

Evolving images of intimacy and sexuality

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Images of intimacy and human sexuality have evolved in our culture. They have long been recognized for their great importance to the individual, community and culture. They were recognized better by studying their images, practices and symbols in other cultures, as well as changes in European culture itself and social change processes. The concepts of the turn of the century and the 20th century discovery of the meaning of these spheres of human life (Freud, Foucault) were also of considerable importance. Images have evolved, knowledge and tolerance seemed to increase (Giddens), but their changes have not ceased to occur and this is assessed in a variety of ways today; there is no definitive assessment. They strongly penetrate the iconosphere of our culture, but they did not automatically caused growth of the consciousness of the importance of fusing them with the differing emotional sphere; it seems, therefore, in some theoretical approaches that it is the thing that lacks most in contemporary imagery. This article analyzes the development of image of intimacy and sexuality in European culture from Freud to the present day. The transformation of the perception of these images is justified by the trends of social development associated with the development of new communication channels; the cosmetic medicine industry based on the self-perception of a person in society. And all this is happening under the pressure of the digital society on the sphere of communications, which massively broadcasts stereotypes through new media that form both individual and collective culture.

Keywords: intimacy, sexuality, emotions, image, iconosphere, philosophical conceptions of man, psychological conceptions of man, psychoanalysis, Freud, Foucault, Giddens.

Introduction

At present, one can meet the claims that our present day, unlike previous eras, is able to discover the entire spectrum of forms of human sexuality and study them in a more neutral way. One can also find the opinion that modernity itself strongly influences these forms: “In recent years, it has been established that our contemporary technologized world has an impact on our sex lives” [1, p. 1121]. Sexuality is therefore examined and to some extent its possible forms of expression change. The perspective in which it is examined, understood or grasped is changing. Sexology reveals their ambiguity and their fulfillment of many different needs and acquiring many meanings both at the level of individual and cultural life [2, p. 144]. Sexuality is “fundamental to humanity”; sexual behavior is “biologically constant and meaning differs cross-culturally” [3, p. 7].

Contemporary sexology reveals their ambiguity and their fulfillment of many different needs and acquiring many meanings both at the level of individual and cultural life

[2, p.144]. Sexuality is also related to gender issues; sociological approaches see its fundamental range: “In every society, people classify each other as men and women; based on this distinction, cultural beliefs and norms indicate what position they should occupy and what roles are associated with these positions” [4, p. 138]. It is also one of the social aspects of human behavior; the phenomenon of sexual dimorphism of our species is expressed in the symbolism of many cultures, but it is connected also with the problem of sex as such and the stereotypes associated with it [2, p. 143]. Even in anthropological and biological terms, the issue of gender is not easy to settle, because it is distinguished by many types, such as: chromosomal, chromatin, gonadal, hormonal, somatic, metrical and mental (which is rather recognized as acquired in the sense of identification with a given gender) [5, p.172–174]. For example, the hormonal sex of some women may be considered male due to a certain proportion of androgens and estrogens in the blood serum. In sociology these problems overlap the perspective of cultural gender differentiation and its stratification, i. e. the difference in the position of women and men in terms of income, power, prestige. At general level “gender stratification exists in all societies known to us” [4, p. 139]. The traditional division of labor reinforced by socialization together with the built-in stereotypes is a strong one, though overcome, and applies to both the USA and most modern countries. Contemporary changes are based on education — more women graduate in such areas as management and organization, IT, dentistry, engineering, law and medicine. They also come from legal regulations prohibiting discrimination against women. The changes are recognized, however, as slow due to the impact of gender-related cultural symbols. Still the concept of sexuality goes beyond the question of sexual dimorphism and procreation. In different cultures, sexuality takes many forms: “Anthropology has shown that what is considered „sexual” has very different ranges of meaning across cultures” [3, p. 1]. It is important for individuals, communities and cultures: “Human sexuality is about much more than procreation; indeed, it is central to culture” [3, p. 1].

Self-images in our culture

Our culture has historically formed very different ways of understanding of man, his relationship to the world and to himself. The conceptions of man have changed; there is the entire spectrum: views of man as a rational being, living in community, political and social being. The Christian ideas of the distinguished position of man as the “crown of created world” were very influential. There were also the Renaissance perspectives making man an autonomous creator of his own world, culture, works and inventions, ideas of Romanticism of a creative genius of man, his faustic pursuit of knowledge and power¹. There are many more modern conceptions: an automaton with consciousness, machine-man (La Mettrie), symbolic being (E. Cassirer), biological entity (evolutionism), sexual one endowed with drive and imagination (Freud), learning, conflicting internally between the adaptation and autonomous self-fulfillment orders (A. Maslow and humanistic psychology), learning, experimenting (cognitive psychology), adapting to changing environmental conditions (behaviorism). All these concepts, and there are many more, were created

¹ In his anthropological and philosophical considerations, M. Scheler distinguished in his work *The position of man in space* three main positions in the question of man in the tradition of thought: developed by philosophers of Ancient Greece (man as a rational being), Christian philosophy (being created by God) and evolutionary (human being as a creation of evolution) [6].

in long periods of historical time in our culture, and not only it was reflecting on man and trying to understand himself.

This reflection was long fought, before the rise of anthropology, psychology and sociology, on the basis of philosophical and religious considerations, and in the ideas of modern times they all lead a multi-faceted dialogue, although it is not so active as to result in some consensus omnium. On the contrary, we are dealing here with many languages of different disciplines and their specific studies, possibilities and reference systems. However, the emergence of separate sciences dealing with various aspects of our humanity, their institutional establishment of the first research centers, formation of research perspectives, methods and tools of the late nineteenth and the beginning and duration of the entire 20th century probably mark a new measure of our modern self-understanding. Europe's social changes of this period are profound in many aspects of cultural, economic and political life. From the end of the eighteenth century, mass culture was created and spread in the following centuries, whose social flywheels are the processes of massification, industrialization, urbanization and secularization, among others (Kłoskowska, Storey, Krajewski). They leave their mark and join in as an active framework on many aspects of individuals' lives and their changing situation.

As late as the second half of the 20th century (1976–1984), the emerging and growing collection of specific dissertations on the history of sexuality by M. Foucault begins with the confirmation of the sense of connection of our era with the Victorian and its influence on the ways of understanding these aspects of man as “restrained, dumb, cool” [7, p. 13]. He assesses the nineteenth century as the one in which “silence” falls on this issue. Nowadays A. Giddens perceives the great power of discovering discourse about sexuality: “Over the past several decades, so it is said, a sexual revolution has occurred; and revolutionary hopes have been pinned to sexuality by many thinkers, for whom it represents a potential realm of freedom, unsullied by the limits of present-day civilization” [8, p. 1].

In many cultures, however, some ambivalence has been observed in treating the sexual act as fearful, but also bringing “animal joy of life” [2, p. 145]. Freud himself also perceived this ambivalence well.

Freud and Foucault

Perhaps, at the end of the century, a large role could be attributed to him in discovering it for our culture, but Foucault's radicalism forces him to recognize this discovery as still very cautious and taken with “medical prudence” [2, p. 14]. Usually, however, this role is seen in research on the importance of attempting to reflect the sexual sphere more revolutionarily. Freud himself had a sense of entering a territory subject to a kind of taboo, since at the beginning of the century (1900) he treated one of his first works (Interpretations of Dreams, Germ. Traumdeutung) as a breach in this embrace of her silence. In the latest period of development of his concept, he also expressed this by writing: “It is understandable that psychoanalysis caused sensation and opposition when <...> opposed the great common views on sex life” [9, p. 105]. At the time, he considered the three results of his research in this area: the existence of child sexuality, distinguishing between the concepts of sexuality as a broader concept encompassing various forms of activity and sexuality, and approaching sex life as a broader concept of pursuit of bodily pleasure [9]. Freud believed that the representations of impulses create the unconscious conditioning both

the whole of the individual psyche and the basic scenario of genre life, at the same time defining its history. In his view, the unconscious is the evolutionary heritage of the species; in this sense, his conception is strongly derived from evolutionary assumptions and the impact of Darwin's thoughts on emerging psychology — the unconscious is “part of the archaic heritage which a child — under the influence of the experiences of his ancestors — brings with him into the world before he even gets the opportunity to gain his own experience” [9, p. 117]. According to him, the assumption of the conditioning nature of unconscious urgency forms psychology as a natural science [9, p. 110]. For Freud, drives are powerful factors (“forces”) affecting the psyche, and their purpose is simply to meet the body's needs. This impact may seem insignificant from the point of view of socialization, but according to him it does not decrease, although they may be assessed as “unkind”, “invalid” or “ridiculous” [9, p. 125]. In our culture, they collide with frequent social bans that shape rigid, harsh forms of conflict with the urges of conscience or super-ego, and this was especially the case in the Victorian era. Human energy is “consumed by futile attempts to refute id” [9, p. 132]. It could then and in some cases may give birth to a state of guilt today, so one of the goals of psychoanalysis is the attempt to influence the process of maturing of the individual and his conscience. Therefore, some forms of cultural development participate in the etiology of neuroses — “in the course of cultural development, no other function has been so vigorous and far-fetched as sexual function” [9, p. 137].

Freudian image of sexual life

Psychoanalysis and related currents are assessed differently; sometimes she is accused of opposing features, such as the mechanical view of man or biology and naturalism; critics are presented in various aspects, and this is probably where these conflicting views come from. It is certain that after criticism of Popper, Wittgenstein, Eysenck and many other outstanding thinkers and researchers, its claims to become a scientific theory were rejected. However, relatively much of her influence remained, especially in the field of changes in collective consciousness, morality and interest, and openness in the treatment of human sexuality. It is true that in this area she is accused of artificially stiffening the approach of natural, unconscious drive [10] as well as conformism and normalizing functions [7, p. 15], than openly examining this aspect of human chewing, but it is already done ex post, that is from the perspective of the long and following cultural and social changes. Foucault himself writes that psychoanalysis “inscribes sexual themes in the system of law, symbolic order and sovereignty” [7, p. 131], on the one hand, contributing to what he calls discourse of sexuality, but on the other, it can be added — pointing on the importance of this perspective of human life and therefore the rise of what he calls scientia sexualis. The issue of the norm is still the least important issue in it, on the one hand with its control element, always indicated by Foucault, on the other — referring to more neutral — and broader (referring to the psychic norm) approaches of “being different” and the ability to communicate own impressions on the concepts of everyday language [11, p. 85–87].

Modern malaises

Therefore, socio-cultural changes in our culture were caused by the emergence of mass, industrial and mass societies, and then, in a modified form, popular culture. These changes led to transformations of everyday life, interpersonal relationships, self-under-

standing, self-reference and self-perception, anthroposphere within urbanization. They had a number of negative consequences; Ch. Taylor calls them modern malaise; modernity is alienation, the inevitable breakup of social bonds [12]. To this can be added the uprooting analyzed by him, which is associated with a lack of sense of security of belonging to small communities associated with some territory and traditions. Changes in state structures were associated with ever-increasing control and discipline; he additionally defines modernity as “an amalgam of new practices and institutional forms (science, technology, industrial production, urbanization), new ways of life (individualism, secularization, instrumental rationality)” [12, p.91]. Mass media and advertising have also had an impact on the mechanization of the message, the dissemination of cosmopolitan content, universal content, their standardization through the use of universal thematic themes — family, dramatic, humorous [13; 14]. They also influenced the homogenization of culture, simplifying the message, subordinating the creative process to market laws and, most importantly, in the field of influencing self-perception, body and sexuality, the received content is a source for hedonistic and ludic needs, but also for projection processes and human self-identification in comparing with external image of what the body should be, what we should treat as a source of pleasure. Sometimes the danger of living a foster life is indicated here, which in itself has an indefinite connection with reality (“the compensatory world of dreams”). Popular culture retains some of the features of mass culture, but introduces, and especially in the last decade, interactivity and a change in the “sender-recipient” relationship in the communication process. Krajewski very accurately recognizes its meaning:

“Popular culture, marginalized and neglected the phenomenon of modernity, has become, in the post-modern world, not only ubiquitous (its manifestations can be found in every sphere of social life), but has also been transformed, on the one hand, into a kind of filter through which reality is through us seen and experienced, on the other hand a basic tool with which we stumble with the world. Therefore, it is the dominant culture — not only because today it creates the intersubjective world (treated as the only conceivable reality), but also because it mediates in any other attempt to construct it, filters foreign meanings towards it, reinterprets them and subordinates it logic of form, disseminates, creates a framework for interpreting reality, sanctions the ways of learning about it and acting within it” [15, p. 7].

Thus, it's hegemonic, it refers to pleasure and control. In the second half of the twentieth century, it developed in conjunction with the transformations of post-industrial society with its focus on the development of knowledge and services, with a consumption attitude, changes in family patterns, atomization, alienation, but also the creation of welfare states. There was a well-recognized departure from the so-called bourgeois mentality and its patterns; it was accompanied by youth and student movements of a contestative nature with their ideas of breaking with the current social order, independence, freedom and free expression of their own identity.

The most important in the context of women's self-understanding and their discovery of their own sexuality and its multidimensionality in contemporary societies is that the culture that shapes us relates us to hedonistic values, to pleasure itself its gradual release from traditional customs, which can also be expressed in sexual liberation, with the important role of “cultural artefacts like novels and films” [16, p. 343]; they are “lifting sexual taboos” [16, p. 347]. Pleasure can be seen as a sense of satisfaction that comes from satis-

fyng the needs at all stages controlled by the individual. However, this also has negative aspects that can be called escapist, escape from everyday life, “shedding social identity and accompanying ideology”. Contemporary identity is a problematic one. Attention is drawn to the fact that modern society is atomized, that the individual’s specificity must be associated with clearly communicating their own specific characteristics to other people through their characters in terms of clothing (fashion as a language), a particular type of behavior or way of being. This culture can at least contribute to the search and disclosure of previously “tethered and oppressed” parts of ourselves [17, p.215]. Even if pleasure actually comes from a sense of compliance with following the established rules of the social world (Barthes), however, these are changes within it that allow increasing margins for identity search and creation. So what influences us in this mediated world of new media? First of all, one can read popularity positively as offering what is multi-semantic (ambiguous), what is open to a multitude of readings subject to consideration, choice and what expresses individual differences, identities and what allows us to experience our own uniqueness [15].

Image and pleasure

Images affect us as forms of communication circulating in various dimensions of our reality (civilisation de l’image). This can also be seen and perhaps above all in advertising, which in itself refers to pleasure. “We don’t encounter any kind of images that often”; “In no type of society has there been such a concentration of images in history, there was no such density of visual messages” [18, p.479]; we now live in a “dense iconosphere” [19]. Ads that offer women the means to create their own image are a kind of independent and separate language of the ad itself. Images, therefore, postulate a change in yourself and your life [18]. Their strength is greater, the greater seems the pleasure. Advertising images refer to pleasure, in particular there are „announcements of future pleasure” because the objects indicated in the image are usually very distant. It is critically noted that these images can “tilt us towards alienating unreality”, and they mainly serve to increase consumption. “Advertising is a culture of consumer society. Through images, it propagates society’s faith in itself” [18, p.483]. In faith alone there is nothing wrong, but only in order to achieve it, you must equip yourself with the desired qualities, objects and finally — seem to be “a person envious.” Advertising is usually quite harshly criticized in our culture: it is a substitute for democracy (consumer choice), takes the place of the right political choice, compensates for the lack of proper democracy. It is “the life of our culture” and “her dream” about a better and more complete life. Thus he can impose false ideas about himself and dictate what is desirable [18, p. 487]. Even the most modern changes aimed at the formation of the digital society and image civilization began with the digital processing and transmission of information after II World War, which over time brought ontological, social, cultural and, above all, psychological effects. These changes in the modern world are multiculturalism, hybridization, and a specific mix of globalization and locality.

In the postmodern world, our digital society lives in a highly mediated, “fragmented” reality, full of contradictory narrative forms [20]. Interactive media affect many forms of individual and social life — including they create politics, the image of society themselves, promote celebrities, co-create images of values and counter-values, people’s aspirations, worldview, affect human emotions and what they say [20, p.48–49]. This not only cre-

ates convenient channels for collecting information, but also for creating and living them already in the circle of “media involvement” [20, p. 56]. Man is recognized primarily from the side of his communication with the environment, and the so-called the post-man should be free from compelling social structures, focus on the free perception of images and practicing free play in the sphere of language, which expresses his being in the world, however, which is largely a mediated world, reflected, which replace reality. The position of a contemporary individual recognized in this way is both privileged (free creation of various aspects of identity) and endangered (no strong demands to shape a sense of continuity, a lasting self capable of resisting e. g. negative experiences). In the research of the last two decades, attention has been paid to changes in the sphere of intimacy as a certain sphere of culture introducing some kind of order into love, sexual, family and friendly relations [21, p. 25]. Theoretical and empirical research can lead to different conclusions here: on the one hand, the increased possibilities of human self-realization in our contemporary culture, emancipation from rigid moral norms (“binding” or “oppressing” the sphere of human being), plastic and constantly discovered sexuality are strongly perceived. and intimate relationships, an increase in the sense of freedom and equality, democratization of intimacy and “emotional reconstruction of social life” (A. Giddens), and on the other, more empirically confirmed tendencies to solipsism and social autism, escape from the need to establish close emotional relationships with another human person (U. Beck, E. Beck-Gernsheim, Z. Bauman, A. R. Hochschild, W. Klimczyk), its increasing objectification, motivated by the similarity of reaction to people and objects simulating them — creating rather bonds with dolls and robots, which is becoming increasingly popular. Why is this happening? The neoliberal consumer market places great demands on working time and commitment to it, and intimate relationships suffer; they are introduced in order to reconstitute them, additionally intermediary companies enabling the improvement of “family management”. Values that seem to dominate today are autonomy, freedom, self-fulfillment, control and a sense of security, for which the challenge is problems in communicating with others (increasingly depleted by habits shaped with electronic messengers) and emotional bonding. Inanimate objects seem to offer safer and simpler forms of relationships, not to mention the fact that, according to many diagnoses, the tendency to exchange and objectifying attitude towards other people is increasing. Another person is objectified as a tool for self-realization of the individual: “subjective intimate relationships are eroded, individuals reduce each other to objects and objects of consumption” [21, p. 31]. Psycho-social diagnoses form a picture of narcissistic individuals locked in their own safe worlds and threatened with autism; in today’s world, “love and care are lacking” (Sh. Turkle). Together, this is a special background for the treatment of their own sexuality by women: on the one hand, traditional customs have long been a considerable barrier to its disclosure, discovery, and interest in the quality of their lives, on the other — changes within it can contribute positively to the growth of knowledge, emancipation and freedom, on the other — to treat it excessive, narcissistic as a necessary tool in becoming ever more perfect. Thus, there is a certain stereotype, which blocks access to medical assistance in many important life problems and forces you to mask the suffering associated with e. g. postpartum injuries, improper genital anatomy, vaginismus. In different regions of the world, the degree of self-awareness and openness of women varies. The doctors’ statements point to the unobvious tendencies on the one hand, the increase in women’s awareness in the field of aesthetic gynecology, and on the other — faint when

it comes to the necessary cytological tests: “Looking at the increasing awareness of women in the possibilities of aesthetic medicine and aesthetic gynecology, the number is decreasing those who apply for preventive examinations, e. g. cervical cancer or breast cancer” [22, p. 25]. Due to changes in the growing influence of the media in societies already called network and media, the situation is changing, although, as Stevens notes, “cultural attitudes will remain very slow to change” [3, p. 7]. Therefore, the real challenge is multilateral and strong impact on them.

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Развитие образов близости и сексуальности

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Образы близости и человеческой сексуальности эволюционировали в культуре человеческой цивилизации. Они уже давно признаны за их огромное значение для личности, общества и культуры. Эти культурные феномены были лучше распознаны путем изучения их образов, практик и символов в других культурах, а также изменений в самой европейской культуре и процессах социальных изменений. Концепции рубежа веков и открытия смысла этих сфер человеческой жизни XX в. (Фрейд, Фуко) также имели большое значение для осознания важности этих образов. Образы эволюционировали, знания и терпимость, казалось, возросли (Гидденс), но их изменения не прекратились, и сегодня это оценивается по-разному; окончательной оценки нет. Они прочно проникли в иконосферу нашей культуры, но при этом не вызвали автоматического роста сознания важности слияния их с разнообразной эмоциональной сферой. В некоторых теоретических подходах, как нам кажется, это процессы не нашли должного отражения, поэтому они не вполне соответствуют современным представлениям. В данной статье приводится анализ развития образов близости и сексуальности в европейской культуре от Фрейда до наших дней. Трансформация восприятия этих образов обосновывается тенденциями общественного развития, связанными с развитием новых каналов коммуникации; индустрии косметической медицины, основанной на самовосприятии человека в обществе. И все это происходит под давлением цифрового общества на сферу коммуникаций, которое массово транслирует через новые медиа стереотипы, формирующие как индивидуальную, так и коллективную культуру.

Ключевые слова: интимность, сексуальность, эмоции, образ, иконосфера, философские концепции человека, психологические концепции человека, психоанализ, Фрейд, Фуко, Гидденс.

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