

## **Maturity, Solitude and Intimacy<sup>1</sup>** **by Stanley Keleman** **A Book Review by Conn B. Hickey**

### Abstract

The author combines his personal experience of Stanley Keleman's Formative perspective with a summarization of the essays covered in this book.

*Keywords:* Stanley Keleman, Maturity, Solitude, Intimacy, Formative

I first met Stanley Keleman in 1969 at a Bioenergetics workshop at Kairos in San Diego County. I was 24 and he was 37. Twenty years later, in 1989, I met him again and began attending his teaching programs and workshops at the Center for Energetic Studies in Berkeley. For as long as I have known him, embodied experience has been Stanley's teacher and the source of knowing from which he teaches others. For the last 30 years I have had the privilege of being challenged by and participating in the evolution of his thinking and practice and applying these to forming my own personal life.

As Stanley accumulated years so did I. I began as an alpha adult, learning from him how to form a mature adult, a life stage he had already formed for himself. And now, how lucky I have been as an older adult to have learned how to be formative in making the transitions and meeting the challenges of this next stage of living.

Over the last ten years or so Stanley began gathering his experiences and thoughts about being older, writing essays and poems to express what he was living. *Maturity, Solitude and Intimacy* is the first in a series of Essays in Formative Psychology.

In this short book Stanley puts into words what he was learning as he sought to know and influence his own inherited biology and to form his own personal somatic style, and along the way learn some universal truths of living. A central message in these essays, as in much of his work, is "*when we lack the tools for self-forming, life forms us rather than we form our life.*"

In these essays he encourages us to develop the empowerment and the optimism that accompanies the learned ability for self-influence, which means learning to influence how we are somatically shaping ourselves and our situations through all the stages of living.

### **MATURITY**

In the first of the three essays in this collection, Stanley describes a life stage he calls the mature adult. He describes maturity as a life stage between the alpha adult and the aging adult. Using his own life experience and what he learned from working with others, he lays out the qualities of this stage of life and helps us to recognize and grow our own relationship to forming a mature life.

In this essay, he explores the wonderful riches and satisfaction that are inherent in differentiating and to some extent disassembling our alpha adult structures to form and support the slower, more porous, pulses of the mature adult. He shows how looking at the changes that accompany this age as loss is to become a victim to our own built in changes. And he points out how, by hanging on to and fearing the loss of the alpha adult structures and

<sup>1</sup> Keleman, S. (2014) *Maturity, Solitude and Intimacy*, Center Press, Berkeley. ISBN 0-934320-18-7.

behaviors, people often cling to a rigidity that no longer serves the organism. He describes how this easily leads to collapse, depression and feelings of loss, all of which serve to mute the natural vitality of the body.

He offers an alternate perspective on this phase of life, namely to support our innate formative function by using voluntary muscular effort to generate and support new structures and expressions, to experience “*the power of life’s instinctive urge to form itself...to develop...this vital stage of our existence.*”

## SOLITUDE

Solitude is not a withdrawal from the world, a removing of oneself from society and others creating a self-imposed loneliness and distance. Instead, Stanley describes it as “*A membrane joining to form a boundary, making an inside and an outside...the beginning of separateness – a separateness that maintains a connection to a bigger [outside] world and a smaller [inside] world. This Formative act is the mother of solitude.*”

He goes on to point out that solitude is an anatomical, boundary-making behavior and shape that has the possibility of generating new experiences from what we gather inside the containment of the boundary. By applying to solitude his basic insight that all of life is active, Stanley enriches us with a way to experience the value and satisfaction of the natural gathering into ourselves that can accompany the maturing years. He uses the term “dynamic stillness” to capture the depth and managed aliveness that he experienced as qualities of this solitude.

## SOMATIC INTIMACY

“*Intimacy as a structure is a semi-porous-rigid layered anatomic organization. It is an experiential knowing arising from one’s own tissues.*” Over the last few years of interacting with and learning from Stanley, it became clear that the function of gathering inward and experiencing the body’s inner pulsatory environment became more center stage. For him developing this kind of self-intimacy with one’s own biology is a way to know, from direct experience, the depths and layers of our own humanity.

Putting this collection of essays together with the latest series he wrote called *Forming Your Aging*, one can see the evolution of his experience and thinking about the centrality of porosity as the creative force in the ongoing pulsation of living.

I had the privilege around the time these essays were published to co-body my 95 year old mother through her own process of leaving behind her alpha adult, and to plumb with her the depths of the porosity and receptivity of maturity and aging, the nourishment of the dynamic stillness of solitude, and the gift of somatic intimacy, both internally and shared, that are so fully explored in these essays. Throughout this five year process, Stanley shared his insights with me into how these wonders were forming from the disassembling of previous structures and habitual patterns. Recognizing and giving shape, support and language to what appeared as a result helped me to help both of us to deeply appreciate and taste the richness of this time of life that was not available to either of us in our alpha stages.

## BIOGRAPHY

**Conn Hickey**, age 73, retired in 2014 from a career as an IT executive in the banking industry and has spent the last four years collaboratively forming a charter elementary school in the Bay Area using a formative perspective to help grow the structure of this educational endeavor. Email: [conn.hickey@rossvalleycharter.org](mailto:conn.hickey@rossvalleycharter.org)



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