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A Reply to Critics

A. W. EATON

Department of Philosophy, M/C 267

1421 University Hall

University of Illinois at Chicago

Chicago, IL 60607

USA

eaton@uic.edu

Heartfelt thanks to the *Symposia on Gender, Race and Philosophy* for organizing this symposium, and to Patrick Hopkins, Rae Langton, Ishani Maitra and Laurie Shrage for their careful and thoughtful commentaries. I have learned a great deal from their questions, observations and criticisms. I am also grateful to Jennifer Saul for helpful comments on this response.

Since the commentaries intersect in various ways, my response will move between them according to topic rather than treat each individually in turn.

1. Why All the Fuss About Representations?

I begin with Laurie Shrage's provocative charge that antiporn feminism (hereafter APF) cannot be made sensible. Shrage's view is that if certain kinds of pornography had harmful effects like promoting "coercive sex" – something for which she denies that we have either a good theoretical model or empirical evidence – then the proper response would be to educate people about the dangers of coercive sex, not to take action of any sort against pornography. Those who think otherwise (including, of course, antiporn feminists) must have "illiberal" and "draconian" motivations.

Shrage's reasoning is askew since it focuses on symptoms rather than causes. If pornography had harmful effects, then we shouldn't wait around for these effects to be realized and only then work to reverse them; rather we should try to prevent the harms from being realized in the first place. As I stress in my paper, we should do this in a way that does not carelessly perpetrate other harms like abridging freedom of speech. But since Shrage is opposed to the very notion that representations can have harmful effects, in her eyes the point is moot.

In response I'd like to take some time to explain why feminists should be especially concerned about representations; in particular we should be concerned about representations that solicit from their audiences responses that deeply engage powerful sentiments. I'll offer a convincing model for how such representations can profoundly affect us, and explain how misgivings about this can be reasonable and judicious rather than illiberal and draconian.

Sexism has many homes: it molds beliefs, structures laws, shapes habits and norms, and organizes the social division of labor. It was John Stuart Mill's profound insight that sexism also lives in our *hearts*: it infects our hopes and fears, likes and dislikes, desires and tastes (Mill 1869). Of particular interest

to Mill, and also for the matter at hand, is the way that sexism organizes erotic tastes: many women and men find passivity, weakness, and submissiveness to be primary markers of sexual attractiveness in women; and dominance, strength and aggression the same for men.¹

Mill thought sexism's effects on our erotic sentiments to be particularly insidious for two reasons. First, sexual desire plays an inestimable role in most peoples' lives. The pursuit of being desired, and satisfying desires, touches and organizes much of our daily activity, especially women's. Second, sentiments fly under the rational radar, so to speak. Our sentiments are rarely amenable to rational argument and evidence: we cannot argue or educate ourselves into or out of finding something likable or unlikable, attractive or disgusting, sexy or unerotic. This, I think, is what Rae Langton has in mind when she notes that commitment to moral and political principles of equality does little to change what turns us on, what we find attractive and desirable. The disturbing fact is that our sentiments and tastes perdure even when they conflict with our rational commitments and considered views. Mill concluded from these two features of our erotic sentiments and tastes – their centrality and power of perdurance – that so long as our erotic tastes and sentiments remain deformed by sexism, women will not achieve full equality. That is, so long as gender inequality has sex appeal, we will continue to vigorously pursue it – and so enact and endorse it – in our day-to-day lives regardless of our commitments and principles.

This is why Shrage's proposal that we address the widespread taste for inegalitarian sex solely through education widely misses the mark. Education may get people

¹ In Mill's words, a significant "means of holding women in subjection [is] representing to them meekness, submissiveness, and resignation of all individual will into the hands of a man. . . as an essential part of sexual attractiveness" (Mill 1869/1988, 16).

to (in Shrage's words) "unsubscribe to ideas," but *ideas* are but a small part of problem when it comes to inegalitarian sex: the heart of the problem is that most all heterosexuals (and perhaps some others) eroticize dominance and subordination for men and women, respectively, to some degree. Educating peoples' minds by changing their ideas will do little to neutralize the erotic lure of inegalitarian relations. Consider Langton's apt case of a man who is a self-described feminist but who nevertheless is turned on by images of women in uncomfortably submissive and objectifying postures being "used" for men's sexual pleasure. This case illustrates well Mill's worry that sexism permeates the emotional lives of even well-intentioned and well-informed people.²

The central questions are: How did our sentiments and our tastes get deformed in this way? And, how do we change them?

This is where representations come in. Representations that elicit our sentiments and engage our tastes can shape these for better or worse. Shrage denies that we have a good model for this, but that is false.

The philosophy of art has over the centuries developed a sophisticated and compelling model of how representations shape their audiences' sentiments. According to this model, representations do this not in a crude monkey-see-monkey-do fashion but, rather, by getting their audiences to see the world (or some aspect of the world) in an evaluative light. Since I do nothing more than point to this model in my paper (680), I'll elaborate.

² Years later Iris Marion Young made a similar point while articulating her understanding of oppression as a structural concept: "In this extended structural sense oppression refers to the vast and deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and *reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions...*" (Young 1990, 41) (my emphasis).

Representations – a category construed broadly enough to encompass everything from high art painting and literature to music videos and advertising – solicit, among other things, emotional responses to the things they represent; we (the audience) are called upon to find characters or actions funny, pathetic, scary, sympathetic, admirable, despicable, disgusting, attractive, erotic, and so on.³ If a representation succeeds in eliciting these invited responses, then we will come to see the characters or actions as *warranting* our emotional responses. For instance, when a character in a movie makes me feel disgust I don't simply have a somatic response (like a tickle) but, rather, I see the character as *worthy* of my disgust; that is, as *disgusting*. In this way the emotional responses that representations solicit, color our perceptions.

Eliciting emotional responses that influence our perceptions in this way can have a lasting effect on one's outlook, orientation, or character. If the movie just mentioned were sufficiently compelling, then my engagement with it would likely bring me to see other persons of that type as disgusting (or, to take the first-person perspective, I would come to see what is disgusting about other persons of that type). Of course there is no *guarantee* that one's responses to a representation will have such an effect, but as Daniel Jacobson notes, the best way to convince someone that a feeling about a particular object is *appropriate* is not to give them arguments but, rather, to get them to actually

³ Patrick Hopkins notes that what one might call a “pure” public health model for dealing with porn would not be concerned with the sorts of responses that pornography *solicits* but only with *effects*; that is, with the responses that audiences actually have. I express one worry about this model in section 2 below. Here I note that if we limit our attention to representations' effects, then representations whose harmful effects resulted from *misreading* would be blamed for effects for which they were not responsible.

experience that feeling about the object in question (Jacobson 1996, 335).

It is for this reason that philosophers since Aristotle have touted the potential of representations to contribute to moral reasoning and understanding (see Nussbaum 1990 and 1998, Jacobson 1996, and, for a recent overview, Carroll 2000). By encouraging its audience to feel particular emotions with the right intensity toward the right object, a representation can do (at least) two things: it can expand our perceptual capacities by offering us a first-person sense of what it would be like to inhabit a different perspective, and (perhaps as a result) it can change how we feel about some aspect of the world. The moral knowledge that we stand to gain from some representations, then, is less propositional than it is a sense of what things look like from a perspective that differs from one's own (“knowledge how” rather than “knowledge that”) (Carroll 2000, 362 and Jacobson 1996, 334).

But if representations can educate our emotions, then they can also *uneducate* them. By connecting our emotions with morally inappropriate particulars, representations can mislead, confuse, or pervert our view of the world. Imagine that the film from my previous example is one of the many produced in Hollywood that encourage disgust toward a character on account of his homosexuality. LGBT advocates are right to worry that by forging a connection between homosexuality and disgust such works enlist the audience in bigotry, thereby *perpetrating* homophobia as well as reflecting it (one of the first such arguments was eloquently made by Russo 1987). This is not to say that such movies *force* their audiences to homophobia: a person deeply committed to LGBT rights would likely resist the prescribed response. But in our world such people are a small minority, and even among those who subscribe to the *idea* of equal rights for homosexuals there are still many who nevertheless consider homosexuality disgusting. This is another example of the Millian point that *taste* – which includes what one finds

disgusting or attractive – plays a significant role in oppression; for example, a recent study shows that disgust, rather than fear, is the primary emotion driving homophobia (Olatunji 2008). We have good reason to worry, then, about films that mislead our emotions in this way.

Likewise APF worries that inegalitarian pornography, more strongly than other forms of representation, misleads our feelings, as well as our ideas, about women, men and heterosexual sex in general. It does this by soliciting erotic sentiments toward inegalitarian sex. As I emphasize in my paper, we're not just talking about "coercive sex" – as Shrage seems to think – but about a spectrum of inegalitarian sex that ranges from rape, at the extreme end, to the kind of heterosexual intercourse where women assume the role of passive objects who forsake their own pleasure. In so far as inegalitarian pornography succeeds in rendering inegalitarian sex – in all of its forms – sexy, it convinces its users that inegalitarian sex is in fact *desirable*; i.e., *worthy* of desire. The emphasis here is not on the *ideas* that result from using inegalitarian pornography but, rather, on the more primary effect, namely the deformation of our emotional capacities and the resulting *taste* for inegalitarian sex of differing varieties and strengths.

This is one way that the analogy between pornography and advertising is perspicuous.⁴ Successful advertisements shape our tastes by getting us to actually feel desire and other pro-attitudes toward its products, thereby convincing us that they are *desirable*, i.e., *worthy* of desire. Good advertising effectively influences our tastes, often without our conscious

⁴ The analogy should *not* be understood to support the idea that makers of pornography are *trying* to sell gender inequality. Some feminists think this but I doubt it is true in most cases. I also doubt that advertisers are consciously *intending* to promote unhealthy standards of female beauty; nevertheless, I am convinced by Kilbourne (2000) and by my own experience that fashion advertising is a primary force in advancing such standards.

awareness and sometimes even against our wills (which need not mean "subliminally," as Shrage charges). I, for one, am dismayed to find how susceptible my tastes are to advertising. The bellbottom jeans that I once saw as hideous I now consider stylish, although I already feel pangs of desire for the new peg-legged jeans promoted by everyone from Prada to The Gap. I *have* been manipulated, made to desire things that I previously didn't want to desire (when bellbottoms came back in fashion I swore that I would never be caught dead in a pair, but a few years later it's all I wear). My point is that advertising is an excellent example of how our tastes are malleable and can be changed by representations, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. The advertisements that encourage us to find emaciated women's bodies attractive, for instance, can pervert women's self esteem as well as men's expectations, sometimes with disastrous consequences (Kilbourne 2000, esp. Ch. 6). Similarly, APF's harm hypothesis holds that the pornographic works that encourage us to find inegalitarian sex erotic and desirable can have a host of damaging effects, many of which I describe in my paper. To these I should add the kinds of harms to *users* of inegalitarian pornography that Langton mentions at the end of her persuasive commentary.

Another advantage of the advertising analogy over the disease model, at least in certain respects, is that it captures Langton's astute point (drawn from MacKinnon) that pornography masks its own harm. (I should note that the addiction model suggested by Hopkins (and originally by MacKinnon), can also account for this epistemological dimension of pornography's purported harm since addictive substances often mask their damaging effects.) The more that advertising succeeds in making emaciated bodies attractive, the less we will see this standard of thinness as dangerous – it will simply strike us as how women's bodies should look – and so also the less we will see the harm of such advertisements. Similarly, insofar as inegalitarian pornography succeeds in shaping consumers' sexual tastes in

the direction of inequality, inegalitarian sex comes to seem desirable and sexy – that is, it will become a standard for good sex – and inegalitarian pornography comes to seem like a harmless reflection of our taste.

2. Pathogens and a Public Health Model.

The emphasis in the previous section on the similarities between pornography and advertising should not be taken to preclude other analogies offered in my paper. These analogies highlight similarities between a heretofore problematic aspect of pornography and a less problematic aspect of a familiar object of experience in order to make the former tractable. But none of the analogies exhaustively captures every dimension of pornography and the harms it is thought to cause. Instead, each analogy highlights a different dimension of a sensible APF's understanding of pornography: advertising offers a model of how representations affect their audience's psychology; pollution models the cumulative nature of some of pornography's purported effects⁵; smoking and pathogens illustrate the point that causes are always interdependent causal complements, rather than singular, and should be conceived of probabilistically.

It is also important, however, to acknowledge the limits of analogical explanation. I worry that Hopkins misses the weaknesses of the disease analogy, namely that it fails to capture the complexity of the kind of psychological interaction between text/image or reader/viewer that I describe in the previous section.⁶ We need to know not

⁵ As I note in my paper (691n40), the pollution analogy is originally due to Patricia Hynes and was picked up by Larry May.

⁶ Hopkins takes the disease analogy literally, describing pornography as a "substance" that "enters the brain and has physical effects on the brain." Even if emotional states are entirely

simply how to measure harmful effects but also, with an eye toward prevention, how the harmful effects occur. The disease model is unhelpful with respect to the latter. As Shrage rightly notes, my talk of audience's being "exposed" to pornography is misleading since much more than simply exposure must occur in order for harms to obtain. Audiences are not simply "exposed" to pornography; rather, they *interpret* it through a complex set of lenses that range from facts pertaining to the individual (personal history, race, sex, sexual orientation, class, etc.) to facts about socio-historical context. Further, audiences vary in their degree of self-awareness and hermeneutic and critical skills. We should not let the disease analogy make us lose sight of the fact that we are talking about representations that can be interpreted differently and even resisted.

That said, we should also not lose sight of the fact that in order for representations to work – to communicate and affect us according to their design – there must be considerable commonality among audience responses. For instance, the reason that companies invest so heavily in advertising is that it *works*: many people reliably respond to the same representation in basically the same way. Hopkins' public health model assumes, I think quite reasonably, that there is also widespread commonality to audiences' responses to pornography, and that these can be described and measured through epidemiological methods. On this we agree and I appreciate the ways that Hopkins puts meat on the bones of the model suggested in my paper.

I'd like to briefly shift the focus from how we measure harmful effects to how we combat them. As I say above, I don't think that the pathogen model gives adequate insight into how pornography shapes its audiences' tastes and

reducible to brain states, Hopkins' description addresses the wrong level to capture the deformation of desires and tastes described in the previous section.

sentiments, but it still might be worth thinking about how we deal with pathogens. As Hopkins notes, “removing the pathogen from the environment” would be ideal, all things being equal. But this is rarely possible – nor, in the case of pornography, would it be desirable insofar as it would conflict with the First Amendment. Instead of (or at least in addition to) removing pathogens, we strive to build immunities to the pathogenic agent and develop ways to fight it when it manages to take hold. But doing this requires understanding the particular mechanics of the pathogen in question. This is why we need a model for how pornography affects its audience psychology and not simply their brains. I address the question of what to do about inegalitarian porn in the final section of this response.

3. Remarks on the Causal Model.

In this section I address several challenges to or comments about the model of causation operative in a sensible APF (sketched in my paper).

Langton finds the pathogen analogy inadequate in two ways. First, she rightly points out that it does not capture the epistemological dimension of harm mentioned above. As I say in my paper, that particular analogy isn’t perfect, nor are the others I employ (like pollution or advertising). Each was meant to highlight some heretofore underappreciated of a sensible APF’s harm hypothesis. The pathogen analogy in particular was meant to capture certain aspects of the causal relation between pornography and its purported harms. That said, Hopkins’ addiction analogy does capture the epistemological dimension that Langton points out.

Langton’s second point is that there is little place for testimony in my proposal about how to find evidence for causal relations. What I say is that “Anecdotal evidence alone does not establish a meaningful positive association, much less a causal connection” (705). I still maintain that this is

right. No matter how clear a pattern seems to the individual, a single person’s experience is too little evidence for even a positive correlation. Further, as Langton herself notes, my own experience is particularly unreliable when it comes to eros; indeed, I am usually the worst person to ask about the forces that have shaped my own sexual desires and experience. But Langton is right that testimony can have the important role of highlighting possible harms to investigate, and the testimonies she cites are quite illuminating.

Maitra raises several difficulties for the probabilistic conception of causation and its usefulness for APF.

First, she charges that without further specification the probabilistic conception has “trouble capturing the notion of a common cause;” that is, cases where it initially appeared that x causes y but in fact both x and y are collateral effects of z . Although Maitra is right that this particular sort of spurious correlation poses serious difficulties for the discovery of causes, these difficulties are not peculiar to probabilistic conceptions of causation, as she suggests.⁷ More important, as briefly mentioned in my paper (704n101), epidemiology has the resources to deal with these difficulties. When an observed positive correlation between x and y is thought to be causal, one thing investigators should check for is whether the correlation results from confounding by some third factor.⁸ This question is addressed either by designing a new study or in analysis of the data,⁹ in either case checking to see if one factor “screens off” another. So although the conception of causation promoted in my paper does not contain a “no screening off” condition, screening factors are precisely the sorts of things that the mode of research I

⁷ What I mean is, whether one thinks of a cause as raising the probability of its effects or as determining its effects, spurious correlations of this type (confounding) are possible.

⁸ See note 10 below.

⁹ For a clear and detailed explanation, see (Gordis 1996, 185ff).

recommend - namely epidemiology -has considerable success in discovering.

Second and related, Maitra entertains the worry that the "existing system of gender hierarchy" screens off pornography from various harms to women; that is, that given the existing system of gender hierarchy, pornography has no further probabilistic impact on various harms to women. (This might be because the existing system gender hierarchy is a common cause of both pornography and harms to women, although this need not be the case for the system of gender hierarchy to be a screening factor.) As just noted, this is the sort of thing that epidemiological methods are designed to catch,¹⁰ and a sensible APF must remain open to

¹⁰ Here I'd like to note two problems with Maitra's point. First, although my paper provides the accepted guidelines for judging whether an association is causal (709-10), it's *not at all* the case that researchers employing epidemiological methods simply check to see if observed correlations fit these criteria. Rather, as I explain in some detail in my paper, a proper epidemiological study moves from clinical data to ecologic studies, to case control and cohort studies, to clinical trials. There are many opportunities along this path to hound out spurious regularities and common causes, and epidemiological methods are particularly concerned to identify these. (It was, after all, researchers using epidemiological methods - not philosophers armed with precise definitions of causes - who showed that smoking "screens off" caffeine craving from lung cancer!) As I discuss in my paper, properly run studies would aim to hold fixed certain phenomena that are candidates for causes of harms in order to determine whether the widespread introduction of inegalitarian pornography in fact raises the probability of harms. One advantage of bringing epidemiology into the discussion is that it highlights problems with the attempts thus far to formulate such studies. Second and related, in her attempt to show that a correlation could meet these criteria but nevertheless be collateral effects of a common cause, Maitra neglects criterion number 6 which stipulates that investigators take account of and rule out alternate explanations. When there is an observed positive correlation between more than two factors, the existence of a

the evidence and to the possibility that there is some common cause of both pornography and harms to women. But it doesn't make sense to worry that this common cause would be anything like "the existing system of gender hierarchy" for two related reasons: (1) The word *system* easily misleads us into thinking that there is some organized set of ideas, doctrines or procedures that can be specified independently of the harms that APF attributes to porn, but this is not so. There is no *system* over and above the various harms that women face; indeed, the latter is the primary component of the former. This is why the harm hypothesis as I've described it has "promoting and sustaining gender inequality" as pornography's ultimate *effect*. I'll say more about this in a minute. (2) It is as unhelpful to say that pervasive gender inequality (my modification of Maitra's term to avoid "system") is the true cause of both porn and various harms to women as it is to say that pervasive racism is the true cause of both demeaning depictions of people of color and discrimination against them. In both cases the alleged cause is an extremely general standing condition centrally comprising the very things it is said to cause. That said, a sensible APF acknowledges that inegalitarian pornography is dangerous only in the context of a society structured by gender hierarchy, which is why I argue that we should conceive of both as components of a larger causal pie (702-3). At the same time, a sensible APF acknowledges that an important component of gender hierarchy - sexist attitudes - is a causal condition of pornography, which is to say that some aspects of gender inequality both cause and are caused by pornography on the model of a positive feedback loop (713).

common cause is just the sort of thing investigators should - and regularly do - check for.

3. What Should Be Done?

To the extent that sentiments and tastes play a significant role in gender inequality, feminists have good reason to try to stop representations that deform our emotional life in this direction. And if we are right that inegalitarian pornography plays a significant causal role in this, then we have good reason to focus our efforts on putting an end to it.

But talk of “putting an end to” any kind of representation should give us pause since it can sound like censorship. And indeed, since APF has traditionally been most concerned with the extreme end of the spectrum of pornography’s putative harms (the most violent of what I have categorized as “isolated harms to individuals”)¹¹, it has advocated legal remedies that many, including Laurie Shrage, see as violations of the First Amendment.

As I explain in my paper, whether the civil legislation proposed by MacKinnon and Dworkin does in fact violate the First Amendment is controversial since our society allows for state regulation of certain kinds of speech that have been shown to be sufficiently harmful. (As Hopkins astutely puts it, “the best justification we know of in a pluralistic society for restricting freedoms is to prevent harm to other people.”) However, Maitra is right to point out that the question of state regulation is not *entirely* decided by the question of the kind of harm that pornography causes.¹² And I gladly accept her point that even if pornography were proven to be a cause

¹¹ Although the most controversial aspect of the MacKinnon-Dworkin ordinances is the trafficking clause which targets group harms (as noted in my paper, 692ff).

¹² On this point I did better to say that that nature of the harm “greatly affect[s] the nature of APF’s proposed remedies” (Eaton 2007, 690) than to say, later in the same paragraph, that the nature of the remedy “depends entirely on just which sorts of harms pornography causes.” Maitra is right to reject the latter formulation.

of the most heinous effects of which it is accused, some would still argue that state regulation is inappropriate. But proof of severe harms *is necessary* for state regulation of any sort. The very notion of balancing the harm caused by regulating speech against the harm caused by the speech itself requires knowledge the relative “weight” of the two elements to be compared. The same goes for Maitra’s point about agent responsibility: one might argue that the responsibility for harms rests entirely with the consumer of pornography, but such an argument assumes that some harm was done in the first place. So although I welcome Maitra’s point that proof of pornography’s harms is not sufficient to justify a particular form of response, she goes too far in saying that the controversial issues she mentions “don’t turn on the truth of the H[arm] H[ypothesis] at all.” The issues Maitra raises do depend on the truth of the harm hypothesis, as do so many other controversial issues in the debate. This is not to say that the harm hypothesis *settles* all of the questions in the debate, nor is to deny other issues have a similarly pivotal role: e.g. the question, raised by Langton at the beginning of her commentary, of whether pornographic representations themselves constitute harm.

But since, as I argue, it has not yet been adequately proven that pornography has violent harmful effects, the debate about the appropriateness of state regulation of some sort is quite a ways off. For this reason APF would be well-served to minimize the question of state regulation and instead to outline judicious, uncontroversial and widely accessible means of thwarting inegalitarian pornography.

Here are a few suggestions inspired by Essence magazine’s *Take Back the Music* campaign, launched in 2005, which aims to combat “the degrading ways in which Black women are portrayed and spoken about in popular media” (<http://www.essence.com/essence/takebackthemusic/about.html>). The basic idea behind the campaign is the same as the one motivating APF, namely that particular sorts of

representations deform our view of the world. In this case the representations in question are popular urban music and music videos that portray African-American women in a demeaning manner. By enlisting feelings of contempt for African-American women, such works foster troublesome gender relations and pervert young girls' self-esteem, among other things (see Hill Collins 2005 Chs. 4-5 for a compelling account). Although these are grave harms, they are not sufficient for state regulation of any sort. But this doesn't mean that there's nothing to be done. *Take Back the Music* encourages, among other things: (1) investigating and educating people about the harmfulness of certain musical representations, (2) providing a widely accessible public platform for discussion about negative representations, and (3) promoting artists who deliver positive messages and "seek greater balance in how Black women - and Black men - are portrayed in popular culture." To the latter end *Essence* holds a Hip-Hop Songwriting Contest to promote positive rapping. The contest encourages awareness by making the magazine's readers the judges, and supports young artists with positive messages by providing the winners with scholarships to attend summer programs at the Berklee College of Music.

I offer *Take Back the Music* as a model for APF, to which I would add *boycott* and *protest* as two other means of fighting representations that undermine equality. Just as the writers and editors at *Essence* have a reasonable worry about misogynist hip-hop and oppose it on this basis, so antiporn feminists have a reasonable worry about inegalitarian porn and oppose it on that basis. APF needn't mean supporting anything like "draconian" measures, nor does it mean opposing *all* sexually explicit representations. Indeed, I think it high time that APF openly embraced and advocated promoting *egalitarian* pornography as part of the solution. After all, as discussed in the first section of this response, commitment to the idea that representations can shape their consumers' sentiments and tastes for the worse goes hand-in-hand with the possibility that representations can also shape

these for the better.¹³ This may be what Annie Sprinkle had in mind when she famously said, "The answer to bad porn is not no porn, but to make better porn!" (Sprinkle 2006, 61).

One thing APF needs to do, then - and this may be a place where feminist philosophers are particularly useful - is to come up with a robust definition of "egalitarian porn." Although I can't provide a full definition here, I can offer a few general criteria. Egalitarian pornography should satisfy all of the following criteria:

- Cater equally to female audiences.¹⁴
- Accurately represent women's sexual pleasure and give at least equal time to acts that women genuinely enjoy.
- Foreground women's sexual pleasure rather than subordinate it to men's.
- Represent women in active roles and postures without resorting to dominatrix stereotypes.
- Offer a variety of female body types, including many realistic portrayals of women's bodies without fetishizing them.
- Refrain from showing women desiring or enjoying their own degradation unless this is equally matched by men doing the same. (This would mean no facial ejaculation scenes unless a gender-symmetrical counterpart were developed.)

¹³ Unless, of course, one's got a story to tell about why representations can harm but not help, a story that would have to contend with the long history from Aristotle to Nussbaum arguing that representations can improve us morally by cultivating our emotions.

¹⁴ It will be noted that I am talking here about pornography for heterosexual audiences. This is because to my mind the category of problematic pornography - i.e., inegalitarian pornography - is primarily heterosexual.

- Represent bisexuality of both sexes or none at all.
- Defy sexist clichés and stereotypes.
- Limit violence to explicitly consensual activities.

Egalitarian porn should make gender equality genuinely sexy by soliciting strong erotic responses to acts, scenarios and postures that empower women. This means that it should not be limited to the softer sensuality of “erotica” and other works that tastefully focus on romantic couple sex, nor should it be didactic or preachy. Egalitarian porn should include lots of sexually explicit, hot and lusty, lewd and raunchy representations that encourage masturbation or other sexual activity. This is to say that it should be properly *pornographic*. There is some egalitarian pornography already being produced, some of it supported by the Feminist Porn Awards in Toronto

(http://www.goodforher.com/Feminist_Porn_Awards.html)¹⁵ It is my contention that in addition to the judicious measures of fighting inegalitarian porn mentioned above, a sensible antiporn feminism should honor and advocate any such efforts to re-organize our erotic tastes for the better.

The idea that anti-porn feminism should be *pro* egalitarian porn may strike some as paradoxical, but when our position is understood aright the apparent tension dissolves. There is a longstanding misperception that anti-porn feminists are finger-wagging prudish opponents of all lascivious representations. This is false. We do not have moral qualms with the pornographic per se. What we oppose is the

¹⁵ Jennifer Saul has pointed out to me that not all of the recipients of this award meet my standards of egalitarian pornography. This, I take it, is a result of the fact that the criteria for what counts as “feminist” remain open to contestation. This is something that I think we should embrace. For our purposes it is important that a sensible antiporn feminism and the Feminist Porn Awards both share a commitment to the idea that there should be more pornography dedicated to the cause of promoting gender equality.

particular form that the pornographic has historically taken because we believe that it is harmful to women and, to a lesser extent, men. Our opposition is multifaceted. My focus has been the way that inegalitarian pornography deforms its audiences’ sentiments and tastes in favor of sexism but, as Langton rightly notes, feminists have other legitimate worries as well. As I understand them, however, none of these is aimed at the pornographic per se but, rather, at the overwhelmingly popular body of sexually explicit representations that eroticize relations (acts, scenarios, postures) characterized by sexism. Not only should we not oppose the small handful of sexually explicit representations that eroticize relations characterized by gender equality, but we should welcome and encourage these as one part of a remedy to inegalitarian porn.

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