

The Mechanics of Pornography – A tentative exploration...

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We will start with a statement then explain the thinking behind it. Pornography “anonymises” the subject, the other. Although a rather obvious opening point the ramifications may be missed if not discussed. We will use the term “consumer” to indicate the person who is viewing and/or indulging in the pornography.

If we reframe the pornography scenario and put it into the context of “normal” social interaction, an interaction where one person finds another sexually interesting, there can be a myriad of outcomes but they basically fall into one of three groups (four if one counts being oblivious to the occurrence), acceptance of the interest and encouragement, an awareness of but a general disinterest in the suitor, or an outright rejection. The important factor here is that there is interaction, and that interaction would normally be perceived and interpreted, rightly or wrongly, and acted on by all of the parties concerned. But in the scenario of pornography the one who is the subject of the interest has no power of acceptance or rejection no matter whether they are alive, on film or on the printed page, they are not perceived as sentient or a free agent with choice (other than perhaps the belief and justification by the consumer that the “other” has *chosen* to be consumed and so is a willing participant). Within the pornography scenario the consumer has no boundaries imposed, no signals of rationality that are able to act to curtail the consumer’s behaviour (to keep them operating within society’s “acceptable” bounds). For instance, the viewer can stare with complete impunity, whereas if this staring was to occur within a social interaction context or other similar, the staring in an overtly sexual manner would be seen by most onlookers as a somewhat perverse act that is also threatening the safety of the individual that is the “object” of the attention. There is a perceived danger of the one being consumed (raped) by the other rather than just viewed.

Pornography appears to allow “interaction” to become entirely one sided to the point where the needs of the consumer are all engulfing and where the imagined needs of the consumed, if imagined at-all, serve to only confirm the consumer’s fantasy as it is being constructed. There are obvious dangers if the consumer sees others around them in the same context as imagery consumed within pornography (“*it was her fault for dressing like that*”).

Pornography is a tool of unrestrained self-indulgence and the ability to ignore the needs of the other or their freedom of agency, whereas sexual interaction between a loving couple is a mutual event wherein the needs of the other are at least as important, where external considering and empathic response are in the forefront, but even here pornography can encroach on the minds of the loving couple if one or the other, or both, consume it. The use of fantasy is for instance promoted as healthy by many sex therapists, but isn’t this internal pornography, imagined pornography? What bearing does fantasy have on the existence of the other, the partner? Are they not secondary to the fantasy becoming then an instrument for self gratification, lessening or ceasing to be considered? The act of fantasising isolates one from the other, it separates and makes distant. It is no wonder that fantasy is damaging to relationship because it is the antithesis of it. While one fantasises an internal scenario the other is abandoned, and this is being done ironically in the name of keeping the relationship alive, adding a bit of spice. Its continual use will destroy the ability of one to interact with the other (the fantasy is preferred), and makes of the other an object for sexual gratification while at the same time emulating the message of porn that males to be real men are seen to have a constant erection and that anything less will not “satisfy” the other. The consumers fall into the trap of pills (Viagra) and injections, love making becomes literally a “performance” for an

imaginary camera. Viagra, as a tool to enhance self sexual gratification, objectifies the consumer of it in his own eyes, losing touch with the fact that he, the consumer, is a human subject, replacing the real with an illusion. At what point is Viagra being prescribed not so much for the medical need but to suppress the insecurity that is felt when one compares self with the "ideal" of the pornographic film star, at what point is it prescribed because relationship is already damaged and already in danger of not being relationship at-all?

Pornography now appears to have a much wider meaning. It can be applied within as well as outside of relationship. Pornography also has a more sinister role, it has always been the marketing communications (MARCUM) of prostitution.

Within prostitution there is an agreed "contract" of interaction (a dovetailing of intent between the consumer and consumed). For the prostitute the contract is "I will be nothing and you will be everything" and for the consumer the contract is the balancing "I will be everything and you will be nothing" (to understand this think back to the above couple in the relationship where one fantasises and in so doing objectifies the other). The contract is agreed through the exchange of money (or in the case of human trafficking, through the knowledge that one *may* survive to live another day if one complies).

How is it possible for any person to be able to agree to this horrendous contract? The answer is almost certain to be found in the consumer's history where abuse, physical and/or mental, will have played a major part. It is horrifying to see how the consumer may also be from a stable background and they have been systematically groomed and coerced a little at a time, transitioning from photography to naked photography, from film to pornographic film, from dancing to stripping to lap dancing to doing "special favours", and so on. When society fails to look after those that are in need of the basics, a roof over one's head and a hot meal on the table, then prostitution can seem like a very viable "temporary" answer, but it is all but "temporary" because the line once crossed ceases to exist.

Domination and bondage flirt even more dangerously with this scenario than realised because the contract of BDSM is the very same as that of prostitution, and as you will have probably already realised it is also the contract of pornography too, i.e. the other becomes nothing, an object to be consumed. The term "consenting adults" masks the true nature of the contract being agreed, and worse still it is almost impenetrable to investigation because it hides behind the shield "freedom of choice".

In a nutshell, the view of the consumer becomes all engulfing, paramount, and eventually very extreme (for example, harder hard core porn is sought progressively as the consumer desensitises), then when this perception is put into the context of society, rape and murder for thrill seem to the consumer to also be "rational" choices. When this extreme thought and intention exist as fantasy inside the head then the final line to be crossed is only whether it is acted out or not externally.

There is an unacknowledged training ground for this contract of thought, the mode where one is the consumer and the other does not exist as the free agent and is consumed, television. The contract that exists between the viewer/consumer and the television image which is seen as an object is the same. The television is watched for the best part with a sense of its unimportance, that it is entertainment, not "real", but it is that same contract. The imagery is absorbed but the consumer still views their self as paramount, that what is observed has no life, no agency, it is objectified. It is interesting and frightening to observe that we can slide up and down the scale alarmingly easily. There is for instance mild and not so mild pornography on

television, scenes of rape, murder and emotional abuse that are presented as a daily diet in “cop” shows, but there are of course also programs and documentaries that can bond society. However, our diet easily becomes self titivation, often involuntarily, even more-so when concealed in advertisements between “innocent” programs. The watching of soap operas is also amazingly compulsive, and perhaps this latter is the prostitute’s contract from the other side being played out. One is helpless to change the scenario presented and has little choice but to either turn off or join the rollercoaster of emotions that these programs invoke (or become desensitised). The horror movie is this same contract in play where we “voluntarily” agree to be frightened. If at this point we allow our understanding to be flexible then the same can also be said of fairy tales for children too. Perhaps the consumer and consumed contract exists within the fabric of our human society and interaction, and if taken to an extreme can take us to very dark places indeed.

Pornography is addictive because for the consumer self gratification is addictive. Being a consumer without any need for empathy or responsibility is addictive, and pornography is empowering for the consumer and destroying for the consumed (although in reality it is destroying the consumer’s empathy and sense of “other” too).

We would not need diets if self gratification (self empowerment) wasn’t addictive. Eating disorders are almost certainly a craving for self empowerment and/or sensation to feel meaningful (one can understand how over-eating can be the result of an attempt to deal with low self esteem for instance). Taken to yet another extreme one can perhaps see how it is that a high court judge may seek to be dominated for the thrill of total submission and helplessness where they are completely out of control, it is a means of seeking psychological balance to counter the irrational power that they hold over others lives where the act of judgement and dominion and the helplessness of the other makes them meaningless. Each harsh judgement forces the judge to kill their own compassion and empathy.

The “thrill” of BDSM is similar to the extreme feeling experienced when bungee jumping, an act where one partakes of the “other’s” contract, a sip from their cup so to speak, the thrill of speed and of extreme sports being indulged in to “feel alive” by facing self-annihilation.

We can see how the contract of “pornography” can exist in many places and forms but is essentially the same. In the above example of extreme sport it is the consuming of fear and helplessness, of finding that nature has teeth. This contract of consumer and consumed is also the contract of the hunter who consumes the existence of the other. Hunting is the equivalent to an enacted snuff movie but with the lives of animals instead of humans, but how thin is the line? Like pornography the youth is introduced to killing a little at a time, coerced into perceiving death to be little more than a sport. The training destroys both the creature and the hunter’s inner awareness. It is a chilling observation to also see this played out by militaries and governments the world over, to kill the other the other must become nothing.

Being appreciated, loved, valued, gratified are essential if we are to feel that we exist and that we have a place in the world. If our lives have been dark and we have been forced to cross those invisible lines because of abuse, where our feelings of self worth have then been destroyed, we find we are more able to agree to that contract of the prostitute. If we are nothing to ourselves then it is easier for us to be nothing for others too... “I am nothing. You can treat me as if I’m nothing. Because you are able to treat me as nothing then surely that must mean that I am nothing”.

We have to view the process of pornography and how it contaminates, often a little at a time, until it becomes identifiable as the process that has many forms but is essentially the same. Pornography is insidious because of its addictive nature, and that addiction is carrying with it the systematic objectification of others as well as the objectification of the consumer's inner self. We need to be aware of how the abominable contract of consumer and consumed is created, and how it is not only all around us but it is also an integral part of the fabric of our society, it is even enforced by the technology around us. We need to be aware that for millennia people have been considered to be consumable. Females particularly have been consumed as wives, servants, sex objects. The same can be said for many men as they are consumed like their female counterparts by commerce and warlords, also becoming servants and sex objects. Men are not immune from either side of this contract.

Perhaps now we see the true commonality between those that can, directly or indirectly through abuse, force another into prostitution and the mind of the individual that can kill another without a moment of remorse... The other is nothing.

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We are faced with a difficult question, how to deal with what is happening right now within our society where porn has become so embedded in the education of the young (aged seven or less), those who are already coerced into viewing while watching TV, playing games on the internet or being abused by "considerate" family members? Can we change the environment? Perhaps we should instead focus on how to immunise their/our minds because the environment will almost certainly *not* change. How can we "de-colonise" a mind that is already "educated" to consume both oneself and the other?

Awareness is immunisation.

Empathy and giving the other meaning is the antidote.

To see the "other" as real, to empathise and relate can be an amazing tool in a society where that experience of empathy is a means to heal and help in other domains. We need to be aware of societies and cultures that are based on the approach of "colonising the other", and how the "porn contract" principle is also installed in young soldiers, promoting their perception of the nothingness of the other (in other words, how to make the soldier fit to kill).

Society has the seeds of pornography within its foundation, there is no such thing as "harmless violence" or "harmless pornography". We need to contextualise the debate to show how the appearance of "free choice" is being used as another MARCOM device. Neo-liberalism like capitalism has to be intelligently understood, its true nature and ramifications will need to be exposed.