

## Introduction:

It is an extraordinary fact that there is no recorded history of happy romantic love within marriage. In the history of mankind romantic love and passion did not emerge until about the 12<sup>th</sup> century – i.e. 1100 A.D. onwards. When it did occur it was always outside of marriage. Marriage, up until recently, was always arranged for social, economic, and political reasons.

Today however, we have never expected so much from intimacy. The high divorce rate represents our expectations and inabilities to meet them.

So how can one find happiness or passion within marriage? The only path toward such a state is a heroic one. One that I find increasingly difficult to make because it demands letting go of cherished beliefs, superstitions, security blankets, and deciding to grow up; to walk out into the Great Loneliness without security. The simple question is this: Can you be in your marriage the way you are or the way you would like to be. In truth you have to be willing to act and be in ways that exceed yourself. You have to be able to forge a new identity and act in ways that exceed your identity. The paradox is this:

You do not think yourself to a new way of living, you live yourself to a new way of thinking.

One of the key heroic steps of intimacy is what is called self-validated intimacy: it is honouring your impotency, cherishing your anxiety, and championing your vulnerability. To emancipate yourself from the prison of your self-doubt, self-criticism, self-monitoring, and self-exile. The heroism comes in emancipating yourself, validating yourself, revealing yourself *when you don't expect your partner to like who you are*. This takes courage.

Most people in relationships try to solve their problems by continuing to do what they have always done, but by doing more of it more intensely. This is when the attempted solution becomes the problem. So in my relationship the level of intimacy was arranged early in our relationship and it has tended to stay within these limits, fluctuating within a fixed distance around closeness and distance, pursuit and withdrawal, over and under-responsibility, over and under functioning. The balance and dance is usually set and thus inhibits intimacy. So how to break free of these chains, this prison, this awful predictability.

The heroic solution is simply this: If you want to expand sex and intimacy then you have to do things that are beyond the person you have always been. Here is one way to look at it: What part of you reaches out to touch your partner? Do you touch her from the strength in you or from the weakness in you? Do you reach out from the fear in you or from the courage in you? Do you move toward her with self-belief and confidence or with shame and uncertainty? If you reach out from the part that wants and needs to hide, then the connection will drop and you will sink back into the familiar. The truth is that intimacy and sex are an *attitude* and not a technique.

