

## What is sex?



Too seldom we think about questions that appear simple at first glance. Nowadays, the question „What is happiness?“ is only covered by self-help books. Yet, this precise question was arguably at the core of ancient Greek philosophy. In the university setting, philosophy focuses on applied ethics, critical theory or postmodernism. The sale numbers of self-help books seem to uncover one thing: we are still deeply interested in the short „What is X“-question. Simply, because they affect our daily lives and the way we want to live.

Yesterday, Lote asked me to write a little essay about the similarly easy appearing question „What is sex?“. I shrunk away thinking I have not yet read anything about this topic. It took a few minutes to convince myself to write down my thoughts, without relying on other sources. I have not thought about the question since I was a sex-less teenager. Maybe the first and most honest revelation is: those who have sex (unfortunately) do not think about it. The second revelation should be: do not take my word for granted, I am just a student.

What is sex then? It is an act nearly all adults participate in and yet, it has a different meaning for everybody. On the healthier side, it is an act between two people who are able to trust enough to get lost in each other. It is a trust strengthened by honest communication about wishes and desires. On the unhealthier side, sex acts as a defense mechanism. It protects against conflicts or structural deficits. These defense-worthy themes may be fragile gender identity, self-esteem, shame or lack of autonomy. Somewhere in between those two poles sex becomes more complicated.



Identity and self-esteem are undoubtedly connected to these topics. Both are being formed as we start being interested in sex. We gain a sense of identity and self-esteem in the interaction with peers, parents and within society. Identity regards finding our psychosocial role and position. It is not an easy task. Ups and Downs are normal. Most adolescents would be surprised to find out how many adults still struggle with this topic.



We face a significant part of our identity roles during sex; a submissive and a dominant role. Traditionally, regarded as a feminine and masculine identity. If we have trust in our own gender identity, the act of sexual unity can be approached without anxiety. If we do not have a stable enough gender identity, we unconsciously fear losing it in the act. Some might deny the conflict and overcompensate, they search for sexual partners or sexual attention at every corner.

Self-esteem problems can manifest as two opposing questions. „Can I even perform well enough?“ on the depressive side and „Is my partner even good enough?“ on the more narcissistic side. Other medical aspects should be a topic for a different exhibition. These questions are not pathological and completely normal.

We do not think much about „simple questions“, because they turn out to be more complicated than they first appear. Books could be written about our question. More important than reading a book or a student essay is your own honest answer to the question: „what is sex?“. Even more important is the honest observation of your emotions connect to the topic.

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Kamiar-K. Rueckert is currently in his 6th year of Medical School at Riga Stradins University. In 2016, he founded [www.psgriga.org](http://www.psgriga.org) in order to establish a foundation for students to learn about emotions in healthcare and psychosomatic concepts. He likes Hummus, continental philosophy and smoked Blutwurst. His previous articles have been published in [theviennapsychoanalyst.at](http://theviennapsychoanalyst.at), [in-training.org](http://in-training.org) and the printed and online version of the Latvian student magazine [semperanticus.lv](http://semperanticus.lv).