Laurie J. Shrage and Robert Scott Stewart. *Philosophizing about Sex.* Broadview Press 2015. 306 pp. $34.95 USD (Paperback ISBN 9781554810093).

As the authors note in the preface of this fine and timely book, the philosophy of sexuality is an increasingly popular subfield of philosophy. They also note that books on this subject often take the form of anthologies. The present book is in textbook format; the hope is that this will give a more 'unifying framework' (ix) to the material. The result, in my opinion, is a success. The book contains twelve chapters. The chapter sections are posed as questions: is consent a sufficient condition for moral sex? Is cybersex genuine sex? Furthermore, each chapter concludes with a set of useful discussion questions and a set of books/articles for further reading. The book offers informative footnotes concerning both American and Canadian contexts. In what follows, I will briefly summarize each chapter.

Chapter one begins conceptually, specifying the parameters of sex. Consider President Clinton's claim that he did not have sexual relations with Monica Lewinski, since he was the *passive* recipient of oral sex. Many of us might smile at this unconvincing delineation. Or consider the role of the internet in sex—is cybersex genuine sex? Of course, cybersex itself has a range of possible meanings—avatars, webcams, and computer controlled sex toys to name a few.

Chapter two examines sexual attraction and delves into how sex, gender, and sexual orientation are related. Fausto-Sterling, for example, argues that two sexes are insufficient to capture 'the diversity of naturally occurring bodies' (23). Through brief summaries of Foucault and Butler, it is shown how essentialist and binary concepts of sex are still pervasive.

Chapter three looks at sexual objectification and autonomy, specifically the accounts of Kant and Nussbaum. The notion of consent is also analyzed. Many people accept consent as a sufficient condition for sex without fully reflecting on the contextual factors that give rise to it. Catherine McKinnon, for example, argues that under patriarchy, women 'often lack sufficient social power to withhold consent' (36). Seiriol Morgan argues that informed consent is necessary but not sufficient for morally permissible sex. Any sex act that might reasonably cause harm is *prima facie* wrong. Consider the BDSM community's distinction between hurt and harm. Some activities involve causing pain (e.g., hurt) but they ultimately 'promote health and well-being' (37). This is different than outright harm. The last section of the chapter examines sexual autonomy, specifically the relationship between exoticizing and eroticizing someone. They are similar in that both treat others as 'lacking unique inner states, perspectives and feelings' (46).

In the fourth chapter, the relationship between sex and violence is analyzed. How are the two related in the moral as well as the judicial sense? In both the US and Canada, sexual harassment is treated as a kind of sex discrimination, but the authors argue that the very concept of sexual harassment is difficult to define. It appears to run together 'offensive behavior because of that person's *sex*' and 'unwelcome *sexual* behavior toward another' (55, emphasis in original). A very long important discussion then centers on rape—its scope, its wrongfulness, its nature on the internet, and what kinds of evidence are available to both the prosecution and defense during judicial proceedings.

In the fifth chapter, one of the perennial topics in the philosophy of sex is examined—sexual perversion. How should we understand sex acts that are 'unnatural' or 'atypical'? The canonical text

on this subject is Nagel's article. The authors do a very good job showing how 'unnatural' is ambiguous and provide a range of possible descriptions. Nevertheless, I think they could have done a better job emphasizing the logical distinction between sexual perversion and sexual immorality. Granted, the two often run together, but it is essential that the distinction be made. An act can be perverted and morally permissible; another can be immoral and not perverted at all.

Chapter six examines marriage. Important topics include arranged marriage, adultery, reproduction, the spectrum between monogamy and polygamy, and the value of virginity. For example, in 2006, a French court determined that a 'Muslim man could have his marriage annulled because his wife was not a virgin' (125). Despite a resurgence of emphasis on virginity, Frederick Elliston offers three arguments in favor of sexual promiscuity—the classic liberal defense, the authentic sexuality argument, and the sex as body language argument. The last argument claims that insofar as sex is a form of communication, one can improve their communication skills by having sex with a variety of different partners. The analogy at work here is one of language; you increase your communication skills by practicing with a variety of partners in a variety of contexts.

In chapter seven, the ever-contentious relationship between sex and children is explored. The majority of the chapters centers on the role of sex education. What should children be taught about sex? And should sex education be left to schools, parents, or health-care providers? This topic is particularly topical given the revised Ontario Sex Education curriculum, introduced in the fall of 2015. The last section of the chapter examines whether sex is always harmful for children. One way into this question is through the ancient Greek practice of pederasty, wherein the older man would provide gifts and instruction in exchange for sexual pleasure. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of evidence 'supporting the harmfulness to both children and adolescents of sexual activities with adults' (147). Granted, it is noted that victims of childhood sexual abuse do not interpret what has happened as traumatic. Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that the trauma is often delayed, as the child grows to maturity and comes to understand what has happened to them. Finally, the authors conclude that whenever there is an asymmetry in power, the person with power 'cannot assume that consent [given by the subordinate] is genuine' (148).

The discussion of the sex and children continues at the beginning of chapter eight, which deals with the freedom of expression. In particular, child pornography is investigated. Is it harmful? How is it different from adult pornography? The internet has made hardcore pornography more accessible and it is still a controversial whether or not this has a negative impact on individuals. The authors point out that 'there is some evidence that rates of sexual assault are declining' (160), which would suggest that accessibility is not having the effect some claim.

In chapter nine, sexual privacy is evaluated. The most interesting section of this chapter centers on the question of whether or not it is wrong to force someone 'out of the closet'. Three cases are critically examined—Ted Haggard, Jonathan Merritt, and Tom Brock. One important factor here is that each person's religious convictions led them to condemn homosexuality. Are they hypocrites for condemning homosexuality and then partaking in homosexual behavior? Or are they simply weak-willed? If they are just weak-willed, one might feel more sympathy for them.

Chapter ten examines the role of responsibility. One notable case involves the alleged necessity of revealing one's HIV-positive status to a partner. The authors note how Canadian courts have

diverged from American ones, specifically in the notion of 'significant risk'. Only people who pose such a risk to their sexual partner must disclose their HIV status. The chapter closes by examining sex columnist Dan Savage's claim that everyone ought to be good, giving and game with our sexual partners. By this, he means we all ought to make 'significant efforts and sacrifices to satisfy' (212) their interests.

In the penultimate chapter, the authors consider the role and scope of sexology. This chapter ought to be familiar to those who have taught the philosophy of sex. It begins with the early sexologists of the 19th century and spends a lot of time on Freud. As the authors rightly emphasize, sex research is not neutral and has been used to diminish female sexuality as well as sexual behavior deemed dysfunctional.

The final chapter broadens the scope to examine the limits of tolerance in a secular democratic society. The two most important questions are whether or not genital cutting practices should be tolerated and whether or not BDSM should be restricted in some way. One common line of argumentation about female genital mutilation is that it is analogous to male circumcision. The authors cite Nussbaum as a scholar who rejects the analogy. For Nussbaum, the comparison would only work if more of the penis was removed. The removal of the foreskin is not equivalent to what occurs during FGM.

As I hope is clear, the book offers a wealth of interesting questions and topics about sexuality and its norms in North America today. Such questions would be excellent fodder for class discussion. There are a couple of notable absences: it might have been worthwhile to engage with asexuality and with the rising rates of senior sex. But overall, I heartily recommend this book to those who teach on this subject, or who have an interest.

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