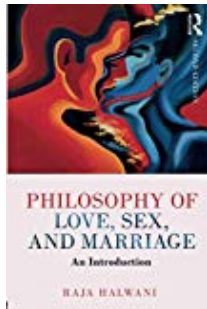




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## PHILOSOPHY



### Review - Philosophy of Love, Sex, and Marriage: An Introduction

Second Edition  
 by Raja Halwani  
 Routledge, 2018  
 Review by Shaun D Miller  
 Nov 27th 2018 (Volume 22, Issue 48)

This second edition is a perfect companion when delving into the philosophy of sex, love, and marriage. In many ways, this second edition is more concise with new additions that are insightful. What makes this book succinct is Halwani summarizing his somewhat verbose example. While I may personally miss his first edition examples, as they helped the reader gain a clearer understanding of the material, this book still very clearly engages the reader and delivers the points across fully. This review will mainly focus on the big ideas that Halwani addresses and not focus too much on what I consider objectionable.

The book is made up of three parts as the title of the book suggests. The first part is on the philosophy of love. One main question philosophers of love ask is: "do we love someone because they are valuable or are they valuable because we love them?" In other words, do we love someone *because* of various reasons (e.g., because she is beautiful, smart, funny, the way she dances, etc.), or is love not based on reasons? Halwani argues that romantic love can be split into two types: romantic love 1 (RL1) and romantic love 2 (RL2). RL1 is the passionate, typically sexual form of love that is usually at the beginning of romantic relationships. It is not infatuation since infatuation is short-lived and may consist of having mistaken beliefs about whether you can be with your beloved. RL1, however, is successful and suggests we love someone *because* of reasons: they already see the values that

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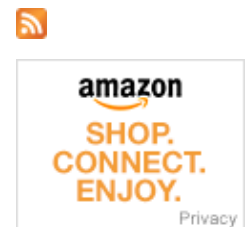
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the lovers have. RL2 is the committed, companionship that we often feel after the frenzied passionate form has settled

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down. RL2 can outlast the initial reasons why the lovers loved each other in the first place, or even create new reasons (e.g., "I never noticed that she cringed her nose when she smiled. But now that I love her, I find that cringe valuable").

This solution also helps resolve which characteristics are essential to love. Philosophers have pondered what is the essential ingredient in love. Is it exclusivity, forming a union, constancy, robust concern? By splitting romantic love into RL1 and RL2, Halwani can demarcate which characteristics of love fit into each category of romantic love. For example, is it the nature of love to be constant? Under RL1, not so. But for RL2, yes.

Halwani also considers love and morality. Here, he looks at various ethical theories as to when it is morally proper to love someone and whether there are moral restrictions to love someone. He argues that the arguments to show why love is a moral emotion all fail. Instead, Halwani makes the argument that love is robust concern for the moral well-being of the other, that the beloved fare morally well.

In part II, Halwani philosophizes about sex. After looking at various concepts and definitions, the issues are mainly ethical. Considering that sex is pleasurable and it can contribute to well-being, both consequentialism and virtue ethics would say that sex is positive. In the applications issue, Halwani considers prostitution and having racial desires.

What about a Kantian angle? Halwani investigates sexual objectification. Regarding sexual objectification, Halwani argues for the Kantian line that sexual objectification is inescapable. However, we can still live with it if certain conditions are met: consent is in play, the well-being of the participants is enhanced or at least not diminished, and the many good things can outweigh the badness of objectification. From here, the discussion naturally leads to pornography and whether it is moral or not. Halwani looks at classic arguments against pornography and responds to them suggesting that the arguments are either making hasty generalizations, or that the problems of pornography is symptomatic of our social situation—sexism, heteronormativity, hegemonic masculinity—rather than pornography as itself the problem. I found Halwani's discussion of pornography incongruent with the rest of the book. In most of the applied issues, Halwani stays up to date and talks about the latest arguments that philosophers argue. In the pornography section, however, he mainly discusses arguments philosophers have made in the 1980s-1990s. Surely there have been updated arguments since then? Or maybe Halwani uses these old arguments because they are the most well-known ones and updated arguments are simply derivatives of them. Needless to say, this section could use some updates or at least an explanation why there were no updates.

Next, Halwani discusses issues regarding sexual perversions and sexual fantasies, including BDSM. After investigating various accounts of perversions, Halwani leans toward an Aristotelian type to give the best account. Here, Halwani does not shy away from areas that philosophers of sex do not dare to discuss, but it is necessary for his criticisms of previous philosophers. For example, Halwani discusses different philosopher's theories of perversion (e.g. Nagel, Ruddick, Solomon, Scruton) and what make either acts or desires perverted. And while these philosophers offer intriguing ideas, Halwani shows the flaws in each of them. But in particular, the major flaw is that their theories of perversion would endorse incest, but surely that is considered a perversion. Therefore, Nagel's, Ruddick's, Solomon's, and Scruton's theories of perversion are inadequate.

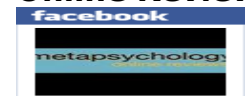
Finally, in part III, Halwani discusses marriage: both its purpose and whether it is necessary. Here, Halwani does not shy away where philosophers (and our culture at large) do not want to go. With same-sex marriage, opponents argue that this is a slippery slope for other types of marriages such as polygamy, marrying our pets, marrying our children, or marrying inanimate objects. Halwani makes consent—which entails that the people involved must understand the contracts of marriage—as the limiting point. As Halwani puts it, "We should not stop [the slippery slope] for same-sex marriages, for trans-marriages, for bi-marriages, or for polyamorous marriages, but we should stop it for marrying our pets, our siblings, our children, and our inanimate possessions" (p. 360).

Is marriage necessary? Halwani argues that having the state involved in marriage is a good thing, and agrees broadly with a type of "minimal marriage"

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(taken from the philosopher Elizabeth Brake) in that the state should support some sort of caring relationships that the citizens want. However, he admits that marriage includes some sort of romantic intimacy and perhaps marriage ought to at least include that feature, though he admits he has no argument for that idea.

I consider this book a great contribution to the philosophy of love, sex, and marriage. Halwani considers the topics from the latest research and adds his own argument to each of the topics. His writing is clear and straight to the point, which is what philosophy should do. An added benefit is that he incorporates virtue ethics in each of the topics. Considering that virtue ethics is starting to become more acknowledged, applying virtue ethics to these hefty topics is both necessary and helpful to give readers different perspectives to see how virtue ethics can contribute to our personal and intimate lives. One thing I would have liked to have seen is the discussion concerning the ethics of technology in our romantic and sexual lives. For example, sex with robots is starting to become a major topic among thinkers. Other forms of technology such as sexting, dating apps, and buying pornography rather than seeing it for free would make the discussions current. However, my criticism is merely miniscule to the vast topics that Halwani has already discussed here. Perhaps in a later edition he will do so, but in the meantime, I will constantly refer to this book to help me think deeper about our intimate lives.

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[Shaun D Miller](#), Marquette University

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