

SEX IN HUMAN LOVING

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Berne, E. (2017). *Sex v lidském milování. [Sex in Human Loving]*. Prague: Portál.

The word "sex" summons special attention in many of us. Sex as such, in particular its reproductive function, has always been an interesting topic for a variety of authors, in particular with different points of view. Lately, a tendency comes to the forefront not only to address constructively the reproductive function of human sexuality and the often unpleasant demographic curve, but also to allow the subject of the role that sex plays in the life of each individual a more frequent part of the discussion. In any case, issues connected with sexuality are very often discussed. In the introductory part of the book, the author pays attention to the terminology concerning sex; one could even say entering the area of scatology. (At this point I would recommend to become acquainted in detail with K.J. Obrátil's book *Kryptádia*, or from the same collector with the contemporary edition of *Dictionary of Dirty Words [Slovník sprostých slov]*, which forms a part of this work, or possibly with the two publications issued currently: *The First Bouquet of National Filth [První kytice národních prasáren]* and *The Second Bouquet of National Filth [Druhá kytice národních prasáren]* which include Obrátil's work.). What cannot be overlooked are not only the sufficient examples in the realm of humans, but also those in the animal kingdom, which is very informative.

Immediately in the introduction, the editor (M. Těřhalová) briefly characterizes the book: "Despite the inaccuracy of some facts and also its period-specificity, Berne's book is wonderfully timeless. Indeed, similarly, to love and sex which are companions to mankind since its inception and which will remain with us as long as we exist. Therefore, in love and sex, too, let us allow the child within us to become captivated from time to time, thoughtlessly throwing him or herself into adventure..." (p. 10)

From the perspective of pedagogy and prevention of risk behaviour with sexual overtones, a very interesting little sub-chapter occurs here (p. 24–25) where the author presents his view on sex education for beginners. In the context of explaining sexual topics to children, he states literally: "The real problem, however, does not lie in the parents but in the belief that something like sex can be explained. It is nonsense, the same way as cooking cannot be explained." In addition to the already mentioned sub-chapter, the following one, Sex Education for the Advanced (p. 25) is also worth the attention as it touches the issue of the views of sexuality and attitudes to it. He arrives at five possible categories (s. 25–27):

1. Sex is a giant squid.
2. Sex is an angelic gift.

3. Sex is a triumph of engineering.
4. Sex as a rebellion.
5. Sex as entertainment.

The induction to the whole issue is found in Part 1 "Sex and Sexual Organs" (p. 33), and in particular the first sub-chapter "Why s/he needs sex" (p. 34) and "What is it all good for?" (p. 37), where a total of twelve questions are raised and answered on the following pages, including some examples.

It is probably going to be of great surprise that the author uses curse words in the text as well, using, of course, asterisks in place of some letters. In the next chapter, the author focuses on intermediate sex education, underlining the significance of "Sex and Health or Intimacy as Prevention" (p. 178). He quite clearly points to the fact that "every human being who lacks the care of loving hands and soothing words deteriorates on the inside and ultimately perishes." (p. 179) Against the background of varying wisdom and life truths, it is one of the deepest thoughts that resonate throughout the whole name of the book.

Equally interesting is part 3 "Finale". In this chapter, the author summarizes his own experience and knowledge from many years of practice both as a psychiatric doctor and a psychotherapist. From this perspective, the entire book is truly captivating and, moreover, it is written in a clear language which is not typical in books of similar focus. Although he lectured medical students, his lectures were open to all interested parties. At the first glance, it might seem that it is an extremely beneficial and highly up-to-date publication. Every contribution, every opinion can undoubtedly be thought-provoking and inspiring but in this case, we need to be somewhat careful. In the publication, which is without a doubt well crafted and pleasantly readable, the author presents the results of his own investigation of some forty years, which from a demographic point of view represents one of the previous generations. As stated on the last page: "The book is based on the author's lectures, which he gave in 1966 at the University of California. In his typical essayist humour, the author discusses sexuality from all angles imaginable: on how to talk about sexuality, how to deal with obscenity, how to carry out sex education, talking about the orgasm, the use and the abuse of sexual organs, about the relation of sexuality to science, religion, health, ethics, aesthetics, intimacy and marriage." There is no doubt as to whether we do find all of these things on the pages of the book, however, the vast majority is merely sketched. Those looking for deeper knowledge will in no way find it here, not even as model situations analyzed in detail. Each bullet-point would have deserved much greater attention. Given the overall focus of the publication, one can assume that the pages would contain such concepts and activities associated with them, as the use of the penis, the use of the vagina or the genital organs and utilization and management of time, the use of the orgasm, etc. These surely are very interesting topics, for example the assertion, that women's breasts "are used as advertising panels", etc. In some scientific publications, one may come across annexes or appendices. This publication has an Appendix as well: "Classification of Human Relations" (p. 233 and

following). The author presents specific examples from his own praxis for each of the individual types. In addition, individual relations are accompanied by a graphical representation. To further draw the whole issue closer, he gives even two examples with direct application to partnerships (p. 243). On the other hand, it is necessary to reproach the Supplement for falling "somehow" short on the content side (at least apparently) – see for example the last paragraphs: "The easiest and maximally straightforward relationships are simple, symmetrical and direct. Conversely, relationships which are complex, asymmetric and indirect are the most difficult ones. Such relationships provide fertile ground for games and other types of ulterior transactions." (p. 246)

It is a shame that some issues in the publication are paid too little attention (and wrongly so). Examples of this can be seen in the sub-chapters "Sex and science" (pp. 43–44) or the next sub-chapter "Sex and religion" (pp. 44–46). Both topics are not only very interesting, but they are also widely discussed, often becoming the subject of debates. Concluding the review submitted here, it is appropriate to provide a few thoughts by the author of the book, i.e. some Short Wisdom and Sad Wisdom quotes (pp. 227–232), such as:

- The sooner you get new acquaintances, the sooner you will have old friends.
- Your body is your friend. Do not treat it like an enemy.
- The Buddha once said that women bind men in eight ways: dancing, singing, playing, laughing, crying, their looks, touch and questions.
- Work performance of a man often depends on the current stage of the wife's menstrual cycle.
- Some men lose their potency as a result of overwork, others because of lack of work.

In any case, the above mentioned book reads very well. It is not overexposed to professional vocabulary, complicated syntax or long complex sentences. Its readability is only intensified by the fact that the text itself is richly interlaced with examples from practice with a certain bird's eye view resulting from life experience. Therefore, the assumption that the book will not only find a large number of readers, but also that the readers will be coming back to it from time to time is very realistic. The publication can also be recommended to all those who are moving into the area of prevention of the various manifestations of risk behaviour in primary or secondary schools, but also to those dedicated to partnership, marriage or parenting education, or to sexual education itself. A large part of the problems between partners as such have this base, as indeed, the interest in sexual activity is one of the leading motives in the activities of boys of that age. At the same time, possible negative experience can then be projected not only to an optimistic perception of life, but the case of negative experiences, they may result in adverse social behaviour, aggression, rudeness, bullying and irresponsible behaviour (e.g. in cases of irresponsible sex life without adequate contraception).

Instead of a final conclusion, suffice the opinion of the author himself:

"In every human, there shines a star, you can see it from afar, shining as a bright flame

of courageous spirit. And it is too bright to draw closer to it without a proper portion of courage and honesty. Every person lives alone in their own personal space, however, intimacy only awaits them across its borders. Intimacy is the space of the cosmos around you, and if you find yourself in it, it is good not to swear at the stars." (p. 232)

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