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Review

Review of the "Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Sex and Sexuality"

Raja Halwani

Department of Liberal Arts, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 36 S Wabash Ave, Chicago, IL 60603, USA; rhalwa@artic.edu

Abstract: This paper is a review essay of the recently published *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Sex and Sexuality*, edited by Brian D. Earp, Clare Chambers, and Lori Watson (2022). The anthology consists of an introduction and 40 essays, and it has eight parts: (I) What Is Sex? Is Sex Good?; (II) Sexual Orientations; (III) Sexual Autonomy and Consent; (IV) Regulating Sexual Relationships; (V) Pathologizing Sex and Sexuality; (VI) Contested Desires; (VII) Objectification and Commercialized Sex; and (VIII) Technology and the Future of Sex. The anthology contains essays mostly by philosophers and a few by non-philosophers (which can be a double-edged sword for a philosophy book). Some essays survey a topic, while others defend specific theses. I argue that the quality of the essays varies, but that all are thought-provoking. Although the essays that deal with sexual orientation and race tend to be on the weaker side, those that deal with technology, objectification, incest, pedophilia, sex work, and the regulation of relationships are on the strong side.

Keywords: philosophy of sex; sex work; sexual acts; sexual consent; sexual desire; sexual orientation; sex and medicine; sex and technology

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1. Introduction

Philosophy of sex is an intriguing and interesting field that covers a large number of conceptual and moral questions, such as the nature of sexual desire and sexual orientation, how to define sexual activity, the necessity and sufficiency of consent for the moral permissibility of sexual acts, the moral permissibility of various sexual practices (e.g., sex work and BDSM), and ethical issues raised by technological advances. Moreover, teaching philosophy of sex is lucrative, at least in that philosophy of sex courses almost always quickly fill up. It is then understandable why both philosophers and publishers are interested in the field. *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Sex and Sexuality*, edited by Brian D. Earp, Clare Chambers, and Lori Watson, is the latest installment in this area of inquiry.

The book is large, running to just over 600 pages, with a somewhat small print and dense pages. It consists of an introduction and 40 essays, divided into the book's 8 parts: (I) What Is Sex? Is Sex Good?; (II) Sexual Orientations; (III) Sexual Autonomy and Consent; (IV) Regulating Sexual Relationships; (V) Pathologizing Sex and Sexuality; (VI) Contested Desires; (VII) Objectification and Commercialized Sex; and (VIII) Technology and the Future of Sex. All the essays approach the topic from within the framework of analytic philosophy (hence so will this review), which has been the trend so far in the field of the philosophy of sex.[1]

In a book of this size, some unevenness of quality among the essays is expected, but I was surprised that this unevenness was somewhat pronounced. Although there are insightful and well-argued essays, some essays mostly politically posture while others are not well argued. There are also a couple of mostly non-philosophical essays whose inclusion in the book is unclear, such as John Stoltenberg's, "The Civil-Rights Approach to Pornography"—a straight-up history of how this approach to pornography developed

(only in the chapter's last two pages does Stoltenberg raise some philosophical questions that, in such a short space, could not be adequately answered). Moreover, the editors do not explain why this history, but not, say, the history of philosophical thought about pornography, is in the book.[2] There are also some essays written by non-philosophers and I wish that they were more tightly argued.[3] Overall, however, this is a valuable book, and many of its essays advance the field.

What to write in an anthology's introduction is a difficult decision, somewhat depending on how the essays are structured: if each essay has an abstract at the beginning, this frees the editors from having to provide summaries of the essays in the introduction, allowing them to, say, focus on general philosophical questions, give a history of the philosophy of sex, or draw connections between the essays. The essays in this anthology do not have abstracts, so the editors devoted the introduction to summarizing the chapters (except for the first page and a half, which briefly—*too* briefly for my taste—explain some of the issues in the philosophy of sex). The chapter summaries, however, are uneven, with some summarized in detail while others not: "with Matthew Andler engaging concepts of queer and straight in Chapter 8, and A. W. Eaton and Bailey Szustak analyzing asexuality in Chapter 9" (p. 3). We are not told how Andler engages these concepts or how Eaton and Szustak analyze asexuality. The introduction, then, avoids going in depth into the philosophical questions in sex, but also does not do justice to all the essays in the volume.

Given the length of the anthology, I do not review every essay (e.g., I skip the mostly non-philosophical ones) and focus on those that deal with long-standing issues in the field, with issues that are currently of interest, or with those that make an interesting and novel contribution to the field.

2. What Sex Is and Its Value

In the opening essay, "What Is a Sexual Act?" Kristina Gupta argues that no definition of "sexual act" is forthcoming. Her argument basically relies on lack of consensus. For instance, she relies on surveys of regular people, on biologists, on different subjective experiences of sex, and on my view that sexual activity cannot be defined to reach her conclusion.[4] However, lack of consensus at best *indicates* that there is no good definition of a sexual act; it neither shows it nor even implies its high likelihood. It is also unclear why people's subjective experiences should tell us much about defining sex or why biological definitions of non-human sex are relevant to defining human sexual acts. Gupta accepts my hunch that there is no single criterion of defining sexual activity without exploring the possibility of a disjunctive definition that relies on multiple criteria.

Gupta concludes with the idea that even though there is no universal definition of sexual activity, how each society defines it is crucial because it has significant consequences for its members, including marginalizing the sexuality of some and elevating that of others. She thus concludes that for the sake of "individual and interpersonal well-being and . . . social justice, societies should adopt definitions of sex that are flexible and do not rank penetrative intercourse as better or more 'sex-like' than other forms of sexual activity" (pp. 16–17). She is silent on what it means to adopt a flexible definition of sex and what definitions have to do with issues of justice and well-being. Unfortunately, this opening chapter of the anthology does not really engage well with the philosophical task of defining concepts (and most of the entries in the essay's bibliography are non-philosophical works), which is needed to address the difficult question, "What Is a Sexual Act?"

The title of Sam Shpall's essay—"The Value of Sex"—is intriguing: given that issues of value are perennial in philosophy and that sexuality has been denigrated by many traditions, it would be good to have a convincing argument on the value of sex. The "value of sex" typically means something like "the value or importance of sex to human beings." But Shpall initially understands it to mean "what makes sex good—fun, exciting, comforting, edifying, relationship-enriching, part of a flourishing life" (p. 35). He quickly pivots to the different question of whether sex counts as a good on the three major theories of human well-being, arguing that because we can experience sexual pleasure but not

like it, and because sexual pleasure need not satisfy our deeper desires, hedonistic and desire-satisfaction theories about the place of sex in a good human life are inadequate (pp. 36–37); he does not explore the idea that desire-satisfaction theories can insist on the satisfaction of deep desires or those that mirror the agent's reflection of what they ultimately want.

Shpall shifts the discussion to the value of mutuality in sex. He first champions it: "a person who values sex in only these ways [emotionless sex] misses out on much of what *could* make sex good for them, such as the eroticism of various forms of reciprocity" (p. 41). He is, however, (wisely) wary of insisting that mutuality in sex is for everyone, because he worries about "stigmatizing already marginalized people—like those who cannot find a willing sexual partner for mutual eroticism—when we assume that [mutuality] is an essential component of flourishing for everyone" (p. 41). However, if marginalized people want mutuality in their lives (but cannot find it), this would not show that mutuality is not for everyone (if anything, it shows the opposite). Shpall should have focused on people who tried mutuality but it did not suit them—they are the ones for whom mutuality is not part of their ideal sex.[5] Shpall concludes that sexual and romantic love are "some of the most important goods on the 'objective list' [theory]" (p. 45), a theory whose adequacy he does not address like he does the other two. This conclusion might be true, but Shpall's argument for it is unclear (perhaps the conclusion's truth is evident).

Shpall's essay is a bit unfocused: by the end of it, it was unclear what the value of sex is or what it takes to establish it. It sometimes moves from one question to another without a clear reason. The questions it tackles are also vastly different from each other: "What is the value of sex in human life?" "Is sex needed for well-being? How or why?" "What makes sex valuable for an individual?" "Are there ideals in sex that everyone should aspire to?" For example, on page 41 Shpall asks whether there is more to say about what makes sex good. He responds by saying that we can think about this question by asking another—about good sex in relationships vs good sex outside them—but he gives no reason for this switch. Indeed, by the end Shpall states that "it is difficult to say much that is illuminating about this huge, amorphous topic" (p. 45). But then why write an essay on it? Perhaps it would have been better to write an essay on the difficulty of writing on this topic or what it takes to adequately address it. But the virtue of the essay is that it illustrates the myriad ways that "the value of sex" can be understood, and for that it is to be commended.

John Danaher's "Is There a Right to Sex?" is rich and nicely argued.[6] Danaher argues for rights to sex in two steps: first, sex is a human good, and "meaningful sexual experiences" (an expression that I wish Danaher had adequately explained) are important to most people. Second, some people are *unjustly* sexually excluded "due to morally unjustified laws, discriminatory ideologies, and prejudicial attitudes" (p. 53). Both these premises imply that there are rights to sex. However, Danaher is unclear on why both premises are needed: why not only the injustice of sexual exclusion? Moreover, injustice is not the only basis for rights; people have rights (e.g., to basic medical treatment) even if they are not unjustly excluded from them. If sex is a human good, why not give rights to anyone who is sexually excluded, even if not unjustly?

Danaher thinks that the rights to sex are both negative—rights to the removal of unjust laws that criminalize sexual behavior that should not be criminalized—and positive—rights to "provide resources and services" (e.g., sex toys and even sex robots) and to "the provision of information and education relating to meaningful sexual experience" (e.g., a sex-positive education to children) (pp. 56–57). Talk of positive rights to sex is provocative because it conjures the idea of rights to partnered sex, which in turn conjures the idea of forcing people to have sex with the right holders. Danaher shies away from partnered sex, emphasizing the importance of the pleasures of masturbating (p. 52). However, these pleasures might be different from those of partnered sex, and many are sexually excluded from the latter. Moreover, if positive rights to sex are to sex toys and education, perhaps "rights to sex" is a misleading expression, as it connotes something stronger.[7] Still, the essay is thought provoking, deals with an important theme, and moves forward the discussion of this issue.

3. Sexual Orientation and Identity

Part II, on sexual orientation, is the longest part with eight essays. Sexual orientation has always raised philosophical difficulties in terms of how it is to be understood and is currently a "hot" topic, especially with the various new orientations that we hear about, so I spend some space on the essays about it. Lisa Diamond's opening essay, "What Is a Sexual Orientation?" aims "to review several of the most pressing theoretical and empirical debates about sexual orientation" and to highlight "productive directions for future research on this topic" (p. 84). Diamond discusses the issue of whether sexual orientation is about sex or gender, what it means to sexually desire another, whether sexual orientation is stable over a person's lifetime, and whether men and women differ regarding sexual orientation—all important and timely questions.

One main philosophical issue currently discussed by philosophers is whether sexual orientation is based on sex or on gender. Diamond opts for gender, because "it is not clear that it is the sex (as in sexual anatomy or biological features) of potential partners that drives the sort of attraction normally associated with the concept of sexual orientation. Often, it is at least in part socially coded gender expressions that may or may not 'line up' with sex in a straightforward way that draws us to a person" (p. 96, endnote 1). However, if by Diamond's own lights gender is *in part* responsible for attraction, then, presumably, sex is the other part. So why opt for gender and not for sex? Why not, say, both?

Diamond gives four more reasons for rejecting sex as the basis of sexual orientation.

First, people are not attracted to others as "abstract biological types" (p. 85), something that we would presumably have to say if we insist on sex as the basis of sexual orientation. However, of course, we can claim that sex is such a basis while also saying that sexual orientation practically or in daily life manifests itself in attraction to specific individuals.

Second, Diamond thinks that if sex is the basis of sexual orientation, then there will be difficult-to-answer questions: "If I am intimately interested in being with a woman, am I interested in people who identify as women? People who have vulvas and/or vaginas? People who act in ways that are culturally understood to be feminine? People who are recognized as female?" (quoting van Anders, p. 85). These questions assume that basing sexual orientation on sex must categorize every person's sexual attractions or (inclusive "or") that there is no difference between a sexual orientation and a sexual preference. However, one can have preferences within one's sexual orientation: straight men, for example, are attracted to female human beings—beings who have vulvas and vaginas—even if they are not attracted to each one. Most of them would not be attracted to men who identify as women (especially without physical alteration). Some of them are attracted to women who gender present in atypical ways; others are attracted feminine men, others to gynandromorphs, while others experiment with other men. No plausible conception of sexual orientation should deny sexual preferences or borderline cases, yet the questions that Diamond raises assume that a sex-based conception of sexual orientation does.

Third, Diamond argues that sex is a mosaic (pp. 85–86), which supposedly undermines sex as the basis of sexual orientation. However, just because sex has to do with gametes, hormones, chromosomes, and genes does not mean that anatomical sex is not the basis of sexual orientation. Moreover, attraction to others on the basis of their sex is compatible with sexual variation within the same sex. A gay man can be attracted to different men, all of whom might have variations in their hormone levels, and some of whom might have an additional Y chromosome. Just because biological sex is complicated does not mean that some aspects of it cannot serve particular purposes.

Diamond's fourth reason to avoid "sex" is political: it "risks misrepresenting the struggles experienced by transgender individuals, many of whom seek physical modification of their bodies". However, Diamond does not explain how retaining sex as sexual orientation's basis misrepresents their struggles (let alone how it risks doing so), especially if they can modify their sex. Additionally, it is unclear why sex is relevant to moral issues surrounding transgender people given that it is fallacious to derive moral and political conclusions from scientific facts.

The concept of sexual orientation should surely be subjected to proper philosophical scrutiny (it has been and continues to be). Diamond's essay is good in raising some important questions about it, but its answers are often not convincing. Here is another example. Diamond raises the question as to why sex/gender should be the factor in understanding sexual orientation, bringing to our attention the fact that age, number of partners, power dynamics, and emotional vs sexual intimacy play a role in people's attraction to others (pp. 89–90). True. However, it is not enough to mention these factors to downgrade the importance of sex/gender to sexual orientation. Instead, we need to answer additional questions: suppose that *X* is a gay man attracted to young men. Are both sex/gender and age equally important to *X*? A proper answer needs to consider *X*'s other attractions: is *X* equally attracted to young women? If no, age is merely a preference (even if an exclusive one) to *X*, one that operates within *X*'s sexual orientation.[8]

Matthew Andler's essay, "Queer and Straight," develops an account of sexual identity that is inextricably linked to political oppression, to "inclusion/exclusion in relation to sexuality cultures" (p. 117). More specifically, a person is "queer (or straight) in virtue of occupying a certain place in a social structure" (p. 118). Andler arrives at this conclusion by arguing against competing accounts of sexual identity, perhaps the crucial one being that one's sexual identity is "grounded" in one's sexual orientation, which Andler rejects because people can have the same sexual orientation but differ in their identities. Here, I worry that using "grounded" obfuscates the distinction between the necessity and sufficiency of sexual orientation for sexual identity, a distinction for which Andler needs to account if his rejection of anchoring identity in orientation is to be convincing. Still, Andler's general claim that identity and orientation need not have a one-to-one relation is plausible.

The basic idea of Andler's own view is that one has a queer identity if one is excluded from straight culture and if one "ought to be included in queer culture" given the norms of such culture (p. 124). It is unclear, however, what it means to be excluded from straight culture, which is, of course, a behemoth in terms of cultural diversity and norms. For instance, gay people have been accepted if they conformed to the norms of straight culture (such as being married to the opposite sex and having children, refraining from having gay sex; less drastically, gay people are now part and parcel of the straight cultural landscape in most parts of the western world). What Andler likely means is that straight culture has excluded queer people *as* queer people. However, then the claim becomes a tautology: by definition, straight culture excludes queer people as queer people, much as queer culture excludes straight people as straight people.[9] Thus, the exclusion needs to be better explained and delineated.

Andler's account faces a more serious objection, which is that the existence of queer identity depends on oppositional or oppressive cultures, such that in possible worlds with no such opposition there are no queer identities. This is implausible given that for any possible world in which queer people exist, there can be queer identities. Andler can plausibly reply that "queer" has oppositional connotations, such that queer culture in the actual world has flourished only because it was excluded by straight culture. However, if "queer" *essentially* refers to excluded sexual groups, Andler's account again borders on the tautological: in virtue of the meaning of "queer," queer identity is a function of exclusion. To my mind, a more plausible account is one in which one's gay (or queer) identity is a function of one's sexual desires and dispositions, such that only in some possible worlds such identities are rejected.[10] Nonetheless, Andler's essay pushes us to think about how to understand the notion of queerness in relation to sexual orientation and identity and in relation to social and political oppression.

A. W. Eaton and Bailey Szustak's "Asexuality" aims to "provide an overview of the political and philosophical issues pertaining to asexuality" (p. 131). Asexuals are people who have a "sustained lack, or near lack, of sexual attraction to others" (p. 132). Thus, asexuals can experience sexual desire, engage in sexual activity, and experience romantic attraction to others—it is only sexual attraction that they lack. Moreover, the "near lack" of sexual attraction allows Eaton and Szustak to claim that asexuals lie on a spectrum—for

example, graysexuals *sometimes* experience sexual attraction (p. 133). Eaton and Szustak also claim that asexuality is a sexual orientation because doing so helps attain political goals such as legal protections, "inclusion in sexual minority societies and in pride events", "serves as a basis for networking", and "provides a basis for self-understanding" (p. 134).[11] They then offer a list of oppressions that asexuals face (which is one main reason for writing this essay) and end with a section on the goods of asexuality, such as that seeing sex through the eyes of asexuals "would seek to find new modes of expression that appeal without relying on sexuality" (p. 141).

One concern with Eaton and Szustak's essay is that most of its substantive points have already been made.[12] However, perhaps another essay on the topic is necessary because asexuality is not discussed enough. A more serious concern is that the authors often opt for political bravado instead of philosophical substance. Consider three examples.[13] First, the authors raise a philosophical objection prompted by their use of "near lack of sexual attraction": if some graysexuals and demisexuals experience sexual attraction and activity, then they are not asexuals. Alternatively, asexuality should not be characterized as lack of sexual attraction (p. 133). This is an interesting objection because it invites the authors to philosophically defend the characterization of asexuality (and the objection need not be motivated by hostility toward asexuals). Their reply, however—that the objection misses the point of their sympathetic characterization that reflects how asexuals understand themselves (p. 133)—does not address the objection and relies on a mistaken conception of sympathy, namely to simply accept whatever the object of the sympathy says (the reply might also confuse the objection's substance with possible motives behind it).

In the section on the goods of asexuality, the authors do not explain or provide an elaborate example of how looking at sexuality through the eyes of asexuals can yield new modes of expression. Another good they mention is that asexuals are free from the burden of being sexually distracted and they "can more easily choose to focus their energies on their schooling, careers, or other personal goals" (p. 142). However, it is unclear how this squares with their earlier claim that asexuals do not lack sexual desire or with the plausible claim that human sexuality is an intrinsic good; after all, even if lacking *A* allows one to focus on other things, the lack might still be a loss if *A* is a valuable good, and especially if it is incommensurable with other goods.

Third, their reasons for claiming asexuality is a sexual orientation are not defended, merely listed (their essay is in the part on sexual orientation), and they do not explore the option that asexuality as an *identity*, as opposed to an orientation, can yield the political goods they seek. Moreover, their proposal to recast "Dembroff's definition to a multidimensional model" (p. 136) is not detailed enough to give the reader a good idea of what they have in mind. Engaging these questions in depth would have made their rich essay even richer and advanced more the philosophical discourse about it.[14]

In her "Feminist Heterosexuality", Christie Hartley argues against "heterosexuality" as it is currently understood but maintains hope that it can be retained in the future. Hartley's argument is that there are two understandings of heterosexuality, each of which is objectionable. On the crude view, heterosexuality is the idea that men are exclusively attracted to women, and women are exclusively attracted to men (it is unclear why exclusivity is part of this understanding), with "men" and "women" referring to males and females, respectively (p. 148). Hartley objects to the crude view because it aligns gender with sex, it assumes a binary understanding of sex and gender, and it does not "recognize the way in which social norms, social practices, and social institutions shape our sexuality and contribute to women's oppression" (p. 155). The institutional view understands heterosexuality not simply as a sexual orientation but as heavily invested in unequal gender norms, and thus ought to be rejected (pp. 156–158). In a gender-less world, we can retain an understanding of heterosexuality that is based on sex but not on gender.

One concern is that Hartley loads the understanding of heterosexuality so much that her conclusions simply fall out of her understanding of it. Relatedly, the crude view of heterosexuality can be understood as that heterosexuality is a general sexual attraction for

members of the opposite sex. Such a view is compatible with a moral view that rejects gender-based oppression, and it is open to other forms of sexual attraction and to the sexual variation that is found among human beings. Hartley's essay, then, unintentionally tries to score political points by being uncharitable to its (alleged) philosophical opponents.

Shaun Miller's "Heterosexual Male Sexuality: A Positive Vision" attempts to provide a positive vision in light of what Miller and others see as "hegemonic masculinity," part of which is "toxic masculinity" (which is heterosexual and white). Hegemonic masculinity is "the normative position that males should showcase a masculinity—roughly, a socially prescribed gender role for males—that reinforces male domination" (p. 164). Toxic masculinity "is exaggerated and destructive behavior patterns . . . to demonstrate that one is not feminine" (p. 165), including disparaging the feminine, "unhealthy emotional suppression," and "bragging about sexual conquests" (p. 165). This leads to many men acting in toxic ways to fit in, even if they do not want to or this is how they really are (pp. 165–166). Thus, Miller wishes to provide "a robust, compelling, and substantive alternative model for male sexuality" (p. 166).

Miller considers and rejects consent and other similar models because they do not address male entitlement to sex, which he associates with deontology (though it is unclear why) (pp. 167–169). He discusses a consequentialist perspective that focuses on pleasure, arguing that men should try unscripted sexual activities (activities other than penile–vaginal penetration)—what Miller calls "expanded masculine play"—because only that way can they know what is sexually pleasurable: they "may find that they enjoy getting a prostate massage without worrying whether anal penetration might be considered unmanly" (p. 171). Here, however, it is unclear how Miller knows what goes on behind closed doors, especially since, by his own lights, much of masculine sexuality is just to fit in. Regardless, Miller rejects pleasure as sufficient for a new vision because the values of white supremacy and heteronormativity "are still locked in place": "What is required is both a structural overhaul of our institutions and cultural and individual moral education" (p. 174), though he is unclear why such a dramatic solution is needed if most toxic masculinity is a matter of perception and the desire to fit in.

Miller writes that change at the individual level is nonetheless possible, especially through cultivating the virtues, and he focuses on the virtue of care. His discussion is ambiguous between care as lack of selfishness (evidenced in his discussion of care in casual hook ups, pp. 175–176) and care as active concern for one's sexual partner, which brings out "generosity, kindness, loyalty, and trust" (p. 176), though how all these moral tendencies are to be combined with sexual desire, which can numb the mind, is unaddressed.

Part II ends with a somewhat humorous essay (a welcome change) by Finn Mackay, "Lesbian Feminism," a historical account of the various understandings of lesbianism and of how lesbian feminism differs from political lesbianism, and how these movements "were far removed from sexuality and sex between women" (p. 193). Political lesbianism "rebranded" lesbianism as a spiritual and political women-loving-women movement, which resulted in de-sexualizing lesbians (pp. 196–197). Even lesbian feminism de-sexualizes lesbianism in its emphasis on the spiritual equality between women. One crucial conclusion from Mackay's essay is that "[t]oo often sex and desire between women . . . is erased in pursuit of rebranding, owning, and controlling lesbianism to frame it as purely a feminist expression," when not all feminists are lesbians and not all lesbians are feminists (p. 198). Despite Mackay's informative and substantive essay, the editors missed an opportunity to include a philosophical essay that addresses precisely Mackay's questions, especially how lesbianism ought to or can be defined in light of its political history and the current turmoil over who should be sexually attracted to whom.

4. Sexual Consent, Sexual Autonomy, and Disability

Part III, on sexual autonomy and consent, has seven essays. Lucy McDonald's nicely argued "Flirting" offers an account that distinguishes between harassing and flirting. Flirting is a joint activity because in order for X to engage in it, Y has to reciprocate,

with *Y*'s reciprocation involving characteristic moves, which McDonald calls "pushing" and "pulling" (p. 210). Pushing involves presupposing a level of intimacy that does not (yet) exist between *X* and *Y*—it is "a kind of presumptuous invitation to intimacy"—whereas pulling involves accommodating the invitation to intimacy by *pretending* to block it—the pretense is clear in *Y*'s continuing the conversation and pushing in return (p. 211). McDonald recognizes that one drawback of her account might be that it leaves no room for one-sided flirting ("*X* was flirting with *Y* but *Y* had no idea"). Such cases, however, might be better seen as attempts at flirting, as McDonald plausibly suggests. Little has been written on this issue, so McDonald's essay is a welcome addition.

Karamvir Chadha's "Sex and Consent" is a *tour de force* of the issues involved in this thorny topic. First, there is the question of why sexual consent is important and differs from nonsexual consent, including consent to nonsexual bodily contact; here the "important difference claim" states that *X*'s sexual contact with *Y* without *Y*'s consent is morally different and morally worse from other forms of non-consensual bodily contact (p. 219). Second is the issue of the relationship between consent and moral permissibility, with some philosophers accepting the *volenti* maxim, that "no wrong is done to a person who consents" (p. 221). Third is the issue of what makes consent valid—what things must be true in order for *Y* to validly consent to sexual activity. One component is that *Y* must perform an act of consent, such as being willing to have sex (the purely mental view) or successfully communicating their consent to *X* (the successful communication view) (pp. 221–222). A second component is that some things need to be true of *Y*, such that *Y* is mature, of sound mind, not deceived, and whose consent is not coerced (pp. 223–224). A third and final component is that *Y* consent to the act that *X* does, not to some other act that *X* does (pp. 224–225).

The fourth and fifth issues are the sufficiency and necessity of consent, which respectively claim that if *Y* consents to *A* (whereby *A* is a sexual act with *X*), then *A* is morally permissible, and that if *A* is morally permissible, then *Y* has consented to *A*. Chadha questions the sufficiency of consent by giving the example of a person of color, Amardeep, who consents to sex with Bart (presumably white) but such that Amardeep plays the erotically-charged role of a subjugated person *because* she is a person of color. Chadha suggests that Amardeep's consent is not sufficient because Bart disrespects Amardeep "on racial grounds" (p. 226). However, the example is under-described, so it is hard to properly assess it. If Amardeep is fully aware of the race play and of Bart's intentions and motives, it is difficult to see why the sex is morally impermissible (perhaps the sex act is not ideal, measured by some ethical standard, but this is different from being impermissible).[15] Perhaps Bart has duties of benevolence to Amardeep to not engage in such sexual acts, but if Amardeep is fully aware of what the sexual act is, such duties would be paternalistic, indicating that they are not genuine duties.[16] Chadha then discusses, and plausibly rejects, some accounts that have questioned the necessity of consent (pp. 227–228), concluding with a discussion of the connections between nonconsensual sex and harm.[17]

Susan Brison's "Beyond Consent" argues against defining "rape" as "sex without consent" or any definition that makes consent the focal distinguishing factor between rape and other forms of sexual activity. Such definitions neglect "the central role that gender *inequality* plays in rape and it reinforces pernicious stereotypes about men and women" (p. 238). They also neglect harm, violence, and the group nature of rape, whereby society in general is responsible for allowing the rape of women by men to be common. Consent is also "a very low bar for morally permissible, let alone *good*, sex" (241), quoting Catharine MacKinnon, "No one says, 'we had a great hot night, she (or I or we) consented" (p. 242). Brison even suggests that consent might be irrelevant to some cases of sex, much like consent is irrelevant to some other practices, such as gift-giving: "If I give my spouse a birthday present, consent ... [is] irrelevant ... [G]enuine gift-giving isn't the sort of thing that can truly be said to be consensual or non-consensual" (p. 242).

However, consent *is* relevant to gift-giving: those who accept a gift have consented to receiving it; if they do not consent, the gift-giving will not even succeed. The issue here,

as Brison realizes (p. 243), is whether consent is the only relevant factor. It surely is not, but this does not make it irrelevant, period. The same goes for a sexual encounter: even if ideal or good sex partners do not discuss consent, their consent is still necessary, hence relevant. Brison's essay also expects too much of a definition: it seems to imply that a good definition has to include or point to the above issues (being gender-based, connected to harm and violence, arising from group dynamics), it has to be context sensitive, and it has to have political and moral utility, such as eradicating rape (p. 235). Granted that one or more of the above factors are often involved in rape, we still need a lean definition that cuts across various contexts, and consent will likely be a necessary factor.

Tom Shakespeare's "Sex and Disability" raises and explains a range of philosophical questions regarding sex and disabled people (though Shakespeare does not offer detailed answers to them), all the while being sensitive to empirical facts about disability (e.g., the false assumption that disabled people are sexually inactive, and the difference between people born with disabilities and those who develop them later [pp. 272–273]). One crucial philosophical issue is whether attraction for people with visible disabilities (e.g., a missing limb) constitutes an especially pernicious form of objectification or whether it can be considered an innocuous taste variation (p. 275). A corollary is whether lack of desire, even repulsion, for visible disabilities is morally wrong in some sense, or at least born of social prejudice (p. 276). Another issue is whether people with intellectual disabilities (including dementia and brain injuries) can consent to sexual acts and, if they cannot, whether some other standard, especially that of best interest, can apply: if they are fed and clothed without their consent, why not have them experience sex? (p. 279) Another set of considerations concerns sex work: does third-party intervention in helping a disabled person, say, masturbate constitute some sort of sex work? Can we even truly say that the helper is part of the sex act? A final set of considerations has to do with some legal and social changes that would help disabled people have sexual encounters, from changing regulations surrounding special services (e.g., allowing cars for wheelchair-bound people to have another person be with them in the car) to legalizing sex work so that disabled people with funds can buy their services.[18]

Andrea Bianchi's "Sexual Consent, Aging, and Dementia" addresses whether people with dementia can consent to sex. Typical models of consent (e.g., "No means no" and affirmative consent) require certain cognitive and communicative capacities that people with dementia might lack, which means that they cannot consent. If consent is necessary for moral permissibility, any sex that people with dementia engage in would be impermissible (pp. 290–291). Thus Bianchi reconsiders what consent might mean for people with dementia (p. 291) by looking at models of "relational autonomy and/or supported decision-making," which might involve a caregiver helping interpret the person's verbal and non-verbal cues, and highlighting the potential benefits and risks of them engaging in sex. Another approach is the use of advanced sexual directives: giving advance consent to an act that might occur in the future. However, the problem with such directives is that people's future selves might differ from the selves that agreed to the advance directive (pp. 292–293).

Striking about these alternative models to understanding consent is the issue of how exactly they differ from standard models of consent: are they meant to replace them, add to them, or modify them? There is also the issue that Bianchi hints at in this essay (p. 292) of whether the patient's well-being competes with consent, so that the former can override the latter in some cases.[19]

5. Relationships and Marriage

Part IV, "Regulating Sexual Relationships," contains four essays. Stephen Macedo and Peter de Marneffe's "Monogamy: Government Policy" defends the claim—not especially popular among philosophers—that there are good reasons for the law to recognize marriage but only in its monogamous form. Their main reason is that such support is highly beneficial to the spouses, their children, and society at large, with little cost, whereas supporting polygamous marriages has historically been costly. Specifically, we accept a social meaning

of marriage, that it "represents, and publicly expresses, a desire to commit to and settle down with another person and build a life in common together" (p. 300). The law, with its packages of privileges and responsibilities for spouses, helps make the commitment public and serious. Critics of monogamous marriage often claim that it is not the law as such that is important, but some non-legal features of relationships and families, such as stability. Macedo and Marneffe reply that such factors are abetted by marriage (p. 304). The authors also argue that legal support of monogamous marriage need not mean that the state cannot do more for others who are not married, such as single parents and single people (pp. 306–307).

Moreover, although the authors do not argue for the prohibition of plural marriages, they argue that they do not deserve state legal recognition because they suffer from many problems, as history has shown. Of course, history can tell us only so much, because things can and do change. Furthermore, state recognition of non-problematic plural marriages (e.g., egalitarian ones) can help them flourish and spread, thereby providing more evidence for whether they are successful. To this objection, Macedo and Marneffe reply that the "most sensible, and most liberal, approach is to let these new social forms develop in conditions of freedom, and then create appropriate forms of legal recognition and protection" (p. 311).

Lori Watson's "Plural Marriage and Inequality" addresses the question whether the state should recognize plural marriages on the assumption that marriage as a legal institution is not going anywhere any time soon. Watson argues that the state should not recognize structurally inegalitarian plural marriages, such as ones with one spouse (usually a man) married to multiple others (usually women) who are not married to each other. They are structurally unequal because "by their very organization, the 'center spouse' has rights and privileges" that the others lack (p. 321), and state recognition would make the state party to inequality.[20]

There are structurally equal forms of plural marriages, two of which are polyfidelity, in which all the spouses are married to each other, and molecular polygamy, in which the partners are free (but not obliged to) to marry each other and free to marry people outside the group (p. 322). Watson argues that the state has good reasons to recognize such marriages if it recognizes any marriages at all, because otherwise the state would take sides with some views (monogamy) but not others of what relationships should be, which is "inconsistent with liberal, democratic principles" (p. 323). This is a principled point about affording different conceptions of the good life, assuming that they are morally acceptable, equal legal standing (a point that Macedo and Marneffe do not address well given their focus on harms and benefits).

The juxtaposition of and contrast between these two essays nicely brings out the main issues involved in this debate, and the approaches to them.

Robin Zheng's "Sex, Marriage, and Race" aims "to make visible how our *sexual practices* are ... deeply racialized—that is, their social significance shifts dramatically according to the racial identities of the parties involved" (p. 328). Zheng claims that inter-racial and intra-racial sex are "morally and politically fraught" and that the solution to this is political (as opposed to legal) (p. 329). Much of the essay consists in historical claims about the legacy of slavery and colonialism, a history surely needed to support the idea that intra- and inter-racial sex is fraught. Still, the essay has some philosophical sweeping claims with less support. Consider the claims that "Black, Indigenous, Latina, and Asian women, particularly those in formerly colonized countries, are highly visible and/or disproportionately represented in industries of pornography, prostitution, sex tourism, sex trafficking, and 'mail-order brides'" and that the "sex work industry *depends* on the prior existence of this layer of economically vulnerable women for recruitment in the first place" (p. 330). The different types of women and their histories, not to mention the various sex industries, are put together in one group, which makes it difficult to assess the truth of Zheng's claim:[21] Asian women might be disproportionately represented in mail-order brides, but are they in Western pornography? Note also the vagueness of some points: "disproportionately represented" is unclear, with no data to support it. The claim that the

sex industry "depends" on the existence of women of color is also unsupported: depends in what way? If they were to go on strike, will the sex industry come to a halt?

Zheng does not deny that there is inter-racial sexual attraction, but she claims that this attraction is all "indelibly shaped by contexts of racial domination and often perpetuates them" (p. 331). However, context shapes everything—so is there something special about these attractions and how they are shaped by their contexts? Zheng also gives no *empirical* evidence to support the empirical claim that inter-racial attraction *perpetuates* contexts of racial domination, especially since one might think that more inter-racial attraction might help *dismantle* such legacies of domination. Zheng's evidence seems to consist of listing a large number of sources. This has two problems. First, most of these sources themselves do not provide the needed empirical backing—most are works in theory that repeat the same claims that Zheng makes. Second, she does not wrangle with these sources, citing them on their authority.[22]

Finally, Zheng claims that "What I hope to have shown . . . is that 'the personal is political' also entails 'the political is personal,' in the sense that large-scale political phenomena such as racial injustice, colonialism, nationalism, and so on are inevitably lived out via the psychologies of individual people" (p. 335). This claim, however, is either trivial—of course large-scale political phenomena shape people's psyches—or unsupported—how many people are affected like this? All? Most? In what ways? Zheng has also not shown the purported entailment claim. Instead, if "the political is personal" is generally true, it is true simply because individuals are affected by the political context they inhabit, not because it is entailed by the other claim.

The issue of race and sex is important and needs a fair and thorough examination. Had Zheng's essay, say, zeroed in on a specific point and taken the time to explain and support it (e.g., racial injustice during a specific period and in a specific location), the essay would have avoided the impression of being sweeping and would have further advanced the discussion of this complex topic.

6. Sex, Medicine, and Therapy

Part V contains four essays on the ways that sexuality has come to be seen as "off." In "'Disordering' Sex through Medicine", Katarzyna Grunt-Mejer goes over the major sexual problems discussed in the medical profession and raises questions about the assumptions that underlie the solutions to them and how the problems are approached. For example, the problem of erectile dysfunction in men is viewed through a phallocentric paradigm "which centralizes the role of a penis in sexual activity, equates sex with penile–vaginal penetration, and therefore implies the necessity of male erection for the sex to take place" (p. 376). This paradigm neglects that not all sex needs to be penetrative, and that women often enjoy sex that is not penetrative. It also neglects that men become more sexually impotent as they age, so erectile dysfunction need not even be viewed as a problem in older men. (Grunt-Mejer's reasoning here is unconvincing: just because something occurs due to aging does not mean that it is not a problem.) Grunt-Mejer is correct to question these assumptions. However, erectile dysfunction need not be a problem only for heterosexual penetrative sex (regardless of how the medical profession sees it). Having erections is important for oral sex, it can be a visible (and trustworthy) sign that one's partner is aroused, and erect penises, for those who sexually desire men, are sexually attractive—they are important for the sexual partner's arousal (*X*'s erect penis can arouse or further arouse *Y*'s desire for sexual activity with *X*).

Brunt-Mejer discusses hypoactive sexual desire disorder (HSDD), more diagnosed in women than in men. She sees this, plausibly, as further evidence of "disease-mongering" (p. 379). More crucially, lower libido in women is seen as pathological compared to men's libido, which is a gendered, so problematic, way of looking at this phenomenon (p. 379). Another issue typically seen through a gendered lens is women's orgasm, which remains a problem as long as we continue to think of penile–vaginal sex as paradigmatic (pp. 382–383). Grunt-Mejer also argues that female sexual satisfaction is not as dependent on orgasm as

men's, speculating that imposing the burden of orgasm on women might be a projection of its importance to men, in that men desire orgasm and in that men desire to see their female partners orgasm because it enhances their pleasure, self-image, and sense of masculinity (p. 383).

Sean Aas and Candice Delmas argue in "Homophobia and Conversion Therapy" that if ever there are available safe and effective techniques of changing sexual orientation, they would be morally permissible because they would abide with the moral principle of autonomy, which includes individuals' ability to alter their own brain state, as long as it does not "harm or infringe upon the harms of others" (p. 413). However, the techniques would not be good, especially in societies vitiated by homophobia or "heterosexist injustice", because of at least four harms that they cause (pp. 408–410). First, they would undermine arguments (such as "born this way") that have led to political gains for sexual minorities, which could cause backlash against these minorities. Second, the availability of these techniques would generate pressure on gay people to convert, which would "constitute a severe mental and emotional burden" (p. 409). Third, if sexual orientation becomes a choice, it would be seen as a matter of decision, which could raise demands for justifying the decision to have a specific sexual orientation, which is invasive in itself and can cause further marginalization. Fourth, changing sexual orientation becomes a rational choice for many people, thus negatively impacting society by depriving it of sexual diversity, even while benefitting some individuals.

The existence of these harms is unclear, however. First, the "born this way" argument was never a good one, because the morality of sexual activity is not a function of being chosen or unchosen. Moreover, society has many transformative techniques (including to one's body), whose permissibility is not hostage to whether we are born or not born a certain way. Second, it is unclear the extent to which pressures to convert are real, especially in western societies where being gay or queer is now mostly an accepted fact. Third, demands for justification are not as such a bad thing—indeed, they open up space for dialogue and discussion—and need not be seen as demands to "reveal their psychologies" as much as they are to defend their choices to retain their sexual orientations (which would allow for "born this way" arguments to re-emerge!). The authors also underestimate how such technology might undermine heteronormativity, because the number of straight people who might change their orientation could be large. Here, Aas and Delmas assume that the only option of change is to become straight *or* gay (p. 411). However, with such technology, people can *add* to their sexual orientation to become, say, bisexual.[23] Such technologies could eventually make the whole world non-straight.

Despite my criticisms, Aas and Delmas's bold thesis that sexual orientation changes need not be immediately dismissed is refreshing, well-argued, and brings out the crucial points of contention. Their essay is a nice addition to this area.

7. Contested Desires

Part VI, Contested Desires, contains four essays on racial, BDSM, incestuous, and pedophiliac desires. Gulzaar Barn's "The Ethics and Politics of Sexual Preference" claims that sexual preferences along racial lines, whether they are preferences for or against members of a racial group, are "morally objectionable" because they have bad consequences: "they trade on and reproduce injustice" because they are based in stereotypes about these members, which in turn "can have harmful social effects" (p. 422). Barn also similarly claims, about sex-based preferences, that such preferences perpetuate "the nuclear family and norms surrounding heterosexuality" (p. 433).

One concern is that Barn's essay consists mostly of assertions, with no proper support. It is unclear, for example, whether Barn's claim that racial sexual preferences perpetuate racial injustices is an empirical claim or some other type of claim. It seems to be empirical, given that Barn uses qualifiers such as "often", "likely", "usually", "routinely", and "to some extent". However, if so, Barn does not provide evidence for it. Moreover, Barn's treatment of the issue of stereotypes and how they operate (a crucial plank for her view) is

simplistic. She claims that people with stereotypes fail to accord individuals “a basic level of respect . . . as unique individuals” and who they are is “predetermined, to some extent, based on their group membership” (p. 425). However, no evidence is given for these claims, a serious gap given that there is work in psychology (by Lee Jussim, especially) that shows the opposite—that people use stereotypes as filler information *until* they have specific information about an individual or interact with them. Finally, the essay lumps together sexual desire, dating, and marriage (p. 423), despite the clear differences between them and how they can affect one’s conclusions—for instance, the claim that wealth transference in racist societies tends to remain in the same racial groups (p. 423) is one that applies to marriage, not so much to sexual desire, so the conclusion that racial sexual desire perpetuates such wealth disparities simply does not follow. For another example, it is unclear whether Barn is talking about all racial groups or just subordinated ones, shuttling back and forth between them (p. 421).[24]

Manon Garcia’s “BDSM” raises moral questions about BDSM practices, ones that complicate issues of consent. Consent is the fulcrum of BDSM practices because it converts painful, violent, and seemingly assaultive practices from being immoral to being morally permissible—even to just “play” (p. 439). Garcia gives a brief yet informative history of how consent came to hold such a prominent place, both in the BDSM community itself and in philosophical reflection about the practice (pp. 438–440). Garcia gives the example of the practice of consensual non-consent, in which the submissive consents to an activity with no safe words—with no ability to stop the scene using these words if it becomes too violent—thus consenting to an activity without being able to revoke their consent. Garcia takes this as “evidence that BDSM . . . is inherently unstable” in that it is torn between wanting to allow people to explore their deepest desires and wanting to mitigate risk (p. 443). However, this claim might not follow—why not claim that *some* BDSM activities are inherently unstable?

Garcia next takes aim at the “commonly held definition” of BDSM which focuses on BDSM as a subculture or community-bound practice whose members are “interested in widely different practices and experiences” but unified by various values, especially consent (p. 444).[25] Garcia argues that the focus on community excludes BDSM practices, including kink, that can occur outside such communities and deflects a discussion of the ethics of BDSM, especially if some of the most violent forms of BDSM occur outside the community (pp. 444–446). Garcia neglects another obvious defect of the definition, which is its over-inclusiveness: *most* sexual people are, after all, interested in different experiences and are unified by consent. The definition is thus somewhat uninformative. It also shields not only some of the more violent BDSM practices (as Garcia plausibly states) but assimilates all BDSM practices to your average sexual activities.

Garcia takes in a new direction the by-now-unpopular anti-BDSM feminist arguments—that BDSM reflects and perpetuates power hierarchies—by noting that most BDSM dominants are men and most submissives are women, indicating that, except in queer BDSM communities, there is no real subversion of the gendered structure of society, as the usual replies against the feminist criticisms claim; if anything, this structure might be reinforced (p. 448). This is buttressed by various facts, including that the BDSM community’s discovery that many rapes occur mostly in heterosexual scenes between a male dominant and a female submissive (p. 448). Garcia concludes that “heterosexual BDSM can serve to disguise patriarchal violence”, and that we should be wary of “extolling BDSM as a straightforward model for sexual ethics” (p. 449). Garcia’s “straightforward” qualifier notwithstanding, it is unclear why one would use an abusive form of BDSM as a model for sexual ethics. Perhaps BDSM as *properly* practiced can serve as such a model. Nonetheless, Garcia’s essay nicely balances giving an overview of the issues and arguing for specific claims, and it looks at the feminist anti-BDSM arguments through a new lens.

Natasha McKeever’s “Critiquing Consensual Adult Incest” argues that moral and social (but not legal) norms against this type of incest (adult–adult) are justified. She clears the way by criticizing arguments against adult incest based on abuse, on power imbalances,

and on genetic disorders. Instead, McKeever argues that incest highly risks some crucial family values: because family relationships are unchosen and lengthy, "there is a tendency to assume that the relationship should be one of unconditional love or at least of strong loyalty and commitment to each other" (p. 461). This ideal of family relationships provides a sense of security to family members, which is enough to value it "and to maintain a norm that people love and support their families" (p. 461). Sexual desire and relationships can be fickle, and friends typically avoid being sexually involved with each other so as to not endanger the friendship. This risk is even higher in family relationships because, unlike friendships, they are unchosen and lifelong (p. 462). Thus, maintaining the norm against incest in even adult, consensual relationships not only gets rid of this risk but it allows family members to be emotionally and physically intimate with each other "free from suspicion that the intimacy is code for sexual overture" (p. 463).

Still, McKeever argues that there should not be legal prohibitions on incest because not everyone accepts the above-articulated family values, and the state would also have to prohibit other things that can endanger these values (e.g., prohibiting sex between a son and his father's girlfriend). The law might also have to prohibit relationships between non-biologically related family members (pp. 463–464). McKeever's essay is clearly and convincingly argued, with interesting conclusions—always the marks of a novel contribution to a field.

Agustín Malón's "Pedophilia" tackles a difficult and sensitive subject by distinguishing among various issues, such as different forms of pederasty (which is really the concept we have in mind when we refer to pedophilia, because the issue is not love, affection, or esteem, but erotic desire for children and adolescents, more accurately captured by "erastia" [p. 470]), such as hebephilia, nepiophilia, and efebophilia (p. 470); pedophilia as a sexual interest as opposed to a sexual orientation as opposed to a medical condition. Malón argues that to many pedophiles, their sexual attraction to children is akin to an orientation given the way it is "central to the erotic structure of their being" (p. 470; see also p. 472), plausibly adding that even if pedophilia is a sexual orientation, acting on it would not be morally or legally permissible (p. 473). He argues that even if pedophilia inclines the pedophile to want to be or work with children, this need not be because he wants sexual contact with children, but "because it helps them to control their sexual impulses better . . . [or] because it makes them feel good (in a non-sexual sense) to be close with children, with some arguing that this is helpful in alleviating the need for sexual contact" (p. 474).

Malón concludes by discussing moral approaches to pedophilia. Liberalism might find it wrong because it involves lack of consent, abuse of power, or harmful consequences. This raises two problems: children are often involved in various risky and emotionally charged situations without their consent, so why focus on sex? Second, is sex morally special, as it would have to be if issues of consent and power loom large in it but not in other areas (pp. 476–477)? Perhaps a conservative approach fares better, because it can account for how pedophilia can disrupt a social order that human beings need to flourish (this is reminiscent of McKeever's argument regarding incest).

8. Sex Work and Objectification

Part VII, on objectification and sex work, contains five essays. Patricia Marino's "Sexual Objectification" starts with a survey of some of the main issues in objectification, including the Kantian, individual approach and how it differs from the feminist, social approach advocated by Catharine MacKinnon (pp. 487–490). She discusses Martha Nussbaum's famous account, according to which sexual objectification can be morally permissible and even good if it occurs in the context of mutually respectful relationships (pp. 490–492). Marino objects that consent can be more complicated in relationships than in casual sex: "If a stranger asks you to engage in sexual activity you don't enjoy, it can be easier to say 'no' to them; if it's someone you love and care about, it may not be so easy" (pp. 492–493), a plausible enough idea though it is unclear whether the difficulty has to do with the process that culminates in consent or whether the decision to consent is itself ambivalent.

Marino also argues that even though we can consent to be objectified, whether the consent is autonomous (done for one's own reasons) is complicated by the fact of adaptive preferences, "desires and preferences that a person forms for what is not really in their best interests, or not really what they want for themselves, in response to social and contextual factors" (p. 494). This definition, however, is broad, and it is hard to see which desires and preferences escape social and contextual factors, though Marino thinks that women and oppressed groups might especially suffer from them (pp. 493–494). The upshot is that if one's consent reflects an adaptive preference, the choice is not autonomous. Because some people, women especially, cannot opt out of being objectified (because men constantly objectify them), they might adaptively consent to be objectified. Marino seems to claim that they consent, but that their consent is not autonomous (p. 495).

This interesting account raises a few questions (in addition to the adequacy of Marino's definition of adaptive preferences): Does the account leave room for women who non-adaptively consent to be objectified? A "no" answer is implausible, but a "yes" one requires explaining under which conditions this can happen, especially if objectification is socially pervasive. Second, the role of adaptive preferences in consent is unclear. If the consent is not autonomous, it might not be valid, in which case we have bigger problems than adaptive preferences. Perhaps adaptive preferences explain why a person comes to choose the way that they do (whether a pattern of choices or individual ones). Then, however, they drop out when we need to look at whether the consent is valid. In one essay, Marino nicely addresses the concepts of autonomy, consent, objectification, and adaptive preferences, thus highlighting the importance of understanding them and their relationships to each other.

The disagreement among feminists about the morality of pornography is well-known. Mari Mikkola, in "Pornography and the 'Sex Wars,'" argues that the debate among feminists is really about the nature of sex (p. 514). Anti-pornography feminists' objection seems to derive from their view that sex should involve "emotional connection and intimacy, mutuality and reciprocity, connection to self, and authenticity" (p. 517). This view of what sex should be can be excavated from what these feminists have written about pornography, such as that it depicts the degradation and defamation of women. Similar to anti-pornography feminists, pro-pornography feminists are also opposed to misogynist pornography, one done for men and from their perspective, but they are not opposed to pornography as such, especially if it depicts "transgression and expansion of norms, activities, physical possibilities, desires; complexity of desire, identities, and pleasure; and authenticity in portraying 'real' sex" (p. 518). Here one can again see a certain view of sex being advocated for. Mikkola claims that both camps emphasize authenticity, though they understand it differently (as reflecting the desire to have sex, and as mirroring real sex).

Mikkola takes issue with whether authentic sexuality even exists "given the extent and influence of socialization, cultural traditions, and even indoctrination" (p. 523). She further distinguishes between the sexual lives of (some) women, on the one hand, and metaphysical claims about sex or women's sexuality as such (p. 523). Since it is unclear whether the latter two exist, it is unclear that pornography can reflect them even if it wanted to.[26]

Mikkola's thesis is interesting though I wish that Mikkola had said more about the normative issue of whether pornography *should* reflect *any* kind of sexuality. If it is a medium meant to provide men and women with fodder for their sexual imaginations, it would be free to depict whatever it wants, to both men and women, within the usual moral constraints.

The last two essays in this part address moral aspects of sex work, prostitution especially. Jessica Flanagan ("The Case for Decriminalizing Sex Work") argues for decriminalizing sex work for three reasons. First, criminalizing sex work violates four types of rights of sex workers and their clients (to intimate and personal decisions and to free association; freedom of expression; occupational freedom and freedom of contract; and legal non-interference given that the activities between sex workers and their clients are not as such morally wrong) (pp. 528–530). Second, decriminalization "is likely to promote

the well-being of sex workers and their clients to a greater extent than a prohibitive system" (p. 530). Third, decriminalization promotes "social justice and gender equality" (p. 532). Flanagan also argues that even if consequentialist arguments rely on a small sample of data, a prohibitionist approach interferes with people's decisions. If the data are undecided, then we should opt for an approach that does not interfere with people's liberties (pp. 534–535).

Lori Watson's "An Equality Approach to Sex Work" starts by distinguishing the various approaches to prostitution—criminalization, legalization, decriminalization, and the equality approach. It defends the equality approach—also called the "Nordic model"—which decriminalizes selling sex but criminalizes buying it. It is an equality approach because its purpose is to "address the inequalities that channel and keep persons in prostitution, while eliminating demand (buying) through holding johns and pimps criminally responsible" (p. 539). Watson makes the case negatively, by arguing against legalization and decriminalization approaches, which tend to rest their cases on harm reduction. She argues that they do not actually increase the health and safety of sex workers (p. 542), and she raises conceptual difficulties with whether they can. For example, a work environment that exposes one to the bodily fluids of another has strict requirements about how such fluids are to be handled that would not sensibly apply to prostitution even if we wanted them to (they would, e.g., prohibit oral sex). Moreover, if we advocate for sex-work-specific regulations, we reveal that sex work is not "work like any other form of work" and that these regulations require treating sex workers as unequal relative to "other kinds of workers" because "[c]omplex systems of legal exemptions, which permit risks to health and safety not tolerated in other work contexts, are required" (p. 543). Nor does it seem that sex workers' autonomy is increased because in most contexts they do not have the choice to refuse clients (p. 543). Finally, giving sex workers the option to refuse some clients might clash with anti-discrimination laws that prohibit denying service to people based on legally protected categories (pp. 543–544).

Watson also asks whether prostitution is in itself morally unacceptable—"whether permitting markets in sexual services is wrong in itself, apart from the inequalities that presently structure prostitution" (p. 546). She appeals to equality to argue that, as in the cases of selling one's vote, one's person, and one's military service, selling sex is incompatible with equality. However, her argument here is unclear and seems rushed. As I understand it, it is that, unlike other transactions, the exit costs of sex work are high, involving the sex worker's loss of sexual agency. This is because a sex worker's refusing sexual services after initial agreement "can have legally enforceable consequences ... beyond mere restitution (returning the money)" (p. 547). She might have to pay back the client in sexual services (Watson does not explicitly say that the pay back is sexual, claiming instead that "what is lost by the seller is ... sexual agency"; p. 547), which threatens the "equality of persons in prostitution" (p. 547).

Although forcing a prostitute to have sex with a client as a form of compensation might undermine her sexual agency, it is unclear why the compensation must be sexual. Given the intimacy of sex and the importance of consent, the compensation could (and should) be monetary, period. Moreover, Watson's argument ultimately depends on viewing sex as somehow special. For example, suppose that a judge forces me to pay 50% of my income as alimony to my ex-husband. This undermines my financial and economic agency (at least every time I have to make the payment). Yet this conclusion is not morally abhorrent. Therefore, if undermining a sex worker's sexual agency is abhorrent to the point that (to Watson) it licenses the prohibition of all sex work, then there is something special about sex. That sex is special in this regard might be a true conclusion, but it is one that Watson might not accept since she distances her account from those that appeal to specific views about the nature of sex (pp. 544–545).

The juxtaposition of Flanagan's and Watson's essays puts in relief the salient issues involved in sex work, including approaching them through a real-world and ideal lenses. Both essays are forcefully argued and provide a good survey of the issues.[27]

9. Technology

The final three-essay part is on sex and technology. In "Hookup Apps and Online Dating," Michał Klincewicz, Lily Frank, and Emma Jane discuss the moral impact of dating and hook up apps (DHAs). One is that their design is similar to that of slot machines, partly intended for users to develop behavioral addictions. This is a problem because by encouraging constant swiping, it undermines the goal of meeting a partner (pp. 556–559). They are also problematic in that if they are to continue to make profit, they must assure a certain kind of failure on the part of users so that they keep coming back (p. 560). This point is weak, however, because there will always be a stream of new users, and successful partnerships by previous users mean more consumer confidence in using the DHAs. DHAs also amplify "existing bias, stereotyping, and vilification" (p. 565) such as misogyny and racism. By allowing users to select mates on the basis of, say, race, DHAs make discrimination appear to be reasonable. The authors, however, are clear-sighted enough to ask whether such preferences are problematic and leave the issue open (p. 565). One important question is whether DHAs merely reflect these pre-existing attitudes or exacerbate them. The sheer number of users and the ability of more people than ever to access them indicate that DHAs multiply such attitudes. The authors conclude by discussing value-sensitive design, which allows DHAs to be sensitive to whichever values are dear, though which values are so is difficult to decide (pp. 568–569).

Sven Nyholm's "The Ethics of Humanoid Sex Robots" discusses various moral issues with sexual interaction with sex robots made to look like human beings (pp. 575–576). Such robots can be useful in various ways, not least of which allowing people who are found sexually undesirable to have sexual activity that comes close to simulating sex with another human being. Still, there are objections to them: whether such robots entrench stereotypes about women, whether sex between human beings and robots would be objectifying and transactional-seeming, and whether sex with robots can symbolize rape, given that robots cannot really refuse or might be designed to not refuse.[28] Nyholm does a nice job responding to these worries (pp. 576–577).

Nyholm discusses Robert Sparrow's claim that while one can display vice towards robots because such behavior reflects badly on one, one cannot display virtue (Nyholm does not clarify Sparrow's reason for the claim about virtue). Nyholm agrees that we cannot exhibit those virtues (e.g., tenderness and mutuality) that require a recipient with a human-like mind (p. 582). However, we can exhibit other virtues, such as temperance (here Nyholm relies on my account of this virtue), because a temperate person would not steal, out of lust, other people's robots (p. 580). However, Nyholm's examples of temperance are toward other people, not the robots. Moreover, we should clearly distinguish between exhibiting *virtue and vice* toward the robot, which might not be possible if exhibiting virtue and vice requires interaction with human-like minds, and exhibiting *behavior* toward robots that reflects well or badly on us, which is plausible.

Robbie Arrell convincingly argues in "Sex and Emergent Technologies" that the prevalent sexual technology will not be sex robots but technologies such as teledildonics, which enable "spatially separated users 'to reach out and touch' each other" (p. 590) and XR (virtual reality and augmented reality) technologies, which enable someone to have sex with a hologram with almost the same sensuous feeling as with someone real (p. 594). Such technologies are likely to be popular because sex robots will probably always be expensive and bulky (hence difficult to carry around or hide) (p. 595), whereas XR technology is the opposite. It is also more psychologically feasible because much of the pornography industry already uses some of its forms (p. 595).

Arrell discusses the benefits of such technology, including providing positive sexual experiences to people who do not have sexual opportunities, diversifying people's sexual experiences, and providing a good education tool (p. 595). However, they also raise problems: enabling the use of deepfake technology, enabling people to prefer hyperreal sex to real sex, enabling them to experience sex (undetected) almost anywhere (by, e.g., using smart glasses while, say, on a plane), and the negative effects of human beings succumbing

to hyperreality (pp. 595–597). This essay is a nice addition to the debates about sex and technology, which has mostly focused on apps and sex robots.

10. Concluding Remark

Of the 40 essays in this book, 17 are quite good or excellent, 15 are average, and 8 are subpar.[29] Those essays that basically provide a survey of the issues (such as those on disability, sex and consent, sex and dementia, sex and medicine, pedophilia, BDSM, and technology) fill gaps in the literature, are very useful resources for the lay of the philosophical land, and can work well in a course, introductory or advanced, on the topic in question. Essays that advance particular theses (such as on the right to sex, sexual orientation and choice, being queer and straight, flirting, relationship anarchy, religion and sexual shame, conversion therapies, incest, pornography, and displaying virtues and vices toward machines) obviously enrich the field by proposing new claims with which future research must grapple, and can work well in (especially advanced) courses. All the essays also have long reference lists, themselves a great resource.

Thus, despite my critical remarks about some of the essays, this anthology is a welcome addition to the literature on the philosophy of sex.

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Notes

1. There are exceptions, such as Adams, Davidson, and Lundquist [1].
2. The editors state that Stoltenberg "takes up the analysis of pornography as a form of gender-based inequality, and defends the legal attempts to regulate it as a civil rights violation" (p. 5). But the essay merely hints at this analysis, and most of it is historical in nature.
3. One example that stands out is Lisa Diamond's on sexual orientation, on which more below.
4. It's unclear why Gupta uses the first edition of my book (*Philosophy of Love Sex and Marriage: An Introduction*) and not the second. Moreover, the book is mistakenly listed in the bibliography as an anthology with me as editor. This is the kind of mistake that should have been caught by the editors. In what follows, I point out more of these mishaps.
5. It's also unclear why we should bend a philosophical account because of the possibility of stigmatizing some people.
6. Danaher has an earlier essay on this [2].
7. At least one reference that Danaher cites (Bovet and Raymond 2015) is not in the bibliography.
8. It is a curious fact that of the 113 entries in Diamond's bibliography, only two—less than 2%—are to philosophical works (one of which—Dembroff's—is alphabetically misplaced).
9. Many straight people engage in what might be called "queer" practices, such as the rejection of monogamy and the refusal to have children. And queer people have done the opposite: accepted monogamy and had children. This indicates that a clear division between the two "cultures" is not easily maintained, especially in today's age (as opposed to, say, the 1950s), and Andler's account is weak to the extent that it relies on such a division.
10. Andler closes with the claim that their essay is a "contribution to an exceptionally—and, I'd argue, unjustly—sparse literature in LGBTQIA+ philosophy" (p. 129). It's unclear whether Andler wrote this despite knowing about the sizeable LGBT literature that predates 2010—work by Mark Chekola, Claudia Card, Morris Kaplan, Richard Mohr, and Timothy Murphy, for example. (With the exception of Stein and Calhoun's books, from 1999 and 2000, respectively [Calhoun's is cited in the essay but is not in the bibliography], Andler's references are to 2010 and after.)
11. Eaton and Szustak claim that Robin Dembroff's influential account of sexual orientation "centers on allosexuality and accommodates asexuality as a mere afterthought" (p. 135). They give the analogy with a host who asks their guests what kind of meat they eat. As a result, vegan guests can be accommodated, but only as an afterthought (p. 135; a fairer analogy would have been to a host who asks their guests whether they are disposed to food, period, given that Dembroff's account is about how one is disposed toward sex/gender). This criticism is unfair because it does not target the substance of Dembroff's account. Their

second criticism—that the focus on dispositions to sexual behavior is a problem—is fair, but it is not about asexuality as such, which the authors realize (pp. 135–136). Esa Díaz-León offers a similar criticism [3], which the authors don't cite.

12 See Bogaert [4] and Brunning and McKeever [5].

13 Additional evidence includes the authors' repeated injunction to believe asexuals. But raising philosophical questions or criticisms is compatible with respecting and believing asexuals.

14 Their reference to Wilkerson 2017 should be to Wilkerson 2013.

15 On the sufficiency of consent and the importance of knowing partners' motives, see Soble [6]. Chadha refers the reader in endnote 17 to Seiriol Morgan's example (in Morgan's essay "Dark Desires") of morally wrong sex despite the presence of valid consent. Presumably, Chadha is referring to the example of the Vicomte, who seduces Madame de Tourvel, a sexually virtuous woman, to satisfy his sexual thrill which consists of seducing sexually virtuous women. The Vicomte has to *deceive* her to attain her consent. Thus, Chadha (and Morgan) should have known that this example is inapt because Tourvel's consent is invalid.

16 Morgan himself argues that duties of benevolence are needed to supplement morally valid consent to make sexual activity permissible [7] (Section 6). Chadha does not cite Morgan again in this regard.

17 One reference that Chadha cites—Robert Morgan 2021—is not in the bibliography.

18 The entry to Soble 2013 in the bibliography is not the essay from which Shakespeare quotes, but the anthology that includes the essay. At one point, Shakespeare mentions sexual supererogation (p. 281) but no reference is given to Soble's "Gifts and Duties" [8], which deals with this issue.

19 She takes it up in [9].

20 Of course, these other spouses might, because of religious reasons, be okay with—even prefer—the arrangement. But the state can accommodate such arrangements by not criminalizing them.

21 Putting together "people of color" in one group and opposing them to white people is now common in academia.

22 Zheng also tends to refer to entire works, instead of specific pages or chapters (though she is not the only contributor who does this), which makes it difficult for the reader to track the claims.

23 The authors note that straight women might be tempted to become lesbians to avoid patriarchal gender norms (p. 411). True. But some or even many straight men might want to become at least bisexual because, knowing how much sexual activity gay men engage in, they will be able to have more sex.

24 There are additional concerns with the essay. One is the lack of biology in Barn's discussion of sexual preferences based on sex and gender, making it sound as if sexual attraction is wholly a matter of social construction (pp. 430–433). Another is her mistaken criticism of my views in "Racial Sexual Desires" [10]. There I argue that people with racial sexual preferences *need not* have them because of stereotypes. Barn replies that someone with such preferences can have these stereotypes (p. 425). I would not deny this, and both Barn's and my claims can be simultaneously true.

25 There are no references to this definition. (Unrelated to this issue, Garcia cites Samois 1981 but it's not in the bibliography.)

26 One missing citation from the bibliography is Palac 1995.

27 See also their *Debating Sex Work* [11].

28 On these issues, see Danaher and McArthur [12].

29 Almost all the essays that touch on gender, sexual orientation, and race are in the last group. I'm not sure why, but one hypothesis is that their topics have become so politically charged, especially in the current climate in academia, that they are not debated except within certain parameters that are deemed acceptable.

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