner, an Employee Assistance Professional, a yoga therapist, an Internal Family Systems therapist and assistant trainer, and as a Psych-K practitioner. She is also adjunct professor in the Department of Psychology at the Univ. of West Georgia. She enjoys translating contemporary neuroscientific discoveries in an easily digestible and human way for students. She can be contacted at her website [www.thezenter.net](http://www.thezenter.net)

**ABSTRACT:** Originally Hakomi took inspiration from a number of sources including philosophies of the ancient past, consciousness cultivating methods and practices, the Humanistic Psychology growth and potential movement, and discoveries from the field of modern science. The present article serves to explore these sources of inspiration in relationship to the Hakomi principles, their philosophy and practice. This exploration of the principles and method of Hakomi is interlaced with results from experimental research and theoretical reflections from the fields of contemporary sciences of physics, atmospheric chemistry, contemporary neurosciences such as neuropsychology, psychoneuroimmunology, interpersonal neurobiology, and from aspects of contemporary psychological research.

All I need to be well  
Lives deeply within me.  
The healer who comes  
Is a midwife  
Who helps to birth  
my original self.  
It is from this place  
I am ready to be  
where I have never been before  
Able now to know,  
may be for the first time  
The Unbroken Field.

--Cherie Greenwood (in Greenwood, 2004).

## **Ancient Wisdom and the Principles**

Hakomi was a pioneer among psychotherapeutic modalities in many ways, not least in being willing to benefit from the knowledge of psychology and consciousness studies outlined first in the ancient wisdom traditions.

In his introduction to the history of mysticism Abhayananda, a contemporary American mystic, summarizes the essence of the traditions. He states that seers throughout the ages and across traditions reveal the antiquity and endurance of one Great Mystical tradition. They extrapolate and relate foundational principles of duality and of the great unity underlying the diversity of its manifold expressions. (Abhayananda, 1996).

The ancient seers report experiences of body-mind-spirit wholeness, and “in their attempt to explain the ineluctable duality-in-Unity, the seers of early cultures relied upon pictorial symbols – such as the yin-yang symbol of the Chinese” (Abhayananda, 1996, p.8). These Mystics, as they have been called, present to us a view of intrinsic interconnectedness and natural unfolding called the Tao in Chinese philosophy. In its Hakomi reflection, we can see this in the Unity Principle.

The mystics relate to us that the only way to experience this reality is to widen consciousness from material realms to embracing more subtle and energetic realms of consciousness via skilful inner listening and cultivation of consciousness. Such inner listening is called mindfulness in Buddhist philosophy, ‘samyama’ or witnessing in yoga philosophy, and contemplation in the Christian tradition. All the traditions emphasize that inner listening unfold within a context of non-violence, loving kindness, truthfulness, non-stealing, and surrender to a higher wider state of consciousness, ultimately characterized as a unified whole called the void, unity, Self, or God.

Ron Kurtz assimilated many of these ancient insights and guidelines into the original five principles of the Hakomi method: Unity, organicity, body-mind-spirit holism, mindfulness and non-violence. In addition to their historical importance to the development of Hakomi the five

principles can serve to structure this introduction to its philosophy and practice.

## **Early Hakomi, Science and the Organization of Experience**

Throughout its' years of continuing developmental history from the 1970's Ron Kurtz (Nov, 2007 p.1) founder and originator of Hakomi, as well as founding and following trainers, teachers and practitioners, have had a tradition of being in ongoing dialectic and reflexive theoretical dialogue with selected aspects of contemporary science. In continuation of this tradition the principles of Hakomi are here in the first part of this article interwoven with a review of some of the early scientific inspirations. In the middle and latter parts of the article the discussion will summarize some of the more current scientific discoveries that substantiate the method.

Greg Johanson remembers that "In the early days of Hakomi (1970's) one particularly fruitful source . . . was the book *Mind and Nature*, by Gregory Bateson (May, 1976). In this work Bateson (1979) outlined ten propositions that characterize a living system that can be said to have a mind of its own, including nature itself." (Johanson, 2007, p.3).

### ***Body-mind spirit Holism***

The body-mind-spirit system is seen as a living system, and as a whole, made up of parts, or parts organized into a whole (Bateson's first proposition). Therefore Hakomi practice includes studying and working with the psychosomatic, psychological (mental, emotional, and behavioral), and psycho-spiritual organization of human body mind consciousness.

### ***Organicity***

Parts communicate within this whole (Bateson's second proposition). The body-mind-spirit system is worked with as a 'holon' (Arthur Koestler, 1967), as a fundamental unity of reality which is made up of parts, and in turn is part of a larger whole. When the parts are communicating within the whole, the system is self directing and self-correcting. It has a mind of its own characterized by complex, non-linear determinism (Bateson's third proposition).

### ***Body-mind-spirit Holism and Organicity***

Looking at the totality of the human body-mind-spirit system as one such living system, as a holon, we may witness effects of deep inter connectivity among component parts when observing the following. The effects of a thought ripples throughout the whole body mind system, affecting all levels of the psyche and its components of thinking, feeling, emoting, perceiving, sensing and intuiting.

When you have an intention, this also has an effect on all those levels in all of these realms, William Tiller et al conclude in summary of their experimental research reported in the book: 'Conscious acts of creation, the emergence of a new physics.'

Activity in one realm has effect on, and is reflected on all levels of the body mind system. Activity within the realms of consciousness may be instrumentally recorded via physical manifestations as brain wave patterns, heart rate variability, immune system functioning, muscle activation and tension patterns, and in form of other energy manifestations. There is a deep inter connection between sub systems of the human body mind; ultimately the living system is a self organizing, complex whole (Bateson's third proposition). There is oneness of functioning beyond and above the multiplicity of sub system functioning, there is 'mind-body-spirit holism.'

### ***Mindfulness***

When we look into 'The Farther reaches of Human Nature' (Maslow, 1971) and the wisdom traditions we learn, that when we as humans still and focus our minds inwardly and sink into presence skillfully and mindfully, this will facilitate a movement toward increasing degrees of body mind integrative processing and body-mind-spirit wholeness. In this process of inner listening and compassionate witnessing, insight unfolds, as we move through the territories of that which separate us from oneness and wholeness of body-mind and spirit.

What was uniquely innovative in the Hakomi method was the, from Buddhist practice inspired, integrative use of mindfulness. This is a detached engaged emotionally and spiritually intelligent presence.

Ron Kurtz recently summarized that mindfulness

is self observation without interference. It is the observation of the constant, spontaneous flow of ones own experience, the ever changing contents of consciousness. It is a turning inward and allowing, without interfering or taking any action. It is letting impulses and thoughts arise and watching them subside. It shows up in therapy as the ground state for all the experiments we do with clients, experiments that are the key to bringing deep unconscious material into consciousness. It shows up as a preference for quiet and acceptance, for understanding and consciousness rather than effort, force and control. In its ability to not be driven, it is an expression of a deep desire for freedom. (Kurtz 2007, p.17)

### ***Non-violence***

For 'mindfulness' to develop and deepen, and in order for the human system to be willing and open for inner listening, there must be an implicit and explicit experience of safety

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and ‘non-violence’ within the therapeutic context and within the immediate situation.

Like humanistic psychotherapeutic approaches in general, Hakomi has from its inception in the early 1970s relied on and focused on cultivating the integrity and presence of the therapist and her/his skillfulness and ability to create and maintain such a context of safety and non-violent relations. This is a primary and necessary condition for willing experiential accessing and processing of psychological material.

Across the life span of Hakomi Ron Kurtz has continued to make refinements to the method. In his “Olympia Training Handbook on the refined Hakomi method” of November, 2007 he wrote about one of these refinements: “Fourteen years ago, I introduced the idea that loving presence is the appropriate state for the practitioner. It is our first and most important task. That one change made a huge difference in the effectiveness of the method “(P.1).

Hakomi, in all of its versions, views non-violent, skilful and embodied loving presence, mindful awareness, appropriate support and containment, and method specific body mind integrative facilitation (‘experiments’ and ‘missing experiences’) as main components of the therapy and of the therapeutic fertile ground which serves as context for accessing, processing and transforming of core organizing psychological material.

### ***Gregory Bateson and the Organization of Human Experience:***

In organic living realms, when unhindered, parts will tend to thrive towards unfolding of their potential for wholeness. This has been and continues to be the starting point and worldview within humanistic, systems, and ecological psychology traditions. In the realities of ordinary human life there is unfolding and, for most humans there is also some degree of stuck-ness, with inadequate or lack of information processing. A result is suffering.

When a human becomes overwhelmed by life challenges, the coping ability of the body-mind system may be compromised. As a result the individual may become psychologically divided and loose touch with their innate wholeness.

From such experiences of overwhelm our body mind system carry experiential imprints, called ‘samsara’ in ancient yoga philosophy, and descriptively called ‘State dependent memories learning and behaviors’ in Ericksonian Hypnotherapies (Rossi, (1996)). These imprints include the state and quality of body mind system arousal at the time of organizing experiences, body mind system emotional and mental interpretations of such experiences, associated learning and behavior from the experiences and internalization of psychological dynamics within us and

around us during the time of experiences and experientially associated experiences and events. In Hakomi such imprints are called ‘core organizers.’ These imprints leave a residue of tensions and holding patterns in the body-mind, and thus interfere with information processing and the free optimal flow of life energy.

Memory imprints manifest on all levels and in all human realms. In the realm of the psyche experiential imprints manifest as psychological organizing habits and patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving with accompanying beliefs (called ‘core beliefs’). Experiential imprints (core organizers), psychological habits and patterns, and core beliefs are embedded within all realms of the human body-mind-spirit system and take part of holding such habits and patterns in place.

What is of primary importance, Bateson first taught us (in his fourth proposition), is the way the system processes information, energy is collateral or secondary to the system. Residual imprints from experience, the ‘core organizers’ of the psyche, and accompanying ‘core beliefs’ influence how information is processed.

The core organizers and beliefs determine to a large extend, how the body-mind-spirit system functions and set the limits for the unfolding of the potential of mental, emotional, perceptual, sensory and intuitive experience. The imprints ultimately lead to and are reflected within psycho physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual patterns. Such patterns affect the overall functioning, processing and energy of the system on all levels of the system.

In other words information is ‘coded,’ as Bateson stated in his fifth proposition, and this ‘coding’ influence the way “we organize our experience” (Johanson 2007, p.9).

Originating with core organizing experiences the human body mind makes experiential state dependent commitments and beliefs. These tend to generalize and, expressed in a term from cognitive science, they operate as ‘premature cognitive commitments.’

Core organizing experiences reflect a commitment to and a stuck quality of experiential memory. They influence how the human organism process information. Core organizers and core beliefs partially or fully determine our present-moment perceptions and experiences, and our interpretations of these experiences (the meaning that our system makes). Thus consciousness is pre-destined and narrowed.

In his refined Hakomi method Ron Kurtz uses the term “adaptive unconscious.” With this concept he refers to the totality of the information processes, which act “outside of awareness, [and] habitually interprets situations and initiates habitual reactions based on those interpretations” (Kurtz, 2007, p.6). This as a result of residue and beliefs related to

past experience. The adaptive unconscious is a term borrowed from Timothy D. Wilson.

Adaptively unconscious rigid and repetitive structures ultimately separate us from living in the present moment within the fullness of human existence and human potential.

### ***Bateson and Internal Relationship among Component Parts.***

Hakomi means ‘How do you stand in relation to these many realms?’ in original Hopi Indian language. As indicated Hakomi work within various realms of the psyche and of human consciousness. When we work within these inner realms a question emerge: So what is the internal relationship among component parts of the human psyche?

Gregory Bateson suggested that the interaction between parts of Mind is triggered by difference, and

When the connection and information exchange is happening the system is self organizing, self directing, self correcting and characterized by non-linear determinism, which means that it has a mind of its own based on its own internal wisdom, Bateson’s third proposition. (Johanson 2007, p.7)

The quality, flavor, and intensity of organizing experiences influence the memory of and interpretations made by the developing psyche. The result is that the organization of the psyche vary from an optimum of balanced and harmonious collaborative organization to degrees of fragmentary, perhaps polarized and divisive modes of internal and inter relational organization, where information exchange among aspects and parts of the psyche is compromised, conflictive, and/or hindered. Internal psycho-emotional organizational patterns of ‘core organizers’ tend to cluster according to the principle of experiential association, and over time mind-body-spirit system specific styles of organization emerge.

Indicators for such body-mind-spirit organization show up in human verbal and most significantly in non-verbal expressions and communications. Core organizers may be directly accessed via non-conceptual non-verbal indicators. This is one of the main foci for Ron Kurtz in his refined Hakomi method: To search for and work with such indicators of core material.

Within the system information is organized into a hierarchy of logical levels of organization (Bateson’s sixth proposition). There are styles, healthy and neurotic, character, archetypal, zodiac and otherwise conceptualized and categorized patterns and styles. From the roots of psychodynamic tradition and all the way back to the most ancient of the recorded philosophies, the vedic philosophy, we learn that such patterns operate in a repetitive fashion, perhaps compulsively so, particularly when anxiety, attachments and aversions are triggered within the system. The greater the distress of organizing experiences, the

greater the degrees of internal polarization, disconnects, and splits.

Therapy can be conceived of as healing disconnects or splits (Wilber, 1979). Aligned with this understanding Hakomi is about assisting others in dissolving and altering fragmentary and rigid structures, which compromise access to information from mind and/or body and thereby compromise intra and interpersonal information processing towards body-mind-spirit holism and unity.

In the therapy process of healing disconnects or splits the first step is to make such experience organizing structures available to conscious awareness. In other words, the first step is to access into conscious awareness from the realm of the adaptive unconscious the organizing patterns for maladaptive and or otherwise limiting and or out-dated patterns and beliefs. This is in order to process, ‘update’ and correct such patterns.

Located within a tradition of psycho-dynamically inspired psychotherapy methodologies Hakomi is about gaining self knowledge, “In fact, the heart of our work is exactly this: making unconscious mental processes conscious. Yes! We do other things, but the core of the work is just that” Ron Kurtz commented in a paper “on the adaptive unconscious” given to the author at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Spirituality and Psychotherapy integrative series, May Mini-mester at the University of West Georgia, 2005.

### ***Conclusion I***

We have now touched upon the original five Hakomi principles: unity, organicity, body-mind-(spirit) holism, mindfulness, and non-violence. In addition we have introduced the later refined principles of loving presence, the adaptive unconscious and some of the implications of the principles for the organization of mind body spirit system.

The original method, which is predominantly taught and practiced by The Hakomi Institute, is made up of components that “used together in an integrated way . . . make an effective method for helping others with their personal growth and emotional healing,” Ron Kurtz recently stated (2007, p.5).

“Since the early 90’ies, when I resigned as director of the Hakomi Institute, I have continued to refine the method and to teach these refinements in workshops and trainings along with a few trainers who have studied and worked with me the last fifteen years or so,” Kurtz continues (ibid p.5).

Today, some 27 years into its life span, the Hakomi method has matured into a ‘midlife’ status of having multiple and differentiated styles and flavors of practice. Ultimately its particular style when practiced takes form shaped by the style and person of the individual practitioner.

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“The work from the beginning was experiential, using reactions evoked by little experiments with the person in a mindful state. That process remains the core of the method,” Kurtz states (2007, p.1). He Points to the added principle of loving presence as the appropriate state of mind for the practitioner, other refinements such as searching for and using indicators, adapting to the adaptive unconscious and other refinements, and his present view of the work as “mindfulness-based assisted self-study” as significant changes. “Seen in this light, it is closely related to the Buddhist and Taoist principles that were among my original inspirations,” he elaborates (2007, p.1).

This author, originally trained and certified as a therapist and teacher by the Hakomi Institute, has in recent years trained with, assisted and been certified as a trainer by Ron Kurtz. It is the impression of this author that Ron Kurtz in his Refined Hakomi method leans even more into the principles behind the work than in earlier versions of the method. An observation he responded to in August of 2007 at the end of a level two training with the comment: “I think you are right about that.”

Ron Kurtz has said that if you ground yourself in the principles, then the Hakomi method, with its particular style, feel and way of being with others, “will naturally emerge as your way of working with clients. Hakomi is a product of living, thinking, and feeling in terms of the principles, in alignment with the principles” (Keller in Kurtz et. al. 2004, p.41).

All of the Eastern wisdom traditions give guidelines for spiritual body mind practices focusing on cultivating embodied experience beyond concepts and words. These are practices classically designed to facilitate increasing degrees of body-mind-spirit integration (Yuasa). Hakomi, like all the wisdom traditions that inspired it, has embodied experience as starting point for practice of the method, and Hakomi practitioners are encouraged to pursue body-mind-spirit integrative practices such as mindfulness (vipassana) meditation, Tibetan practices, zen practices, yoga, tai chi, qigong, or other practices for personal body-mind-spirit stabilization, integration and deepening.

The remainder of this article represent a more comprehensive introduction to the principles with a discussion of some of the current scientific findings that support the validity and effectiveness of the Hakomi method.

### **The Principles of Hakomi II,**

This section will look at the principles of Hakomi as seen from within a context of ancient philosophy and contemplative practices, contemporary sciences of physics, atmospheric chemistry, contemporary neurosciences such as

neuropsychology, psychoneuroimmunology, interpersonal neurobiology, and aspects of contemporary psychological research:

### **Unity**

In the Upanishads, which contain revelations of the deepest meditations of early sages, we are told that not only do the trees, mountains, and rivers, the wind, and the stars surround us, but that they are to be found within us as well. Our bodies contain the very essence of Nature – and the very essence of the Divine. (Schumacker, 2006, p.3).

Within all wisdom traditions East and West there is a view of a deep unified intelligence embedded within the field and system of the body-mind-spirit. This is an intelligence beyond “the inner ecology of our egos” (Johanson, 2006, p.19) and the psychological parts of the psyche. When we skillfully and discerningly open up to this deep intelligence, it will guide the process of studying and working with the system.

This intelligence is cultivated via skilful inner listening (mindfulness from Buddhist tradition, samyama from yoga tradition), and has been called many names such as Atman in the philosophy of yoga, the larger self (Tiller) in modern psychology and Self (Schwartz) in modern psychotherapeutic methodology. All these terms for a larger intelligence are pointing towards that which has been called the soul in Judea Christian traditions. “For the East there was only one way,’ Ken Wilber writes, ‘the Tao, the dharma, and it signaled the wholeness under the dividing boundaries of man-made maps” (1979, p.40).

Theories of modern physics developed in the last century support this worldview of unity and interrelatedness. Ultimately, Einstein theorized in his unified field theory, there is an unbroken wholeness within us and around us. Within this wholeness, Tailhart d’Chardin a modern paleontologist added, there are infinite webs of connectivity among parts, aspects and dimensions, and aliveness is flowing through (the Tao).

Each element of the cosmos is positively woven from all the others... it is impossible to cut into this network, to isolate a portion without it becoming frayed and unraveled at all its edges ... all around us, as far as the eye can see, the universe holds together, and only one way of considering it is really possible, that is, to take it as a whole. (Chardin, 1965, pp. 43-44).

There is “unity within the biological world” Whitaker and Malone relayed in 1953 in *The Roots of Psychotherapy* (p.18), and “any change in a part of the organism, regardless of whether the change comes in the province of the physiological, genetic, chemical, or psychological, results in changes which affect every other aspect of the total organism” (ibid p. 18).

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This underlying wholeness, this unity, this oneness, is not readily knowable via ordinary human consciousness. Zen master Suzuki explains that “since the awakening of consciousness, the human mind has acquired the habit of thinking dichotomously.” He elaborates:

In fact, thinking is in itself so characterized, for without opposition of subject and object, no thinking can take place ... the result is that the intellectually dichotomized self is placed above and over the one which is the true Self, transcending all discriminatory distinction. (Suzuki, 1972, p.3).

According to the great mystics this unity is accessible via extraordinary “experience so convincing, so real, that all those to whom it has occurred testify unanimously that it is the unmistakable realization of the ultimate Truth of existence. In this experience, called *Samadhi* by the Hindus, *nirvana* by the Buddhists, *fana* by the Muslims, and “the mystic union” by the Christians, the consciousness of the individual suddenly becomes the consciousness of the entire vast universe “(Abhayananda, 1996, p.2).

Vedic philosophy, the oldest of the recorded philosophies which inspired many of the later developments, agrees that unity is knowable via the true Self, called Atman, and may be accessed and cultivated via skillful experience such as body-mind-spirit practices and witness consciousness.

Chatterji explains: “This Being Atman is also feeling.” Not thinking, but “Feeling is the very root and ground of our existence as conscious entities . . . thus the Atman, the ultimate Self in man, is pure being (*sat*), objectless awareness (*chit*), and unclouded joy (*ananda*). Atman, the ultimate Being, is timeless and space less” (Chatterji p. 18)

“We must come to understand this Self and personally ‘interview it’ if we really desire to get settled at the final abode of our being,” Suzuki recommends. He continues:

The ultimate Self is above all forms of dichotomy, it is neither inner nor outer, neither metaphysical, nor psychological, neither objective nor subjective. If the term ‘Self’ is misleading, we may designate it as ‘God’ or ‘Being’, ‘Man’ or ‘Soul,’ ‘Nothing’ or ‘Anything.’ (Suzuki, 1972, p.3).

In the practice of Hakomi “Unity is expressed when the therapist feels what the client is feeling and helps contain and manage these [experiences] through his or her own state of mind,” (Kurtz, 2004, p. 3.).

Psychotherapeutically “Unity is the principle that embraces connection and interdependence,” Ron Kurtz explains.

It is a sense of connection that derives from such things as: Limbic resonance, mirror neurons [which reflect the mutual arising of subject and object], oxytocin and the social engagement system. It shows

up in therapy through the therapist’s wordless understanding of the client’s experience and the powerful influence of the therapist’s state of mind on the client’s process called psychobiological regulation by Alan Schore. It shows up when the therapist feels what the client is feeling. It is shared pain and sympathetic joy. It shows up as the ability to create cooperation and intimacy. (Kurtz 2005, this author’s insert).

It was Lewis et al who coined the term “limbic resonance” in their book, *A General Theory of Love*. They defined the term as follows: “Within the effulgence of their new brain, mammals developed a capacity we call *limbic resonance* – a symphony of mutual exchange and internal adaptation whereby two mammals become attuned to each other’s inner states.” (p.63). “Ron Kurtz was an ‘early adopter’ of limbic resonance, finding in this neurological explanation of emotional attunement a clarification and confirmation of what he already understood clinically . . . (that) healing requires the presence of a sensitive, compassionate, deeply attuned ‘other.’” (Keller in Kurtz et. al., 2004, p. 40).

The wisdom traditions all the way back to the Vedas agree that unity is a holographic reality from the level of the atom to the level of the universe. Each segment of manifestation is ‘a holon’ (Wilber), and as such represent the structure of the entire wholeness. In Hakomi, on the level of psychotherapeutic reality, indicators of core material such as non-conceptual, non-verbal facial expressions are ‘holons.’ They are holographic miniatures of the entirety of the system they are reflecting. When we skillfully focus on a holon, with presence, tracking, contacting, probes, experiments and other Hakomi skills and tools, we are potentially able to access the entirety of the organizing pattern.

### Organicity

So within unity there are infinite webs of connectivity among dimensions, realms, aspects, and parts. Gregory Bateson, the founder of modern systems theory, proposed that what makes a system living and organic is exactly that the parts communicate within that whole.

This is also the view in modern physics where Sapp reached the realization that all systems are characterized by interactive flow and communication. He elaborates “An elementary particle is not an independently existing, un-analyzable entity. It is, in essence, a set of relationships that reach outward to other things” (Wilber, 1985, p. 37.), an insight which was embedded within native cultures such as the Native Americans and expressed in their common greeting: “all my relations.”

Atmospheric chemist James Loveluck (1979, 1991) studied and described this general principle and found that in the natural world there is a constant flow of energy and matter. He and microbiologist Lyn Margulis (1974) together

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identified a complex network of feedback loops within the atmosphere of the earth. The outstanding feature of these feedback loops is that they link together living and non-living systems. Therefore we can not think of rocks, animals, and planets as being separate. Instead, they belong to GAIA, a single living system where, as Frijof Capra reported, “there is a tight interlocking between the planet’s living parts – plants, microorganisms, and animals, -- and its nonliving parts – rocks and the atmosphere” (1996, p.104). In the words of Margulis:

The [GAIA] hypothesis says that the surface of the earth, which we’ve always considered to be the environment of life, is really part of life. The blanket of air – the troposphere – should be considered a circulatory system produced and sustained by life . . . when science tells us that life adapts to an essentially passive environment of chemistry, psychics, and rocks, they perpetuate a severely distorted view. Life actually makes and forms and changes the environment to which it adapts. Then that ‘environment’ feeds back on the life that is changing and acting and growing in it. There are constant cyclical interactions. (Margulis, 1989.)

We can conclude from the scientific data that there is a deep inner ecology characterized by inter connectivity within the natural world, and ultimately within all of creation. The earth is a living system GAIA, named the TAO in Chinese philosophy.

Rhythms of life force pulse through everything from the circadian rhythms of nature to the ultradian rhythms of the human nervous system. In the human nervous system this rhythmic flow and interchange involves a circling back and forth between thought, action, experience, sensing and perceiving. Neuro-psychologically this is a circling back and forth of activation and dominance between the cerebral hemispheres and the two sides of the body and between the anterior and posterior cortical zones.

Everything in the known world, organic and inorganic, is in constant dynamic reciprocal inter-relationship and co-creative ‘interbeing’ (Thich Nhat Han). In accordance with this the Hakomi psychotherapy encounter is a collaborative and co-creative inter-relational activity allowing for and aiming at reestablishing the natural rhythms, going with ‘the grain’ not against ‘the grain,’ and opening up to discovering the particular organization and inter connectivity within the system of the person who is the focus of the process.

Hakomi practitioners rely on the principles of unity and organicity defined and described by the wisdom traditions and by contemporary science, knowing that a living system moves towards inter-relational flow and wholeness when unhindered.

When practicing Hakomi we look for the central organizing principles and beliefs of the psyche and system, and facilitate the undoing of division and fragmentation, while

leaning into knowing that underneath all division and fragmentation there is connectivity and ultimately a unifying oneness of consciousness.

Central to all wisdom traditions is a relying on and leaning into a sense of a greater intelligence in the universe, whether this is called void, God, Self, Krishna, or by some other name. This ‘surrendering to God’ is called Isvara pranidhana in the yoga sutra II.32 of Patanjali (Iyengar (1993) p. 136).

In other words the wisdom traditions tell us that within us and around us there is consciousness of a spiritual and wise quality which supports the unfolding of our unique and human potential in the direction of survival, nourishment, free, reciprocal, capable, creative self, and ultimately Self-actualization.

Over the years of Hakomi development and practice many students, teachers and trainers of Hakomi from the diverse flavors of the method have embodied this as an implicit principle. Having faith in this, we not only take action but also at the appropriate moments pause and linger, observe and allow, and midwife the unfolding of the unique individual potential allowing for the guidance from the inherent wisdom of the system and beyond the system.

Now, according to Donna Martin (personal conversation with this author, Jan. 2006), Ron Kurtz’ partner in training for fifteen years, Hakomi, in Ron’s refined version of it, is moving toward an explicit inclusion of this as a foundational principle of the method.

The following training experience is reflects this observation. On the last day of the level two training in Ashland, Oregon in August of 2007, Ron Kurtz facilitated a group guided imagery exercise of connecting with sources of inspiration from intelligence “beyond the inner ecology of our egos” (Johanson, 2006, p.19). This was followed by a discussion amongst the participants about their individual manifest or non-manifest psychological, energy, and/or spiritual sources of inspiration and guidance during Hakomi facilitation. Ron Kurtz called this “the Uncle Function,” Ron Kurtz summarizes that in the psychotherapy encounter

Organicity shows up as a deep awareness of the other’s freedom to be and to choose . . . the client’s needs and experiences are primary. . . . Without a sense of the client’s organicity, we wouldn’t know that we are only a small part of the change process and that much of what happens is what the client is making happen out of his or her own courage, will and sensitivity. Honoring that is organicity, (Ron Kurtz, 2005).

It is the organicity principle in action when in Hakomi we, therapist and client, facilitator and the facilitated, compassionately, mindfully and experimentally attend to and linger with one component or ‘indicator’ of a psycho-emotional-behavioral experience such as, for example, a

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facial gesture or an image, and this leads to the effect that entire core organizing memories emerge into conscious awareness. The emerging from sub and unconscious realms of the original state dependent experiences unfold with the original states of arousal and experience with the sensory modality activation related to this experience (the sensory components of image, sound, smell, taste, and body sensations) unfolding and emerging like ‘pearls on a string.’ Once in conscious awareness these memories can be updated and premature cognitive commitments can be modified.

### ***Body-Mind-(Spirit) Holism***

*“If one is [whole], one will be filled with light, but if one is divided, one will be filled with darkness,” The Gospel of Thomas, (Meyer, 1992,, 47).* The view of the mind and body as a single system has been a defining characteristic of the Eastern wisdom traditions for 2000-5000 years (Yuasa). In contrast Western culture, religion and science have been dominated by dualistic views of mind and body.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Rene Descartes (1596-1650), the father of Western science exclaimed: ‘cogito ergo sum,’ or ‘I think therefore I am.’ He defined the mind and reason as ‘res cogitans’ and the body and experience as ‘res extensa’ the extended thing. Descartes said about the body-mind relationship, that “there is nothing included in the concept of the body that belongs to the mind and nothing in that of the mind that belongs to the body” (Capra, 1982, p. 164).

Since the time of Descartes Western philosophy and science have been characterized by fragmentary views of the relationship of reason and experience. In modern times of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century science in general, and main stream Western psychological theory and psychotherapeutic practice in particular, have continued this tradition and tendency by emphasizing cognitive and behavioral aspects of human functioning to the exclusion of embodied experiential dimensions.

Freud, the originator of psychoanalysis, “was known for frequently stating that the ego is fundamentally a body ego but the psychoanalysis he developed paid little attention to the body” (Friedman in Lowen p. i).

Carl Jung, psychoanalytic student and contemporary of Freud, and student of consciousness and ancient philosophies of consciousness, concluded that: “The body is . . . the personification of this shadow of the ego,” and that “it holds the record of our rejected side” (Conger, p.108).

Wilhelm Reich, a student and contemporary of Freud and one of Ron Kurtz’s sources of inspiration, elaborated on how “the body as bound energy that is unrecognized and untapped, unacknowledged and unavailable” is “predominantly the body as ‘character’ ” (Conger, p. 108).

He “worked directly on the armored layer in the body, in that way releasing the repressed material” (Conger p.110).

Alexander Lowen, a student of Reich, and also a source of inspiration for Ron Kurtz, extended the tradition of Reich through his development of Bioenergetics analysis. This approach to psychotherapy combines physical and psychological interventions. “Information from patients bodies . . . is used diagnostically, while physical interventions are used to facilitate changes in patients’ bodies” (Friedman in Lowen, p. i).

Coming from a non-physically intervening tradition of psychoanalysis inspired psychotherapy Carl Whitaker M.D. and Tom Malone Ph.D. M.D. also distanced themselves from the mental cognitive over focus of classical psychoanalytic traditions and cognitive behavioral traditions. In the 1950s they initiated the new tradition in psychotherapy and coined the term ‘experiential psychotherapy’ (Whitaker and Malone, 1953). In personal interviews they repeatedly responded to Descartes’ ‘cogito ergo sum,’ with ‘Cogito ergo sum num’ meaning ‘I think therefore I am not,’ (Malone, 1998). They pointed out that going beyond thinking to experiencing directly who we are in the present moment is a must in psychotherapy.

Modern neuroscience supports such a shift of focus. Core organizing experiences from deeply influencing and or repeated experiences are coded in patterns of neural impulse activity in the brain and in the extended nervous system (Fields, 2005). When someone is having an experience a “pattern of neural impulse activity in the brain” (Fields p.78) is activated or is ‘firing.’ It was psychologist Donald Hebb who in 1949 proposed the simple rule that “connections among neurons that fired at the same time should become strengthened” (Fields p.77). This has been called the Hebb’s theorem: What ‘fires’ together ‘wires’ together.

When we apply the Hebb theorem to psychotherapy it implies that we best assure that a neurological ‘firing’ of the experiential memory of the core organizing experience is happening, that the individual is actually experiencing what they are talking about, in order for a neurological ‘wiring’ of an appropriate and corrective update of the experience and associated belief to occur. The core organizing experiences need to be experientially activated for a re-wiring to occur. Merely abstractly talking about issues or memories will not make a sustainable change.

Now, more than half a century after the discoveries of Jung and Reich, contemporary neuroscience informs us that it is not only at the level of armor, but into the depth and core of human experience that ‘the body is our subconscious mind’ (Pert), and the holder of implicit pre-reflective state-dependent (Fisher) memory, learning and behavior (Earnest Rossi).

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“There are image resonances in the body of all mind states,” Tom Malone used to say (personal interviews). Candace Pert has now shown how that is literally and concretely so with her psychoneuroimmunological research on neuropeptides and neuropeptide receptors. She concluded from her extensive research in the field of psychoneuroimmunology that whenever we have a thought, there is a chemical released in the body-mind. She sees this as the chemical manifestation of emotion, operating as messenger molecules between the physical body and conscious awareness, or ‘mind.’

Candace Pert discovered that the limbic-emotion processing brain has a forty-fold higher concentration of neuropeptide receptors for ‘the chemicals of emotion’ than any other part of the brain and body and thus is principal in processing of emotion. On a neuro-chemical level of organization, residue of unprocessed chemicals from experience “floats around in the hippocampus” of the limbic brain, Bessel van der Kolk explains (2002). Such unprocessed chemicals reside in the synaptic gaps between the axons and dendrites of the neurons in the brain. (See for example Seligman et. al. 2001, quoted in Aposhyan 2004 p. 48). Here it is ready to attach itself to present-moment sensory experience signals as these pass from the body via the extended nervous system to the brain, and on this path move through the synaptic gaps. In this way, awareness of present-moment experience is infused with and distorted by synaptic gap and hippocampus residue of past experience. This is a manifestation on a neuro-chemical level of what is called core organizing material, core organizers and core beliefs in Hakomi.

In Hakomi we track, and utilizing the methodology of mindfulness teach the client to track, her or his own inner experience. Clients who have learned such tracking frequently report body sensations at core levels of the gut, solar plexus, and chest and throat area.

Neuro-psychologically, there are multiple connections from the gut, the solar plexus, the chest cavity, the heart, and the throat to the limbic brain. The emotion processing system is not only the limbic brain in the head, but includes the entire visceral core bodily system of the organs and internal cavities.

Candace Pert discovered that the entire digestive tract and the internal organs have a high concentration of peptide receptors, and are lined with neuropeptide receptors. All the organs have neuropeptide receptors and are thereby associated with emotional processing, which Chinese Medicine has known for 5000 years.

Pert learned in later studies that all cells in the body have neuropeptide receptors. So, not only the limbic brain, but the core body in particular, and ultimately the whole body represent our emotion processing system. Body and mind as a whole.

According to Pert the neuropeptide receptors not only receive and transfer current emotional information, but also hold memory of frequency and intensity of past emotional activation. The core body is an emotion-storing body, with associated holding patterns in the peripheral body. The stored emotions and emotional decisions, in the form of memory within the receptors, may be ‘triggered’ or activated by present events and present emotional experience and in turn may influence and emotionally color such present experience. The memory in the receptors is a neuro-impulse and psychoneuroimmunological manifestation of ‘core organizers.’

Fritz Pearls, another source of inspiration for Ron Kurtz, was an early American humanistic experiential psychotherapist of Eastern influence. He asserted the importance of our coming ‘to our senses,’ and suggested that we use our bodies as resonant chambers of experience. He initiated the use of experiential experiments to access, process, and facilitate transformation of outdated pre-reflective beliefs and habits.

Ron Kurtz revolutionized the experiential approach by introducing the use of mindfulness as a form of inner listening. With this form of awareness, observation is placed internally at the ‘sense doors of perception,’ where experience is colored and at times distorted. This enables the individual to gain a more direct view of her or his internal organization and internally organizing experience.

In 1995 Tom Malone exclaimed, “Hakomi has taken it much further than we ever did,” as he was reviewing a comprehensive Hakomi training syllabus (personal conversation with the author). As an experiential psychotherapy methodology Hakomi explicitly and deliberately works with mindful awareness of states of consciousness of body and mind, of meaning and experience at the experiential core levels of the body mind spirit system. Since the 1970s Hakomi has been unique in this integrated use of mindfulness to access, process and update core organizing pre-conscious material.

### ***Core Organizing Material and the Body-Mind***

Since Sigmund Freud it has been generally known within the field of psychodynamically oriented depth psychotherapy that many of our core organizing experiences and beliefs have roots in early infancy, if not earlier.

As infants and young children we try to make sense of the experiences we are having with [m]other, with the environment, and with our bodies. Much of this “sense-making” occurs long before we have true cognitive abilities, and so it is our organism itself [the body-mind] which draws certain ‘conclusions’ about life on the planet, and gradually hard-wires these into the impressionable brain. (Keller in Kurtz et. al. 2004, p.33. Inserts by this author).

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Conclusions reached in this way are said by contemporary neuropsychology to reside in “implicit memory,” and when they operate they do so without our conscious awareness.

Such core organizing experiences are pre-verbal, pre-conceptual conclusions held in state-dependent (Fisher quoted in Rossi) experiential format in the body-mind. This include neuromuscular, neuro-impulse and neuro-chemical domains related to experiential states of arousal, of thoughts, feelings, body states, drives, and the subjective experience of the immediate interpersonal context.

Bodily felt experience is encoded via the sub-cortical, limbic-hypothalamic emotional brain (Rossi) and sensory motor brain mechanisms (Luria) of our body-minds below the surface of conscious conceptual awareness and ‘explicit memory.’

In accordance with this Ron Kurtz advises therapists not to get seduced into explicitly communicative flow of conversation. We want to escape ordinary consciousness. Get some information from words and concepts but focus on noticing, what we are “seeing, hearing about the person’s present experience” (Kurtz, 2005). Look for signs of present experience and look for indicators for what beliefs are running this information processing system. “The whole front end of the work is designed to get to the memories that determine the beliefs, the kind of beliefs which create suffering,” Kurtz (2005) summarizes.

One of the neuropsychological reasons for closely tracking facial expressions is that this gives the most direct view into what is happening at the level of the (implicit memory encoding) emotional brain. Neuropsychologically there are direct and immediate connections between the heart, the emotional brain, and the facial muscles and facial skin. The face is the only part of the body where there are such direct and immediate connections between any part of the brain and the skin. So what happens in the emotional brain will most directly be reflected in the face and eyes. These are ‘indicators’ of implicit memory.

Core organizing implicit memory can be accessed via non-conceptual, non-verbal indicators, such as facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures, and energetic manifestations. When accessed this material moves from implicit embodied experiential form through limbic and posterior cortical processes, via right and left hemispheric processes into explicitly known anterior cortical awareness and attention.

In this process associated states of emotion, nervous system arousal, and sensation rise with the core organizers. “These will emerge into images, thoughts and feelings which are congruent with that emotion” (Kurtz 2005). In this process the hippocampus of the limbic system receives, sorts and categorizes the information from the body, which “is faithfully reporting the chemical processes that enter our

consciousness only when we recognize them as emotions” (Pert, 2000).

Core organizing material emerges from implicit toward explicit territories as Pert indicates, typically embedded in a felt sense of emotion. The Hakomi therapist looks not simply for an emotional catharsis, but also for the belief and structures which are associated with and hold core patterns in place. Once in conscious awareness, individuals can develop a coherent narrative, and core organizing material can be directly contacted in the present moment. It can be processed, updated, and transformed.

In the psychotherapy encounter, “Holism refers to the complexity and inter-relatedness of organic systems, including human beings, with their minds and bodies, hearts and souls. It is what allows us holographically to read a person’s life story in her posture or tone of voice, to infer an entire childhood from a single memory, to suspect certain core, organizing beliefs from simple repetitive gestures or words. As therapists, this means that the entire (relevant) psychological history of the client is always there before us, that there are a number of ways for us to become aware of it, as well as a variety of ways to assist the client in learning more about what troubles her” (Keller in Kurtz et. al. 2004, p.40).

### *Mindfulness*

In Hakomi a primary methodology for accessing and working with core organizing experiences and memories is the use of mindfulness. “Mindfulness is a tool, maybe the very best tool, for developing consciousness. Mindfulness is becoming a silent witness to one’s own experience in the present moment” (Ron Kurtz 2003). “In general, a mindful state of consciousness is characterized by awareness turned inward toward the present felt experience. It is passive, alert, open, curious, and exploratory. It seeks simply to be aware of what is, as opposed to attempting to do or confirm anything,” Greg Johanson explains (2006, p.16).

“The method for beginning to relate directly with mind is the practice of mindfulness,” Trungpa, a contemporary Buddhist teacher, explains. We relate “with the working basis of one’s experience, which is one’s state of mind, and that is according to the Buddha dharma [what] spirituality means” (Trungpa).

Mindfulness has at times been called ‘bare attention.’ It is “the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us at the successive moments of perception,” Nyanaponika explains. Gunaratana elaborates:

When you first become aware of something there is a fleeting instant of pure awareness just before you conceptualize the thing, before you identify it, that is a state of awareness. Ordinarily this state is short-lived. It is that flashing split-second just as you focus your eyes on the thing, just as you focus your mind on the

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thing, just before you objectify it, clamp down on it mentally and segregate it from the rest of experience. It takes place just before you start thinking about it – before your mind says, “oh, it’s a dog.” (p. 161).

Mindfulness meditation, classically called Vipassana, is a way of training us to prolong that moment of awareness. The purpose of mindfulness is to “experience what one’s mind is doing as it is doing it, to be present with one’s mind” (Varela, 1992, p.23).

Since the time of Sigmund Freud, psychodynamic approaches have built on the foundational insight that real change comes about through awareness, not effort. Freud advised practitioners and clients to “listen with ‘evenly suspended attention;’ during which the critical faculty is suspended, allowing for ‘impartial attention to everything there is to observe’” (Weber, 2003, p. 172). Ron Kurtz elaborates: “If you can observe your own experience with a minimum of interference, and if you don’t control what you experience, if you simply allow things to happen and you observe them, then you will be able to discover things about yourself that you did not know before (Kurtz et al, 2004, p. 13).

Mindfulness is evenly suspended attention, and it is more than that. Mindfulness involves a widening of the aim and scope of awareness to include deeper embodied realms of experience. It includes what the Japanese philosopher Yuasa summarized as the foundational focus and starting point of all the Eastern wisdom traditions: the body and embodied experience.

Eugene Gendlin, the originator of Focusing, integrated this into his methodology. He coined the term “bodily felt sense” of experience, and discovered that when you pay attention to the qualities of an embodied felt sense, then it naturally reveals its inherent meaning in the form of “a word (phrase or image)” (Gendlin, p.44). He discovered that when skillfully lingering with and going back and forth between conscious conceptual awareness and embodied felt sense, the felt sense will shift when accurately named and or seen. Furthermore the felt sense will shift or slightly release as words, images and or other modes of insight arise in response to questions directed towards it.

Mindfulness (or *sati* in Sanskrit) is non-conceptual awareness. It is not thinking . . . it comes before thought in the perceptual process . . . it does not get involved with thoughts or concepts. It does not get hung up on ideas or opinions or memories. It just looks. . . . Mindfulness registers experiences but it does not compare them. It does not label them or categorize them. It just observes everything as if it were occurring for the first time . . . Mindfulness is present-time awareness . . . It is the observance of what is happening right now, in the present moment (Gunaratana, 1991, p.162).

In mindfulness “We are dealing with two reversals of the most habitual cognitive functioning, of which the first is the condition for the second, and the second cannot happen if the first has not already taken place: 1) A turning of the direction of attention from the exterior to the interior, and 2) A change in the quality of attention, which passes from the looking-for to the letting-come” (Varela et. al, 1992). This brings with it a particular quality of awareness as “there is . . . a wholesome slowing down in the impetuosity of thought, speech, and action” (Nyanaponika (1972, p. 25)).

Mindfulness is a particular relationship between awareness and experience. It is being truly present with experience while letting there be a space between the observer and the experience. It is adding a witness quality which includes observing not only the felt sense and accompanying words and phrases, like Gendlin does in his Focusing Method, but also observing the one who sees. In this way “you can discover little pieces of inner structures of your mind, the very things that make you who you are” (Kurtz in Kurtz et al, 2004, p. 13).

According to Germer (2005) and Johanson (2006) Psychodynamic therapists have become interested in how a mindfulness practice of their own can affect the quality of their lives and the relationships they have with their patients. Ron Kurtz and Hakomi have since the 1970s developed the comprehensive Hakomi psychotherapeutic methodology which has at the very principle core an integrated use of mindfulness.

In the words of Johanson, “Mindfulness in Hakomi is used as the royal road to the unconscious, or implicit, pre-reflective consciousness (Stolorow, R. D., Brandchaft, B. & Atwood, G. E., 1987)) where core organizing beliefs control experience and expression before they come into consciousness” (2006, p. 19).

### ***Mindfulness and Psychobiology:***

Mindfulness not only accesses emotion and unconscious implicit memory, but it also cultivates witnessing of and disidentification with such mental and emotional patterns and structures. Mindfulness “calms the system, [and] allows the person to focus attention” (Morgan 2002). Scientific research utilizing recent technology is beginning to show how it is that “mindfulness helpfully affects the brain through such things as left prefrontal activation that enables people to not be fused or blended with emotional activation or obsessive-compulsive behaviors” (Johanson quotes Germer, 2005, p.22-23)

Psycho-biologically, as awareness is turned inward there is an increase of “blood flow to the anterior cingulate cortex . . . the brain area that allows attention to be focused on internal events” (Morgan 2002). Candace Pert (1999), in her discussion of neuropeptides, explains that the system is able to digest information when there is focused attention on the body.

“During mindfulness information is able to flow upwards, be filtered and processed” (Morgan 2002). This happens by the open and receptive focus on embodied experience named ‘inductive processing’ by the Russian neuropsychologist Luria. Right hemispheric processes are activated and functions as a bridge between one shore of memory and emotional experience processed via the limbic brain, and another shore of conscious conceptual knowing processed via the left hemisphere (Myllerup, 2000).

With mindfulness there is focus on sensory experience at the sense doors of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, body sensations and thought as a felt sense. The neuropsychological area responsible for processing of such sensory impressions is the posterior cortex. According to Luria, the primary areas of the posterior cortex (the cortical areas for seeing, hearing, tasting, and body sensations) have identical roles between the two cerebral hemispheres. These primary cortical areas have none of the hemispheric lateralization between mind and body, between reason and experience that is typical for tertiary anterior cortical areas responsible for processes of thinking, speaking and meaning-making. Therefore, lingering with posterior cortical processes of primary sensory experience will facilitate the sensory-based accessing of embodied experience.

Furthermore, the posterior cortical areas are believed to be storage areas for encoded experiential memory. For example the sight of an apple, the taste of an apple, the smell of an apple, the sound of eating an apple are stored in the respective primary sensory cortical areas. Lingering with sensory experience of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and body sensations will facilitate awakening of encoded memory stored at these primary sensory areas, and hereby lead to the accessing of experiential memory emerging like ‘pearls on a string’.

When in Hakomi core material has been accessed and the client reports experience “the verbal areas [of the left hemisphere] are kept active, which helps balance the two hemispheres. In the process of developing a coherent narrative based on the emerging meaning of the experience memory fragments are gathered by the hippocampus and the frontal lobes” (Morgan 2002, this author’s inserts). In this process which is alternating between mindful awareness of experience and a verbal processing and naming of experience, both left and right hemispheres are activated, which is “crucial for memory consolidation,” (Morgan p.9), and there is integrative functioning between the anterior and posterior cortical functions. “Going slowly, mindfully allows processes to complete” (Ibid. p. 9). Operating in such a Hakomi manner assures a processing which is body mind integrative

Non-violence is the last and the first of the original five principles of Hakomi. One of the primary principles in all the wisdom traditions, Ahimsa is the first of the Yama principles for wholesome spiritual living in the philosophy and science of yoga, rooting back “into the Upanishads, the final section of the 4000 to 8000 year old Vedas, mankind’s oldest body of scripture” (Subramuniaswami, 2004, p. vii).

The Yama, which are modes for restraint of human consciousness functioning, serve as foundation for spiritual progress. The Yama are cited in “numerous scriptures, including the Sandilya and Varaha Upanishads, the Hatha Yoga Pradipika by Gorakshanatha, the Tirumantiram of Rishi Tirumular and the Yoga Sutras of Sage Patanjali” (Subramuniaswami p. xvi). Ahimsa, the first of the Yama (Iyengar, 1993), directs us to observe non-violence in action, speech and thought.

Non-violence is also the essence of the five precepts in the Buddhist tradition (do not kill, steal, lie, be unchaste, take drugs or drink intoxicants). In the Abrahamic traditions (Jewish and Christian), non-violence is addressed in the Ten Commandments as the directive to ‘Love thy neighbor as thyself,’ and to not kill or murder.

Non-violence is deeply relevant on all levels of life. As the beginning paragraph of a chapter on ‘the Biology of Relationship’ in his most recent book Pearce outlined that “all living creatures, from the simplest cell on up, have some form of positive-negative sensory detector, essentially a chemical approach-avoidance response necessary to basic survival: Embrace (or devour) an event that nurtures; avoid an event that threatens before it devours you. The higher in evolution, the more extensive is this primary instinct” (Pearce, 2007, p.138).

Ontogenetically speaking, non-violence is of primary importance for psycho-physiological development. From early in human fetal development the organism has a reflexive tendency to withdraw from perceived harm (the Moro reflex), and the human nervous system and brain development, including physical, emotional and mental realms of development, is measurably affected by environmental factors of threat.

Non-violence is of utmost importance not only in our cultural history and initial human development, but also in the psychotherapeutic context for healing and updating of out dated beliefs and commitments. Here it is important to be aware of the fact that as humans “we must be in a state of relaxation to enter certain states of consciousness, these are states of consciousness where healing also occurs” (van den Kolk, 2002). It is therefore of primary importance for all therapists, including Hakomi therapists, to attend to safety and to develop skillfulness in creating and maintaining a healing context which allows for a person to feel safe enough to relax.

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E. T. Gendlin, one of the sources of inspiration for Ron Kurtz in his development of Hakomi, elegantly relays the needed gentleness of such relating with noting that: “Even if it is a cat or a bird, if you are trying to help a wounded bird, the first thing you have to know is that there is somebody in there, and that you have to wait for that ‘person,’ that being in there, to be in contact with you. That seems to me to be the most important thing.” (Gendlin 1990, here quoted in Kurtz, 2007, p.16)

In the recent decades of Hakomi development Ron Kurtz has named not only non-violent presence but ‘loving presence’ as a foundational principle. In collaboration with Donna Martin he developed the ‘loving presence series’ of exercises and sequences of practices for the refinement and deepening of this state of consciousness, as he found that it facilitates a sense of safety, deepening, and accessing of inner realms. In addition to this added principle Halko Weis, one of the eight founders and Ron Kurtz has discussed the inclusion of also ‘truthfulness’ as a principle.

Pioneering research in the field of contemporary neurosciences has scientifically identified some of the neuropsychological effects of human presence, loving presence and non-violence (Lewis et. al., Siegel, and Porges). In *A General theory of love* Lewis, Amini, and Lannon examine experimental research on the effect of nurturance on the behavioral and neurophysiology of rats. This research revealed that parts of the hippocampus died in rats who received very little nurturance. For rats who received a high degree of nurturance none of the hippocampus cells died, even when there was a context of low oxygen. The same pattern of the effect of nurturance on post-stroke damage and recovery was found in humans. Bessel van der Kolk found in his research with PTSD suffering individuals, that long term traumatic stress has as one of the neuropsychological effect a reduction in the size and functionality of the hippocampus of the limbic system.

So the hippocampus appears to be sensitive to the existence and experience of environmental nurturance and safety. The hippocampus is the main limbic neurological structure that in humans is responsible for processing of information from the beginning to the end of an event and experience, for moving information from implicit non-declarative realms of consciousness to explicit declarative modes of consciousness, and for placing experience within a context. Together with the hypothalamus and the amygdale the hippocampus is responsible for transferring information from implicit pre-reflective realms to explicit reflective memory realms, from unconscious to conscious reams of processing and knowing.

The above mentioned research reported by Lewis et al and Van Der Kolk alert us to the fact that a nurturing context characterized by safety is of utmost importance for the functioning of the hippocampus and therefore it follows for information processing to unfold. “So being in the presence

of someone who is calm, warm and caring – characteristics of loving presence - is, in and of itself, part of a healing experience” (Keller in Kurtz et. al, 2004, p.38).

“Loving presence” helps a person make connections between the emotional brain and the frontal lobes via which experience becomes conscious. Specifically loving presence affects the ability of the hippocampus to sort and process emotional experience into autobiographical memory.

By the state of the limbic areas of the brain that process emotion and regulate bodily state, we directly influence and in part “regulate” the limbic and cortical brains of others (Shore). Research on ‘mirror neurons’ have revealed that these neurons located in motor and pre-motor areas of our frontal cortex light up when we observe another having emotions or behaving (Dobbs, 2006). “The mother and infant regulate each other; they cause changes in each other’s hormone levels, heart rates, immune functions, neural rhythms, etc. So do husband and wives, fathers and sons, pet owners and their pets, and, of course, therapists and their clients. A calm therapist helps the anxious client regulate the hormonal and autonomic functions within her body that, at one level, are producing the anxiety” (Keller in Kurtz et al, 2004, p. 34).

In the psychotherapy encounter, “Non-violence is being mindful of organicity. It’s the recognition that there is a natural way that life ‘wants’ to unfold, and aligning ourselves with – not against – this organic, intelligent process” (Keller in Kurtz et. al. 2004, p. 40).

This shows up as not pushing your agendas, not forcing anything, not trying to control and direct when control and direction aren’t welcome. It’s leaving silences when the client needs silences and changing what you are doing to accommodate to what’s happening for the client, going along with what wants to happen. It also shows up as not pushing yourself, not trying too hard, being easy and relaxed. Your non-violence encourages trust and makes being in mindfulness easier for the client (Kurtz et. al. 2004, p.1).

“It means we support the client’s so-called defenses (his ‘management behaviors’); we don’t offer advice or interpretations; and we don’t ask questions unless doing so serves the client” (Kurtz et. al. 2004, p.40).

## **Conclusion II**

This article explores the grounding of Hakomi principles within the context of their inspirational sources in ancient wisdom traditions. These tradition-based principles are furthermore discussed and related to concepts and findings within the fields of consciousness studies, history of psychology, and the sciences of physics, biology, chemistry,

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and the neurosciences of neuropsychology, psychobiology, interpersonal neurobiology, and psychoneuroimmunology. As the article progresses the principles are specifically discussed in relationship to specifics of the organization and functioning of the human nervous system and psychological body-mind organization. On all of these levels the principles apply.

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*Learning consists in daily accumulating;  
The practice of Tao consists in daily diminishing.  
(Lao Tzu, 48)*

*When they think that they know the answers,  
people are difficult to guide.  
When they know that they don't know,  
people find their own way.  
(Lao Tzu, 65)*

*The Tao is empty (like a bowl).  
It may be used but its capacity  
is never exhausted.  
It is bottomless, perhaps the ancestor  
of all things . . . .  
It becomes one with the dusty world.  
(Lao Tzu, 4)*

*(Lao Tzu quoted in  
Johanson & Kurtz, Grace Unfolding, 1991)*