

# INTIMACY IS A WORK OF ART

AUTOR: Yehuda Tagar

Sex has been with us since ancient times, and love in its various forms has always been a basic human value. But intimacy is new. Although it is such a fundamental component of today's interpersonal relationships, so important in creating families, so highly valued as an important source of personal happiness, intimacy remains a mystery. Most people perceive that intimacy is either a part of a partner relationship if you are one of the luckier ones, or if you are not, you are simply out of luck. Relationships, sex life, marriage and love can survive to a certain level without intimacy, but the soul, heart and their energy cannot.

Sex and sexual desires have always been around, or at least since the legendary separation of species in the ancient past (see Plato, Symposium). Humans and mammals have had sexual organs, sexual desires and sexual intercourse since their inception. Human reproduction is still the same, it hasn't changed much since the beginning of the human species.

But animals show no intention to change their sexual and reproductive habits. Human being's relationship to sexuality, on the other hand, keeps changing rapidly in recent times, especially since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There were always stories of special people who had special love and sexual experiences on which novels, poems and folklore were based: Rebecca fell in love with Isaac on first sight (and consequently fell from her camel) with Isaac, son of Abraham; Jacob fell in fatal love with Rachel and Potiphar's wife fell in desperate lust with Josef (the slave to become head of state) in ancient Egypt, all recorded in the old Bible. The ancient Greek spoke about the joys and powers of love, lust and sexuality without a hint of shame, and renaissance dramas and 19<sup>th</sup> Century novels and 20<sup>th</sup> century movie stars celebrated romance, but intimacy was not much of a topic until the 60's, with the erotic and intimate poetry of Sappho of Lesbos making one of the few exception in the ancient world. Most people married in accord with custom and parental choices, procreated and got on with life, without great expectation of romance, love and intimacy. Love itself was considered a duty: *"I love your majesty According to my bond; nor more nor less"* said Cordelia to her father King Lear in Shakespeare's masterpiece. Yet in recent decades intimacy is the highest value in all intimate relationships, and we cannot even designate sexual relationship without the term 'intimate'. Intimacy entered our lives forcefully very recently.

Checking the entomological dictionary I found that in Old Latin there was a word 'intimus' meaning – the innermost. There was another Old Latin word 'intimare' meaning- to make familiar. And suddenly, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century a new word appeared in Late Latin: *INTIMATUS* meaning intimacy, a relatively recent development.

In light of all the above I came to the following conclusion: sexuality was always there since the legendary division of the sexes from the androgyne into male and female. The individuation process, leading to the formation of individual personality and independence of thinking is an on-going process, started in the Renaissance, accelerated since the Enlightenment and made into a widespread public phenomena since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century everywhere. *Intimacy is a product of the meeting of these two streams, sexuality and individuality in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Intimacy is as new as empathy.*

In my observation the strongest element in sexual desire is the longing to reach a momentary unity through the fundamental experience of separateness. For a moment, in the peak of the sexual act – the two become one. And for a moment – a deep drive to become again one with nature, humanity and the universe through the union of a man's body with a woman's body (or same sex intimacy) – that is sexual desire on the most fundamental level. It is inscribed into our bodies, as Plato describes it in his Symposium, as a primordial force. As Leonard Cohen sang: "And the blessing comes from Heaven, and for something like a second, I was cured, and my heart was at ease" (Light as a Breeze).

In recent times we, humans, have made sexuality into a soul dynamics. A cosmic and a natural process became for us a personal, emotional, soul process. The natural desire became for us a soul longing for unity, and that longing became intimacy, connecting the 'Intimus', the inner-most component of the soul, with the 'Intimare' – making the other familiar – into 'Intimatus' – intimate partner.

That means that intimacy is an act of creation between two individuals when they unite sexually not only in body, but also in soul. People can unite sexually with people that they do not feel intimate with, and we can all love people without sexual attraction to them. But we can only be intimate with people that we both love *and* feel sexually attracted to – when we become close to them. *In intimacy the body becomes a soul; the soul expresses itself sexually. That is a new human creation.*

And if intimacy is a new human creation – then the creation and re-creation of intimacy is potentially in our control. It can be created and restored, up to a point.

Let us have a closer look at what is given and cannot be change and at what can be changed, heal and developed in sexuality, intimacy and intimate relationship:

For sexual activity to take place there is a need for good conditions on three levels at least:

1) on the physical level the sexual organs and their support systems have to be in good order: primarily the cardio-vascular system enabling healthy blood flow to the genital areas, nutrients have to be in good supply, endocrinology (hormones) system well functioning and the neurological channels in good communication with each other.

2) On the Life-Body level sexuality is energy, the Reproductive life force. It is a major component of the vital body, underlying the energy of the body as a whole. Exhausted bodies cannot function well sexually. There are many factors, physiology, life style, mental, emotional and interpersonal conditions that can enhance or suppress sexual energy; 3) on the Astral or Sentient-Body level sexuality is *desire*, sometimes called Libido. It has life of itself, much as the physical and the Life-Bodies do. It has constitutional hereditary elements but it also responds to biographical, mental, emotional, interpersonal factors and to various levels and types of stimuli. What arouses people sexually is highly individual but for sexual arousal and function desire has to be awakened universally.

At any given point in time the state of physiological, energy and desire in relation to another human being – is a given fact. Attraction is practically impossible to manufacture. It is a matter of chemistry and alchemy, coincidence of life, or, if you believe it, of karma.

The next basic component of intimacy is the presence of love. The event of two people opening their hearts and their bodies to each other at the same time is always a miracle, a gift of life and destiny, a given fact, like sexual attraction.

But other factors essential for intimacy are potentially in our control:

- Mutual respect – without it intimacy cannot grow; it can be restored;
- Interest in each other – without it all relationships stay on the surface. It can evolve;
- Management of interpersonal complexity – in every one there are past destructive patterns of defensive, reactive, projective behaviors that can destroy intimacy. The willingness and skill to explore and to manage these inner structures determine if intimacy keeps blossoming or dies.
- Healing – intimate relationship brings up to the surface everything in the soul that needs healing. All the old wounds will be projected into the intimate meeting. If the opportunity of intimacy is used for healing – intimacy grows. If not – intimacy will sooner or later be destroyed.
- Trust – this fragile element enables the risk of opening up, being vulnerable, visible and naked on many levels. Easily broken, damaged and lost, difficult to restore, hard work to maintain, but possible.
- **Empathy and intimacy are sisters.** Both created recently at the same point of human evolution. Empathy enables intimacy to grow. It is a new capacity in human evolution (not in any dictionary before 1951, and still in its infancy). There can be empathy without intimacy, but intimacy without pro-active empathy is short lived.

Considering empathy as a major ingredient of creating and restoring intimacy – I can say with certainty that intimacy is a work of art. As in any art – there must be real, given ingredients to work with: colors for painting, words for poetry, clay for sculpting. Functioning body, living soul, sexual attraction and love – are the raw materials required for intimacy. Initially growing naturally between people who bring together the above ingredients – it is an initial, fragile, endangered gift. Respect, interest, self-management and healing are required for intimacy to stay alive and to grow. Combined with the conscious skill of empathy – they can grow and be restored, making intimacy into a masterpiece of collaborative artists.

Empathy can evolve consciously and methodically. It is the future of humanity. No one yet can claim to be an expert in empathy. It is too young for that. We are all beginners in empathy.

But everyone can make everyday a new step in the cultivation of empathy.

And everyone can become an artist of intimate relationship.

-----

Yehuda Tagar, Bernolakovo, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018