

TOUCHING THE SOUL: A Sexual Dilemma

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ABSTRACT:

I wrote the original article, *Touching the Soul*, for the Folio in 1992. The content was not particularly on my mind until the topic of the piece came up at the 2015 International in Seattle — apparently the subject had *touched* a group of people there, who strongly suggested that I consider re-publishing it (since we've gotten a lot of new members in the past 20-plus years). In looking the article over, I realized that the content is as relevant now, almost 24 years later, as it was at the original writing.

And, as I wrote the first time around, as profound as the subject matter seems to be — at least to me — I don't see/hear/experience anyone discussing this topic or making mention of it, any more than I did 24 years ago...ummm...

So, with some updated revisions (and deletions), I would like to address this topic once again, and as I requested the first time around, please see/notice/observe whether the theme *resonates* with your own *direct experience*, or strikes a chord of familiarity and resonance.

I will end this abstract with the last line of the original article: If the content *moves you*, my hope is that more dialogue will ensue, because we are talking about the essence of human-spiritual connection: *Touching the Soul*.

TOUCHING THE SOUL: A SEXUAL DILEMMA

“When love is the only residue of all your accounts with the Earth, then will the Earth acquit you of your debt.” —The Book of Mirdad

This article is about sex — sort of.

It is about a particular aspect of *attraction* to other people for which we don't currently have a term-of-expression in our present culture. It is about that aspect of loving, caring, and even passionate attractions between growing, evolving people, that are meant to be non-sexual and non-romantic, yet feel *magnetic, powerful*, and often *irresistible*.

On a metaphysical level, the experience is one of an overwhelming outpouring of the heart, which draws two or more people together with such a passion and sense of bonding that the feelings one *carries inside* might, due to lack of language, be confused with sexual

attraction. Barbara Marx Hubbard (Hubbard, 1976) called this phenomenon “supra-sex”, a term which only partially resonates for me. I’ve toyed with *meta-sex*, *Divine Intimacy*, and *meta-relationship*, but these terms don’t-quite-fit either.

I have been exploring metaphysics, spirituality, and personal growth for some 40-plus years now. Over the course of that time I have noticed a most interesting and dynamic phenomenon: People are falling in love with each other at an increasingly rapid rate — and *no*, I am not referring here to any and all people. I am referring specifically to those people/beings who pursue *inner work* (also referred to as ‘spirituality’) as a matter of course; people who have experienced *opening up interiorly* and have made a profound connection with others; people who know about love and loving in a safe and trusting atmosphere, and who consciously seek out others’ who also seem to be operating from these *supra-aware* channels. I also have some concern (and the motivation for writing this piece) for those people who are just beginning to experience ‘awakening consciousness’ — especially collectively with others — and don’t yet have the vocabulary or structure to describe the complexity and intricacy of this *inner journey*; people who might be confused or distressed as to what may be happening to them. Let me begin, by trying to articulate what exactly this *supra-experience* is:

When we experience this connected and attuned type of relationship, something in us connects with “the more” (Gendlin, 1981) in ourselves, and consequently *the more* in others. In the field of metaphysics we might refer to this phenomenon as *soul-to-soul contact*. It is an experience of being ‘touched’ so deeply, so totally by another, that in the actual moment of the experiencing, there are, in all probability, no words to articulate the complexity of multiple feelings that arise.

The experience is of seeing other people beyond their ‘form’, beyond their limitations as human beings. It is a seeing and knowing someone from such a *highly connected place*, that the heart feels as if it might explode from the ecstatic rush of connection, synchronicity, and unity. In-the-moment one feels totally *heard, seen, acknowledged* — at the deepest level of *being*. There is, in that magical moment, an *experiencing* of one’s own *existence as a soul*, a space where we truly *see ourselves* clearly — reflected in the heart and eyes of another.

The result of this type of experience is very complex: There is an enormous amount of *highly charged energy*, which I would like to suggest, has not been adequately addressed, especially in the context of: What are we supposed to *do* with it!

This connection, as I have experienced it (and observed with others), can happen on one or more levels of consciousness, simultaneously. I therefore have no qualms about calling this multi-leveled-magical-experience *supra-simultaneous-orgasm* or *meta-physical orgasm* (the orgasm part is not the issue!)

Let us explore some of the levels on which this experience might occur:

On the *etheric, vital* or *sentient* level (also referred to as the ‘energy body’) the experience can be registered as an impactful, sensitive, and sensuous attunement that includes:

- Sensing the non-verbal energy of another with such clarity, that it feels as if the other was actually speaking aloud.
- Being able to ‘read’ someone else’s mind/heart/feelings at an energetic level.
- Feeling the impulse to move with another (e.g. dance, walk in perfect sync, sing, play music) in order to create a further sense of unison, or harmony.
- Sensing of physical fluidity with another: non-sexual, yet a powerfully energetic ‘high’ — and — sometimes very confusing for the spiritual neophyte.
- Fine-tuned sensing of another’s feeling-states (as if they were our own).
- Feeling as if you are *inside* of another’s feelings with a seemingly complete recognition and felt-understanding of how they are inside.

While the above points are not necessarily erotic, they are certainly alluring as in: *magnetic, irresistibly drawn to, and stimulating* (to the senses). On the mental level, a term that comes to mind for this *supra-aware* experience is *telepathic rapport*. It is something like being able to read another’s thoughts, finish another’s sentences, and *knowing directly* someone else’s thought-flow process. There is a sense of rapture, as two minds intertwine and connect in a *like-minded way*, whether the connection is around philosophy, points of view, common interests, or simply a sense of joint-knowing: *knowing-that-you-know*, knowing that the other knows exactly the same thing that you know — the *ah ha!* experience. The energy of these encounters can be so intense and finely tuned, that *mind-blowing* and *mentally orgasmic* are two terms I have often used to describe the experience or *state of mind* to myself.

Then there is what we might loosely refer to as *soul-alignment* or spiritual *at-one-ment*. This level of connection is multi-dimensional, however the key feature (in my experience) is an opening of the heart that is so full, so richly powerful, that it feels as if one might burst from the overwhelming feeling of the *outpouring* and *incoming energy* of love. As a former teacher of mine expressed it:

“We are all walking tuning forks with our own unique notes, pitches, and tonalities which may be sympathetically triggered by others in the environment...it is all a question of reverberation, resonance, and synchronicity...”

Although the experience of *soul-alignment* is not necessarily a sexual attraction, the terms we use to describe an actual sexual experience also fit the description of this *supra-spiritual-connection*.

- **Internal foreplay:** The budding awareness that two or more people are ‘touching’ into the *world of ideas* as they explore together shared visions, ideâals, feelings....
- **Intensity:** The gradual build-up of energy as minds/souls intertwine around various subjects, the inner sense of which is, *Yes! Me, too, that’s exactly the way I have it!!*
- **Simultaneous peak experience:** A crescendo feeling, so intense that words are lost and sometimes narrowed-down to the most simplistic language like *Wow!*

- **Orgasmic:** Explosive — as in *shared revelation* and *shared understanding*.
- **Release:** A gentle winding down, a joyful feeling of being ‘spent’.

It is interesting to note that we often have such intense connections with people that we actually limit the amount of time we can *bear* to spend with them as there is, in addition to the feeling of elation in these interactions, often a feeling of exhaustion that comes with the discharge of so much internal energy (for example, staying up all night in rapt conversation).

To complicate matters further, this supra-sexual experience is definitely *not* a monogamous one, and since monogamy is considered the norm in our culture, I believe that we need to address — very open-mindedly — how we are to handle and feel comfortable with the dynamics of falling in love with more than one soul/being at a time — sometimes with many beings in a lifetime — especially if we are in a committed dyadic relationship.

I vividly recall the developing process around this whole topic of *supra-connection*, and where I started to address the subject openly for the first time. It started in the 80’s during the Focusing Week-longs that I co-taught with Mary McGuire at Villa Redeemer. In brief, by the middle of the training of intense (and also playful) psychological work, the participants were so connected and so attuned to each other (both as individuals and as a whole group) that some participants began to question the relationships and lifestyles they’d left at home. As group leaders, we started feeling some concern as we watched attractions forming, and participants questioning: *Why doesn’t my mate understand me this way? Why doesn’t s/he listen to me this way? Why do I feel more valued and nurtured here, with people I’ve just met, than I do with anyone at home?* Needless to say we not only addressed the subject openly, we made a habit (on the last morning of the training) of spending almost an hour addressing the process (and potential problems) of *re-entry* back to the life that the participants were returning to at home.

(As a parenthetical aside, I have often wondered whether these non-monogamous spiritual attractions might have been the downfall of many of the intentional-live-in communities of the 60’s and 70’s, where nuclear families dissolved and dissipated into the power, pull, and energy of the larger group — a subject for another paper!)

If I had to identify a ‘bottom line’, I’d say that the issue of *meta-attraction* boils down to one word: ENERGY — its flow, its direction, and our ability to manage that energy — *wisely*.

Some background:

The science of Yoga deals with the complexity of how energy is used, stored, spent, flows, and controlled. In particular is the systematic study of the chakras: wheels or vortexes of energy located in the *etheric body*. These energy centers correspond to the endocrine system in the physical body.

Briefly:

There are 7 chakras or energy centers: 3 below the diaphragm (base of spine, sacral center, and solar plexus) which correspond to the instinctive, animalistic, and personality nature of human beings, and 4 above the diaphragm (heart, throat, pineal gland or 3rd

eye, and top of the skull) which correspond to a person's intuitive and spiritual nature. By controlling, directing, and elevating, i.e. *drawing up* this energy, one gradually learns, with practice, to transmute the substance of personal will and ego, (sometimes called "the lower self") "What *I* want", into a more refined, sensitive, and compassionate vehicle for service, "What is *wanted* of me?" (asked by the 'Higher Self', or Soul).

This ingenious and scientific system works. The only problem (especially as it was initially intended by the yogis in ancient times) is that its end result was a sort of celibate and transcendent state — in itself a remarkable *state-of-being* that takes one internally to lofty and subtle levels of meditation and consciousness. However, this ancient system does not deal with how we share these states *interactionally*, or how we are to cope with the tremendous and sometimes overwhelming attractions we feel towards others *as the heart opens up into greater inclusiveness and compassion* — which brings us full circle to the dilemma of: What are we supposed *to do* with this energy?

As I ponder this question, the first word that comes is *tolerance*, and I am not here referring to the concepts of empathy and understanding. I am meaning the ability to *bear* it: to *withstand* increasingly higher levels of what we might call *energetic* or *spiritual voltage*, enlarging our capacity to *tolerate* and *bear the* intensity and force of this *meta* energy, or *supra aware* experience. (Think of the difference between the thick wiring on your washing machine and dryer, verses the thin wire on your bedside lamp.) The point: *We need proper wiring to handle the increased voltage!*

Another set of words that fit for me are *discipline* and *concentration*: Equipping our energy systems to remain centered, stable, and comfortable through the intensity of these profound energy exchanges. Practices such as yoga, meditation, Tai Chi, martial arts, and even regular aerobic exercises prepare the body for this increasing energetic voltage. The practice of Focusing, developed by Eugene Gendlin, Ph.D. teaches a way of listening *inside* to the *bodily felt-sense* of our experience in order to articulate (to ourselves) our own unique, *internalized understanding* of life, situations, and inner complexity.

In metaphysical parlance we might describe the meta-energy-experience in this way: *As the soul increasingly makes its presence felt in an attempt to impress itself upon the untrained (and often unruly) personality, there is often a backlash of resistance from that personality (or Critic) as it tries to maintain the status quo.*

In Experiential Psychotherapy (and using Focusing-oriented terms here) the same statement might be expressed in this way: As the Self (or adult-self) becomes more present and prevalent, allowing the inner *felt-sense* to express itself more freely, sub-personalities, or *parts* — fearful of loosing their power — attempt to resist and block the new incoming energy to maintain homeostasis, or the status quo.

No matter what *linguistic terminology* we use, we can safely say that *concentration* is sporadic, *discipline* is not yet grounded, and *tolerance* for the whole issue of personal and spiritual development (with its consequent light and dark periods and intense energy cycles) is frequently questioned. The student often finds him/her self in fluctuating states of supra or ill health, or battling bouts of obsessive-compulsive behaviors (a retaliation by the sub-personalities or *parts*) to the newly imposed rhythms of the Soul or Self — only to be balanced days or weeks later by periods of extreme peace and calm. In metaphysics, this

yo-yo period is often referred to as the *schizophrenic phase of discipleship*. In Focusing we often talk about stabilizing or *protecting 'the new'* and *trusting the process*.

Over time, as a new rhythm is established between the Soul and personality, or between the Self and all of its various un-integrated parts; a higher tolerance is reached at every level of consciousness. The body becomes stronger and is able to cope with and channel the increasing voltage and frequency of energy (think thicker wiring). The mind becomes more still, more thoughtful, more contemplative, and is able to focus and concentrate for increasingly longer periods of time. The heart begins to open toward the authentic Self — and the authentic Self of others; there is an increased sense of compassion, empathy, and a feeling of global connectedness. The urge-to-service becomes stronger, as does the ability to stay balanced in the swirl of incoming energies and forces — what John Lilly referred to as “*remaining still in the center of the cyclone*”. Focusing calls it “*holding the space*”. It means being solid as a rock in the tumultuous process of growth, events, and unexpected turmoil — for ourselves and others. It means learning about, safety, strength, and inner stability, for ourselves and others.

It is around this time of increasing spiritual awareness that we start becoming attracted to — and attracting to ourselves — like-minded, like-souled, like-energied beings; people that we *sense* or *intuitively know* have tread or are treading very similar paths to our own; people with whom we feel connected, understood by, *instantly and empathically*, although we don't know their history or their personal stories — yet. Curiously, it is only on the physical plane that we use the term “opposites attract.” In metaphysical terminology the Law of Attraction states that: “*Like attracts like.*” (Bailey, 1970.)

At this more advanced stage of connection, many people find themselves falling madly and passionately in love with other beings — in mind, heart, and soul. They are not necessarily experiencing sexual attraction, yet the feelings are as powerful and overwhelming as any initial courtship: intense desire to be with, constant thought about, feelings of emptiness without the other, magnetic pull toward...

Some people find themselves in a panic due to lack of language or structure of this meta experience — and consequent lack of reasonable explanations as to what might be happening to them: *I'm already in a relationship. Does this mean I'm no longer in love with my mate?...that I want to cheat on my partner?* Where there is a strong resonance with someone of the same sex, one may wonder: *Am I gay?* Or the situation is interpreted as a spiritual crisis: *This must be a test about learning to control my emotions.* Some people shut down and withdraw: *Too many people, too much energy, too vulnerable and scary...*

Others allow for and learn to *contain* the increase of this dynamic energy — something like developing a new, thicker wiring system to handle the higher voltage. Some turn to sexual expression and may later regret it because literally, the *felt-sense* of a supra-sexual experience and the actual physical sexual act don't *fit or match*. Is it any wonder that people experience confusion and sometimes burnout from these encounters!

I have experienced this phenomenon countless times, both with individuals, as well as at certain large group gatherings and workshops where there is a build-up of intense group energy. I particularly recall a conference that I attended a number of years ago in Chicago. The group was one that I had been affiliated with for many years, and in which I had many

good friends and colleagues. I looked around the circle in the opening session. There were 79 people at that gathering. I knew about 65 of them. Of the 65, I still held close to my heart some profound one-to-one connections that I'd had with some of them in the past, plus some powerfully deep small-group-connections — in addition to an ongoing-history with many of them — and I distinctly remember wondering, in a passing moment of sensory-overwhelm: *How am I possibly going to connect meaningfully with all of the people I care about here — not to mention the ones I want to know better!* This is the *dilemma of the soul* when it is *touched* by the spirit of universal love and connection. I am clear that there is no one-answer to address these issues. I am also clear that the more these issues are addressed the more answers there will be.

Whatever work we do — meaning both outer work (our jobs) and inner work (our personal inner paths/journeys) — inherently has, in all probability, some structure and discipline that safely *holds the space*. Structure and discipline are often related to time: We know when we work, and when the workday ends. We make time to exercise, socialize, eat, sleep and relax. Hopefully, we plan time for thinking, for creativity, reflection, and integration of new ideas, and concepts. If we are consciously treading a spiritual path, then in all probability we also have various practices and structures designed to bring discipline to our bodies, emotions, and minds — and we make time for those practices. Now I wonder whether we need to create some kind of model or form to address the possible ways that we might better manage the enormous output of energy that happens as we collectively tread the path of consciousness with others? Certainly, we need to *name* and *label* this *meta-magnetism*, if we want to have a more viable *structure to contain it*.

Consider the word *acknowledgment*, which according to Webster means, “to admit as true; to give thanks for; to reward”. Perhaps we need, as a possible step, to articulate and validate *as true*, this heightened, shared energy-experience. Perhaps we need to gather more information about others’ experiences, sharing our own in the process.

Another step might be learning to *bear-it-together*, meaning open discussion with others while this intense experience is occurring: *Are you feeling this too? What is happening in you, right now...? This is what is happening in me, right now*. It seems that this kind of interaction would involve tremendous self-permission to have, own, and enjoy the intense pleasure of these feelings and interactions. If I may be so bold, I feel that many people have difficulty fully experiencing the sensations of pleasure and aliveness on a physical sexual level. On this Meta level, the dynamics can be even more complex and often more powerful since (it seems to me) *the touch of the soul to the human heart out-performs and out-lives, in felt-memory, the touch of the human anatomy*.

Finally, I believe that we need to address this energy phenomenon more openly and more often. As the planet continues to shrink, as we increasingly experience ourselves as part of the ‘global village’, as we become more interconnected and aware of each other, we are going to find ourselves falling passionately in love with more and more beings. We will increasingly be ‘touched’ by their ideas, their dreams, their creativity and potential, and we may be most *touched* by their willingness and ability to love (us!)

In the Focusing community, there is a structure for planned time to be together in a particular kind of relationship called, ‘Focusing Partnerships’. These are ‘couples’ (same or opposite sex is irrelevant), some of whom have been meeting together on a regular basis

for years, (usually weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly) to share time for Focusing/listening and processing, in equal turns. (I often call it “free therapy”.) According to some of Janet Klein’s research (on which she did her doctoral thesis) many of these relationships contain the fundamentals of a solid marriage (excluding sex): intimacy, caring, sharing, friendship, attunement, shared sacred space, comfort and ease. The Focusing process may hold personal solutions in a deeply personal, highly individualistic way — and if the Focusing process can actually contribute to the understanding of this human capacity to love and connect, the outcome could conceivably be of immense healing for the world.

To date, Focusing Partnership’s have proven to be some of the most balanced, grounded, and contained-form of non-sexual intimacy that I’ve encountered so far — a model for *meta-relationship*.

Then, there are the other kinds of encounters, the brief ones, those magical moments with grand and exquisite people with whom we cross paths for moments, days, finite periods of time; people who touch our souls to the depths of our being, whom we will remember vividly and never see again; people with whom we’ve shared our most intimate inner places as if we’ve known them forever — but we’ve only just met.

We need to find a name for this *interactional intimacy*, this *meta-magnetism*, and a form in which it is *very ok* to experience and express it: fully, openly, freely, ecstatically — and safely.

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