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Samuel A. Malkemus
California Institute of Integral Studies

Mariana T, Romero
Estel: Center of Personal Growth and School of Integral Studies

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Sexuality as a Transformational Path: Exploring the Holistic Dimensions of Human Vitality

Samuel Arthur Malkemus
California Institute of Integral Studies
San Francisco, CA, USA

Marina T. Romero
Estel: Center of Personal Growth and School of Integral Studies
Barcelona, Spain

This article explores a holistic vision of human sexuality by contrasting it to the prevailing trend of “cognicentrism” in sexological studies. To this end the authors propose that a novel understanding of sexuality as a creative force of life energy can greatly enhance such cognicentric approaches. Such a proposal rests on a holistic approach to human nature that has been developed over many years of educational and clinical application. Within this holistic vision, the role of a human multidimensional cognition that is somatically rooted in bodily nature assists the articulation of sexuality as a transformational life path of embodied spirituality, healing, and growth.

Keywords: *sexuality, holistic, transpersonal, transformation*

Approaching sexuality holistically can shed light upon the creative depths of human nature. Such an approach stands in stark contrast to the prevailing academic presentation of human sexuality, wherein sexuality is usually restricted to a quantitative presentation of facts and figures. While appreciating the benefits that such information can bring, we have found such a methodology to be deeply inadequate. Over the past 30 years of working as a sexological researcher, therapist, and educator, I, Marina Romero, have developed a holistic approach to sexuality that begins, not with factual information about sexuality, but with a lived inquiry into the experience of sexuality itself.¹ This holistic approach allows the living currents of sexuality to speak in new and creative ways, and we believe that the still developing field of sexology is in great need of such creativity. Thus, the aim of this paper is threefold: (1) to present a holistic approach to sexuality that draws upon our experience in the field of holistic education and to contrast it with contemporary sexological accounts; (2) to propose that such an approach reveals a novel understanding of sexuality as creative life energy; and (3) to suggest how this novel understanding allows one to engage sexuality as a transformative path of healing and growth.

Toward a Holistic Inquiry

In this section, we briefly present a holistic vision of human sexuality by contrasting such a vision to two problematic assumptions that are endemic within most contemporary sexological perspectives. This vision is the fruit of our work with Holistic Transformation, an embodied path of psycho-spiritual growth that Romero originally co-developed with Ramon V. Albareda.² This vision has changed dramatically since it was first presented 20 years ago (Albareda & Romero, 1991), yet its basic core remains the same. It is to this core and the holistic vision of sexuality that emerges from it that the discussion now turns.

To approach sexuality holistically there are two basic problematic epistemological assumptions that are important to bring to awareness. These two assumptions are, in our experience, the most fundamental roadblocks to embracing a holistic vision of sexuality. The first is that human cognition is understood to be above all a rational and mental process. This assumption, which we have elsewhere termed *cognicentrism* (Ferrer, Romero, & Albareda, 2005), is arguably one of the most prevailing dogmas of the Western world. To bring this point home one need only to look at McCammon, Knox, and Schacht's (2006) authoritative volume on human

sexuality, wherein the study of sexuality is restricted to the scientific method. In the spirit of Kinsey's (1948, 1953) pioneering sexological research, they displayed a broad range of empirical data throughout more than 700 textbook pages to present what they felt comprised the field of sexology. By carrying forward this seemingly innocuous epistemological assumption—that in order to know something one must know it through intellect and reason (in this case through the empiricist method of scientific research)—they have homogenized an entire field of inquiry by presenting their particular version of what constitutes valid and valuable knowledge.

In contrast, we contend that human cognition is multidimensional. There exist many modes of understanding or “ways of knowing” and, without the contribution of each particular epistemic mode, the essence of sexuality is obscured. Reason and logic do play an important role in one's understanding. Yet their role is not superior to other ways of knowing.

The concept of multidimensional cognition may seem common sense. Since Gardner (1983) presented his theory of multiple intelligences it has been widely recognized that there are varying capacities through which individuals can engage the world (emotional, intuitive, kinesthetic, etc.). Yet the acknowledgement of the multifaceted nature of human knowing has had little impact upon the hegemony of reason and logical inference in the Western world. Furthermore, its mere acknowledgment does not make explicit the somatic roots of cognition. In other words, it does not acknowledge the way in which the body is intimately intertwined with different forms of knowing. From the perspective of our work with Holistic Transformation, there are a number of basic ways of knowing that are rooted in different regions of the human body. These ways of knowing are linked to particular somatically localized centers of energy that we have termed: *body*, *vital*, *heart*, *mind*, and *consciousness* (Albareda & Romero, 1991).

An understanding of these centers is important, not only in light of the problems of cognicentrism, but in that they play a foundational role in our approach to sexuality. The experiential work that we offer involves cultivating a relationship to each of these centers and, thereby, developing the wisdom that is inherent in each. While being profoundly interwoven within the flow of full-bodied living, each center reflects specific experientially discernable characteristics that are related to specific regions of the human form.

For example, the center that we term *body* discloses an experience of physicality, of “bodiliness,” in the world. While it encompasses the whole body, we have found that it is most directly experienced through the experience of the feet and legs. It is the feet and legs that, under typical circumstances, move one through the world, grounding and differentiating one's identity. The center that we term *vital* reflects an experience of instinctual generativity and life force. This vitality fills the whole of one's being, but can be located most potently around the area of the hips, lower belly, and genitals. The vital center is the fountain of sexuality and creativity. The center that we term *heart* reflects a distinctly human wisdom that thrives in relationship and is profoundly sensitive to the fragility of finitude. Its pulse fills all of one's being, but it can be most directly felt in the thoracic cavity, arms, and hands, especially the center of the chest. The heart center is the essence of humanness and the source of trust and innocence. The center that we term *mind* reveals the capacity of discernment and discrimination. It is the dominant form of knowing in Western culture. While it is essentially whole-bodied, it is most readily known in the upper shoulders, neck, and head. The mind center offers clarity and insight, allowing one to articulate the dynamic and vague flow of experience. The center that we term *consciousness* speaks to the transpersonal and transcendental awareness that makes one awake as a spiritual being. This subtle awareness is present throughout one's being, but is perhaps most accessible through the crown of the head, particularly at the apex of the skull. The consciousness center connects human existence to the light of the infinite mystery of which it is a part.

Each center comprises a whole and complete world through which different attempts to understand are enacted. Together they reflect a human identity that is essentially holistic, an identity where each of its aspects plays an equally significant role. While a multiplicity of other centers could be distinguished, such as the hands or stomach, we have found that a fewer number, of what are perhaps the most essential human aspects, allows participants to sink deeper into the experience of them without getting lost or overwhelmed by an excess of mental information. The chakra and acupuncture systems are examples of other means through which bodily energies can be articulated.

The basic centers that we present have been developed through a process of meditative listening

while in physical contact with another. The basic aspects can be developed, critiqued, or expanded upon by anyone who has a human body and is willing to engage in such meditative inquiry. The basic centers reflect a multidimensional understanding of human cognition and human nature. In other words, the human species has a rich and many-layered nature that is not reducible to the mind alone. It is a nature that by its very essence awaits the cultivation and unique unfolding of every human being.

What is important here is to emphasize that a large part of our work involves helping others to access and develop these different modes of understanding. This access is essential if one wants to understand sexuality holistically. If humans are holistic beings, understanding need not be reduced to one specific aspect of the whole identity. How might, for instance, a heart or body knowing enrich an understanding of sexuality with different perspectives and insights than the mind alone can offer? How can one truly know sexuality if one has not yet developed these different epistemic capacities? Or put differently, how can one truly know an essential aspect of one's nature, such as sexuality, if one does not first have a relationship to the whole of that nature?

In this we have revealed the crux of our first epistemological critique. If one hopes to develop a holistic sense of sexuality, we would suggest first taking an honest look at the degree to which people are living their lives holistically. The point here is this: One cannot inquire into sexuality with logic of the mind alone if one wishes to arrive at a holistic understanding of its nature.

The second major epistemological assumption that blocks attempts to approach sexuality holistically is the presupposition that the epistemic stance from which one engages their inquiry is neutral or objective and will, thus, produce unbiased results. Such a presupposition is made evident by the fact that while a number of journals devoted to the study of sexuality have emerged in the last 10 years, the most prominent remains, *The Journal of Sex Research*, a journal committed to the empirical study and statistical analysis of sexological data. There is no room for questioning the theoretical bases for such presuppositions within a strictly held scientific paradigm, which prevents any possibility for critical reflection upon these issues. Raising such a critique stems from basic perceptions gained through lived inquiry and therapeutic practice, which we articulate here as open questions for the reader. Namely, from which energies does one engage

in daily life? In the context of the present critique, from where does one engage an inquiry into sexuality? How does the epistemic stance from which one engages such inquiry predetermine the results? That is, it seems that if all inquiry stems from a mental way of knowing, in the sense of mind that we have put forth, the results of one's inquiry will be likely to speak *only* to the mind and thus leave other aspects of one's identity marginalized and forgotten.

Our critique of this presupposition lies on a simple insight drawn from many years of working with clients and students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. The insight is this: The human species, by and large, is not aligned with its essential and holistic identity. Instead, we suggest, human beings tend to live in narrow and confining psychic spaces that restrict the full expression of human identity. The human identity, like the different beings of the greater biotic community, is essentially a living multidimensional process that cannot be reduced to just one specific mode of being. Yet in the West, human identity is most commonly reduced to the mind, which is in turn reduced to the brain. Again, it is important to emphasize that we are not suggesting that humans ought to stop thinking rationally. On the contrary, we are suggesting that reason, in its essence, is a vital bodily process that can only enact its true voice when aligned with the other aspects of one's being. We are not calling for an end of reason, but for its revitalization.

Naturally, if one inquires into sexuality from a narrow and constricted identity, one will arrive at narrow and constricted results. Language helps to further confine human nature and, thus, to define it as this or that sexual identity, gender, orientation, and so on. Drawing on the groundbreaking historical analyses of Foucault (1976/1998), the sociologist Jeffery Weeks (1986) has detailed the constitutional role of culture in thoroughly shaping the way that human beings language and conceptualize sexuality. The emergence and formalization of the concept of sexuality in the nineteenth century has, despite its liberatory impacts upon consciousness, largely resulted in rigidifying sexual and gender definitions. These definitions act to greatly constrain the dynamic and multifaceted reality of human nature. Upon recognizing that there might be more to being human than culture leads one to assume, one might open the possibility of moving further away from the artificial responses of historical conditioning and closer to one's holistic nature.

The potential for a holistic vision of sexuality emerges by remaining both critically aware of the epistemic stance from which inquiry is engaged, and open to the many ways of knowing that are a natural part of a holistic human identity. Such a vision stands in sharp contrast to the egocentric and, to a great extent, dissociated state of Western culture. To discern such vistas requires listening deeply to sexuality itself from many different perspectives until one uncovers its naked essence, an essence that, despite attempts to define it, always retains its inherent mystery. Holistic sexuality reveals a sexuality that is always part of a greater whole, while danced with through myriad different particularities. Our clinical experience has led us to the firm conclusion that it is only as one begins to uncover their essential human identity, and thereby invite all of their life energies to participate in the inquiry, that one reveals the essential truth of sexuality.

Towards an Expanded Understanding of Sexuality

We have demonstrated how one might begin to approach sexuality holistically, but what does such an approach reveal about the nature of sexuality? In this section, we present our perspective on sexuality by revealing it in its primordial state as a vital force of generativity. To this end, we point to the link between sexuality and the transpersonal dimensions of existence by connecting the particularity of human sexuality to greater cosmogonic forces. The aim of this section is to expand and enrich a modern understanding of sexuality in the hopes that some readers may find resonance within their own experience.

There are many ancient spiritual traditions and modern approaches that view sexuality as a potent energy of creative life (Feurstein, 2003). From Chinese Daoism and Indian Tantrism to Reich's Orgonomy and a proliferation of Neotantrism in the West, sexuality has been conceived as creative life energy in a myriad of different forms. Yet, here it is not our intention to engage the nuances of each approach in relation to our own. We find ourselves in alignment with many of their insights, and yet remain critical of a number of transcendentalist and dualistic tendencies wherein the bodily dimension is devalued and held as subordinate to the spiritual dimension. A telling example is readily available in most traditional forms of Tantra (Bhattacharya, 1988). As Tantra is traditionally presented, it involves a spiritual path of yoga that aims to awaken and utilize the flow of

sexual energy in order to achieve an enlightened state of consciousness. This spiritual sublimation, wherein vital energy is used in the service of the energy of consciousness, stands in stark contrast to the vision that we hold. In our view, sexual energy is not subordinate to any other energy, but an equal partner in the creative unfolding of human potential. Because of these discrepancies and the unique holistic vision of sexuality that we wish to present, we would like to simply acknowledge these traditions, with their many merits and shortcomings, and move forward into an exploration of the insights that we have gathered from our life experience.

From our perspective sexuality, in its essence, is a dynamic source of life potentials that inform and impel, through the flesh of bodily nature, the very being of vital existence. In other words, it is the source of being alive. It impels aliveness in the sense of both maintaining the vital pulse of existence and imbuing one's life with a fresh and healthy vitality that fills one with vibrant beauty and dynamic passion. It is with this dual sense of aliveness that we can simply state our understanding of *sexuality as life*.

In our experience, we have found that if one welcomes this essential quality of sexuality into one's life, one becomes simply but truly human, thereby fostering the incarnation of one's potential as a human being. Because sexuality, in this sense, is linked to the deep and dynamic rhythms of life, it offers the possibility of not becoming calcified into a fixed and rigid identity, but rather the opportunity to be continually shaped by a cyclical flow of clean life energy that keeps one dynamically alive as a human being. It awakens the verb in *living* by connecting one to life's continuous dance. With this flow, one moves toward a life that is at once meaningful, profound, and essentially human.

Yet, as alluded to in the previous section, it is important to recognize that sexuality cannot be understood as life through the mind alone. The foundation of such an understanding must be a felt sense of the primordial depths of living. As a living being, one has the possibility of knowing sexuality directly in its primordial and essential state. Yet, in modern times, such an experiential sense and understanding of sexuality as life is uncommon. Its manifestation in daily life is rare, perhaps with the exception of its most biological expression: giving birth. Sadly, even this most primary expression has been greatly hindered by the modern medicalization of birthing (Davis & Pascali-Bonaro, 2010). Thus, in general, sexuality is ruled and colonized

by a specific cultural tradition or set of developmental patterns that rigidly molds one's identity and tendencies as a sexual being. Under these circumstances sexual life becomes a narrow and limited experience. It tends to be dissociated from a holistic identity and does not foster a dynamic unfolding and transformation. The prevalence of this dissociation can be readily seen in the enormous success of the pornography industry, wherein particular fantasies are enacted apart from the lived reality of the individual. Relying on these fantasies for vital stimulation can in many cases lead to a vital dependency that will persist until this vital energy can be brought into relationship and alignment with the rest of one's holistic identity.³

When constricted by patterns alien to human nature, one cannot normally explore and wake up into the deepest layers of sexuality. If one attempts to explore sexuality, it often results in confusion, fear, conflict, or shame because one has not learned how to relate this life flow to all the aspects of one's holistic identity. This vital power must be brought into relationship with one's bodily being and, perhaps most importantly, with the more tender and vulnerable aspects of one's heart.

One can only expand modern conceptions of sexuality once one recognizes and cultivates the link between sexuality and life, thereby coming to understand that sexuality, in its most fundamental sense, flows from the deep rhythms of life itself. Such a conceptual expansion of one's understanding invites one into the transpersonal dimensions of existence, at least in two ways. First, it invites one to transcend habitual modes of being and open to a wisdom that pulses at the core of vitality. By accessing this wisdom, one can connect to a source that dwells much deeper than rational intellect. Second, as one connects to the rhythms of sexuality as life, one also accesses what we have elsewhere termed *dark energy*, that is, the source and organizing principle of sexual life (Romero & Albareda, 2001). This source transcends the particularities of individual existence and reaches back to the origins of the cosmos. We call it dark because it cannot be seen by the light of consciousness and refers to a primordial energetic state in which all potentialities are in amorphous coexistence, without having been differentiated or developed. In the human realm, this energy is the source of sexuality and natural wisdom. Sexuality is, potentially, the first soil for the organization and creative development of the dark energy in human reality. That is why it is so

important that sexuality is an open soil based on natural evolutionary principles, and not on fears, conflicts, or artificial impositions dictated by the mind, culture, or spiritual ideology. When sexual development is not aligned with the essence of dark energy, individuals cannot fully embody this energy. This often leads to an unconscious accumulation of sexual energy that may result in depression, wherein one's life energy become devitalized, or in dissociated sexual expressions, wherein sexual energy becomes mixed with unconscious wounds and trauma. Thus, as one opens up to the primary flow of sexuality, one simultaneously opens a transpersonal channel to the vast cosmogonic powers of dark energy. Yet it is up to the individual to find healthy and holistic ways of integrating its manifestation into daily life.

These two ways of understanding the transpersonal dimensions of sexuality as life further reveal the potential benefit of developing a relationship between sexuality, as it currently exists, and the whispering call of its essential voice. In the context of the vision of sexuality outlined above, it is important to emphasize that a holistic relationship to sexuality calls one to embody its energy in the world. Such a process of embodiment involves inviting this energy into relationship with all aspects of our human identity, especially those that we have termed: body, vital, heart, mind, and consciousness.

In this way, sexuality manifests distinctively within the various energetic domains of human identity. And within all those domains the sexual flow moves through different stages of manifestation. In each stage, sexuality regenerates the corresponding domain by awakening essential life potentials, as well as connecting it to the other domains and the greater mystery out of which everything arises. In our clinical practice, we have seen that the continuous flow and cyclical processes of the manifestation of sexuality through each of the basic aspects of human identity allows one to connect to the fullness of one's life potential. This flow brings fresh life to each cell of one's being and to each aspect of one's existence. The necessity of integrating this flow in order to live a more creative and healthy life is what we would here like to term the principle of *holistic sexuality*. This principle is a simple and essential key that has emerged from working with countless individuals and groups to foster health and wholeness. It holds that no aspect of human identity can manifest its full potential without welcoming, relating to, and integrating the flow of sexual energy.

For example, if one's heart is in conflict with one's sexual energy, and rejects its presence when it arises, then one's life will lack vitality and be imbued with a feeling of emptiness, a feeling that something is missing. This conflict may be the result of a specific trauma or simply due to a lack of support in the face of sexuality during development. Until sexual energy can be brought into a healthy relationship with the heart, one will unconsciously draw vitality from other forms, the most common of which involves developing a vital dependency in intimate relationships. Because of this inner conflict, one projects unwelcome sexual energy onto others. Others then have to embody vitality for you, since your heart cannot welcome such energy. Sadly, a devitalized heart that has developed such a dependency can never truly develop its own function: unfolding the unique and authentic path of each human being. This example underscores the importance of the principle of holistic sexuality. If one cannot welcome sexuality into each aspect of their identity, one cannot really live the full aliveness of being human that is one's birthright. In other words, the holistic and dynamic identity of each human being is most effectively manifested when in an open relationship to the primary life potential of sexual nature. This relationship is enacted when one gradually learns to ground the light of consciousness within the darkness of vital energy throughout each energetic domain of one's human identity. In the following section, we take a deeper look at the process that developing such a relationship entails.

Sexuality as a Transformational Path

We have suggested that one potentially helpful way to view sexuality is as a flow of clean and dense primary life.⁴ Yet, the corroboration of such a claim ultimately lies in the unique experience of each individual. It is up to each person to honestly engage their experience and see what is the truth that they find. We have also suggested that there are many obstacles to relating to the essence of sexuality as life. These obstacles emerge through the context of a Western world that is, in general, dissociated from its holistic human identity. How then does one cultivate a relationship to sexuality as life? What are some of the tools and keys that might help one to deepen this relationship? In this section, we respond to these questions by briefly exploring the possibility of holding sexuality as a life path of holistic healing and growth. To this end, we distinguish sexuality as life from the more specific experiences of being and acting sexual,

and then draw on our clinical practice to examine two associated potential transformative paths, ultimately envisioning the possibility of their eventual unification.

In order to approach sexuality as a transformational path, it is important to recognize that existence as human beings is, essentially, a process of manifesting life potential. One is born into this world and asked by life to grow and share the fruits of existence. As we have tried to show above, such fruits can flourish more effectively when growing from the clean spring of sexual life. With this understanding of sexuality and its intimate relation to life potential, one can see how sexuality as a transformational path is, in some deep sense, none other than the transformational path of life itself. Yet from this broad conception of sexuality, one can also move toward more specific manifestations of its energy. These specific manifestations—which involve sexual behaviors, tendencies, and other erotic manifestations—are what often emerge in awareness when one takes a standard approach to apprehend what sexuality is. These are the manifestations of sexuality upon which most sexological literature is focused. What we would like to emphasize here is that one can hold a dual definition of sexuality that does not have to constrict awareness into this narrower understanding. To this end, it is crucial to discriminate the fountain of sexual being from the fact of being sexual. This double use of the term helps one to recognize that sexual energy is present not only when having sex, but also when allowing life to flow through whole of one's being, whether this involves sexual behavior or simply drinking a cup of tea. Sex in this sense is not something separate or divided from the energetic flow of daily life, but an integral and natural aspect of human identity.

These two senses of sexuality, the broader sense of *sexuality as life* and the more specific sense of *being and acting sexual*, offer two ways to approach sexuality as a transformational path. The first involves working with the transformative potential of sexuality as life. This entails inquiring into sexuality as a fresh spring of vibrant life and fostering its presence throughout one's entire human identity. This process involves welcoming, relating to, and integrating sexuality in each of the basic aspects—body, vital, heart, and so forth—as they manifest throughout daily life.

This first approach is one of the main tools that we use in our work with Holistic Transformation. This work creates a container wherein participants can safely

inquire into sexuality through a variety of structured meditations that utilize conscious physical touch between meditators. One basic meditation that we often present to our students involves inviting them to breath deeply and slowly while in conscious physical contact with a partner's vital center. We further suggest they open their embodied awareness to some of the following questions: Can you feel a clean fountain of vital energy alive in your experience? Do you feel this fountain in relationship to each of your basic aspects? Do you have an experiential sense of the essential nature of these aspects? Is there a natural and dynamic flow between them? Do you feel yourself alive, passionate, and creative? If so, can you locate the source of such aliveness, passion or creativity? Is it internal? Is it external? Where can you feel it in your body? Does it involve all your basic aspects or just some of them?

The type of questions that we pose depends on the unique circumstances of each meditation, yet afterwards we always encourage students to take their time to slowly feel their responses to each question and, depending on how they respond, we might suggest other meditative practices to deepen the inquiry. This type of inquiry can continue in a wide variety of ways depending on the unique dynamics of each individual. The crucial point here is uncovering and growing a relationship to one's creative potential, a potential that sexuality is a key in fostering.

To work with the second sense of sexuality, the fact of being and acting sexual, involves first inquiring into one's sexual life, identity, and tendencies and then attempting to foster their link with sexuality as life. We have found that the process of fostering this connection is an extremely effective path for freeing sexuality from habitual modes and preset patterns. In this process of liberation, sexuality begins to foster new cycles of deep transformation in both identity and daily life. That is, one begins to live dynamically, linked to the natural cycles of life and death of which one is a part. As one's identity becomes vitally rooted in this flow of life, daily routines become tasks that call forth passion and vital engagement. To deepen into the inquiry, we might pose some of the following questions: To what extent in daily life, when you are being and acting sexual, are your energies linked to the clean flow of sexuality as life? What if you could dive and wake up in sexuality as life before trying to be and act sexual? What if you could be initiated in life and its mystery before making any

statement about your sexual life, identity, and tendencies? What if you could allow the clean fountain of sexuality to guide your sexual actions and attitudes? This inquiry process involves fostering the essence of sexuality as life within habitual modes of being and acting sexual. In it lies a potential key for liberating sexuality and aligning it with the flow of clean vital energy.

Two paths of transformation have emerged through two distinct yet interdependent experiences of sexuality. On one path, the broad conception of sexuality as life may foster the presence of what is essential and the dissolution of what no longer serves throughout all aspects of daily existence. On the other path, the more specific delineation of sexuality as being and acting sexual might, when rooted in its essential origins, fill sexual life with the fresh essence of vital potential. Each path involves dedicated effort and honest critical self-reflection in order to truly align oneself with the essential rhythms of sexuality and not become lost in unconscious projections or unhealthy patterns. Vital energy is a formidable power that, if not approached with humility and an open heart, can make many people fall prey to its dissociated manifestations.

Each path can also be held, through the profound transpersonal dimensions of sexuality that we have suggested above, as a path of embodied spirituality (Ferrer, 2006, 2008). In welcoming the sensuous dance of sexuality into daily life, and relating it through the diversity of somatically rooted epistemic capacities, one is explicitly honoring the body as a sacred source of spiritual growth.

Yet, if one chooses to take up one of these paths and engage them authentically, we have found that whichever path is chosen, as they develop and become more closely aligned with the fresh spring of life, they begin to intertwine until they are no longer distinguishable. In light of the intertwinement of these conceptions of sexuality, we conclude this section by offering a few brief reflections upon the profound possibilities available in intimate sexual relationships.

As sexual beings whose embodiment reflects an innate capacity to come together in erotic embrace, human beings carry the seeds of deeply uniting both of the senses of sexuality that we have presented. It is our personal belief that, in uniting sexuality as life with the sexual act, a new creative power is incarnated on Earth. This power, we feel, can allow one to become more deeply embedded in humanness and the living ground of

holistic potential than any other experience of sexuality. It is an act through which new life is brought to Earth. New life not only in the possibility of incarnating a new soul through the conception of a child, as in the sexual union of a woman and a man, but *more essentially* in the form of an energetic potency that gives birth to novel life potentials that can radically transform lives.

Conclusion

In the preceding pages, we have presented our personal vision of holistic sexuality. It is a vision that reveals the essence of sexuality as a fresh spring of virgin life potential that, when welcomed into each of one's basic aspects, connects one to the deepest currents of their creative power. Such a power is manifest through what we have called the principle of holistic sexuality, which highlights the essential role that sexuality plays in developing and manifesting the gifts of one's creative potential. We feel that those unique gifts that each human being has to offer are greatly needed, and, thus, we have proposed the possibility of walking the transformational path of sexuality as a deeply meaningful life path of holistic healing and growth.

This presentation has three additional aims. The first is to contribute to a transformation of scholarly and pedagogical approaches to sexuality wherein the field of sexology opens its doors to the many additional epistemic modes through which human beings can inquire into sexuality. The second is to participate in a transformation of dissociated cultural patterns whereby the clean essence and wisdom of sexuality as life is liberated from narrow and constricting modes of being and invited to dance within one's holistic identity. Finally, we hope to have offered seeds of insight that we have found along our journeys. We proceed this way with the wish that such seeds might someday find a tender soil and manifest their vital beauty.⁵

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Notes

1. To situate the context of this article, it is important to note that while Romero has been developing this vision over the past 30 years – through her work as an educator, researcher, and clinician working with clients and groups – Malkemus has been working together with her in each of these arenas since 2008. Together we are applying our shared efforts and life experience to continue to develop a holistic vision of human nature that was born from the fruits of Romero's collaboration with Ramon V. Albareda in Barcelona, Spain (c.f., Albareda & Romero, 1991, 1999).
2. In the past, this work has been referred to as Holistic Integration. After much reflection, we decided to change the name of the work to Holistic Transformation to emphasize its dynamic quality. Etymologically, "integration" suggests completion whereas "transformation" suggests a process of continual movement. Such a process, we feel, is more aligned with the essential rhythm of life that the work embodies. For a succinct overview of the work and its basic structure, see Ferrer (2003).
3. On the complex and nuanced topic of sexual perversion the reader is referred to the work of the psychiatrist Robert Stoller (1975, 1979, 1985, 1991). Stoller presented the moral hypothesis that what constitutes sexual pathology may depend on the degree to which harm of oneself or another is involved. More controversially, he defended the claim that unconscious desires to harm are motivating factors in most forms of sexual fantasy that invoke strong sexual arousal.
4. It is important to make the reader aware that our use of the adjective "clean" does not carry any traditionalist moral import. Instead, it is used in the sense of that which is coherent with our essential nature. It stands in contrast to that which is incoherent with that nature and not to that which is "dirty" or otherwise traditionally viewed as morally repugnant.
5. We want to thank and acknowledge Jorge N. Ferrer for his helpful suggestions and editorial work. His keen eye and collaboration with this holistic vision has brought an enhanced clarity of presentation and many creative insights since 2000.

About the Authors

Samuel A. Malkemus, MA, is a doctoral candidate at the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA. His doctoral research involves an interdisciplinary exploration of the somatic and lived dimensions of sexuality, instinct, and world with the aim of articulating a transpersonal vision of human nature that holds bodily life at its foundation. Contact: malkemus@gmail.com

Marina T. Romero is Co-director of Estel: Center of Personal Growth and School of Integral Studies, Barcelona, Spain. She is also an adjunct faculty at the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA. Co-author of the book, *Nacidos de la Tierra: Sexualidad, Origen del Ser Humano*, as well as of many articles and book chapters on transpersonal sexuality, psycho spiritual embodied development, and human integration, she has been leading encounters in Holistic Sexuality and transpersonal and transcendent sexuality in Spain since 1987, and in California since 2000. Contact: marina@estel.es

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