Questions for Discussion

Philosophy of Love, Sex, and Marriage: An Introduction
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Chapter 1
1. Can you think of other features common to the three types of love?

2. Can you imagine cases of romantic love such that (1) the love has no sexual dimensions; (2) the lover has no concern or does not care for the beloved; and (3) the love is between a human being and a non-human being (an animal or an inanimate object)?

3. Can you think of other necessary or sufficient features for love to be romantic love?

4. Other than bitterness, resentment, and grief, can you think of examples of long-term emotions that survive their originating beliefs?

5. Pick four or five emotions, and then give two examples of each such that in the first example the emotion is based on beliefs, but in the second example the same emotion is based on only thoughts or images.

6. Are there types of friendship not captured by Aristotle’s three-way distinction? Can two bad people be friends without falling under either of Aristotle’s use and pleasure types of friendship?

7. Is there a sense of “lack of choice” that characterizes romantic love but not friendship?

8. Can you think of ways other than Nozick’s to understand the idea of the “we”?

9. Can you think of other generally necessary features of romantic love?
10. How would you distinguish between romantic love and infatuation? Is there also a distinction to be made between being infatuated with someone and having a crush on someone?

Chapter 2
1. Can any plausible sense be made of the idea that for each person there is a “special someone (out there)”?

2. Can you think of cases in which if something bad happens to y something bad does not happen to x (or even something good happens to x) when x and y are in a we?

3. Suppose that Bill and Michelle are a we. Bill, having a dominant personality, is always able to get Michelle to agree to his thinking when it comes to major decisions. Are these really joint decisions? Why or why not?

4. Is the view of autonomy given in this chapter – that autonomy in a we is much more curtailed than Nozick thinks – true? Is there a way to preserve Nozick’s we while allowing lovers a certain degree of autonomy?

5. Is it true that we do not desire to have our autonomy limited by forming a we with another person? If true, is this reluctance a general human trait or one limited to specific cultures that emphasize individualism?

6. If limited autonomy is an essential feature of love, such that no “love” can be love without limited autonomy, how is it possible to desire love without desiring this limited autonomy? And is limited autonomy an essential feature of love? Can there be genuine love without it?
7. Can you give examples of love that convincingly explain how feeling happy or sad is better captured by the idea of concern instead of Nozick’s we?

8. Does romantic love play the main role in determining a self?

9. Can you think of a form of union that is strong and interesting but that does not suffer from the problems of other forms of union (Aristophanes’s and Nozick’s)?

10. Do the arguments for romantic love’s selfishness apply equally to other intimate relationships, such as friendship and parent–child relationships?

11. Can you come up with other arguments for romantic love’s alleged selfishness?

12. If x and y don’t see eye to eye on what y’s well-being consists of, is there a standard or a general rule by which x should sometimes act on his (x’s) conception of y’s well-being and by which x should sometimes act on y’s conception?

13. Suppose that x and y don’t agree on what y’s well-being consists of. Can you think of examples of when such a dispute cannot be settled objectively because there is no objective answer as to what y’s well-being is?

14. Can you think of examples in which x’s warped view of y’s well-being would defeat or go against x’s claim that he loves y?

15. Are there reasons other than generating and cementing romantic love why sex is important to romantic love?

16. Can you think of criteria by which to decide when sex expresses love and when it does not?

17. Are there additional arguments that show romantic love to be exclusive?
18. Hate is not an exclusive emotion. However, is it also like romantic love in that it cannot have too many objects? If your answer is no, what is the difference between hate and romantic love in this respect?

19. Give at least two detailed and convincing cases of non-exclusive romantic love.

20. Can you give a (not complete) list of reasons for love that tend to make romantic love long-lasting and a (not complete) list of reasons that tend to make romantic love short-lived or at least not long-lasting? Do these lists indicate that some loves, depending on these reasons, are better than others?

21. Is hate a constant emotion? In what ways is it similar and dissimilar to romantic love in this respect?

Chapter 3
1. Can one love something one does not value? How?

2. Can one love something and not desire to possess it “forever”? How?

3. Is the Form of Beauty a perceptual type of beauty – one that, for example, can be literally seen? If it is not, what is it? If it is, how is this possible given Plato’s theory of the forms?

4. Consider the following reasons for x’s love for y: “Because dogs are faithful pets,” “Because the allies won World War II,” and “Because the Earth has one moon.” Can you tell three stories, for each reason, each of which would make x’s love for y comprehensible?
5. Can you give a case in which \( z \) has the same properties as \( y \) and on which basis \( x \) loves \( y \), but such that \( x \) does not love \( z \) and \( x \) is not inconsistent in not loving \( z \)?

6. Give two examples of love, such that each reason for the love in each example makes the love comprehensible, but also such that only one reason justifies the love.

7. Can you give an example in which \( x \)'s reasons for loving \( y \) are specific enough to make \( x \)'s love for \( y \) exclusive and comprehensible?

8. Can you tell a story according to which \( x \)'s love for \( y \), based on \( y \)'s unique fingerprint, is comprehensible?

9. Can you think of ways in which incorporating the beloved in a relational reason for love does explain the love while also securing exclusivity?

10. Are there arguments other than the uniqueness of works of art that preserve particularism in art and that are relevant for love (i.e., that could make us think that reasons for love are not general)?

11. Can you think of arguments (or models) other than particularism in art and in ethics for why reasons might not be general?

12. Is there a way for \( x \) to love \( y \) agapically but without \( x \)'s love being based on \( x \)'s or \( y \)'s properties?

13. Can you think of a way in which love not based on any of the beloved’s properties is not insulting to the beloved?

14. Can properties be objects of love? How?
15. Could the beloved’s soul or the self be an object of love in a meaningful way if it does not manifest itself through the beloved’s attributes? How?

16. Can you give a convincing example of someone not loving the real beloved because the lover has radically mistaken beliefs about the beloved’s core or important properties?

17. Can you make additional distinctions between types of properties? Would such further distinctions make a love better along the lines discussed in this chapter?

Chapter 4
1. Can you construct a case of two people, $x$ and $y$, such that $x$ has an obligation to romantically love $y$ (or – the flipside – that $y$ has a right against $x$ that $x$ love $y$)?

2. Are there any additional arguments for why romantic love’s involvement of preferential treatment – even if not excessive – is morally problematic?

3. Give an example of a love relationship that a consequentialist would consider to be immoral.

4. Are there any additional arguments to explain why romantic love in general has good effects?

5. Give an example of a love relationship that would not be allowed by Kant’s Categorical Imperative.

6. Can you give a list of virtues that are essential for a morally good love relationship?

7. Can you think of virtues other than justice that might conflict with romantic love?
8. Is commonsense morality actually stricter on love than I made it out to be in this chapter? Why or why not?

9. Is it true that romantic love makes the lovers self-absorbed? If your answer is yes, is it also true that this makes the lovers morally worse, not better, people? If your answer is yes, could love have other positive effects that counter these negative ones?

10. Do lovers have special obligations to each other, obligations that stem from the very nature of love, in addition to general moral ones? If your answer is yes, provide some examples.

11. Is there a case to be made that our obligations to others may be more easily overridden if the reason for this is love-related? If your answer is yes, can you make the case?

12. Are Questions 10 and 11 connected to each other? That is, might the possibility that there are special obligations have anything to do with the possibility that moral obligations to others are more easily overridden for love-related reasons?

13. Can you give a case in which one party (e.g., the lover) is humiliated or demeaned because of the love relationship he or she is in?

14. Can you give a case in which one party (e.g., the lover) neglects duties of self-improvement because of the particular love relationship he or she is in?

15. Can you give an example in which belief formation on the part of one of the lovers needs to proceed especially cautiously?

16. Are there additional reasons why lovers should carefully acquire their beliefs about each other?
17. Can you come up with a general principle that tells us (1) when loving \( y \) on the basis of a shallow property reflects badly on \( x \) and when it does not, and (2) when loving \( y \) on the basis of a non-shallow property reflects well on \( x \) and when it does not?

18. What criteria should be used to decide whether a property is shallow or not?

19. Are there one or more purposes for romantic love that are (more or less) specific to romantic love and not shared by other types of love or other phenomena?

20. Can romantic love make lovers’ lives richer, even if their characters are incompatible with each other’s? How?

21. Can you add to the list of the dangers or risks of love provided in this chapter?

22. Are there additional explanations for romantic love’s prudentiality?

Chapter 5
1. Is there a distinction to be made between sexual acts and sexual activities? If your answer is yes, how? If your answer is no, why not?

2. Give three more examples of behavior that may or may not be sexual depending on the context.

3. Suppose that John calls a 900 “sex number” and talks to a woman. While he masturbates, she fakes arousal as she works on a jigsaw puzzle. Did he engage in a sexual act? Did she? Did they have sex with each other?

4. Give at least two other examples in which it is unclear whether someone engaged in a sexual act or whether he or she only had a sexual experience.
5. Do you agree that a phone-sex worker’s utterances constitute a sexual act? If you do, is Daisy’s uttering “chipmunk” to arouse John also a sexual act? If you do not, what is the difference between the two? Or is neither a sexual act? Why or why not?

6. Can Goldman’s definition be fixed by clarifying some of its central concepts, such as “person” and “body”?

7. Whose account of sexual desire do you find to be more convincing: Goldman’s or Morgan’s? Why?

8. Can you offer a convincing definition of “sexual desire”?

9. Is there a way to define “sexual pleasure” as caused by sexual activity but ensuring that only sexual pleasures are caused by the activity, and not other kinds of pleasure?

10. Think about whether, and how, Primoratz’s definitions of “sexual activity” and “sexual pleasure” are subject to the same criticisms that Morgan raises against Goldman’s views.

11. Is sex between a human being and an animal (or a human corpse) casual sex? Why or why not?

12. Is rape casual sex? Why or why not?

13. Can you think of counter-examples to the definition of causal sex as “sexual activity engaged in between people with no prior deep commitment of which sex is a part and with no beliefs, intentions, or desires that it lead to such a commitment”? If there are counter-examples, can the definition be fixed or must it be thrown out altogether?

14. Can you give a plausible definition of “promiscuity” or “promiscuous sex”?
15. If a husband knows that his wife is having a sexual affair with another man, is the wife committing adultery? If she were having a sexual affair with another woman instead, would this make a difference to the answer? How and why?

16. Must John intend to have sex with someone other than his wife for John to commit adultery? If not, must John know that he is having sex with someone other than his wife for him to commit adultery? Why or why not?

17. Construct two lists of sexual activities engaged in by John, a married man, with someone other than his spouse, but such that the activities on the first list are adulterous while those on the second are not. What accounts for the difference?

18. Should what counts as betrayal of love be left up to the lovers to decide or is it an objective issue? Or should some betrayals be left up to the lovers to decide but not others? If your answer to the second question is yes, which are which, and why?

19. Are strippers, phone-sex workers, pornography actors, peep-show actors, and people who pose nude in magazines prostitutes? Why or why not?

20. Does the definition of prostitution as “engaging in sexual acts, many of which involve physical contact, only with those who are willing to pay the price” face convincing counter-examples? If your answer is yes, can the definition be fixed or must it be entirely thrown out?

21. Think of other sexual practices (e.g., cyber-sex, group sex, bestiality), and attempt to offer a definition for each.

Chapter 6
1. Can you think of (non-consequential) examples in which a sex act is rewarding or enriching, other than by being pleasurable or enjoyable?
2. Is there a way to qualitatively, not quantitatively, distinguish between higher and lower sexual pleasures? How? Can you give some examples?

3. Can you think of additional arguments why sex with love is more pleasurable than sex without love?

4. Can you think of arguments why sex without love is more pleasurable than sex with love?

5. Can you come up with examples of bad consequences, in addition to the ones which Bentham gave, that homosexual sex has? Are they outweighed by good consequences?

6. Give an example of an act (not necessarily sexual) that is permissible according to act consequentialism but not rule consequentialism. Then give an example of an act that is permissible according to rule consequentialism but not act consequentialism.

7. Are there cases in which being offended should carry a lot of moral (consequentialist) weight? If your answer is yes, under what circumstances or when offended by what?

8. Give a detailed example of a sexual act generally considered wrong (e.g., rape, pedophilia, sex in public) whose consequences are overwhelmingly good. Is the sex act then morally permissible or even obligatory?

9. Which types of non-sexual acts are similar to rape and pedophilia in that an act-consequentialist should prohibit them on general grounds because, if they become widespread, they could lead to bad results?

10. Under what conditions do you think people tend to believe that sex “pollutes women”? Too much sex, period? Too much sex with many partners? The way a woman
has sex? Something else? Do any of these conditions also lead to the belief that sex pollutes men?

11. Think through the issue of the extent to which sexism, prudish beliefs about sex, or other factors explain the general social hostile attitude toward prostitution.

12. Can you come up with a feminist-inspired, anti-prostitution argument(s) different from Shrage’s?

13. Can you come up with a feminist-inspired pro-prostitution argument(s)? Defend and explain your answer.

14. Are there further, generally good consequences to prostitution not mentioned in the chapter?

15. Provide a few examples of sex acts that are wrong because they stem from vices, also illustrating whether they differ in the severity of their wrongness.

16. Give examples illustrating how the virtues of courage and generosity can be the (direct) motives for sexual acts.

17. If temperance and intemperance are about sexual desires, why would the shepherd’s occasional desire for sex with his sheep not make him intemperate? Or would it?

18. Is Huck really a temperate person given his well-suppressed and controlled voyeurism? Or is he continent?

19. How important do you think sex is in a well-lived life? What role should it have in such a life?
20. Prostitutes, compared with your average person, have too much sex, given their large number of clients. Are they intemperate because of this? Why?

Chapter 7
1. Can you think of additional cases to the ones provided at the beginning of this chapter in which an accusation of sexual objectification is usual or plausible?

2. What reasons can you give in support of defining “objectification” in terms of treatment only? What about in terms of treatment or regard?

3. What if a man ogles or cat-calls Sandra Bartky’s “bathing beauty” but without him believing that she is nothing more than her sexual parts? Does this show a problem with Bartky’s definition of “objectification”?

4. Is there another way to make sense of the idea that \( x \) treats \( y \) simultaneously as a sex object but not only as a sex object? Should “only” be kept in the definition of “objectification”? What would happen if we were to remove it?

5. Give examples of each of Nussbaum’s types of objectification. Try to explain how objectifying someone under one of the types (e.g., denial of subjectivity) need not also be objectifying under another type (e.g., inertness).

6. Can we (non-sexually) objectify animals? How? If someone has sex with an animal, would he or she have objectified it? How so?

7. If, despite the fact that I am reading a newspaper or having dinner, my cat insists on sitting on my lap, is she objectifying me? Why or why not? Can animals objectify people or each other?
8. Can you think of an example of casual sex that satisfies both of the following conditions? (1) It involves one party treating the other only as a sex object, and (2) it is not rape.

9. Give a few examples of how regarding someone negatively (but not thinking of him or her as subhuman or non-human) is compatible with regarding that person as a moral equal. Can you also argue that in some cases believing that someone is a moral equal is even necessary for holding certain negative views about him or her?

10. Can you support or boost Nussbaum’s view that a respectful relationship can make the sexual objectification permissible or good? If the relationship is a love relationship, would that do the trick?

11. Do you find the argument that being primarily a sexual being is compatible with dignity convincing? If you do not, why not? If you do, can you provide additional arguments to support this claim?

12. If we can treat others in undignified ways regardless of whether we all have “metaphysical” dignity, how are we to decide what constitutes undignified treatment and what does not? Do we rely on objective or subjective standards (e.g., the person feeling humiliated)?

13. Compare and contrast Kant’s and Nussbaum’s solutions to sexual objectification. How are they similar and how do they differ? Which do you find more convincing? Why?

14. I argued in this chapter that Kant exaggerates the subversive power of sexual desire. Does Kant exaggerate? Even if sexual desire is not always or necessarily subversive of our rational powers, is it usually or typically subversive?
15. Can you give additional arguments as to why all rational beings have dignity regardless of how they actually lead their lives or the decisions they make and the goals they set?

16. Is it possible for someone to rationally lead a primarily sexual life and still be demeaned because of this? How?

17. Consider people who are into sadism, masochism, bondage, and domination, or being urinated or defecated on. Are such sexual lives or activities incompatible with Kantian dignity? Can they be compatible with it? Explain.

18. Do you agree with Helen Longino that pornography plays a role in maintaining and furthering the exploitation of women? Why or why not?

19. Are some sexual acts (e.g., oral sex) and positions (e.g., doggie style) degrading by their very nature, as Soble suggests? How so?

20. Can you think of ways in which a pornography movie might depict women as not slavish to men, depict women’s pleasures as central, or, more generally, depict women as respected in ways that would (1) satisfy Longino and Hill, but (2) without making the movie very different from what we see in mainstream pornography (e.g., no character development, no lengthy plots or storylines)?

21. Do you agree that pornography does not endorse views about its characters, especially its women characters, or about sexuality in any deep way? Why or why not? Can you think of reasons why it does endorse such views?

22. Consider a scene in a gay male pornography movie in which two big, hairy guys “manhandle” a smaller guy: they have sex with him any way they want, they flip him around, make him perform fellatio on them, and so on. Is such treatment degrading to the third guy? If your answer is yes, does it differ in any fundamental way from degradation
found in a similar scene involving a woman? If the third, smaller man sported an erect penis throughout the whole scene, would this make a difference to your answer? Would it indicate his consent? How do women differ in this respect?

23. Do you agree with the idea that the meaning of images in pornography depends more or less on the viewer? Why or why not?

24. In accusing pornography of degrading women, do anti-porn feminists really buy into certain conservative or sexist views about women and sex? Or might there be something else going on in their arguments? Explain.

25. Suppose that a male viewer of pornography can only get sexually aroused by scenes of men using women as their own tools or if he only “interprets” the scenes by thinking that the women are “bitches” or “sluts” or cannot get enough “man-meat.” What does this tell us about the man, his character, and his actions toward women in general?

26. If we live in a sexist society, do pornographic films that depict women as wielding whips and humiliating the male characters counter the cultural dominant view of women as submissive? How? If they do not, does this mean that the women are still submissive in these films? How so?

27. What would a non-sexist society “look like”? What would pornography look like in such a society? Would we expect to find the pornography produced in that society similar to the pornography produced in ours? If your answer is yes, why? If it is no, why not, and what would some of the differences be?

Chapter 8
1. If you agree that Nagel’s view of sexual perversion is unsuccessful, what is its philosophical value, if any? Can it be used instead to evaluate sex acts along a dimension of value other than morality, pleasure, and naturalness?
2. Would Ruddick say that heterosexual couples who desire and enjoy sexual intercourse (penal–vaginal) but who, in political solidarity with their gay and lesbian brethren, engage only in oral (and some anal) sex, are perverted?

3. Construct a list, a la Solomon, of attitudes and feelings that make the sexual acts through which they are communicated perversions. Why this list and not another? Can you construct an opposite list of sexual acts that are “normal”?

4. Is Goldman’s definition of “sexual desire” more convincing as a definition of “normal” or “natural desire”? If yes, would it still encounter difficulties?

5. Would Scruton agree that the following sexual practices are perversions: orgies, cyber-sex, voyeurism, and exhibitionism?

6. Unlike Baltzly, can you make a case for how a voyeur, an exhibitionist, and a pedophile are likely to not have the virtue of respect for the autonomy of others (“others” includes people in general, not just their sexual objects)?

7. Unlike Baltzly, can you make a case for how a coprophile is likely to not have the virtue of wisdom?

8. What would some of or all the philosophical views of perversion discussed in this chapter have to say about transsexuals and transvestites?

9. Can you think of an example in which someone sexually fantasizes about an activity but does not sexually desire it? Is this possible?

10. Elaborate on how playing the role of a Nazi or a white slave owner during a sexual act (with, respectively, someone playing the role of a Jew or a black slave) reflects badly on the person’s character, but playing the role of a nondescript dominant person need not
do so. Would it matter if the submissive person were not playing the role of someone historically oppressed by Nazis and white slave owners?

11. Elaborate on how playing the role of a Jew or a black slave during a sexual act (with, respectively, someone playing the role of a Nazi or a white slave owner) reflects badly on the person’s character. Would it matter if the dominant person were not playing the role of someone who historically oppressed Jews and black slaves?

12. Elaborate on how a woman sexually playing the role of being raped might indicate a moral defect in her character. Can you think of an example in which such role-play does not indicate a moral defect in a woman’s character?

13. Can you think of cases in which fantasizing about someone while having sex with another indicates a moral defect in the person’s character?

14. Is it true that, during sex between two people who love each other, each must be totally focused on the other? If your answer is yes, why? If it is no, why not?

15. Discuss the moral ins and outs of the differences between Ed’s fantasizing, while having sex with his lover Emma, about Uma Thurman, on the one hand, and about Emma’s sister Ella, on the other.

Chapter 9

1. Can you come up with a preliminary yet plausible definition of “marriage”? Is it a dictionary definition? Is it a philosophically descriptive one? Or is it a normative definition? Why?

2. Give three cases of adultery involving lying, deception, or promise breaking, but such that the adultery is overall morally permissible (justified).
3. Do Western societies still strongly connect love with sex? What is the evidence for and against this view?

4. To what extent, if at all, do one-night stands, purely sexual affairs, and anonymous sexual encounters involve the kinds of emotional elements that Steinbock mentions?

5. Are there additional sources for the wrongness of adultery? What are they?

6. Does adultery have further negative consequences? What about positive ones?

7. Sexually speaking, does monogamous marriage lead to sexual jealousy and insecurity on the part of the spouses? Would non-monogamous marriages fair any better?

8. Do polygamous and polyamorous marriages provide better or worse environments for raising children than monogamous marriages do? How and why?

9. Are there any non-practical, non-logistical reasons for why society should not make polygamous and polyamorous marriages an option for those who want them? Explain.

Chapter 10
1. Explain the idea that sex can be engaged in for the reason or purpose of promoting (or honoring) the good of marriage, as the new natural lawyers claim.

2. Compare and contrast George’s and Lee’s claim that non-marital sex acts make us use our bodies merely as a means with Kant’s similar claim.

3. Evaluate Finnis’s claim that even if two gay men (or women) intend to or hope that their sexual act expresses their love, they are deluding themselves, and that their sexual act is on a par with a man having sex with a prostitute or engaging in solitary masturbation.
4. Would the new natural lawyers accept the following claim? Anal and oral sex between a married heterosexual couple is morally permissible so long as it is intended to be a form of foreplay preceding penal–vaginal sexual intercourse. Would they accept this similar claim that anal and oral sex between a married heterosexual couple is morally permissible so long as it is, or ends up being, a form of foreplay preceding penal–vaginal sexual intercourse (regardless of the couple’s intentions)? Why or why not?

5. Suppose that John and Susan, in the example given by George and Lee above, are not married and have sex for reasons that have nothing to do with the good of marriage. Is it true, as George and Lee claim, that Susan is irrelevant to John (and vice versa)? How many types of cases can you distinguish here?

6. Explain in a convincing way George’s claim that casual sex disintegrates the self of the person having the sex.

7. Is there a moral difference between a sexual act engaged in by a heterosexual, sterile couple, and a sexual act engaged in by a homosexual couple, assuming that both love each other, that both have been together for the same number of years, and so on?

8. Why should brothers and sisters not be allowed to marry each other? Why should people not be allowed to marry their pets? Would it make a difference to your answer if the marriage were sexless (the married couple will not, and do not intend to, have sex)?

9. What does the claim, namely that homosexuality and heterosexuality are “states” whereas polygamy, bestiality, and incest are activities, mean? Is it true?

10. Is it true that, as Rauch claims, allowing incestuous marriages would devastate families because it would legitimize “sexual predation” in them? Does incest necessarily involve “sexual predation” (which means what, by the way)?
11. What does the claim that marriage “domesticates” men mean? Is it true? Why and how?

12. Can you come up with a convincing list of one, two, or three purposes of marriages? Explain also why they are purposes instead of byproducts of marriage.

13. Are there additional arguments as to why same-sex marriage undermines heterosexual marriage?

14. Are you convinced by Mohr’s view of moral equality? Why or why not?

15. According to Mohr’s view, the Catholic Church regards gay people with disrespect – as morally unequal to straight people – because it views them as morally disordered. Is this true? What about the Church’s position captured in the slogan “Love the sinner, hate the sin,” especially in light of Mohr’s definition of moral equality?

16. Are there good explanations – other than holding gay people in lesser regard – for why America is willing to allow gay couples to form domestic partnerships but not grant them the right to marry?

17. Suppose that Calhoun is right that prohibitions against same-sex marriage somehow displace gay people from civil society. What sort of displacement is this? How does it actually manifest itself? Is it merely theoretical displacement, almost on a par with Mohr’s view that society regards gay people as morally inferior?

18. Are there any additional differences or similarities between Calhoun’s and Mohr’s arguments and positions for same-sex marriage?

19. Calhoun gives two options for political strategizing regarding same-sex marriage, and she opts for the first. I argue that the first option is morally compromised. Whose view do you think is more plausible? Why?
20. Is Card making an analogy between rights to own slaves and rights to marry, or is she using slavery as an example to make a point about marriage rights? Which would be a more plausible or charitable way of interpreting her view?

21. Suppose that we fix marriage laws so that the state no longer grants and enforces legal rights of access to each spouse for the other spouse. If we set aside a symbolic role for the state in marriage and laws having to do with the welfare of children, would the state have any interesting or substantive role left to play in marriage?

22. Suppose that we agree with Card that evil is a culpable wrong which “foreseeably produces intolerable harms.” Would it follow that the institution of marriage is an evil because it “hinders an abused spouse from exiting an abusive relationship before intolerable harm is done” or only that some particular marriages are evil? And what would Card say to the objection that “Nobody forces people to marry. If they marry and end up in an abusive relationship, they have no one else to blame but themselves”?

23. Do you agree that even if the state is not involved in regulating the intimate relationship between two people, it would still have to be involved in regulating their relationship with their children? Should the state have this role?

24. If you agree that the state should have a role in monitoring the welfare of children, to what extent can this role be separated – practically and theoretically – from its role in regulating the intimate relationship of the parents?

25. Suppose that, if many gay couples marry, they would have a serious impact on marriage. Given what you know about gay couples, both male and female, provide some examples of how they might change marriage for the better or for the worse.

26. What sense can you make of the idea that marriage disciplines or regulates other types of relationships?
27. Are there any good reasons or justifications for why marriage should occupy an elevated status in society?

28. What political options are also available, in addition to the ones offered, regarding whether to pursue rights to same-sex marriage? Which is the best to pursue? Why?

29. What should morally decent people do if rights to same-sex marriage, but not to universal healthcare, were attained? What political strategies should then be adopted?

30. What happens if rights to same-sex marriage were attained but marriage is still not satisfactorily reformed (in light of Card’s objections to marriage)?