

THE EVOLUTION OF SEXUAL INTIMACY IN OUR TIME

PART 1: BACKGROUND AND PRESENT STATE

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There is a deep longing in creation for unifying through the separation of earthly existence. No sooner has a new baby been born out of the body of his mother he/she longs with to reunite with her through her breast and her milk. That urge to reunite with the body of the mother will not fade for many years. It will later be transformed into another urge for uniting with another human body: sexual intimacy. No sooner we start to be able to imagine separating from our parents, the longing for the new intimate unity is already pulsating within us.



The origin of longing for sexual intimacy is as long as the separation of the sexes into man and woman. Some ancient traditions trace this back to Old Lemuria, before Atlantis. There, still in so-called paradise, even before the original sin took place, the separation of the original androgynous Adam into Adam and Eve took place, peacefully at least on the surface. We are told that as soon as they had separated they reunited again as man and woman to become one flesh. Ever since then, we repeat that ancient ritual in every generation - as soon as we transform from innocent children into the separated sexes by becoming sexual male and female in our adolescence – our sexual desire to unite with the opposite sex becomes a compelling driving force for the rest of our lives.

So far there's nothing new. So what has evolution got to do with human sexuality? It has been there since time immemorial. As everything human is in a constant process of evolution, so is sexuality. Change seems to be the essential nature of being human, both individually and collectively. It is unimaginable for most of us that our science, technology, economy, art, music, film, world views, philosophies, work, our political, social, educational, and environmental attitudes, gender roles, social interaction, IT, healthcare, personal relationship, patterns of parenthood, self images, will be for us what they have been for our parents; will be the same now as they were even ten even years ago. We are in a constant conscious evolution. Those who do not evolve are left behind. Those whose ideals are moored in the past are considered stuck and irrelevant for many, certainly not in inspiring leading positions. It should come as no surprise to anyone that patterns, styles and the meaning of sexual intimacy are also undergoing a rapid process of evolution.

Sexual patterns have been changing for at least the past sixty years. I keep asking audiences in my lecture tours in various countries how many people in the room would consciously choose to repeat with their intimate partners, the patterns of intimate relationship that they observed in their parents. Most of the time no-one lifts their hands at all. Once in a while, may be one in fifty people will say

yes. We all know that something different is possible in sexual intimacy than what we have learnt from our parents, and from what we had done ourselves in our biographical past. But what that difference actually is, is difficult to define.

In the past, sexual intercourse used to be considered as a necessary evil for the propagation of children, a duty for women and a socially acceptable obsession for men. It is still so in many quarters. But for most of us sex has a powerful reality and life of its own, and to freely choose to act on mutual sexual attraction is essential for the formation of relationship and families in all free countries, and marriage is by no means the end of sexual exploration. Sex for most of us is not a matter of reproduction. What is it about then?

It is our expression of longing for unity through separation, an expression of desire and an expression of love. But it is more than these? Sexuality has a definite life of its own. It has its own will. It is as if a part of nature itself lives through our personal needs, expressing its own life. It is a force of nature taking place through us in the most intimate act of creation; through our individual sexual life. I believe that this is part of the huge appeal of sexual expression: it is the most intimate connection of human experience and nature itself, from the inside. Not much in human life can quite match this primordial fusion with nature. The power of sexual expression does not seem to be losing momentum for human, social and artistic life through the generations since biblical times.

Before dealing with the therapeutic/developmental aspects of sexual intimacy from the observation of a practitioner of counselling, let us have a look at some old deep insights about its meaning in past and future. In many ancient traditions sexuality was seen as a metaphor for higher dimensions of consciousness. Even the austere Old Testament included the Songs of Songs of Solomon, one of the most graphically erotic poetry of the ancient world, in the sacred codex. Why? – It is because sexual desire and intercourse were considered a symbol for the intimate relationship between the human soul and the divine. It was a subject of the most rigorous interpretations for the life of mystics. In Christianity, the monks and the nuns are ‘brides of Christ’. They are not necessarily people with no sexual intimacy, but their sexual life is expected to be directed towards the divine, transformed into a bridge to the spiritual life. Echoes of this approach to sexuality are to be found in all mystical traditions, east and west: Hindu, Buddhism, Tantra, Sufis, Gnostics, and Tao. Aspiring to the spiritual dimension of sexual life was always there in human culture. For the ancient Greeks there were three names for love: Eros for sexual love, Philia for emotional love, Agape for spiritual love. There was no hierarchy between them, they were all considered divine; they were all names of gods. Some of these ancient attitudes are returning in recent decades in Europe, through the partial adoption of eastern traditions in western versions of them. The search continues.

In some approaches to human development, sexuality is considered a fundamental life force. Rudolf Steiner speaks about seven *Life Processes* underlying human physiology: breathing, warming, nurturing, secretion, maintenance, growth and reproduction. Reproduction is the deepest underlying life force, capable of transforming the life force itself into a complete renewal. All these life processes have implications beyond the physical level; they affect all dimensions of human life, physically,

emotionally, culturally and spiritually. This is the basis of the psycho-spiritual-somatic continuum without which healthcare and human development stays on the surface. In the case of the Reproduction life force – the higher dimension include vitality and creativity. It is possible that creativity, the ability to create something completely new or to transform old reality into a new one – is a higher expression of one's sexual energy. It could be that blocked, exhausted, un-nurtured and neglected sexuality results in low levels of creativity. It is therefore also possible that this connection works in the opposite direction as well: that a creative vibrant life enhances one's sexual vitality.

People and relationship patterns are changing. I am still to meet a woman who has not experienced a drastic transition in her relationship to her own sexuality and her sexual life around the age of 33 years. It seems to me to be a universal phenomenon that around that age, the separation between the woman's soul and the woman's body becomes unbearable. Whatever sexual habit a couple may have established in their 20s - when most first marriages take place – it will have to change drastically across the early 30s, at least for the woman. It is never healthy for a woman to be used as a sexual object for the gratification of a man's desire, but after that age such a practice becomes progressively destructive. If you touch a body of a woman after that age – you touch a soul. Who is going to teach men about that transition when they do not grow to realise it for themselves? The quality of touch itself has to evolve: from taking into giving, from serving desire to serving love, from touching a body to touching a soul. If men do not go through this transition, they lose their women, or they lose whatever sexual intimacy they had with them before. They mostly do not know how it happened. I am trying here to tell them something about how it happens: There is sexuality to be found in the depth of a woman's heart, but you have to find the new door for it, and it might not be where you used to find it before.

I wish to say to women: There is a man's heart to be found in the depth of man's sexuality. It is there. The man may not know about it consciously, he may not be able to reflect and to talk about it to you - but it is there if you look for it. If you only knew how much it means for men to unite with you sexually, to be welcomed into your bodies, into your soul, to be trusted, to be wanted, to be chosen, to be touched intimately; to be the one that you want close to you. Men do not know how to express it to you. But you mean to men so much more than men normally manage to communicate to you. I will be surprised to find any man who does not feel it in the depth of their soul.

I wish to say to both men and women who do not know it already or who are not talking about it: sexual intimacy can be renewed and re-enlivened if we truly communicate our depth and vulnerability and innocence and deep needs to each other. But it cannot be renewed if we don't find a new way to talk about it.

In part 2 of this article I will be writing about the potential for sexual healing and development, and of the potential role and contribution that Psychophonetics can make to human development in this regard. What can sexual development and healing consist of?