

Wholeness and Part(iality).

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Lecture at EFT congress Netherlands June 10th 2022

I have been thinking about the theme of this conference. I hope this thinking will mean something to you.

Let's start here

We are psychotherapists. As EFT psychotherapists, we share a vision on humankind. We understand the human being as necessarily, at its core, connected, attached, in search of attachment.

We understand the human being as born within attachment.

Psychotherapy always starts with the mental suffering of the patients, in a relationship with a therapist, who is "a healer",

a helper, who commits himself or herself to reduce the suffering in relationship with the clients to heal the human being and his relationships.

Therefore, psychotherapy does not start with a diagnosis. It starts with mental suffering. 'Mental' refers to processes of experience. To be clear this experience also includes mental suffering from physical problems.

When we help patients who are suffering from their cancer diagnosis, or from unexplained physical problems, as psychotherapists, we try to reduce their mental suffering. We do not aim to cure the cancer.

Allow me to emphasize that experience also needs a body.

The mental and the physical are not strictly distinguishable, physical processes feed the mental, are part of this mental process, and vice versa the mental has physical aspects.

In this sense, mental suffering is the basis of the connection between patients and therapist, because the suffering of the patient (system) connects with the caring (system) in the psychotherapist. This connection is the first care that we psychotherapists try to offer. We empathize with the mental suffering and try to convey a presence that says: 'you are not alone, I understand your suffering, I can possibly feel a part of it, I can resonate'.

When we succeed in installing this connection, psychotherapy is already on its way, already underway.

This is because, being alone, for the connected human, is equivalent to mentally dying, equivalent to not existing.

Seeing our experience mirrored, feeling a little understood in our experience is therefore 'existence'. This connection between the suffering of the patients and the care of the therapist, this offering of authentic connection by the therapist, is called the therapeutic relationship.

In relationship we become both *part* of a relationship and at the same time *whole*: we belong to humankind.

Research in psychotherapy has overwhelmingly shown that the quality of this relationship has a major impact on the effectiveness of psychotherapy. People who are felt in their mental suffering, meet someone who resonates. This resonance removes some of the loneliness. The patient is recognized as human, the people in relationship are recognized, their suffering is recognized.

In the recognition resides acknowledgment.

Only when acknowledged, does their suffering exist as meaningful. That is why it is less convenient that psychotherapy would start with a diagnosis. The recognition that is offered in a diagnosis has a more objectifying character. The relationship between the person giving the diagnosis and the object of diagnosis is less equal and has more the character of an I/it relationship. In connecting the suffering with care there is more of an I/Thou relationship, a collaborative relationship.

In addition, a care relationship that starts from a diagnosis is a relationship with a part of a person, and especially with the part of the patient that is 'sick', that does not function, that is 'broken'.

“We then might be chasing symptoms not healing people” to quote Bruce Perry.

By 'patient' I mean he/she who suffers. The whole person, not the diagnosis. The word 'patient' derives from the Latin 'patientia', which means suffering, toleration, perseverance, and patience. That's why I often prefer this term.

Because it better reflects the relational basis of psychotherapy. I do not object against the word 'client' for the person seeking help, if it means that the person is a full participant in the process. However, when client starts to act as a customer say like in the idiom: 'the client is king', then the therapist, or the doctor, in turn is reduced to an object, to a commodity.

Then we would take part in the Me-ness-Mania that we try to counterbalance in this conference.

To be clear, diagnoses are sometimes helpful as partial recognition, especially if they are used by us as healers as an 'empathetic bridge', to feel and be close to the other and their relational and their inner world.

Allow me to repeat my definition of psychotherapy one again: "Psychotherapy starts with the mental suffering of the patients, in a relationship with a therapist, who is "a healer", who is committed to reduce this suffering in relation with the clients and so healing the human being and his relationships."

From our view of humanity within EFT, the last part is a pleonasm: 'the human and his relationships.' This is like saying 'white snow'.

Maybe it is more correct to state that it should be a pleonasm. After all, the human hardly exists outside his/her relationships: in relationships we are seen and in this seeing we arise.

The individual does not exist in this sense, while loneliness does.

Although the line 'the human and his relationships' is a pleonasm, we better continue to use it. Because in our Western world, in our Western medicine, Western psychiatry, Western legislation, Western organization of care... we still usually start from the individual as a separate unit.

Also, the patients themselves, often do not attribute their suffering to problems in relationships or to a lack of relationships.

Partly this is a consequence of our culture being too focused on 'my' happiness, 'my' development, as if this were a stand-alone thing.

Fortunately, we see that differently in attachment. Attachment is always a process between people and in people, in the in-between the inner worlds are formed, and the inner world (of all) shape the relationships. Healing the person and his relationships is our mission, our quest.

Better than arguing further I want to suffice here with a short quote from Karl Ove Knausgard out the book Spring (p87). He talks about suicide and depression (sorry for the literary folks, it is I who translated out of Dutch). He writes:

"Suicide has as many reasons as there are suicidal persons, but what they all have in common is that somehow, they no longer have any bonds, that in them something else has become stronger than the bond, so that they can no longer allow that in which the Self lives.

This impossibility to make connections is often temporary, because this inner darkness, that stiffening of the soul into which nothing from the outside can

penetrate, this state which we call depression, is a state, it is acute but not unchanging:

Also, for the night of the soul there comes a day.

Somehow, we all know that, except for the one who commits suicide, for whom the darkness and pain are so severe that even the certainty that it will get better does not make it bearable.

For those the darkness and pain are so intense that even the sight of your own children is not enough to overcome the desire for the final dark, the death of the self."

End of citation.

If the individual is not the best 'whole' to consider in our view of humans, if we say we want to heal 'the human and his relationships', how can we think that 'whole' that we mean to heal?

I once coined the word 'Two-Brainenedness' as an attempt to describe this whole.

As a half-attempt to launch a new word.

Because language elevates experiences to unity, to wholeness. Language makes whole what is divided outside our ordering.

Eg. Without the word "love", all these different experiences, actions, interactions, and emotions would not belong to a whole.

Language always distinguishes to form entities, to form wholes, that we then can call by name.

For sure that is the case in the Western languages. Western languages tends to name things and attribute properties to things rather than to relationships. We say, 'my child is lazy', because the longer and more relational sentence: 'as a parent I am worried about the future of this child and his level of activity and his taking initiative, or lack thereof, this frightens me towards his future and that leads me to feel the urge to want to do something to prevent this anxious future out of concern, but I feel powerless'. This long sentence says the same thing as 'my child is lazy'. It is not as useful, as handy, as the short sentence where we attribute the trait to the child. But that is what we do, we attribute to entities what is in fact relational.

Because me too, I am trapped in language.

I can't help but think of a new word to propose an alternative to the pleonasm, to put a new word into the world that captures a different whole, calls this whole into entity.

This entity is implied in attachment thinking. So, what we seek to heal, that whole that suffers, is a human *and* his relationships, the human *in* his relationships.

The new word shows that we as persons transcend the boundaries of our skin.

This wholeness is hard to hold on to without a word to help us.

Today I would opt for 'multi-bodydness'. And I realize I cannot translate the difference I feel in Dutch between '*lijf*', and '*lichaam*' into the English language. "Lijf" in Dutch means to me a soulful body, the animated body. Anima being soul. The body we experience. That is what I refer to here, the body as a mental process.

We will not go into details what it means that we live in a specific language and that some words do not exist in a different language.

So, in basic Western language this wholeness cannot be conceptualized, cannot be experienced at once, it must be explained.

But the word 'two-brainedness' is already there. Essentially, I mean by it the same thing: the human and his relationships, the human being in his relationships. Thus, the human as participating in relationships and taking shape in relationships and as well as the human in a context of relationships.

As an aside, and this is a beautiful evolution, lets remark that EFT evolves from a couples therapy to a therapy with multiple modalities, always based on this image of healing the patient, the suffering person in his relationships and that this can be done both in EFIT, EFT for couples and EFFT. Thus making unity in the way to approach our patients. Where in all modalities the intrapsychic is relational and the relational in all modalities is intrapsychic. Forming a kind of wholeness in the world of psychotherapy. A therapy unified in theory. The same theory that provides a view on humankind in its essence and its

development, an understanding of suffering and healing, and a view on the healing process.

It's no coincidence that we often call this healing 'growth'.

Growth is closer to biology and 'living'. Growing up, developing what is potentially already there.

The theory of attachment shows that the unity of an individual's wholeness should not be limited to what goes on within the boundaries of the skin. Our interdependence as humans is not limited to our time in the womb. Although this does not mean that we do not take on functions ourselves as a fetus, we already recognize sounds and learn the rhythm of our mother tongue.

Formulated differently we could also say that the rhythm of the mother tongue forms patterns in the developing brains.

Biologically, we are focused on the other before and even more so after birth. After birth, we will send out signals that, in an interaction with the nearby parent, caregiver, will develop into patterns which patterns we will then attribute to the child, following the organization of the Western language.

For example, how we are best comforted. Anyone who has had more than one child knows that this is always different, although rhythm, closeness and warmth will be important anytime, the specific pattern of the comforting action will develop between this child and this parent.

Afterwards we will say: "he prefers that he be put over the shoulder and walked around".

By two-brainedness, I mean just that.

Trying to transform the language imperative so that we see the "us" in relationship.

So that the individual cannot be thought of as limited to this brain or to this body.

So that we understand the individual does not exist as an isolated person. That is the whole that I propose as an image of humanity in the concept of two-brainedness.

Perhaps the most important expression throughout life of this two-brained wholeness is the way we regulate our emotions. Or maybe more correct: how our emotions are regulated.

Some emotions, especially joy, only arise in two-brainedness, or multi-bodydness. We can enjoy music on our own, but we can only feel elation and go crazy with joy at a concert, carried away by the emotions of those other bodies around us. We can enjoy a soccer match on TV and only really get absorbed in it when others are watching and cheering together with us.

Jim Coan has shown that our perception also changes (we literally see differently) when there is a 'friend' next to us.

Jim's and Sue's research on holding hands shows that the perception of pain changes when a safe other holds our hand.

Not that we don't know that intuitively: that's how we comfort, that's the power of 'mother ointment' or a kiss on the child's pain.

In a more academic language, Coan calls his form of two-brainedness: 'the social baseline theory.'

It boils down to the fact that the individual is not the best unity, wholeness, to understand humans.

The basic state is the presence of the other.

In attachment terms another who is accessible, responsive, and engaged.

That's why couples therapy and family therapy are so potentially powerful. That important other is present. That is also why in EFIT the attention for the relationship with the other is always present. That is why we look for the how (not the what). We seek to discover how the interactional protection becomes a prison for the individual in his relationships and why we try to free the inner world and the relationship.

Therefore, we focus on the emotions and on emotions regulation in the threatened unity: two-brainedness.

In doing so, we rely on another aspect of two-brainedness, or multi-bodyness: we complement each other.

In love and connection, we are pluralistic, more than 'oneself'. Our self does not end with ourselves, then we are only selfish.

We also identify with a relational whole, with a relationship, with a family, with a group. And this identification then contributes to our identity.

We know that self-centeredness in love relationships leads to tension and ruptures. Then we perceive starting from ourselves, ending necessarily in economic thinking: we wonder if the give and take is balanced. Research told us long ago that this thinking is dangerous for the unity. Whereas in a world where a relationship is a whole, this give and take balance is a false question. In a relational world it is more appropriate to ask what I do for the whole? And what do you do for the whole? Instead of thinking in terms of what do you do for me and I for you.

In our human development, we naturally experience two brainedness with our children.

We form a duality with them.

We supplement what they cannot do and at the same time in this supplementation we give them the ability to slowly take over from us.

Most notably, we help children name what they feel: 'Are you afraid? Oh, there's something under your bed? Shall we have a look together? It's ok though, to be afraid mom/dad is here.'

We help our children to give words to their emotions, first we do this in the safe relationship with us. As you know, research shows that our brain calms down when emotions can be named.

'When you can name it you can tame it!'

I would suggest that this slogan is somewhat incomplete. The parent-child wholeness is somewhat obscured here. It is better to say:

'If you can name it a relationship you can tame it'.

That is what the child does, it says to the parent what it feels, it is not purely naming that brings calm. Naming in a safe relationship where what you name is seen and recognized, in which you are recognized, and your experience is seen as valid, that is the deeper two-brainy meaning of this line.

Therefore, we must see the whole as broader than the individual.

Of course, you recognize the background of the reasons why we rely on enactments. Enactments build on this naming in a relationship and thus assume a wholeness that transcends the individual.

We do this naming in language. With words. Words have the special property that they always create a whole and at the same time thus divide the world into parts. Because words distinguish. A table is not a chair. At the same time to describe a whole we again split it into parts. That also applies for the word 'wholeness'. Wholeness then automatically refers to an inner contradiction, unification, and division. To avoid that this inner contradiction be a problem we need to incorporate the ongoing dialogue between that the parts of the opposing forces.

So, we need to make wholes, and in doing so we divide the world into parts. To describe the whole, we then need to make parts again.

In our healing then we unify these parts in a process. In a relationship between parts, thus creating a whole, and a feeling of being whole on a metalevel.

And so on...

When we help our clients to feel what they feel, and to experience this as a whole, we do this in experiencing a relationship between parts or elements of an emotion: trigger, initial response, physical response, meaning and action tendency. Same with competing emotions or parts in a person. We work on the relationship between this competing emotions or parts of a person.

When these parts feel connected, we feel whole and owned. The self feels whole.

When we help to express this emotional whole, that makes us feel whole and Self. Thus, separated from the other.

To feel this whole other, to hear that meaningful other, in recognizing and in vibrating with that otherness a new healing arises, a new whole, a relationship, a connection.

Truly as Eft psychotherapists, we are healers.

Healer and wholeness are words connected with healing, health, and Holiness. This is also the case in Dutch: heler, heelheid, heiligheid. The connected word for health, being 'heil', although that word has become somewhat smothered in the period around the Second World War.

To come to a closure:

Referring to Bateson I can propose that it is necessary to respond to the 'interfaces', or the encounters, of different wholeness's with complexity. Complexity being different than complicatedness. Complexity being a feature of nature, complicated is what humans make. By wholeness (he speaks of systems) Bateson means both man, culture, and nature.

In fact, he means everything living, the so called Creatura.

This is a complex world. Complexity, according to my understanding, then refers to the dialectical opposite of simplifying, of using, of buying, of categorizing, in brief to the opposite of power from one over the other. This is where things get complicated.

When we cannot realize dialogue in interconnectedness the 'parts' become 'parties' and tend to become simple. And live becomes complicated.

'I believe opening dialogue demands love, courage, and a vision of our being part of a larger whole'.

Bateson writes:

"It presupposes at least seeing one's own complexity and the complexity of the other. So that a forest is not just wood that can be cut down, but an ecosystem".

He then proposes the possibility that together we form an overarching whole, connected through a network of mental processes. Such conception/perception of self and other, connected through mental processes, united in an overarching whole is the confirmation of what he calls the Sacred, the Holy.

Whenever we feel in connection with 'the other', with the whole, then we recognize the whole in us, then we are in the miracle of the living. We are in the Holy.

That whole, when it concerns the human (but probably for most living things), then has a subjective experience of this reality. To cite Heinz von Foerster "It is syntactically and semantically correct to say that subjective statements are made by subjects. Thus, correspondingly, we may say that objective statements are made by objects. It is only too bad that these damned things don't make any statements at all." (Heinz Von Foerster, 1976, p. 16).

Being in the miracle of living forms 'Holy' moments.

Being able to help subjects reconnect, subjects who are disconnected in difference, subjects who lost connection with themselves, to form a whole again, to help them feel part of a larger whole, to experience their selves as whole, is why we are so eager to do EFT because now and then,

occasionally,
we may participate,
be part of,
a Holiness in moments when a person, a couple, a parent and a child, are
briefly in synchrony, in harmony, and forget that they are separate, while being
themselves in this relationship, being whole in this relationship that at the
same time transcends them.

In those Sacred moments we are without words and yet we know!

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