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## FOREWORD

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I was very impressed by *Sex and Self-Respect*. It represents a major contribution to the theory and practice of Bioenergetic Analysis. It is grounded in Reich's fundamental concepts of organismic excitation, namely pulsation, charge and discharge, contact and sexuality. It integrates psychological constructs with basic bodily functions and it includes some of the bioenergetic exercises we use to promote the self-healing process of the body. It is at the same time a very scholarly work connecting bioenergetic concepts with some of the best psychological thinking.

Helfaer uses the concept of self-respect to describe a healthy attitude to the body, its feelings and especially sexuality. I fully agree with that construct as a criterion of health since it is based on feeling and not just on a mental attitude. Since self-respect denotes a positive orientation to life stemming from good feelings in the body it is a criterion of emotional health. Emphasizing the aspect of self-respect focuses upon a serious lack and disturbance in the modern individual. Without self-respect, one has no respect for the other or for life or the earth. A lack of respect characterizes the modern narcissistic individual. Helfaer grounds his concept of self-respect in the identification with one's sexuality. That identification is dependent on sexual fulfillment, on the "good" body feelings of sexual excitation and on the absence of shame and guilt about sexual feelings.

In this time it is of great importance to emphasize the sexual etiology of all human emotional problems. There is a strong tendency to focus the problems of modern individuals on power issues, race issues, or intercultural issues. These issues exist but they are superficial symptoms of the underlying serious energetic disorder which stems from sexual conflicts in childhood. Real therapeutic progress depends on the working through of early sexual traumas.

The book is full of interesting vignettes which describe the damage to the individual whose self-respect is violated which happens so frequently in our culture. Reading those vignettes I was greatly impressed with the sensitivity of Helfaer to his patients and the respect he felt for their struggle to find some joy and fulfillment in their lives. This sensitivity reflects the therapist's commitment to his own being, reflected in the endeavor all therapists must make to fulfill their personal quest for identity and self-respect. Without that commitment I do not believe one can do significant therapeutic work as a bioenergetic therapist.

I would conclude by congratulating Dr. Helfaer on this excellent study of the human condition written with sympathy and understanding. It is a book which everyone who works with human beings to help them become free from the torments and constrictions of a life-negating culture should read and study.