

**A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON PORNOGRAPHY
FROM A FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL-ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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Declaration

Except where explicitly indicated to the contrary, this study is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been submitted in any form to any other institution.

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Introduction

It is shortly before eight o'clock in the evening. I switch on the television in order to watch the news. Time for adverts. What I see is a woman's leg and what I hear is an erotic female voice - advertising for Virgin Atlantic. Next I see a white female shaking her head in order to emphasise her long blond hair - an advert for hair shampoo. Then, the advert for an upcoming film - a woman half naked, emphasised are particularly her fleshy brown breasts as she tries to seduce a man to sleep with her. And finally the news: A group of women castrated a rapist in the Gauteng area. The commentator mentions that South Africa has the highest rape statistics in the world.

These things are certainly thought provoking. The images that we see on television and newspapers have an impact on our lives and on the ways we think and act. Certain questions arise, such as is it possible that there could be a common pattern of interpreting pornographic images and words? If so, what could be the significance of such an understanding and interpretation for men and women? Is there a link between sexual violence and these adverts which I regard as pornographic?

In the South African situation it may seem as if a discussion on pornography is irrelevant because of greater issues, like poverty or unemployment. It also seems to be naïve to call for better relationships between the sexes as if all would be well if only we all loved one another. But I want to argue that a discussion on an apparent trivial matter like pornography is essential. It is essential because it shows how deep-seated and widespread negative attitudes and the distorted relationships they foster, are and how they affect our lives at every level.

Pornography is becoming an important issue for countries like South Africa. Developing countries, for instance, are targeted when pornographers initiate newer and cheaper forms of making pornography as well as finding untouched markets. Pornography is not only an issue for developing countries. Indeed, it is a global issue due to its economic, political and social impact. The industry confronts, for instance the role of the state in regulating pornographic material. Human rights, such as freedom of choice and the right

to be free of discrimination, are the two major points a democratic society has to deal with when it comes to pornography. The global increase in all kinds of violence, brings up another issue, namely the link between portrayals of sexual violence and sexual violence itself.

The main problem I want to explore in this thesis is the ways in which a feminist theological-ethical response to pornography could be developed. In order to find answers I begin in chapter one with a definition of what feminist theological ethics is. I also suggest ideas and develop a vision of how men and women could live together in what I call a redemptive community. In chapter two I am going to investigate the nature of pornography and under what conditions it develops. I will examine the arguments against and for pornography. I am going to focus, in particular, on the arguments within the feminist debate. A special section will deal with the discussion on pornography in the post 1994 South Africa. In chapter three I will explore the context and the content of pornography. I am going to examine how pornography itself is defined by male and female stereotypical roles in our societies, and how it creates these roles. I will illustrate my investigations with a few examples of pornographic depictions. In chapter four I will discuss a feminist theological-ethical approach of sex that challenges the phenomenon of pornography. The concluding summary at the end of the thesis not only summarizes my investigations but also suggests some practical ideas of what people, especially Christians, can do against the widespread use of pornography and its ideology.

Various methods are used in this thesis. I begin the thesis by descriptions based on primary and secondary sources. These include books, journals, pornographic material, television advertisements, newspaper articles, and material from the internet. Technical terms, like pornography and feminist theological ethics are explained and defined in the thesis. I evaluate the extent to which pornography affects men and women, and arguments in support of pornography. I assess the arguments against pornography. Reflections on the significance of the feminist arguments on pornography are presented and this is followed by a critical analysis of pornographic depictions and texts. At the end of the thesis I provide suggestions concerning the ethical perspectives that should be considered as appropriate regarding sex and sexuality. This study is presented within

a framework of feminist theological ethics. Every study relates to the writer as a person. In my case, as a woman who is concerned about the relationship between men and women, I realise that in most cases when men talk to me, they first of all see my body, and not me as an individual with my own character and personality. I reject the understanding that this is part of the male nature. I will argue in this research that it is rather part of how males are socialised and what they are taught, to a large extent through the media, about their relationships to women and themselves. Pornography appears to be *the way* most of our societies today use to define the image, role and position of women and men. As a woman I feel enormously limited by the image of only being a sex object. In this research I wish to express how as a creature of God, I am being reduced and deprived of my dignity and acceptance by others through stereotyped images of women. I further consider this research of prophetic significance in relation to the social responsibility churches and Christians have for their fellow humans and their society. I want to offer ways of how to deal with the phenomenon of pornography and its consequences. This work wants to express the hope for a future of women and men living in the communion to which God calls us.

**I. VISIONS FROM FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL ETHICS:
RE-CREATING WOMEN AND MEN IN THE IMAGE OF GOD**

**In the Beginning is the Relation
In the End - the Healing
But in the Present - the Energizing of Creation for Justice
(Grey 1991:18).**

Introduction

I see this thesis as being part of the present - the energizing of creation for justice (Grey 1991:18). In order to energize one has to have a vision to work and live for. This is exactly what the first chapter of my thesis is about. The chapter provides a vision of a redemptive community from a feminist, theological and ethical perspective. In section one I give a general explanation of what feminist ethics is and where the importance of theology lies for feminist ethical discussions.

Speaking about a redemptive community, the aspects of a new humanity and a re-definition of power are of importance. I am of the opinion that attitudes, behaviour, and values need to be transformed as part of the making of a redemptive community. I also argue that the understanding of power needs to be reviewed. I explore these two aspects in sections two and three. Besides the aspects of a new humanity and a new understanding of power there are other elements that are of importance in the making of a redemptive community, for instance, an ethic of care. This will be explored in section four.

When reading the first chapter of this thesis one should keep in mind the overall topic. As I explained earlier, my argument is that pornography destroys human relationships and shapes people's attitudes, behaviour and actions. Pornography defines the reality we live in. What this reality looks like, especially in the South African context, is described in the fifth section.

1. A definition of feminist theological ethics

In general terms a feminist is one who takes seriously the practical concerns of women's lives, the analysis and the critique of these conditions of life, and the ways in which women's lives can become more fulfilling (Parsons 1996:8). The feminist movement is ethical in its core and character because it reflects and deals with questions that affect all spheres of life: the private and the public, the individual and the community, the theoretical and the practical. The feminist movement is ethical in the way that it does not only reflect but also acts. Being a feminist, and doing feminist ethics, means to be relevant to central issues that concern women in every day life.

Feminists challenge social, economic, political and religious structures. They question the values, attitudes, and behaviour that result from these structures. Feminist ethics begins with women's experiences, evolving from social, economic, political and religious conditions, and moves from there to definitions, conclusions and actions. Biographies, stories, and literature written by women are used as data for ethical reflection. To focus on experience as the starting point also incorporates body, mind and soul. Feminist ethics identifies human action and knowledge as interlinked. It underlines that moral knowledge must be rooted in the integration of body and mind, and this is a critique of the body-mind dichotomy in Western cultures. Bodies are conceived as the primary source and medium of relationships to the world around us; the situation from which we effect change; interact with others; relate to non-human creation, and manipulate technology (Harrison 1985:12ff).

The central issue in ethical reflection is the foundation: On what basis does one define what is good and evil? What are the criteria and directions for alternative values, attitudes and behaviour? I agree at this point with feminist ethics that proceeds from the assumption of a shared humanity and a shared moral vision. The feminist theologian Cahill points out that the foundations of morality are best understood as:

broad areas of agreement about human needs, goods, fulfilments which can be reached inductively and dialogically through human experience. All humans - as embodied, self-conscious, intersubjective, and social - share common ground for moral obligations, insight, communication, and action (1996:2).

* Cahill states that without essential unity of human moral experience and common recognition of values, virtues, and vices, social criticism in the name of justice would be impossible (1996:33). To claim particular human experiences, values and virtues as universal inevitably raises the question of relativity, which is, who defines what is universally true, good and evil? Cahill argues that:

Human activity is purposeful; it aims at happiness. The goods which are constitutive of happiness, as well as the activities and virtues which realize those goods, are not mere social constructions or psychological projections. They are objective, stable across cultures, and knowable by human reason. The way in which they are known is ... by inductive reflection on, and generalization from, human experiences of need, of lack or deprivation, of fulfilment and flourishing, and of social cooperation (1996:46).

* Here is the point where a theological perspective in feminist ethics could come in. The inclusion of Christian theology in feminist ethics enables one to draw on the biblical concepts of good and evil as well as to meditate on God's positive "comprehensive vision for the world" (Nünberger 1998:23). The Bible can further be used as a source of documentation of human experiences in all spheres of life. Feminist theologians can provide a spiritual aspect within ethics. Ethics and spirituality are both linked to the question of the meaning of life and the ways towards a fulfilled life. It is important to see ethics and spirituality together. Christian feminist ethicists have the task to call upon the loving, redeeming and comforting aspects of the triune God when dealing with ethics.

But to make theology a relevant voice in feminist ethical debates means to be aware of the impact churches and theologies had and still have in prescribing ethics and morality, especially in terms of sex and gender. It is necessary to analyse traditional Christian ethics and morality from a feminist perspective so as to identify the good for all of us. In the following sections of this chapter I will define what is good and evil in feminist theological terms.

But before one can define or rather re-define what is universally true and good for humankind, it is necessary to reflect, analyse and examine ethical standards and moral

norms of the past and the present. Furthermore, in order to outline women's life experiences from an ethical perspective, it is useful to de-construct traditional values, norms, and patterns of behaviour. A de-constructing analysis leads to a critical realism. Cahill explains that:

Radical deconstruction of moral foundations simply leads to a cultural relativism which enervates real moral communication, intercultural critique, and cooperation in defining and building just conditions of life for men and women (1996:2).

This argument follows from the fact that, historically, women have been denied full moral agency. Instead, men took moral decisions for women. It is in view of this background that feminist ethicists de-construct traditional sex roles and affirm that women are fully able to make moral decisions as autonomous agents. This implies, for instance, the conviction that gender relations are neither inscribed in natural differences between the sexes nor immutable and permanent. Part of a de-constructing approach in feminist ethics is an analysis of the structural dynamics of race, class and gender in societies (Harrison 1985:2). Such an analysis informs the description of the moral situation and affects the way women assess what responsibility requires, given women's historical predicaments. One of the central questions in this regard is, how do the matters that are central to my personal liberation as a white middle-class woman, for instance, touch the lives of those who are doubly and triply oppressed (Harrison 1985:90)? Arguments for certain moral actions that arise out of the experiences of a German middle-class woman studying in South Africa will only to a certain degree reflect the moral situation of an unemployed black woman living in Soweto. There is the danger in especially Western feminist debates to argue only from a gender perspective and to ignore the aspects of class and race. Non-Western women have challenged this and emphasised that all three aspects of gender, race and class are of importance in analysing women's situations.

In the area of ethics of sex and gender feminist ethicists analyse the underlying attitudes about male and female sexuality and the power dynamics involved. In this, feminist theological ethics in particular focuses on a hermeneutic of suspicion, especially in relation to the emphasis of female sexuality on procreation. Ethics of sex and gender today tends towards a radical rejection of traditional Christian and Western norms of sexual behaviour. Pluralism, freedom from restraint and the unavailability of any 'master plan' for sexual experiences and purposes have become the slogans. Critical voices

(Cahill 1996; Storkey 1997; Woodhead 1997) have pointed out that the modern meaning of sex emphasises individualism; sex is privatized, seen as fun or as the major fulfilment of human life. Sexual intercourse has become a means of personal gratification, pleasure and interpersonal fulfilment at the expense of the procreative side of sex, with its strong social dimension. Responsibility and respect for one's sexual partner, or for the mutual procreative potentials of sex, is undermined. Instead, the modern understanding of sex justifies unfaithfulness, destroys trust, abuses the young, and uses people. Cahill (1996) emphasises from a theological perspective that a 'freedom from' traditional Christian and Western repressions needs to be translated into an ethic of meaning, purpose, and even discipline which can meet cultural trivialization and modern distortions of sex. She writes that:

For Christian sexual ethics to have a future ... it must ground sexual freedom and fulfilment in some account of the human goods at stake in sex and in the relationships built upon it (1996:11).

It is important to find an approach to sexuality that aims to be holistic. Part of a holistic approach is to see women's bodies and sexuality as a "source of our moral power" (Harrison 1985:2). This means that women are to affirm their bodies themselves as a way of appropriating the moral universe. The goal of a holistic and integrated sexual ethic is to affirm a sexual activity that enhances human dignity in relation to identity (Harrison 1985:90).

A feminist theological ethic of sex and gender is committed to equality, to intercultural discernment of real goods and evils, and to the human and moral interdependence of sexual desire, mutual pleasure, and sexual commitment. One of the primary concerns of feminist theology in ethical reflections and moral decision making is the well-being of women, based on the fact that they are made in the image of God. The Judeo-Christian tradition claims that the world and humans, men and women, are created good. This includes that women are capable of living decent and humane lives and enjoying them (Jung 1988:67).

A process of de-construction is usually followed by re-construction, a setting of alternatives, of a new vision for the future. The foundation of a future I envision is based on a Christian faith that shares in God's creative power, redemptive concern and

comprehensive vision for this world (Nürnberger 1997:23).

2. The vision of a new humanity

Feminist theological ethics as part of the wider feminist movement supports the empowerment of women as well as the humanisation of communities. An important aspect of the feminist vision I am committed to, is that which shapes a redemptive community. A redemptive community is understood here as a community that includes freedom from the evil of patriarchy. It is a community in which people live and work for the vision of a unity in diversity, a world in which "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female" (Gal 3:28a). In short, a feminist vision of a redemptive community is a community in which racism, classism and sexism do not exist. To bring about a redemptive community in terms of gender equity means to transform the way men and women relate to each other in terms of power and justice. A re-construction of power and justice is followed logically by changes in economic, social, religious and political structures. The feminist vision for the future is an overthrowing - a revolution - of traditional mores and values (Haney 1994:4/5).

The new humanity of this feminist 'revolution' is rooted in a new and powerful consciousness of what it means to be human. It is committed to the struggle that seeks the realisation of the awareness that human beings are God's creation. In this sense, women, for instance, have to challenge the female images given to them by men, as found in pornographic depictions, and discover their authentic being.

Talking about a new humanity, it is important at this stage to define what is understood to be human in a moral and ethical sense. According to Cahill what is understood as human entails "basic human functional capabilities" (1996:57) such as being able to live to the end of a complete human life; to have good health, to avoid pain and enjoy mutual pleasurable experiences; to use one's five senses and to imagine, think and reason; to love, and to feel gratitude; to be concerned about animals and nature and to have attachments to other members of the community. It is only natural and fair that every human creature is entitled to a fulfilment of these capabilities. For most of the human

species the realisation of these potentials is not reality but a dream, a hope, a vision. Cahill emphasises that these capabilities "provide a ground and content for the human virtues of love, commitment, respect, equality, and the building of social unity toward the common good" (1996:89).

I mentioned earlier that one of the crucial aspects in ethics is who defines what is good and evil. In discussing the 'common good' I want to refer to Haney's (1994) paradigms of nurture and friendship. According to her, good is what nurtures all of us in the way that it makes people more humane towards themselves and one another. Haney refers to the image of God as nurturer and provider. Nurture means helping to grow and develop a fulfilled life. Friendship as the second paradigm of good "helps us to remember that our good must fit in significant ways with the good of the rest of being" (Haney 1994:6). Friendship can be described as a relation of mutuality, respect, fidelity, confidence, and affection. These elements make it possible to transform dominant power relations. Friendship makes one realise that human beings are related beings. In relation to others one develops a sense of self-identity. Friendship avoids egoism and ego-centrism but emphasises the formation of the individual self. "Authentic individuality recognizes and enhances the relational character of the self" (Parsons 1996:205).

The danger with Haney's paradigm of nurture and friendship in order to make people more humane towards one another and themselves is that most women already live the role of a nurturer, trying to bring about common good. In my view it is important to see these paradigms as values that both men and women need to emphasise. They are part of a new humanity and sharing in God's creative power.

The sharing of women in God's creative power also means the recovering of the *imago dei* (image of God) for women. I am aware of the fact that the discussion on the nature of 'woman' is a complex task in the feminist debate, for it is here that the most powerful arguments against equality are constructed. It is also here that the nature of 'woman' has been constructed by the experience and imagination of men. Nevertheless, I think that it is women who have to break this order with claims about their own experiences

and lived reality, their sexuality and spirituality. To affirm women's identity helps to define the differences between men and women. These differences can be seen not as contrasts but as variations and diversities. To acknowledge differences as diversities further assists the realisation of the equality of the sexes, male and female.

The difference between being a man and a woman is what draws us towards one another and enables us to unite, or become one flesh. What does a new humanity in terms of an ethic of sex look like? At this point I want to mention Carter Heyward's (1989) theology based on relationships. For Heyward human nature is based on relationships with one another, with the earth and with God. Sexuality which constitutes a bodily *and* spiritual reality is part of human relationships. Heyward (in Parsons 1996:143ff) emphasises that humans' knowledge of sexuality should speak for the interrelation of all things in a way that is close to divine creativity and love. She says, that human bodies are more than flesh, they are also the presence of God in the world, so that as humans act, love, suffer and enjoy, they are actually bringing God to life again. It is as bodies that humans share creative power, i.e. intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual power. To fulfil humanness and to follow one's nature means to participate in honest, just and empowering relationships (Heyward 1989:129ff).

This understanding is in line with my view that, as physical beings, women come to know themselves and one another and they come into a power that moves among them, between them and within them, inspiring and encouraging them towards the realisation of what may be best for all of humankind. I think that to know this is to take greater responsibility for our bodies, and to appreciate more fully the significance of our relationship with others. Heyward (in Parsons 1996:143ff) argues that such knowledge demands the work of love, defined as the attempt to achieve justice in the world, and the commitment to be faithful to the love of God, as much as it demands the work of critique when right relation is denied. Heyward also emphasises that "living in the fullness of the body ... is an expression of the compassion given to us by nature, known to us in our desires, and attuned with the divine compassion through which the world is made whole" (cited in Parsons 1996:145).

A new humanity needs to acknowledge that human beings are related to each other, to the earth and to God. Body, mind and soul together define human nature. Likewise, even though women and men are different, they also share common experiences, desires, and capabilities. Ethical decisions and actions taken by humans can be based on an understanding of being human as Sharon Welch described it (in line with Kant): "each individual is seen as a rational being entitled to the same rights and duties we would want to ascribe to ourselves" (cited in Parsons 1996:187). Accordingly, moral decisions are taken in accordance with norms of formal equality and reciprocity.

3. A re-definition of power in terms of love and justice

The meaning of the word 'power' can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand the term includes strength, control, authority, force, and even domination and violence. There is the power of nuclear weapons that defines the strength of a country. There is the power of high-tech security systems that provide control. There is the powerful voice of a father who demands to be given authority. 'Power' understood in this way is a patriarchal definition. It is to rule over, to have control, to dictate, and when necessary to destroy.

On the other hand 'power' can be interpreted in a positive and constructive way. There is the powerful strength of survival when an African woman carries wood on her head, one child on her back and one in her womb. There is the powerful voice of a prophet who challenges the rich. There is the power in nature that enables growth. These meanings of 'power' are seen as beneficial, as part of a development towards justice and love. 'Power' in relation to mutual love and justice can become part of a new culture, a spontaneous, natural, creative culture (Griffin 1981:120). It is a culture that is part of a redemptive community in which truth is seen as beauty and love as becoming and life (Langan 1986:64).

'Power' can be seen as rooted in emotion and therefore part of moral action. I make this statement based on Harrison's (1985) argument that all knowledge is body-mediated and rooted in humans sensuality. Harrison (1985:13) suggests that *perception* is

foundational to *conception*, that ideas are dependent on sensuality. Therefore, feelings or emotions are the basic bodily ingredient that mediate human connectedness to the world. If feeling is damaged or cut off, the power to image the world and act into it is destroyed. Further, in the absence of feeling there is no rational ability to evaluate what is happening (Harrison 1985:13). The Western understanding that states that the body and mind should be seen as separate entities has increased the inability to deal with ethical and moral issues that effect the relationship between women and men, and nature. Feminist ethicists suggest that positive constructive power can be built on feelings and emotions.

Harrison (1985:14ff) gives an example of positive constructive power by arguing that anger is a powerful feeling-signal. Anger is usually associated with aggression, outrage and wrath. Someone who becomes angry is seen as bad behaving and not able to control his or her emotions. Anger also includes attributes like irritation and displeasure. It reveals pain and indicates that all is not well in one's relation to other persons, groups, or the world around. It is a mode that reflects connectedness to others and it can be seen as a vivid form of caring. Harrison speaks about anger as a measure of resistance in ourselves to the lack of moral quality in the social relations in which we are immersed (1985:14). Extreme and intense anger signals a deep reaction to the action upon one's self or toward others whom one is related to. Anger signals something amiss in relationship. Harrison makes us aware of the fact that this point is a critical step in understanding the power of anger in the work of love. Where anger rises there is potential energy to act so as to ameliorate the present, because one's body-self is engaged (Harrison 1985:14). This is so because anger expressed directly is a mode of taking 'the other' seriously.

Harrison speaks about 'the other' as our neighbour, the person next to us, the one we interact with as well as 'the other' as groups and the world around us. Harrison's understanding of 'the other' is based on the awareness that a person is a person through other persons. The same is expressed in the popular Zulu saying "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu". The African traditional cultural ethics and value systems have *ubuntu* as a model of what humans should be like. *Ubuntu* means humanness, to say

that one can only be human through other humans. I am human only because you are human. If I undermine someone's humanity, I dehumanise myself. *Ubuntu* further means to have kindness, honesty, humility, sympathy, love, hospitality and caring for others. To live *ubuntu* is to have a sense of communalhood that enables us to live as one family of the human race. However, this strong communalistic feeling should accept each individual's inalienable uniqueness so that we can supplement each other where we are weak (Dziva 1998). Harrison's understanding of humanness is similar to that of the African traditional concept.

I want to come back to Harrison's description of anger as a feeling signal. She explains that being confronted by the anger of another person, can teach one respect and responsibility. It can make one aware of the other person's need for dignity because 'the other' is demanding acknowledgment or accountability. 'The other' is asking for the recognition of his or her presence and values. Harrison (1985:15) emphasises that one has two options in such a situation, either one can ignore, avoid, condemn, and blame, or one can act to alter the relationship toward reciprocity, and toward beginning a real process of hearing and speaking to each other. This example demonstrates how it is possible to bring about quality in social relations in terms of justice and mutual love.

One might ask what it is that makes humans to hear and speak to each other? What is it that makes one respect and love another person? I refer here to Farley (1993:186ff) who argues that the two features of humans that require respect and love are autonomy and relationality. Autonomy or self-determination is based on the fact that humans have rationality; therefore they have the capacity to recognize in and by themselves what counts as a moral obligation and to resolve to act in accordance with it or not. The ability of persons to love one another and the world, and the capacity to express this love freely, makes them worthy of respect. Actions that humans choose should be for the sake of some form of love, whether for themselves or for 'the other' (Farley 1993:197). It is a fact that freedom arises out of human relationality and serves it. An obligation to respect persons requires that one honours the freedom of others and responds to their needs.

I should note here that it is important to value difference as well as sameness. Men and women have to attend to and appreciate the concrete realities of their own and others' lives. In a feminist ethic, respect for either males or females is "both an obligating and a liberating call" (Farley 1993:198). Friendship can be a path towards caring for others on the basis of respect including the goal of mutuality and solidarity (Jung 1988; Haney 1994). It is the responsibility of human beings to be living witnesses to the possibility of incarnate freedom, to live as images of the creator.

* For feminist theologians it can be of value in this discussion to draw on Jesus Christ's life and death. Beverly Harrison (1985:18), for instance, points out that it is important to see Jesus as someone who was radical in his power of love. Radical acts of love - expressing human solidarity and bringing mutual relationship to life - are some of the central virtues of the Christian moral life. Like Jesus, we are called to a radical activity of love, to a way of being in the world that deepens relations, extends community, and passes on the gift of life. Women and men must live out this calling in a place and time where the distortions of loveless power stand in conflict with the power of love (Jung 1988:70). In the discipleship of Jesus women and men are called to confront the kind of power which prevents personal and communal love to grow. They are called to challenge that which distorts relationships, denies human well-being, and hinders human solidarity in this world. *quoted*

* Part of a feminist theological vision is the transformation of power into love and justice. To speak about love and justice in this sense means to live out solidarity, to make relationships live, to respect one another, to give and to receive. These are the fruits, values and virtues of a power that embraces emotions and feelings and makes them part of ethical reflection and moral action. It is a positive constructive power that helps men and women to grow and empower one another. It is not the kind of power that is based on control and violence but on becoming and life. It is the power that enables the making of a redemptive community. To speak about power in terms of justice involves envisioning a community in which each person is recognized as a full human being who seeks respect and dignity. It is a community in which people care for each other and share their duties, rights and resources equally.

4. The making of a redemptive community



My vision of feminist theological ethics is one in which women and men manage to create a world in which practical care, kindness, love and respect are exercised in their community. As mentioned earlier, my understanding of a redemptive community is one in which the evils of racism, classism and, most of all, sexism do not exist. It is a community in which women and men have freedom to express mutual power so as to build a community whose fundamental basis is a theology of deep relationships. Such a community practices a value system of equality and an ethic of care.

A theology of relationship is essential to the building of a redemptive community. The core of this theology is to recognise the creative purpose of God in making all things exist in relation to each other. It is the providential work of God in bringing the whole of creation into right and harmonious relationships (Parsons 1996:216). Making a redemptive community in this way means to affirm again and again that relationships are the matrix of human life. This affirmation enables one to recognize the brokenness of this world and the need for healing. Our world is broken in many ways. Individuals and communities are divided within themselves. Relationships are destroyed between couples, generations and families. Feminist theological ethics holds that relationships are central and this means that humans should become more sensitive to all forms of interaction that deny relationship.

Speaking in concrete terms, to emphasise relationships between individuals and groups means, most of all, to develop the quality of relationships. In order to heal brokenness the ability to listen is important. Listening enables one to learn and to begin a journey of conversion as response to the lessons of history and the present (Grey 1991:17f). It means to recognise and admit the evil and wrong of the past and the present. The motivations behind this journey of conversion are faith and its power to heal wounds, the power to recognize the evil of broken relationships, and the energy to restore just relations into the social, economic, religious, and political scene (Grey 1991).

It is a genuine faith which brings primal trust, a trust that leads to hope. Hope then is directed towards the vision and a genuine vision activates or brings development (Nürnbergger 1997:23).

Listening to each other demands to see the other as a partner, an equal friend. In general, for the making of a redemptive community it is important to live in a value system of equality. A significant aspect here is the issue of gender differences and gender roles. What makes a community a redemptive community in terms of social, economic, religious and political power between men and women? Is it possible to establish an equality that does not deny the differences between the sexes? I have mentioned some of the issues earlier in the discussion about a new humanity. Mutual empowerment is part of bringing about equality. Men and women have to discover themselves as subjects and agents in interpersonal relationships. To respect the other person in his or her peculiarity, to recognize the other's need for dignity, and to try and live as friends are further aspects that create equality. These values need to be encouraged in our communities in various ways between individuals and groups.

Another key issue in a theology of relationship is an ethic of care (Harrison 1985; Gilligan 1988). It includes the caring for the other person's emotional and physical needs within a mutual framework of respect and responsibility. In this process the other's needs are put before one's own. These aspects are based on relatedness among humans and they help to develop a sense of self-identity. Nurture and friendship, the two paradigms I mentioned earlier, (Haney 1994:6ff), as well as fidelity, confidence and affection, honesty and truthfulness, are integral components of an ethic of care. Other practical aspects involve expressing feelings, sharing knowledge and bodily experiences. An ethic of care demands a political commitment to changing certain values, behaviours and attitudes so as to reshape current institutions like marriage, courts, and African traditional rituals. A theology of relationship builds a wider framework for the goal, process and methods of the making of a redemptive community. Components of this theology are an ethic of care and a value system based on equality. Another very important aspect in a theology of relationship is an ethic of sex.

The task of a theological ethic of sex in the life of a redemptive community is to imbue sexual and reproductive behaviour with the qualities of respect, empathy, reciprocity, and mutual fidelity which would allow sexual and parental love to be transforming agents in our communities. A feminist theological sexual ethic does not function to point at and condemn but rather to inspire and encourage the doing of good (Cahill 1996; Haney 1994). Considering today's understanding of sex and sexuality in most communities (I discuss this in detail in chapter four), it needs to be said that

particular care is required to ensure that sexual liberty is not a screen for - and even a modern-day institutionalization of - manipulative and ultimately oppressive sex which demeans women, fosters the destruction, neglect, or domination of children, and permits a market-place mentality of free entrepreneurship, risk-benefit analysis, and survival of the clever and well positioned, to undermine this crucial realm of human interdependence (Cahill 1996:159).

As a first step it is important to mark the transgressions, to speak out against the disregard of human dignity and to call for respect. In this vein it is clear that sex outside of commitment does not symbolize friendship and solidarity (Haney 1994:6ff). Commitment is understood here not only in terms of a legal marriage but as a mutual bond between two individuals who are prepared to be responsible for their behaviour and actions. Such a commitment should be based on trust, honesty and respect for the partner, the relationship as such, and for everyone who shares and shapes this relationship. The last aspect includes the God of love who provides and protects the life of a committed relationship.

Feminist theological ethicists must define and formulate guidelines for concrete sexual behaviour in every place and time in relation to communal expectations and to the various physical and emotional needs of the individual person. I agree at this stage with Cahill (1996:2ff) who remarks that contemporary theologians must and should draw on human and cultural experiences of the good in sex in order to define concrete moral obligations. Feminist theological ethicists should do more analysis and conceptualise heterosexual marriages and families from the point of view of their dominative and sexist aspects. Here the role of churches and theologies in shaping sex roles needs to be reflected upon critically. A feminist theological ethic of sex as a transformative ethic of discipleship, builds on and reforms female and male cultural practices so that they better represent Christian values of community, solidarity, fidelity, compassion, and hope that

moral and social change are possible (Cahill 1996:3ff). God has created humans as beings who are related to each other and the world around them. This is the basis of our existence, and it is also the crux of every day experience. The brokenness we live in was and is not God's intention.

5. The discrepancy between vision and reality

ANGRY WOMEN SEVER ALLEGED RAPIST'S PENIS

Dar es Salaam - Angry women in northern Tanzania cut off the penis and ears of a man who allegedly raped an eight-year-old school girl.

The Kiswahili newspaper *Majira* said a group of 50 irate women pounced on the 27-year-old Laurent Matonya and sliced off his penis and ears. "We cut off the thing which makes him proud", one woman said (Natal Witness 20/04/1998:4).

TEEN (16) IN COURT FOR RAPING GIRL (5)

Nelspruit - A 16-year-old Mganduzweni-Trust schoolboy appeared briefly in the Nelspruit Magistrate's Court yesterday after he allegedly abducted a five-year-old girl in September and raped her.

Local child protection officer Sergeant Thokozile Virginia Gumede said statements from the girl's friends confirmed the pupil grabbed the girl from among them before carrying her to a bushy area, where the alleged rape occurred.

The children did not testify as they are too young. The boy pleaded not guilty to the charges and was released into his parents' custody (Natal Witness 15/05/1998:3).

CHILD RAPE ACCUSED LINDERMAN REMANDED

Alleged paedophile Mark Linderman, facing rape and attempted murder charges, was yesterday remanded in custody until June 8.

The state alleges that Linderman raped, teargassed and stabbed a 10-year-old girl in Lidgetton in March. He was also arrested for the alleged rape of a 15-year-old at Curry's Post in November (Natal Witness 14/05/1998:3).

These three articles were collected from the same newspaper within a few weeks. They indicate that sexual violence is prevalent across race (third article), across age (second article) and across the continent (first article). Sexual harassment and molestation, assault and battering, sadist and masochist behaviour for sexual gratification are some of the forms of sexual violence. The most painful and brutal form is rape. South Africa is said to be the "rape capital" of the world (Buckenham 1998:Introduction).

It is estimated that every 23 seconds a woman is raped in this country. Between 1 in 3 and 1 in 2 women or girls will be raped in their lifetimes (Buckenham 1998:3).

These examples depict the reality we are living in. It is a reality which is far from the vision of a community of equality, love and justice. It is a reality that is far from seeing power as an energy that drives humans to live in the image of God. This reality depicts the opposite of what feminist ethicists envision. Ethical reflections on sex and gender that deal with violence against women must attend to the realities of the links between violence and sexuality experienced by women (Lebacqz 1994; Cooper-White 1995). Furthermore, it must attend to male power and the 'eroticizing of domination' (In chapter three I will discuss this in more detail). Feminist theological ethicists, like Lebacqz (1994:245ff) and Jakobsen (1994:152), have pointed out that traditional approaches to sexual ethics are inadequate because they presume an equality, intimacy, and safety that do not exist for women. Jakobsen states very clearly that:

The emphasis in feminist theology on the full personhood of women and the interconnectedness of all our lives makes sexual violence one of the most urgent issues of our time. It is an issue which affects all people at all levels of society. Any ethical system that does not take seriously the extent of sexual violence cannot claim to work for a better future and a more ideal society (1994:152).

Heterosexual women in particular need to operate from a hermeneutic of suspicion that does not ignore the socialisation of men and women. Many heterosexual women face experiences of violence and fear on a daily basis. A feminist ethics of sex and gender seeks to encourage such women to give account of the realities of their lives. More and more women become aware of their role in politics, their position and power in economics and their power as the female sex. Nevertheless, the social control of women as a group by men has totally shaped women's and men's deepest and most basic attitudes toward each other in terms of gender identity, power dynamics and sexuality. Sex and sexuality reflect the core of the position of men and women in our communities. Matters of sexuality, sex and intimacy are either seen as related to physical needs, to sport, and to reproductive purposes only, or they are associated with romance, fairy tales, virginity and motherhood. Both ways do not seem to reflect what sex and sexuality truly mean for women and men.

Today, sadomasochism (enjoyment of sexual violence), misogyny (hatred of women) and paedophilia (sexual abuse of children) are common place in human relationships. Sexual violence and hatred are perceived to be part and parcel of every day life. They are taken for granted in some marriages and even interpreted as a sign of love. Human relationships need to be nourished to be kept alive. The most favourite recipe presented by current Western cultures and economies is that pornographic material can provide the right nutrition. The absorption of pornographic magazines, videos, tapes and other media available has increased in the last ten years worldwide. People believe that the material helps them to grow in their intimate relationships and to achieve a more fulfilled sexual life. Pornography is assumed to be the way to sexual liberation, the freedom from puritanic and Christian morality on sex. There is very little awareness of the fact that pornography contributes to particular sexual stereotypes and promotes specific sex roles for men and women. It is to a large extent denied and rejected that pornography shapes people's attitudes to one another, their behaviour and their actions. The hypothesis proposed in this thesis is that pornography widens the discrepancy between vision and reality. Pornography fosters, directly and indirectly, sexual violence and misogyny. It does not lead us to fulfilled intimate relationships but rather destroys wholeness in these relationships.

Summary

In the first section of this chapter I explained that a feminist theological ethic provides key elements of thinking and acting that are of importance in the envisioning and making of a redemptive community. I pointed out that part of feminist ethics is a process of deconstruction and re-construction. Important for the first stage is an analysis of the structural dynamics of race, class and gender. Important for the second stage is the theoretical and practical relevance to issues that concern women. I also emphasised that the theological significance in feminist ethical discussions lies in the possibility of drawing on biblical concepts of good and evil. Of further significance are the challenges churches and theologians have to face about their ethics of sex and their definitions of the role of women.

In section two and three I explained that I understand a redemptive community as a community in which the evils of class, race and gender differences do not exist. The making of a redemptive community is possible through a transformation of attitudes, values and behaviour. This creates a new humanity (section 2) and defines the meaning of 'power' in terms of justice and mutual love (section 3). In section four I developed my vision of a redemptive community based on a theology of relationships. The foundation of this theology is the awareness that human existence is only possible in relation to other individuals, groups and the world around us. The quality of relationships between people and groups defines the quality of life. I suggested an ethic of care and a value system of equality as ways to improve our living together.

Though all this is not yet real in the here and now, ironically there would be no vision if it would already exist. I mentioned in the fifth section our real life is defined by mistrust, carelessness and physical abuse between individuals and groups. In which ways pornography plays a role in promoting and defining human relationships will be examined in the following two chapters.

II. THE MEANING AND IMPACT OF PORNOGRAPHY

Pornography, ... , is a discrete, identifiable system of sexual exploitation that hurts women as a class by creating inequality and abuse. This is a new legal idea, but it is the recognition and naming of an old and cruel injury to a dispossessed and coerced underclass. It is the sound of women's words breaking the longest silence ...

(Dworkin 1992:522).

Introduction

Pornography is a phenomenon that portrays, characterises and promotes the discrepancy between vision and reality. It is seen as one of the scourges of modern society and as a reflection of the general degradation of the social, cultural, and moral environment. Pornography raises questions that surround our ideas of image and imagination, fantasy and reality, relations between the sexes, violence and social interaction. It is seen as a 'delicate subject', or as Arcand puts it, "still badly understood, secret, taboo, extremely private and disturbing, but, at the same time, recognized and hailed as a terrible fundamental and determining phenomenon" (1993:14). Pornography exists, but no one seems to be responsible for it. It is something that we are aware of, but hope everyone will forget about. The following two chapters will explore the way in which pornography widens the gap between the vision of a redemptive community and the reality of human relationships we are living in.

This chapter provides a discussion of various definitions and meanings of the term 'pornography' and suggests a working definition of 'pornography' to be used in this thesis. In section one I will also have a look at the historical development of pornography within the modern Western mind-set, and the understanding of sex and sexuality in traditional African cultures. This will help to understand the controversy that might arise within the South African context. Besides the conservative and the liberal views that define the whole debate on pornography, the feminist perspective on the issue brought in a whole new perspective. Section two will explain in detail how pornography has been defined by feminists.

Bearing in mind the different approaches to, and definitions of pornography, I will concentrate in section three on the debate on pornography in post 1994 South Africa. The focus will be on the legal aspects of pornographic depictions as contained in the new constitution.

1. General definitions of pornography

Definitions of pornography are very diverse and selective, depending on views and interests. The most common definition describes pornography as "the representation of obscene things". However, this definition is generally seen as inadequate, because it could be interpreted as anything "that deliberately offends public decency by evoking shame or unease in those who come into contact with 'things of sexual nature.'" (Arcand 1993:24). Pornography, like beauty, excellence, or humour, seems to belong to an order of issues which one claims to be able to recognize but can never really fully describe. The issue needs to be defined by its effects, its consequences, and its social implications.

Etymologically the word 'pornography' is derived from the Greek word *pórnos* meaning 'nude' or 'naked'. *Pórne* refers to a 'harlot', a 'prostitute' or a 'female captive'. The meaning of *graphé* is a 'writing', a 'document', a 'drawing', a 'letter', a 'depiction', or a 'description of'. Dworkin (1981:200/201) points out that a *pórne* was the cheapest, and least protected of all women, including slaves. In ancient Greece not all prostitutes were considered vile, except the *pórne*. Therefore, according to Dworkin, 'pornography', in its original meaning, is the graphic depiction of women as the lowest, most vile whores. As defined by this writer, pornography refers to writing, etching, or drawing of women who, in real life, were kept in female sexual slavery in ancient Greece (Dworkin 1993:84). In short, pornography was the writing about prostitutes.

Contemporary dictionaries define 'pornography' as "writings, pictures, films etc., designed to stimulate sexual excitement", and as "the production of such material" (Collins Concise Dictionary 1989:890). In the *Encyclopedia on Human Sexuality* 'pornography' is defined in the following way:

Pornography is a commercial product designed to elicit or enhance sexual arousal by the portrayal of sexually explicit images that produce or activate the consumer's sexual fantasies. ... [It] either embodies an intended audience's sexual fantasies as a fictional drama or ... provides an image that serves as a projective stimulus that invites and only partially constrains the sexual fantasies of its audience (Mosher 1994:474).

The three descriptions above indicate that it is very difficult to provide one concise definition of pornography.

As mentioned earlier, discussions about pornography do not only focus on its definition but also on the phenomenon's effects and consequences and one's own perspective. In general, there are three approaches of how pornography is seen and dealt with. The conservative approach argues that pornography is immoral because it exposes the human body. The liberal approach presents pornography as just one more aspect of our ever-expanding human sexuality. And the feminist perspective sees pornography as the ideology of a culture that promotes and condones violence against women. In order to understand the three approaches and their arguments I want to expand a bit on the history of pornography, especially on its ideological mind-set in Western cultures.

Desire, sensuality, eroticism and the depiction of sexual organs and sexual intercourse can be found in many places and throughout all ages. The modern kind of pornography, I focus on, seems to have grown out of Western ideas. Hunt (1996:10ff) emphasises that the term 'pornography' came into widespread use only in the 19th century. But modern pornographic tradition can be traced back to the 16th century in Italy and the 17th and 18th century in France and England. Pornography emerged at the same time as Western modernity. Scholars like Hunt (1996) explain its emergence as something that was not given but "defined over time and by the conflicts between writers, artists and engravers on the one side and spies, policemen, clergymen and state officials on the other. Pornography's political and cultural meanings cannot be separated from its emergence as a category of thinking, representation and regulation" (Hunt 1996:11). Pornography threatened religion, the state and good morals. It was used to express a critique of those three categories. These are issues the conservative approach focuses on.

The emergence of pornography in Europe was related to the development of a modern world view. Some characteristics of modern thinking are personal initiative and enterprise. The modern way of life is human centred, individualistic and secular. As Nürnberger (1997:15) points out, in modernity individuals are encouraged to develop their full potential in every aspect of life. To spend, enjoy and discard are taken to be virtues in modernity. They are taken to be natural and normal. This is often understood as the right to freedom and becomes an issue in debates on pornographic matters. Modern society proclaims that citizens have the freedom of choice. But the individual of today is at the same time a creature invaded and manipulated by Western marketplace values and requirements. This phenomenon is fast becoming a global one with the globalisation of the market economy.

Modern thinking includes libertinism as a mode of thought and action. The liberal approach has its root in this way of thinking. Nature and the senses became a new source of authority. It is important to note that libertinism in the 17th century was "an upper-class male revolt against conventional morality and religious orthodoxy" (Hunt 1996:36). Later, it spread into lower classes. Libertines are said to have been the propagators of and audience for pornography. As freethinkers they were open to sexual experimentation. Important to mention is also that in libertine thinking women's bodies were equally accessible to all men. Since then the community of women has been seen to satisfy male sexual desires. In the period from the 16th to the 18th century, pornography as a structure of literary and visual representation most often offered women's bodies as a focus of male bonding (Hunt 1996:44).

The Enlightenment also emphasised nature as opposed to reason. Sexual appetite and passion were seen as natural and beneficial. Pornography of the 17th and 18th century was naturalist in inspiration but later it turned materialist (Hunt 1996:34). Part of a materialist philosophy is that women be materially and sexually equivalent to men. Differences are excluded and men are seen as the norm. Here lies one reason for the tendency for pornography to move towards thinking in universals. It tries to be independent of time, space, history and even language. In this way it reinforces the false sexual archetypes. It was men who wrote about sex for other male readers. And it was

for men's sexual arousal that they read about women having sex with other women. These aspects are the focus of a feminist critique of pornography.

The modern world was related to the growth of cities and with it a bigger audience of readers. Urbanisation also increased a sense of privatization and the splitting off of sexuality from the rest of life. An urban, capitalist, industrial and middle-class world provides anonymity, whereas in a village community one's actions and behaviour are closely observed. A prerequisite of the development and rise of pornographic material was to a large extent, the market for printed works. There was the desire for readers to buy certain books. This desire was heightened by the efforts of religious and political authorities to regulate, censor and prohibit works. Both, the market and the prohibitions, contributed to the construction of modern pornography. Related to the market economy was the idea of free enterprise. Part of free enterprise was the human being in body and mind itself. Humans became an "object of analysis, manipulation, programming and planning" (Nümberger 1997:6). In line with this is that sex and sexuality became targets for economic exploitation, especially through the mass media and the entertainment industries.

At the end of the 1790s, pornography began to lose its political connotations and became a commercial tool. Now, sexual pleasure was and is its only purpose. Pornography is one of many areas in which the modern elite utilised its power for its own economic advantage. The pornography industry is an investment opportunity with extremely high returns and often fewer risks than most other commercial sectors. It is also closely linked to other industries like tourism, advertising, film etc. Pornography has become a 'popular art'. For the past twenty years, it has tried to depict every possible position, every imaginable combination of partners, every conceivable size and shape of sexual organs, every imaginable combination of animals and humans engaged in sex, etc. It has tried to reach out to a wider audience, to appeal to men and women of all sexual persuasions (Arcand 1993:35). As a marketing strategy pornography has become available in every medium and mode of expression, e.g. in prose and verse, in prints, sculptures and trinkets, in dozens of growing pornographic literary publications, in stage productions, in comic strips, photographs, films, video and audio, tapes, sex telephone

lines, and even on the internet (Arcand 1993:35).

Pornography, as it is found on the market today, is a Western phenomenon which represents Western concepts and values of sex and sexuality. It includes the enhancement of the fascination with the body, especially the female body, for commercial purposes. Any definition of and debate on pornography must take into account the context of its reception. This is a very important element in the discussions on pornography in the South African context. The people of South Africa are confronted with modern pornography embedded in free enterprise system on the one hand and the African traditional understanding of sex and sexuality on the other hand.

Contrary to the Western emphasis on individualism, in most African communities the interests of the community determine the centre of thought and action. In traditional cultures the meaning of sex is first and foremost procreation and not enjoyment. Procreation defines almost all aspects of people's lives. Fertility, for instance, is an important element in traditional religions and is often depicted in the form of figures with huge breasts or big penises (e.g. among the Akan people; the Xhosa fertility and rain goddess). African people are educated and raised according to their gender. During puberty a girl learns what it means to become a woman, wife and mother and a boy learns how to behave as a proper man (Oduyoye 1995). Interestingly, sexual education does not only include the importance of becoming a mother or father one day, but also the aspect of enjoying sexual intercourse. Young people are, for instance, trained how to move or position the bodies when having sex. Besides the emphasis on the meaning of sex as a procreative act, sexual violence and abuse such as rape, incest and unwanted pregnancies do exist in traditional communities. One proof of this is that there are specific terms for these phenomena in the different African languages (Dziva 1998). To prevent the abuse of sex, rules are established and rituals performed in order to control sexual activities.

Whereas modern societies emphasise sexual desire and try to find ways to prevent procreation, traditional communities try to direct the *libido* towards reproduction. In my view, both are extremes, and create conflict. In the South African context, modern

Western culture and traditional African culture meet. In many ways traditional cultures cannot maintain their structures, values and systems. People have been influenced by modernity in all aspects of life including sex and its different meanings. African people, who did not commercialise their naked bodies in the past, have been lured or indirectly forced to get into the Western way of viewing sex, sexuality and human bodies. One might argue that in the new South Africa the consumption as well as the production of pornographic material seems to be accessible only for a certain section of the population, namely urban and middle-class people. But this is only one side of the coin. Due to the extensive influence of the media, pornographic ideas and images spread into every corner of the globe. The media are the main tool of Western neo-colonialism. It is not the task and place here to explore this issue further. But it is important to note that ethical debates related to sex need to start with an analysis of the different cultural concepts concerning sex, sexuality and the importance of human bodies. Only in this way all groups will have a voice and a fair and authentic conclusion can be drawn.

Apart from the differences in the understanding of matters pertaining to sex between modern and traditional views, there are other factors that define today's debates on pornography. The different perspectives on the issue are generally divided into pro- and anti-pornography arguments. Pro-pornography advocates argue for the legalisation of pornography on the basis that it has social benefits. They are of the opinion that the legalisation of pornography would reduce sex crimes, minimize the market for pornography and decrease activities of organised crime, like drug trafficking, the Mafia etc. Their argument is based on the assumption that censorship and prohibitions increase people's desire for and interest in the forbidden. They also assume that each individual is mature in and responsible for making his/her own decisions. Ethicists such as Court (1980) argue, however, that it is evident now that related activities like prostitution and drug peddling are growing at places where pornographic material is sold, such as major cities and harbours. Furthermore, where pornography is legalised, it becomes a self-perpetuating market.

There is further the argument that pornography can be therapeutic, and that it should be available for the lonely or the handicapped for whom it may provide the only available

sexual outlet. Some marriage counsellors argue that pornographic material can enhance marriage relationships which have become dull. The material is said to help overcome problems like frigidity and impotence. Nevertheless, evidence has shown that this sort of therapy requires a carefully structured use of erotica rather than pornographic material. Erotica must be distinguished from pornography, as I will discuss later.

Einsiedel (1992) has shown that pornographic material can be used for sexual dysfunctions in dealing with therapeutic methods of observational learning and information processing. Proponents of pornography argue that such procedures can be successful in changing attitudes and behaviour. It is also argued that pornography can be used for the diagnosis and treatment of sex offenders. As an example, Einsiedel (1992:279) has observed that the indication of arousal patterns might involve the inhibition of inappropriate arousal responses to the photograph of a child, for instance.

Behind pro-pornography campaigns is the ideology of the so-called liberation of sexuality from taboos and repressions. Its critique is directed mainly against conservative Christian teachings about sexuality and marriage. Champions of pornography claim to be able to release people from their prudish traditions. This argument is influenced by a Western European philosophy that emphasises ethical principles as relative and human beings as autonomous in all respects. Therefore moral standards cannot exist; nothing is true and everything is permissible.

Whilst pro-pornography activists say that the freedom to see, hear and express all things is an inalienable right and necessity, for others, it is imperative that our societies need to change and re-think their views about sex, sexuality and the relation to one's body. Investigations into the Western sexual revolution have discovered that what started as an apparent emancipation from constraint led to despair and nihilism (Court 1980:19). Amidst the quest for freedom final values of right and wrong disappear and it becomes impossible to distinguish between good and evil. A critical analysis of pornography and its consequences from a feminist point of view offers some light on the question whether pornography can bring about emancipation in terms of sexuality and self-identity. Feminist perspectives on pornography have brought a lot of changes in the whole

debate. But the issue of pornography has also resulted in conflict within the feminist movement itself. Writing about pornography from a feminist ethical perspective, I now want to explore the feminist debate in more detail.

2. Definitions of pornography within the feminist debate

The economics and politics involved in pornography have given rise to extensive debate on its social and moral implications, and its devastating consequences for the individuals concerned. In the late 1960s the debate about pornography took a new direction. It involved feminists, especially from America and the United Kingdom, who examined pornographic materials from a feminist perspective. This has brought a tremendous change in the way people view and discuss pornography. The arguments are no longer focused on sexual morality and obscenity as was the case in the past, but rather on issues of harm and violence, power relations, male and female images, and sex discrimination. Since then pornography has been discussed as a political, social, economic, and religious issue.

The most famous feminist definition of pornography was given in the early 1980s by MacKinnon and Dworkin. They defined it in the ordinance for the City Council of Minneapolis as follows:

Pornography is a form of discrimination on the basis of sex. (1) Pornography is the sexually explicit subordination of women, graphically depicted, whether in pictures or in words, that also includes one or more of the following:

- (i) women are presented dehumanized as sexual objects, things or commodities; or
- (ii) women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation; or
- (iii) women are presented as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure when being raped; or
- (iv) women are presented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt; or
- (v) women are presented in postures of sexual submission; or (vi) women's body parts - including but not limited to vaginas, breasts, and buttocks are exhibited, such that women are reduced to those parts; or
- (vii) women are presented as whores by nature; or
- (viii) women are presented being penetrated by objects or animals; or
- (ix) women are presented in scenarios of degradation, injury, abasement, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual.

(2) The use of men, children or transsexuals in the place of women in (1) (i-ix) above is pornography for the purposes of ... this statute (Fedler 1996:60 note 6).

This is a very detailed and critical definition of pornography. It refers to what is known as hard core pornography. The explanation was used to formulate legal steps towards censorship of pornography in the United States and in Canada. On the basis of this definition, women could take legal action against its perpetrators. Many other feminists and anti-pornography activists have defined pornography in ways similar to that of MacKinnon and Dworkin.

Fedler (1995:145), a South African anti-pornography activist, points out a number of elements that are required in order to declare an item pornographic. There is the graphic sexual explicitness and the sexualisation of violence, the sexualisation of pain, torture, abuse, brutality, coercion, or the depiction of rape mixed with romance. All these elements include a context of unequal power relations. The purposes of pornographic depictions are sexual arousal, the subordination of women, and the undue exploitation of sex.

Russell, another feminist anti-pornography activist, who has conducted research in South Africa, defines pornography as material that "combines sex and/or the exposure of genitals with abuse or degradation in a manner that appears to endorse, condone, or encourage such behaviour" (1994:287).

McLennan speaks about pornography as pro-rape propaganda. She writes that: "Pornography is the sexually explicit subordination of women, graphically depicted, whether in pictures or in words. Pornography promotes male power and rape through its depiction of the victimisation, dehumanisation, and violation of women as somehow sexy." (1997:4/5).

Along the same lines, Brownmiller argues that "[p]ornography has been so thickly glossed over with the patina of chic these days in the name of verbal freedom and sophistication that important distinctions between freedom of political expression (...), honest sex education for children (...) and ugly smut (...) have been hopelessly

confused" (1980:30). Without mincing words, Brownmiller states that "pornography is the undiluted essence of anti-female propaganda" (1980:30). Robin Morgan has expressed this powerful sentiment in a more tense phrase: "Pornography is the theory and rape is the practice" (cited in Strossen 1996:204).

These feminist definitions of pornography can be interpreted as emerging from a struggle against dehumanisation where pornography is seen as an agent of misogyny (I shall later examine and analyse this perspective on pornography). The definitions above do not provide us with a detailed description of what kind of sexually explicit material one can find on the market. Further, no attempt is made to differentiate between pornographic material and erotic material.

In order to be able to distinguish between different kinds of sexually explicit material, it is useful and necessary to classify it into different categories. As I noted earlier, definitions and demarcations of sexually explicit material are controversial. The categories provided here are my own.

First of all there is *sex education material* which is neutral and contains scientific descriptions of the male and female body and the sexual act. This material as well as that used in counselling and in fine art, is not intended for sexual arousal.

Then is what is called *erotica*. This material depicts non-sexist and non-violent scenes. Erotic images have as their focus the depiction of "mutually pleasurable, sexual expression between people who have enough power to be [involved] by positive choice" (Steinem 1980:37). Erotica portrays positive, affectionate human sexual interaction between consenting individuals participating in a sexual act within a balance of power. The depictions have no sexist or violent connotations and are hinged on equal power dynamics between individuals as well as between the model and the camera or photographer (Stock 1995:80ff).

Steinem (1980; 1983) was the first feminist who pointed out that it is necessary to distinguish pornography from erotica. However, it is extremely difficult to make this

distinction when defining pornography. Both terms, pornography and erotica, refer to verbal or pictorial representations of sexual behaviour. 'Erotica' comes from the Greek root *éros* - sexual desire or passionate love. It contains the idea of love, positive choice, and the yearning for a particular person. It leaves the question of gender open. Erotica includes aspirations of tenderness and wonder. It is sexually suggestive or arousing material that is free of sexism, racism, and homophobia. It is regarded as respectful of all the human beings and animals portrayed in it (Steinem 1980:37; 1983:20ff). Pornography, on the other hand, humiliates and degrades as it denies human dignity and emphasises the outrageous and the obscene. Pornography can be divided into two categories; non-violent and violent pornography.

Non-violent pornography, also known as 'soft porn', contains sexist and dehumanizing depictions. This type of pornography is degrading and dehumanizing because men and women are verbally abused or portrayed as having animal characteristics. Women, in particular are often shown as lacking any human character or identity, and are depicted as mere sexual play-things. The images portrayed have no explicit violent content but may imply acts of submission or violence by the positioning of the models, for instance the male is standing and the female kneeling. It may include the subtle use of props such as guns, whips, and chains. The images may also imply unequal power relationships through the use of clothing, for instance the male is fully dressed, while the female is naked, or the dressing of adult models so that they look like children, or a model is dressed in clothing that suggests violence. Furthermore, the positioning of characters also plays a role, for instance standing behind bars, in positions of vulnerability, or by setting up the viewer as a voyeur. Non-violent, degrading and dehumanizing pornography emphasises male dominance (asymmetric power relations) and depicts women as actively and assertively pursuing sexual gratification (Stock 1995:85).

Violent Pornography or 'hard-core porn' contains the depiction of the overt infliction of pain and use of force, or the threat of either. The images portray explicit violence of varying degrees perpetrated by one individual against another such as hair pulling, slapping, and whipping. This category also includes images that portray self-abuse, self-

mutilation and despair. Included in this category are images in which no actual violence occurs, but the model is bruised, has a black eye and welts, and thus, appears to be suffering from the aftermath of abuse (Senn 1993:181). The aim of hard-core porn is to create a state of increasing sexual arousal in the consumer by portraying sexual relations in which all standards are violated and the primary emotion involved is lust.

For the purpose of this thesis, I will include in my definition of pornography, both the violent and non-violent categories which are sexist and dehumanizing. Pornography is seen as a commercial product with the purpose of sexual stimulation combined with the encouragement of physically and psychologically abusive and degrading behaviour. Thus, pornography is understood as having serious consequences; hence it cannot only be described by its content but must be judged by its effects, consequences and social implications.

On the other hand, the term erotica will be used in this thesis to describe sexually explicit material that depicts non-sexist, non-racist and non-violent scenes. Erotica portray positive, affectionate human sexual interaction between consenting individuals. It is generally agreed that erotica can provide sexual stimulation and encourage caring and constructive behaviour.

One can speak about a split between a pro- and an anti-pornography league, certainly in Western Europe and the United States. Because the issue of pornography is closely linked to censorship (I will explore this later), one can also speak of the pro- and the anti-censorship feminist position. The pro-censorship feminist position rests upon traditional, stereotypical views disapproving of sex and denying women's sexuality. Pro-censorship feminists are seen as being anti-sex, whereas anti-censorship groups are seen as pro-sex (Strossen 1996:110).

On the one hand, pro-pornography activists, like Strossen argue that history has shown that the suppression of women's sexuality goes hand in hand with the suppression of women's equality. For her, one of the positive things pornography does for women, is the expression of their sexuality in all forms. Strossen (1996) further argues that freedom

of sexually oriented expression is integrally connected with women's freedom. "The fact that many women find much that excites or otherwise pleases them in commercial erotica is indicated by their large and growing share of the burgeoning market for such imagery" (Strossen 1996:144). Strossen also argues that many women who perform in the industry affirm that they do it voluntarily. She criticises anti-pornography women for being out of touch with women who are in the industry. Sex workers have accused feminists of misinterpretations, wrong images and for raising their voice for others. This debate is crucial as it raises the question in the women's movement about who ought to be allowed to speak on behalf of women who are directly involved in the industry? It also challenges the power dynamics among women. Many feminist activists, for instance belong to the middle and upper class. They might interpret sex work as sexual slavery, whereas many sex workers themselves might see it as strategies of survival or even forms of resistance against their status in society. Strossen (1996) points out that the sex industry in Western societies has started to develop its own laws, customs, and workers' solidarity. But it needs to be noted that this formation is available only for independent sex workers with particular positions within the industry. Foreign women, youth and many street sex workers are not able to benefit from these policies.

It is not clear what kind of pornography Strossen is talking about. In her writings she uses the terms 'pornography' and 'erotica' interchangeably and does not provide a definition of either. If she is referring to soft and hard porn (the non-violent and violent kind of sexually explicit material), one has to ask, whether this material represents or constructs sexual feelings and identities of women. In my view, Strossen also does not indicate the way in which pornography empowers women to take control of their sexual and reproductive rights. She does, however, argue against censorship of pornography because the government has no right to interfere in people's views, and especially not in the rights and interests of women. This is particularly important because it is mainly men who are part of the legal decision making processes. However, Strossen does not pay adequate attention to the distinction between anti-obscenity laws that seek to suppress sexual expression and anti-pornography laws that confront sexist expressions.

On the other hand the anti-pornography position raises a number of interesting and significant issues against pornography. During the 1970s a suspicion grew that there might be a link between pornography and criminal sexual behaviour. The question arose as to whether the growth in pornography paralleled a growth in the rate of sex crimes, or whether the opposite was true where an increase in the consumption of pornography lowered the crime rate.

Some scholars who dealt with this matter have concluded that violent pornography tends to modify men's attitudes to the point of making them more tolerant when confronted by rape and more aggressive toward women (Arcand 1993:67; Court 1980:38ff). It is claimed that repeated exposure to pornography leads to a familiarity that gives a certain legitimacy to sexual violence, and creates the impression of being normal, acceptable, or natural, and therefore unchangeable. In this regard, Einsiedel (1992:282/283) has shown that sexually explicit material, that are designed to arouse. This is true for offenders of sexual violence as well as to non-offenders. She has found out that rapists appear to be aroused by forced sex as well as consenting sex depictions and that non-offenders are less aroused by depictions of sexual aggression. But, when these portrayals show the victim as 'enjoying' the rape, these portrayals similarly elicit high arousal levels. Einsiedel's research shows that arousal due to rape depictions is linked to attitudes of acceptance of rape myths and sexual violence, and both likewise correlate with aggressive behaviour. Research shows (Senn 1993; Check 1995; Einsiedel 1992; Russell 1980) that depictions of sexual violence also increase the likelihood that rape myths are accepted and sexual violence toward women condoned. This relates to aggression toward women, and this in return correlates with self-reported sexually aggressive behaviour.

It is important to note that there is a difference in how women and men react to the exposure of sexually explicit material. Men report to have more exposure to pornography in everyday life and more subjective sexual arousal than women (Russell 1980:220; 1994:291). The average heterosexual man reports predominantly positive emotions, usually interest and enjoyment, whereas the average heterosexual woman reports mixed emotions, a combination of interest and disgust at the exposure to the same

pornographic material. According to Stock (1995:80ff) research findings indicate that women are not sexually aroused by representations of rape. They do not enjoy depictions that include the victim's pain and suffering. However, it has been noted that the indirect depiction of violence in non-violent pornography can increase the acceptance of the rape myth, even by women. It is important to point out that degrading depictions of women are more common than violent depictions.

From these passages one can see that pornography is designed mainly for the gratification of males. Male arousal might result in subliminal conditioning and cognitive changes in the consumer by associating physical pleasure with violence (Russell 1994:291ff). It has even more pronounced effects when the victim is depicted as enjoying the use of force and violence. Therefore, even sexual aggression depicted with negative intentions may have harmful effects because of the sexual arousal induced by the explicitness of the depiction (Russell 1994:295). It has also been shown in research that consumers of pornography graduate from less violent and dehumanizing material to more violent and more degrading materials. This may be so because "familiar material becomes unexciting as a result of habituation" (Russell 1994:310).

Contrary to these arguments other people (Strossen 1996) argue that by the time most adults arrive at the age at which the consumption of pornography is legal, the sexual orientation, tastes, and even the sexual fantasies have already been determined and pornography will not change them very much. This argument seems to assume that children are not exposed to sexually explicit material and are not shaped by a pornographic understanding of sex. At this stage it must also be said that the laws of social learning apply to all mass media, including pornographic depictions. Males can learn how to rape, beat, sexually abuse and degrade females regardless of their age, colour, class or religious background through pornographic material.

To further support the anti-pornography position, I want to mention here that from a psychological point of view it is evident that non-violent and violent sexist and dehumanizing pornography denies the need for human relationships and emphasises isolated sensual feelings. Court highlights that pornography appeals to

those whose sexual maturing process has been thwarted or distorted. Moreover, for those who have failed to mature and cannot see what sexuality could be, the idea of sex-in-relationship produces anger and frustration. This colours their sexual fantasies such that a wish to hurt and be hurt becomes a common theme (1980:64).

Related to this is the perception that pornography consumed in one's private sphere - which in most cases is the bed - provides inner peace and satisfaction. Thus, the emphasis on the individual's needs and interests suggests that the latter can enjoy sexual satisfaction without any other person. Pornography pretends to describe ways of sex that are, or can become, part of our lives. The truth is that these descriptions are mainly exaggerated fantasies. The biggest deception of pornography lies in the fact that it promises sex whereas it provides only a stimulus for masturbation which is a minimal form of sex. It further uses exaggerations to make the consumer more fascinated and attracted. Most of all it pretends that sex is easily dissociated from the rest of human experience (Arcand 1993:176ff).

All these issues need to be considered, for instance, when a government has to decide on the legal aspect of the consumption and production of pornography. How and whether this has happened in the debate about the issue in the new South Africa, will be discussed in the next section.

3. Pornography in the context of the post 1994 South Africa

Both producers and consumers of pornography have argued that because there is no consensus on how to define pornography, it should not be subject to legal restraints. This perspective is too simplistic, as it seems to deny any consequences of the production and the consumption of pornography. It further avoids moral responsibility and accountability for the phenomenon as such.

From a legal point of view a definition of pornography is left to the state. Most governments do not seem to be particularly worried about pornography. They treat it as a marginal phenomenon without much consequence, or alternatively as a chance to gain more political power without much risk. However, at the moment there are indications

that people are concerned and are putting pressure on governments to take a stand in the debates concerning sexually explicit materials. In the recent history of South Africa the stand towards pornography has changed.

In the past the debate on pornography in South Africa was based on a conservative view and a Calvinist understanding of sex and morality. As mentioned earlier, conservatives argue that sex and nudity in themselves are sinful, dirty and immoral. Therefore they should not be exposed in public. Concerning the censorship of pornographic material, the old South African government was no different from most other leaders of African countries. Many spoke and still do of 'an undesirable and immoral Western import'. Their arguments are based on the African traditional way of understanding sex and sexuality, on the rejection of Western influences or religious views. One might expect the new South African government to argue in the same direction because most of its leaders are black Africans. But the censorship on pornographic material has been lifted. What might the reasons behind that be?

Russell offers the following comments:

It is understandable (sic!) that South Africans who have fought for democracy against an authoritarian racist government for so long would be tempted to support whatever this government has opposed, including pornography. But just because it is understandable does not make it right. On the contrary, it is vital that progressive South Africans educate themselves about the impact of pornography rather than mindlessly embracing this material because Western nations have done so or because the Nationalist government has suppressed it for so long. It is also important that more black South Africans express their views on the subject before their younger generation gets hooked on this pernicious white Western form of sexism and, in some cases racism (1994:341/342).

In this discussion, two concerns are of importance. On the one hand, there is the strong argument for freedom of expression which is one of the priorities of building a new South Africa. On the other hand, the expression of pornography clashes with justice and the right of individuals to be free from the dehumanising nature of pornography.

Freedom of expression in a democracy is based on the assumption that every citizen is free to choose whatever he or she likes. In the case of pornography, however, it can be said that the tastes of a small minority have progressively influenced a whole culture.

Although it is said that one does not need to read it or watch it if one does not want to, violence and sex fill the media, despite the fact that this material does not reflect the choice of the average adult. Barry emphasises this point as follows:

In the liberal and patriarchal state's production of pornography, speech has been made into the defining feature of freedom because liberal individualism ... reduces freedom to that which services markets. The liberal ideology creates a public psychology that serves individuals and individual rights (1995:318).

The South African Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) tried to consider both sides - those who want to consume pornographic material and those who confront it (Duncan 1996). The debate is generated because it seems that two human rights are in conflict with one another: the freedom to convey information of whatever content and the conflicting right not to be a victim of dehumanisation and prejudice. One right has to be subordinate to the other. I am of the view that the right to be free from discrimination should be preferred to the free speech principle.

Earlier sections of this chapter explained that pornography is more than just speech. It says something, but it is designed specifically to elicit a physical response. Whereas freedom is a precious value, I think it is time to challenge the assumption that we should have freedom to seek individual gain without any moral responsibility for the resulting consequences. Freedom of speech always sounds splendid, but in reality it is precious only if it is used with moral responsibility. The rights of individuals to pursue their own interests, including sexual gratification, is accepted as the norm, especially in the Western world. However, this sexual freedom is not considered in relation to sexual justice. The question is whether the separate and single rights of individuals, for example to produce and view pornography, are not in conflict with the broader interests of society. Is it really in a society's interest to allow for the proliferation of pornography if, as many clearly agree (Barry 1995; Cowan 1995; Duncan 1995), it is a degradation of the female population? Pornography, it can be argued, is in direct contradiction to the rights of women to be treated as equals.

One of the reasons why freedom of speech is so important is that truth is most likely to emerge from a 'marketplace of ideas'. But most pornography makes no contribution to political, intellectual and social debates. I have already noted that pornography does not

only consist of ideas and fantasies, but also of acts and words that abuse women and children and some men. Pornography can actually be seen as hate speech or commercial speech which silences women by promoting sexism and violence against them. As Fedler (1995:145) argues, it is important to recognise pornography as a political issue impacting on gender inequality. It seems that the only value pornography has in a democratic society is the value of individual autonomy, of not allowing the government to dictate to people what is allowed to be seen, heard or read. But the value of privacy also needs to be contextualised within the social reality that the home is often the most violent place for women.

Governments have to consider questions of harm when debating the issue of pornography. Harm to women is a form of dehumanisation based on sex. When evaluating consequences of harm which result from pornography the following questions are useful: What are the messages conveyed to viewers? How dangerous, traumatic, humiliating, painful or unpleasant is the treatment depicted? Are males and females portrayed with different levels of dignity? If so, why?

Anti-pornography activists have developed and demonstrated ways of how to prevent sexual exploitation. This also includes the issue of pornography. The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, which is working with UNESCO, states in its Convention Against Sexual Exploitation that "sexual exploitation" is:

a practice by which person(s) achieve sexual gratification or financial gain or advancement through the abuse of a person's sexuality by abrogating that person's human right to dignity, equality, autonomy, and physical and mental well-being (Barry 1995:320).

This convention declares that it is a fundamental human right to be free from sexual exploitation in all its forms. These include battering, *pornography*, prostitution, genital mutilation, female seclusion, dowry and bride price, forced sterilization and child-bearing, sexual harassment, rape, incest, sexual abuse, and trafficking in women (Barry 1995:320). As Russell (1994:342) pointed out, South Africans must educate themselves about these issues and analyse and critique them from various angles.

Other rights ambiguous to pornography are the rights to dignity, to freedom, to security, to freedom from servitude and the right of children not to be subject to neglect or abuse through pornography. The right to freedom and security in this case includes the provision that "no person shall be subject to torture of any kind, whether physical, mental or emotional, nor shall any person be subject to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" (Fedler 1995:149).

What options does the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) offer in view of the questions of freedom in sexual expression and the right to dignity and security? From the start, the debate about pornography in South Africa was related to the discussion on the democratic right of freedom of speech. Before the 1994 elections the South African government censored sexually explicit material. Section 47.2(a) of the Publication Act of 1974 states:

For the purposes of this act any publication, object, film, public entertainment or intended public entertainment shall be deemed to be undesirable if any part of it ... is indecent or obscene or is offensive or harmful to public morals (Loots 1996:86).

This implied a common understanding of what can be called indecent, obscene, or offensive and an understanding of what constitutes moral practice.

The new government leaders decided to lift all restrictions on the pornography industry. Protection of the freedom of expression and the right to privacy implied the end of censorship. The Constitutional Court held that section 2 (1) of the Indecent or Obscene Photographic Matter Act (37 of 1967) was inconsistent with the Constitution based on the right to privacy (Smith 1997:292). Since the 1st of June 1998 a new Publications Act has been introduced (see draft of the Bill in Duncan 1996:194-218). This Act does not allow child pornography but is open to other forms of pornography. The new Publications Act (Duncan 1996) prohibits depictions of bestiality and actual bestiality on the grounds that human dignity must be protected. The Act provides a definition of 'degrade' in section 1 referring to the wording of clause 16.2c (Act 108 of 1996) of the Constitution. The phrase is formulated in such a way that it leaves it open for different interpretations.

The South African Bill of Rights (chapter 2 Act 108 of 1996) does not include a particular section on sexually explicit material. Since then, producers and consumers of pornographic material have started to enjoy their freedom of speech and their right to privacy. Clause 14 of the Bill of Rights states that, "[e]veryone has the right to privacy, which includes the right not to have - a. their person or home searched, b. their property searched, c. their possessions seized; or d. the privacy of communication infringed" (Act 108 of 1996 ch. 2, clause 14). Clause 15 also makes specific reference to freedom of the press and other media. The producers of sexually explicit material could justify the individual right to own, read, and view pornography as it is a private act and thus protected by the Bill of Rights.

The focus on the harm that pornography inflicts on women has not produced consensus amongst constitutional lawyers that are determined to uphold both liberty and equality. Clause 9, the equality clause, states in sub-section 9.3 that "[t]he state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, *gender*, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth" [own emphasis] (Act 108 of 1996: ch.2, clause 9.3). As Loots (1996:86ff) points out, it could be argued here that pornography does not express equality. Women are represented as objects for male sexual gratification and male ownership. This is a status which unfairly discriminates against the individual on the grounds of gender. Furthermore, clause 10 is about the Right to Human Dignity. This clause says that "Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected" (Act 108 of 1996: ch. 2, clause 10). Pornography does not respect the bodily dignity of humans, especially of women, and thus infringes on women's rights to be full and equal citizens, both legally and politically. Another clause that may be used to argue against pornography using the Bill of Rights is clause 16, subsection 16.2c. This clause emphasises that the rights of freedom of speech and expression do not extend to the "advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, *gender* or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm" [own emphasis] (Act 108 of 1996 ch. 2, clause 16.2c). I think it is important to see pornography as propaganda, as a form of hate speech, which significantly contributes to the subordination of women in society. As pornography undermines women's equality

rights in several ways, it should not enjoy protection under a constitution which entrenches the right to equality. Smith boldly points out that "[i]f the Constitution says that a certain type of expression is not protected then we know we can ban it without fear of constitutional challenge" (1997:302/303).

Since the beginning of democracy in South Africa the production and consumption of pornographic material has been growing in leaps and bounds. Adverts on street light poles saying where pornographic magazines, sex toys and XXX-videos are sold have doubled. In most supermarkets and adult gift shops magazines such as *Penthouse* and *Playboy* are in stock at all times and the huge breasted naked cover 'girl' always catches the eye of both men and women, and both young and old. Russell (1994:327) critically comments that the publication of these magazines in South Africa can be seen as a form of neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism. As explored earlier, the drive for profit and the influence of the Western life style seems to ignore the complex situation of South Africa's different cultures and religions.

Russell, for instance found in some of her research that black students at the universities in South Africa stated that "one of the most difficult things about coming to res [residence] was their exposure to blue movies, which they had never seen before" (1994:325). Russell asks whether it could be that a small minority of white South African males seek to impose their desire for access to more hard-core pornography on the majority of South Africans (women from all ethnic groups and African men) who are not interested in this material. Russell (1994:326) argues that because pornography has harmful effects, this would indeed be a tragic occurrence because disinterested men can be socialized into becoming interested in it.

Generally, there are mixed feelings about pornography among South Africans. Sporadic action has been taken to prevent its spread in public. South Africa's Central News Agency (CNA), for instance, has announced a code of conduct regarding pornography publications. It will sell certain types of 'soft porn' and not 'hard porn'. The Central News Agency also insists that certain measures should be taken so that these publications are not available to children and to those people who are affronted by this material.

This was done only after some of its customers had protested against the sale of pornographic material in CNA shops.

Very little research has been done in South Africa analysing the effects of pornography. Especially from a black South African perspective, no statements regarding pornography seem to have come forth. Furthermore, little has been written about the link between the consumption and public exposure of pornographic material and sexual violence in South Africa. Interestingly, it has been demonstrated by Court some years ago, while pornography had not been legalised, that in "Australia, Britain, *South Africa*, and Singapore, pornography has had the direct and demonstrable effect of significantly increasing the number of rapes" [own emphasis] (cited in Arcand 1993:65 footnote 9). Although South Africa is the country in the world which has the highest rate of rapes, pornography is not seen as one of the factors that encourage and construct sexually violent behaviour. According to Russell, "[s]ome people have argued that because the rates of sexual violence against women in South Africa are among the highest in the world, pornography cannot possibly make it worse" (1994:337). For South Africa the challenges concerning pornography and its impact will remain. Though a decision has been made and pornography got its place on the South African market, the debate has to go on.

Summary

The discussions provided in this chapter centred around a definition of pornography. In the first section it was pointed out that pornography in today's form is a commercial product designed for sexual arousal. Pornography grew out of the modern Western understanding of life. Its emergence was influenced by an emphasis on individualism and secularism, libertinism and the Enlightenment, as well as free enterprise and urbanisation. It was also pointed out that in the South African context a modern and a traditional African understanding of sex and sexuality come together and need to be explored when discussing matters related to sex.

I further mentioned that definitions on pornography are divided into pro- and anti-pornography arguments. I discussed, in detail, the feminist debate which brought in a whole new perspective on pornography. Its focus has been on harm and violence, power relations, and male and female images depicted in pornography. Pornography has become a political, social, economic and religious issue. I also mentioned that the feminist debate is divided in itself into pro- and anti-porn activists. The division is linked to censorship, questions around the freedom of choice and the link between pornography and sexual violence. My own definition of the term 'pornography' focuses on feminist perspectives. I have distinguished between sex education material, erotica, non-violent and violent pornography.

In the third section of this chapter I discussed the South African situation regarding pornography since 1994. Almost all restrictions concerning the consummation and production of pornographic material have been lifted. According to the new constitution of South Africa two issues are in conflict. On the one hand the right of freedom of expression is very important, and on the other hand the right to be free from dehumanisation is a significant value. I showed that the South African constitution provides ways to confront matters surrounding pornography. But generally it seems that discussions on the issue have not considered enough some of the feminist arguments of harm, dehumanisation, sexism and racism. The whole aspect of cultural and religious differences in the understanding of sex and sexuality also seem to have been left out in deciding on the matter.

Pornography is a very ^{diverse} subject. The phenomenon as such, as well as its consequences, need to be examined from various angles. It is only through a critical study of pornography and its effects that one can take thorough and mature decisions about it for the benefit of our societies and future generations. In order to go deeper into the issue I will continue now to examine what exactly is depicted in pornographic material, what messages are included in the pictures and in pornographic texts.

III. WOMEN CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF MEN IN PORNOGRAPHY? A FEMINIST ETHICAL DE-CONSTRUCTION

As pornographers defended their *expression* and the decency contingent fought for *repression*, women began to notice that whichever side won the day, it would spell *oppression* for us (Cole 1995:13).

Introduction

What else contributes to the existence of pornography? In order to find an answer to this question, I turn now to an examination of the economic, social and cultural context in which pornography can boom. This will be done in the first section of this chapter. In the second section I am going to examine the content of pornographic material. This section is based on the hypothesis that pornography is an agent of misogyny. Therefore I concentrate on the wider messages pornography propagates besides sexual stimulation. In section three I am going to explore whether the hypothesis of section two is correct or not. For this I have chosen to examine a pornographic magazine.

1. Male power and female powerlessness: the context of pornography

A feminist ethical analysis of pornographic material understands and interprets pornography *from its social, cultural, and economic context*. Feminist research related to pornography emphasises the need for de-construction of these elements. Such a process includes an analysis of the particular elements as well as the link between them, in order to get a complex and realistic picture of the entire phenomenon. In this way, the economic benefits of pornography, for instance, are closely related to the social status of the owners of pornographic magazines. A key aspect of a de-construction process is the power dynamics and their consequences. To discuss pornography without analysing the power relations within which the debate is situated, would be a self-defeating exercise (Fetller 1995:144). Furthermore, such a debate must include an analysis of race, class and gender inequality.

A lot of research has been done in order to examine the physical and emotional violence and abuse related to pornography (Dworkin 1980; 1995; Lederer 1980). There is, on the one hand, the coercion and brutality that is involved in the production of pornographic material. On the other hand there is the violence against women that results from the consumption of the material. Research that concentrates on physical and emotional violence in relation to pornography draws on data of first hand experiences of women such as life stories, and on various tools and methods from the social sciences.

Although the one cannot be separated from the other, in this chapter I want to concentrate on the structural violence in and behind the phenomenon of pornography. A focus on the structural violence points to the wider role pornography plays in shaping people's attitudes, behaviour and actions. One important structural element that needs to be examined is the economic aspects that make the production of pornography possible. A de-construction process in view of the economic factors within the pornographic industry explores issues such as: Who is involved in the production of pornographic material? Who owns the multi-national magazines? Who are the models used in pornography and what is their socio-economic background? Who consumes pornographic material? These questions give us an idea of the economic power relations and the interests within the field.

Researchers have found that many women who are models in the pornography industry are poor, were sexually abused as children, and/or seem to have reached the end of societies' options (Fedler 1996:50ff). Pro-pornography advocates and some models point out that many women in the industry say they made a free choice and like their job. But from a feminist anti-pornography point of view this does not mean that women who choose to go into the industry are not coerced. The emphasis of feminists on the life experiences of the women concerned is in this regard of enormous importance. One has to ask constantly, 'who is speaking'? This means that a discussion in this matter relates to 'positionality', i.e. the source of knowledge is experience depending on one's gender, status in society, educational level etc. (Fedler 1996:50ff). Consensus among feminists who have dealt with the economic aspects within the pornography industry, is that the power of pornographers is generally based on the political and economic power of men

over women. This leads to another structural element feminist research focuses on, namely the social aspects that determine the production of pornographic depictions.

The social statuses of men and women in our societies create structures that promote the existence of pornography. From a feminist point of view, Lebacqz (1994:247f) has pointed out that an analysis of the power of men in a patriarchal and sexist culture is relevant for determining an appropriate sexual ethic for men and women. It is important to take seriously the power that is attached to a man simply because he is a man. The power of a man needs to be seen as the power that he has as representative of other men, as representative of the politics of dominance and submission, and as representative of the threat of violence in women's lives. An adequate sexual ethic, especially for heterosexuals, must be informed by a recognition of the representative nature of men and women (Lebacqz 1994:251). The imbalance of power between men and women is further expressed in the form of the social subordination of women. Women experience hierarchy socially and sexually, publicly and privately as integrated in a society in which they are held to be inferior. The subordination of women is one of the major purposes in pornographic depictions. In what ways this is done and how this defines women's social role will be explored in detail in the section about pornography as an agent for misogyny. Bearing in mind the social statuses of men and women one can conclude that pornographic depictions are the representations of the social relationship between the genders.

Besides the economic and social elements that define the existence of pornography, there is the question of what kind of culture it is that creates an environment for pornography. Culture is understood here as based in a society's world view and its understanding of the meaning of life. It is the expression of ideas and opinions circulated in a society. Attitudes, rules of behaviour and living grow out of these. The meaning of 'culture' certainly includes various other aspects, but what is important at this stage is the question of the ideological framework in which pornography can boom. I argue here that pornography is only possible in a patriarchal culture in which men suppress the ideas and opinions of women. Kappler explains it by saying that "[t]he instrument of suppression lies in the control of access to the means of production, the market, and the

'ideological state apparatuses' where ideas and opinions are produced as public and disseminated in society, i.e. published, publicized and broadcast" (1992:92).

Another important aspect related to a de-construction process is the power dynamics that are connected to the issue of racism in pornography. This element is of particular significance for the South African context where pornography might be used to continue and maintain racist ideas. So far mainly Afro-American scholars (Walker 1980, 1982; Gardner 1980) have debated this issue from an Afrocentric feminist/womanist perspective. One important aspect touched by Gardner, for instance, is that the "Black [sic!] man, like the white man, is buying pornography. He is beating, raping, and murdering all kinds of women. Black women are going to have to deal with him on this. But when we do, we must deal with the Black [sic!] man as a Black man, not as a white [sic!] man. In this country [U.S.A.] it is the *white* [sic!] man who is producing pornography, and it is the *white* [sic!] man who is profiting from it" (1980:113). Gardner brings in the questions of the economic benefits of the production of pornography. The majority of black people in the States as well as in South Africa live under different socio-economic circumstances than their white counterparts. These circumstances need to be examined, especially in relation with racism. Therefore, in the South African context, one has to ask, who profits from pornography on the market? Who imports international pornographic magazines from overseas? The economic power in South Africa lies still in white hands. The profit that is made through pornography in South Africa will certainly not end up in *masakhane* projects.

Related to racism and cultural differences is the colonization in terms of sex and sexuality. Gardner says, "That is what several Black women I have talked to think. Pornography speaks to the relationship *white* men and women have always had with each other. Because they have been forced to live under the values of white people, the identity of Afro-Americans has been distorted and belittled to the point where pornography also speaks in part to our relationships" (1980:112). This is a very important issue that needs to be thoroughly investigated in the South African communities as well. As I mentioned earlier, the cultural differences around sex and sexuality have to be considered, analysed and discussed. Some of the questions that

need to be asked are: What do black South Africans think about pornography? In which ways does pornography shape their sexual life compared with traditional values, norms and rules about sex and sexuality? Many young black South Africans are influenced through the media to conform to Western values, norms and forms of behaviour. Consciously or unconsciously they become 'Westernised'. The Western understanding of sex and sexuality is not only part of this process but one of the major focus, certainly for the media.

To examine the context in which pornography can 'grow' is an important step in understanding the phenomenon more fully. The context determines to a very large extent the content of pornography. But the ideas of pornography go beyond present economic, social and cultural conditions. They contain a programme for the future which can be called the propagation of misogyny.

2. Pornography as an agent for misogyny

When one thinks about women's ordinary lives, it is very hard not to think that one is looking at evil. The hurt is not exceptional, but it is systematic and real. Many cultures and communities accept the subordination of women. They defend it and often punish and ridicule people for resisting or trying to change it. Pornography plays a big part in 'normalizing' the ways in which women are demeaned and attacked. It contributes to a culture of humiliating and insulting women.

Pornography is an agent for misogyny in the sense that it embodies an ideology of biological superiority. It expresses that ideology and enacts it in such a way that people believe it to be true. 'Misogyny' means literally 'woman-hating'. It includes attitudes, behaviour and actions towards women that are supposed to dehumanise, humiliate, and discriminate women. There is massive evidence (Cooper-White 1995; LaBelle 1980; Dworkin 1980; Filter 1998) that pornography is not only a symptom of misogyny but an active agent in generating woman-hating acts. Pornography is the "propaganda of misogyny" (LaBelle 1980). It supports the ideology that women exist solely for the sexual gratification of men. Such dehumanizing ideas about women are so widely accepted that

pornography is often not recognized as propaganda designed to exploit and misrepresent the sexual differences between men and women.

Propaganda can be understood as "psychological manipulation of the public by powerful, often invisible elites for the purpose of the furthering of a particular ideology" (LaBelle 1980:174). According to LaBelle (1980:175ff) there are eight techniques which are universally employed in propaganda campaigns. There is the use of stereotypes, for instance. Men and women are represented as diametrical opposites, as different species. Women are portrayed in pornographic depictions as carnal, submissive, promiscuous, whore-victims. Pornography refers to the portrayal of human beings as de-personalized sexual things, as sex-objects, not as multi-faceted human beings. The objectification of women means that women are not seen as human beings but as objects. Court explains this by saying, that

We may observe this, even in "girlie" magazines, in which the titillating way the girl is discussed, and her photographic exploitation as an object, destroy her personal unique qualities. This is the objection to the use of nudity in advertisements, too. It makes woman into a commodity thing. In all pornography she is humiliated and subjected to contempt as a mere sex object. In her image, humanity itself is degraded, by being deprived of value and subjected to hate (1980:65).

The objectification of women in pornography demonstrates male power - the power to control and overrule. This is the element that makes pornography sexy in the sense that it stimulates men. The problem with objectifying men for the consumption of women is that it is not sexually arousing. The attractiveness of men is based upon their power and status in society. Objectification removes that power and status (Jeffreys 1990:465). Pornography is not egalitarian and gender-free but predicated upon the inequality of women. It is the propaganda that makes this inequality sexually arousing. For women to find passive, objectified men sexually arousing in large enough numbers to make a pornography industry based upon such images viable, would require the reconstruction of women's sexuality into a ruling-class sexuality. In an egalitarian society objectification would not exist and therefore the particular buzz provided by pornography, the excitement of eroticized dominance for powerful, would be unimaginable (Jeffreys 1990:465).

The stereotypes and objectification of women is most obvious in public images. Most of these images I consider as pornographic in the sense that they depict women as sex objects. It might be tempting to put objectification of women through media images on a scale of increasing harmfulness and not interpret it as violence against women. This is true in the sense that "no woman is as damaged by seeing a billboard of a woman in a stereotypically sexy pose as she would be by being gang-raped or murdered" (Cooper-White 1995:44). But it is necessary to consider the deepest root causes of violence against women. Every specific form of violence, whether in picture or in acts, supports and maintains the systemic perpetuation of all forms of violence against women. Public media images of women provide the text for all other forms of violence. Public images of women in the stereotypical forms of Barbie dolls, in adverts, as emblems or as mascots instruct both men and women on what a 'real' woman should be like. Women are seen as every-woman, as objects of the same character.

Objectification goes hand in hand with depersonalization. Women's personalities are taken away. They are not recognized as subjects that deserve dignity and have the same rights like men. The situation of a dehumanized or depersonalised 'being' is characterised by obedience and compliance. That 'being' is expected to be submissive, and submission in such cases is usually necessary for survival. This is what happens to the majority of women in our societies. As Lebacqz (1994:247) pointed out, in this way men are expected to disregard women's protest and overcome their resistance. When a man 'overpowers' a woman, for instance, does it mean that he is raping her, or is he simply a man in both his eyes and hers? Women are accustomed to male power because it surrounds them. However, with regard to pornography, the point is not simply that men have power, rather, that male power has become eroticized.

In order to dehumanise and depersonalise women, pornography uses the technique of naming or substitution (LaBelle 1980:176). Pejorative terms are used to create a biased reaction to the victimized group and to allow people to remove the victimized group from the category of 'human being' and place them in a sub-human category.

On the one hand pornography describes women and women's sexuality in pejorative terms, like 'pet', 'chick' or 'bunny'. On the other hand the idealized *Playboy* man is described as the so-called 'winner' male, as Lederer (1980:121ff) puts it.

For pornography to work as propaganda it selects its facts (LaBelle 1980:176). Only certain details are presented to the public. Pornographers, for instance, present only one version of women's sexuality to their readers and viewers, namely the portrayal of women as sexually subservient to men. They also exclusively report only the supposedly 'good' effects of pornography and nothing about the possible adverse consequences that unrestrained access to such material may engender. In this way pornography is based to a very large extent on lies and repetitions (LaBelle 1980:176). Although pornography has been noted as one of the most boringly repetitious types of media, repetitions help the public to become accustomed to whatever ideas the propagandist is attempting to inculcate. The messages are also not subject to a reality check. They bid people to imagine their own experience according to the images promoted in the medium. Critical reflection is suspended and substituted by a plethora of sexual choices like body shapes, settings, participants, contexts, ages, moods etc.

In pornography there is also the assumption of freedom of expression that makes the propaganda work. The use of mass media in propaganda is paired with political organizing and strategic alliances. It has been noted that one of the most effective propaganda techniques pornographers have developed is their alliance with anti-censorship organisations and civil libertarians (LaBelle 1980:177/178). For example, in the case of America, Lederer (1995:135ff) has pointed out that through this coalition pornographers have successfully shifted the debate over their product from one of sexual exploitation and abuse to one of free speech. Under the auspices of free speech pornography perpetrates misogyny and a philosophy of male supremacy. There is further the appeal to authority in order to make the ideas respectable and intelligent. This can take the form of incorporating references to the past, testimonials from famous people and quotations from so-called 'experts', implicitly expressing their support for the 'liberating joys' of pornography (LaBelle 1980:178). Psychological and sociological studies are also often used to prove that pornographic publications are not harmful.

A number of feminists and anti-pornography activists have stated that "the most terrible thing about pornography is that it tells male truth as if it were universal truth" (Dworkin 1980:289).

Pornography as a propaganda for misogyny can be described as an ideology of male sexual domination that "posits that men are superior to women by virtue of their penises; that physical possession of the female is a natural right of the male; that sex is, in fact, conquest and possession of the female ... ; that the use of the female body for sexual or reproductive purposes is a natural right of men; that the sexual will of men properly and naturally defines the parameters of woman's sexual being, which is her whole identity" (cited in Jeffreys 1990:464).

Through pornography structural, emotional and physical violence has been structured into the meaning of sex and sexuality. It has influenced, and still influences the very ways what people experience and think in particular about heterosexual sex. Sexuality is not a mere 'biological' phenomenon. It is socially constructed. Feminists, like MacKinnon even declare that "an erection is neither a thought nor a feeling. It is a behaviour" (1995:304). I think that erections and sexual arousals are caused by hormones. They are part of a natural process in male and female bodies. The question is how does one deal with these biological processes? Sexual arousal may follow biological patterns, but *what* we find sexually arousing is culturally influenced and socially constructed. In short, "there is a social dimension to even this most 'intimate' of experiences, and in this culture [Western cultures] sexuality, imbalances of power, and violence are linked" (Lebacqz 1994:247).

Russell (1998:59) has emphasised that pornography as an agent of misogyny appears to endorse, condone and/or encourage abusive sexual desires or behaviours. Abusive sexual behaviour refers to sexual conduct that ranges from derogatory, demeaning, contemptuous, or damaging, to brutal, cruel, exploitative, painful or violent. Degrading sexual behaviour refers to sexual conduct that is humiliating, insulting, and/or disrespectful (Russell 1993; 1994). As MacKinnon (1995:305) has stressed that

pornography is used as masturbation material. It is used for sex, and men know this. It is not the ideas men are ejaculating over, but the experience of sexual access and power that are provided by the materials.

As a male Betzold (1980:46) rightly points out that besides reinforcing destructive fantasies toward women, pornography promotes self-destructive attitudes in men by providing easy substitute gratification. Pornography, therefore, provides an excuse for men to avoid relating to women as people.

But it is not only men who are shaped by, and whose sexuality is constructed through pornography. Women are influenced by pornographic depictions as well. There are three kinds of harm pornography can cause to women: the actual, physical harm; the legitimation of sex and gender discrimination; and the oppression which reinforces the sexual subordination of women as a group (van Morle 1994:438). Concerning the last two points what seems to happen is that "what men think of women, becomes what women think of women, and in a system of total dominance, what men think of women, becomes what women are" (cited in van Morle 1994:438). This is a harm caused to the inner self of women. The false self depicted by pornographic images leads to the loss of a woman's inner self. There seems to be a strong female tendency to 'be' or rather become whatever the male society demands at the time: Victorian in one period, and explicit and erotic objects in another (Lederer & Bat-Ada 1980:122). The process of identity is a learned one, and millions of women today seem to accept the presently preferred, dehumanized sex-object symbols of themselves. Research has shown that the pornographic magazine *Playboy*, for instance, portrays women and shapes their identity.

The *Playboy* genre is programming a female identity which features female masochism during our youth and early twenties, and female obsolescence when we have barely achieved womanhood. This programming is based upon the dehumanization of women, and the "object" erotization of homo sapiens. In other words, as the commercial establishment inundates us with images of women as "objects", the rewards for women who grow and become strong decrease, while the rewards for women who present themselves as sexual objects increase (Lederer & Bat-Ada 1980:122).

Especially young women hate themselves for not being like the magazine models they see men panting after. Women generally do not measure up to the sizes touted by the magazines, and women know this. Many despair and, as Bat-Ada (Lederer & Bat-Ada 1980:122ff) explains, because there seems to be no place to go with that despair it is turned inward and becomes self-hatred. Griffin's analysis (1981:107ff) of this process is that it is by the false images of women that women become enslaved. She suggests that if one believes one's self to be something, one becomes what one believes. Public images have a powerful effect on the mind. "If one questions in one's heart who one is, one's mind throws up to one's vision an image of one's self" (Griffin 1981:108/109). By socializing the view of women as sex objects, pornographic magazines contribute to the increasing antagonism and subsequent violence between males and females. They help methodically to break down the ability and need to care, which human beings are born with and which, as social animals, we need in order to survive.

In order to do something against this growing self-hatred of women, it is necessary to recognize that pornography depicts acts of terrible violence to women's bodies and women's psyches. Griffin (1981:202) argues that pornographic images should be challenged by speaking about them and not being silent. Through pornographic images, a woman ceases to know herself. Griffin's approach, therefore, is to emphasise the destruction of an image, either of a self-image or of a public image, that is not women's selves. Griffin asks women to reject the false, cultural image of women's selves in order to free women's real beings.

The feminist movement and the empowerment of women is that women find their own identity in terms of sex and female sexuality. Pornographers are aware of this fact and they try to find ways to work against the emancipation and empowerment of women. Women, for instance, are increasingly being invited to become spectators of pornography or to become pornographers themselves. This is done in the name of empowering women and their sexuality. As Kappeler (1992:98f) convincingly explains, this does not affect the fundamentally sexist structure of pornography. She says that today the powerful persuade their objects of their inferiority without the use of physical violence. Kappeler (1992:99) maintains that this is visible in the expansion of

pornography since the legal emancipation of women and in the emergence of eager woman advocates of pornography. Structural violence has paid off. The advanced sadism of contemporary Western cultures specializes in the violation not only of the victim's body, but also of her mind. The domination of women's minds happens through the continued control over representation. The author controls the inventions, dramatizes and produces the victim's will. Kappeler (1992:94) speaks about selflessness as the definition of perfect femininity, thus this virtue is the prerogative of women, encouraging women to find their salvation in the extinction of self. Kappeler (1992:99) declares that the cultural textbook used for this is the freedom of expression.

I have demonstrated in this section how pornography works in propagating woman-hating ideas and how important it is for women to analyse the methods and techniques pornographers use. In the following section I will give an example of what pornography entails. I will examine a few pornographic depictions through asking questions such as: Who and what is depicted? What kind of female images and sex roles does the material reflect? What language is used? What kind of messages does the depiction send to males and females? These questions will help us to come to an interpretation of pornographic material in terms of its meaning and significance in the construction of sexuality. These issues are part of a deconstructing process of the structural violence of pornography. Furthermore, they will help us to examine how pornography is used as an agent of misogyny.

3. Examples of pornographic depictions and their messages

The journal I chose to demonstrate how pornography constructs female sexuality is called Electric Black and Blue (Pretorius & Zerbst 1995). The South African edition of this magazine and American imports, like Black and Wild or Black Sexations, specialise in women who are not white. In such materials a white supremacist ideology can easily be noted. Walker observes that, "where white women are depicted in pornography as "objects", Black women are depicted as animals. Where white women are at least depicted as human bodies if not beings, Black women are depicted as shit" (1980:103). Walker's observation shows that there is an inextricable link between male domination,

violence and oppression on the one hand and racism and sexism in pornography on the other hand. I chose the journal Electric Black and Blue precisely because I want to examine whether such observations like those of Walker are correct or not. In a colourful society like that of South Africa the issue of race is inevitably in such investigations.

The names of the editors, Jeff Zerbst and Charl Pretorius, and the producer, Brian Carson, of Electric Black and Blue suggest that they are white males. The title of the magazine announces that the models are all women of colour. I counted two women of East Asian descent; four or five women are said to be from Indian descent, and more than five women are black Africans. Although the women are all of colour, it is interesting to note that their names are of European derivation: Frankie, Simone, Charmaine, Alberta, Maxie, Diana, Denise, Brooklyn, Rose and Carmel. Most of the women are young, but of different sizes and shapes, suggesting a variety of tastes in the consumers.

The magazine portrays naked and half naked women. There are no men depicted and no scenes of sexual intercourse. Each woman is introduced through the voice of the editor. These introductions are ostensibly based on statements of the women about their own sex life. Quotations are worked into the introduction in a way that suggests that the women themselves are speaking.

Sultry Simone is a walking, talking, shagging doll, and sensitive with it. "I've got a very sensitive body, especially my tits" (Pretorius & Zerbst 1995:19).

The photo shows an East Asian woman (see appendix no.1). Note that the woman is depicted not as a woman but as a doll, a toy, something to play with. It is possible to compare her with a Barbie doll that contains a computer voice in her plastic body and some mechanism that makes her walk - "walking, talking, shagging doll". The picture and text are based on the prejudice that East Asian women have sensitive bodies because they are usually of a small size and slim figure. Therefore their bodies are assumed to be easily breakable and sore. The other women are characterised in similar ways: "chocolate cutie" (1995:32), "hot blooded Frankie" (1995:4), "horny Mauritian hussy" (1995:105), "aggressive Indian temptress" (1995:73), "delightfully dusky Rose"

(1995:97) and so forth. Many of the adjectives indicate racial prejudice. Without seeing the picture of the "chocolate cutie" it is clear that a black African woman is meant. The expression of an "aggressive Indian temptress" provokes the comparison with a tigress in the jungle of India.

Other pejorative and dehumanizing terms for females used in pornographic material are cunt, bitch, whore, piece of ass, or also pet, chicks, dogs, cows etc. As I explained earlier, a woman is not a woman, a human being, or a person of worth, but described as something less, either as an animal or an object. In a similar way the female body and its parts are described in humiliating ways. Chocolate nipples, cunt, pussy juices, sexy bum, naked arse, tits, etc. are some examples used in the magazine. This kind of vocabulary is used to deride and humiliate the human body, in particular the female body.

Language is the most important aspect in the erotization of male power and the subordination of women in pornography. Men have the power of naming (Dworkin 1981:250). This power enables them to define experience, to articulate boundaries and values, to designate to each thing its realm and qualities, to determine what can and cannot be expressed, and to control perception itself. In English, for instance, as in many other languages, the word 'to possess' means both 'to own' and 'to fuck', "a semantic coincidence that is no accident" (Stoltenberg 1995:180). Therefore, to have sex with someone means to have that person, to take that person, to possess that person. This is expressed in pictures and words.

It is interesting to note that in pornographic material the kind of language used sounds very poetic. There are a number of alliterations, like "Sultry Simone ... shagging sensitive", "chocolate cutie" and use of vowels, like "hot blooded". Writers of texts in pornographic material like to play with words in this way. They use a lot of adjectives to create the image of a model as precisely as possible. This descriptive style enables the texts to flow, be easily understood, and retained.

Language can become another way of 'raping', part of the humiliation, part of the forced sex women have to face. The whole issue of language that is used to express matters around sex and sexuality is an important area that needs to be examined and challenged. I believe that part of a feminist ethics of sex is, on the one side, to analyse the way matters of sex and sexuality are talked about, and on the other side, to create new ways of verbalising these matters. (To a certain extent this is happening already, for instance in poems by Audre Lorde or writings by Carter Heyward).

Besides the language used in pornographic material, the pictures present and underline the way the perception of women and their sexuality is constructed. One of the black African women depicted in the magazine is called Rose (see appendix 2a, 2b). The name reminds us of the beautiful flower.

Hard though it may be to believe, the delightfully dusky Rose has just lost her virginity at the ripe old age (for these days) of 21. "Most of my friends lost their cherry years ago," she smiles (Pretorius & Zerbst 1995:97).

A reading of the text shows that the sentences are carefully chosen to proclaim a certain message. The central message of text and pictures is that women should have sex as early as possible in their lives. The editor of the text starts with a statement that points to something unbelievable - "hard though it may be to believe". When reading this phrase, one gets curious and wants to know what is the unbelievable. Rose is presented as an extraordinary case because she is supposed to represent one of the rare women who lost their virginity at the age of 21 years. To be 21 years of age is almost too old for having the first sexual encounter (the "ripe old age of 21"). These days every woman is doing it at an early age (*most of my friends lost their cherry years ago*). Every argument highlights the message that having sexual intercourse as young as possible is not only chic and smart but even normal, natural and good.

The pictures shown of Rose (see appendix 2a, 2b) depict her sitting in a blue chair with flowers which is possibly a link to her name. She is dressed in black stockings, red shoes and a white dress. Black, red and white are the colours that are most often used in pornographic depictions. These colours are universally associated with death and evil (black), life and blood (red), and purity and holiness (white). Also the clothing

is typical of pornographic depictions. Light, transparent material provokes the fantasy and curiosity of the viewer. These are all elements of the process of stimulation.

The white dress reminds one of the dress of a bride. White symbolises virginity and purity. On most pictures Rose's legs are wide open. In pornographic depictions open legs are generally a position that expresses to a male viewer the invitation to enter his penis into the model's vagina. Apart from this invitation there is another message in Rose's example. The camera focuses on Rose's vagina, so that the customer is invited to establish for himself that she is no longer a virgin. Virginity is the supposedly interesting topic of Rose's case.

Another focus is her big breasts. The major emphasis of pornographic depictions are on the female sexual organs, of course, but also on buttocks and legs. Rose presses her breasts into various directions, as if they were made out of elastic. In one of the pictures she even pulls her nipples in opposite directions which must cause her physical pain. Nevertheless, most pictures depict her smiling as if she is enjoying what she is doing.

Pornographic models are not only supposed to show that they like and enjoy what they are doing, but they are also supposed to send the message that they are in some way sex mad.

"There was one guy who suggested that we meet up for a drink. Then he went on to say all the things he fantasised about doing to me. One of them didn't sound physically possible - but I wouldn't mind giving it a try!"

"To be honest I am well and truly hooked on nude modelling because the thought of thousands of men getting horny at the sight of my naked body really gets my pussy juices flowing."

"For me, this is doing what comes naturally ..." (Pretorius & Zerbst 1995:83).

This statement, supposedly given by the woman herself, indirectly invites men to get in touch with the models in order to have sex ("there was one guy who suggested"). It further invites them to fantasise and act out whatever and however they would like to do it with the woman ("didn't sound physically possible ... all the things he fantasised doing to me"). The text also includes that the woman is prepared to try more or less anything ("I wouldn't mind giving it a try").

It is the man who does something, who acts ("doing to me"). The last sentence states that the described way is the natural and therefore the normal way of having sex between a man and a woman.

The kind of pornographic depictions in this magazine could be categorized as 'soft porn'. In my view, the magazine depicts non-violent, dehumanizing, degrading, sexist and racist pictures and words. This analysis of a pornographic magazine presents an archetype of how pornographers construct women and their sexuality. Some of the central ideas proclaimed in this magazine are that women should and want to have sex at an early age of their life. Women in general are crazy about sex. They like to have sex in whatever imaginable way, and they like it to be done to them. In addition, this magazine confirms common prejudices about Asian women as being sensitive, Indian women being aggressive and black African women never being sexually satisfied.

Summary

This chapter dealt with the context and the content of pornographic material. I showed that there is an "indisputable and inevitable link between pornography and women's oppression" (Scorgie 1997:1). There is, firstly, the exploitation of women in some pornography that involves actual 'documentation' of real life sexual abuses of women who are harmed in its production. There is, secondly, the role pornography plays in promoting sexual violence. This role can be seen as contributory in the way that pornography is embedded in, and creates a 'climate' in which women experience structural violence. Thirdly, pornography contributes to the subordination of women by eroticising male power and sexual violence. It sexualizes inequality and, most of all, it objectifies women by denying them subjecthood.

The example I gave in the third section of this chapter demonstrated that pornography uses certain methods to construct the sex object 'woman'. The pictures depicted and the language used send directly and explicitly the message of women being identical with sex objects. The inclusion of symbols and certain styles of expression provide additional indirect messages, like the proclamation of racial prejudices. In addition,

pornography uses the techniques of propaganda campaigns. The most distinct message behind this propaganda is that pornographic depictions are said to be the only normal, natural, and true forms of sex and male and female sexuality. Implied in this message is a hatred towards women. This woman-hating is expressed in the violence against women that is depicted and promoted. Pornography influences men's behaviour towards women. It also influences women in the way they think they have to conform to the messages of pornography.

Implicit in the critique of de-construction is the potential for a process of re-construction. This means that what has been, or what is, learned can be unlearned, and what is institutionalised can be changed. A second step, therefore, would be a recovery of the significance of the female role and status in terms of sex and sexuality. I examine this issue in chapter four where I try to re-imagine or re-construct female sexuality.

IV. RE-IMAGINING FEMALE SEXUALITY: A FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL ETHIC OF SEX

**In the beginning is the relation, not sameness.
In the beginning is tension and turbulence, not easy peace.
In the beginning our erotic power moves us to touch,
not take over; to transform, not subsume
(Carter Heyward 1989:100).**

Introduction

Women who become aware of the influence pornography has in proclaiming and boosting woman-hating, start grieving, asking and changing. They know and feel that their sexuality and the way they understand sexual relationships are not what is depicted in the pornographic material. Many women are angry and do not really understand what is done to them directly and indirectly through pornography. There is a deep sense that something is wrong and needs to be challenged and changed. It cannot go on like this, senseless, entirely brutal, insane, day after day and year after year (Dworkin 1980:291; 1981). These images, ideas and values pour out, are packaged, bought and sold, promoted, enduring on and on, and no one stops the process. There must be, and there are ways to change and oppose this woman-hating ideology that pornography propagates. I propose at this stage Harrison who gives us a hint. She is of the opinion that,

it is never the mere presence of a woman, nor the image of women, nor fear of "femininity", that is the heart of misogyny. The core of misogyny, which has yet to be broken or even touched, is the reaction that occurs when women's concrete power is manifest, when we women live and act as full and adequate persons in our own right (1985:5).

In the previous chapter I explored the ways in which pornography is used as a tool of misogyny. I pointed out that pornographic depictions propagate false understandings of sex and female sexuality. From here I want to move on to an alternative view of female sexuality and heterosexual relationships. I aim to work towards a feminist ethic of sex that describes women's sexuality and the sexual relationship between men and women in a way one can identify with. It is a way that 'moves one to touch and transform' various aspects of life.

My argument is that the almost desperate search for physical pleasure and personal intimacy that characterizes most of today's cultures, especially Western cultures, is a symptom of the lack of more humanizing and fulfilling opportunities in work and life. Genital sexuality, narrowly conceived, is too weak to bear the overloaded expectations that people are encouraged to place on it. In agreement with many others I think that what is needed is an approach to sexuality that aims to be holistic (Harrison 1985). An approach, "that sets what we know of ourselves as sexual persons in the broadest possible context of our lives within our existing social order" (Harrison 1985:85/86).

The awareness about women's erotic power will be the topic of the first section of this chapter. The knowledge of women's sexuality is part of a transformation process that changes the way of being. Being in this sense means identifying with, and living this identity in various aspects of life. The second section describes what it means to be sexual in a holistic way. The next step from knowing to being is doing or acting. Here the interaction with other people, in particular the other sex, comes in. I speak about acting-each-other-into-well-being which means to bring about a fulfilled and enriching relationship that even goes beyond the two people involved. This will be discussed in the third section of this chapter.

1. Know-ing about women's erotic power

A starting point for a holistic approach to sex is the affirmation of the goodness of sexuality as an embodiment of feelings. It is further the respect for bodily integrity, and the importance of self-identity (Harrison 1985:90). Women have to consider these as their right. In relation to an ethic of sex they include knowing about female sexuality. With knowing I mean understanding fully and identifying with. This is important because knowing about one's self empowers a person and enables one to have self-esteem and to reach one's full potential.

I have chosen to speak about women's sexuality by using the terms 'erotic power'. In chapter two I argued that pornographic depictions have to be distinguished from erotica. Erotica portray positive affectionate human sexual interaction. Erotic depictions are part

of women's erotic power, but this power is more than non-sexist and non-violent depictions of sex or nude bodies. Audre Lorde (1980) defines the term 'erotic' as a resource within each woman. She speaks about the nurturer of all of women's deepest knowledge. 'Erotic' is sometimes described as a mediator between the beginnings of women's sense of self, and the chaos of women's strongest feelings. Lorde describes it as, "an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire" (1980:297).

As mentioned earlier, the word 'erotic' comes from the Greek word *éros*, which includes the personification of love, creative power and harmony in all aspects. 'Erotic', therefore goes beyond sexual power. It is the assertion of the life force of women, "of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives" (Lorde 1980:297). From this understanding, 'erotic' knowledge empowers women. It is especially important to focus on internal needs and knowledge. Lorde (1980) emphasises that women should live from within outward. They should allow that 'erotic power' to inform and illuminate their actions upon the world. Herein lies the profound feminist view that feelings and not only reason, should determine actions. It is only then that women will begin to be fully responsible to themselves.

It is important to understand the dynamic of the 'erotic' and how this relates to relationships. Writers such as Lorde (1980:298ff) have shown that there is a power which comes from sharing any pursuit deeply with another person. The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers. This bridge can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference. This is an important aspect when working with unity in diversity - the sameness of men and women in being human but also the differences in being male and female.

I have already stated that the power of the 'erotic' has to be part of women's knowledge about their sexuality. To start with, I want to say that sex in general is a "complex connection between personal sexual identity and the expression and satisfaction of

certain basic physiological and psychological needs and desires" (Gudorf 1998:10). Sex can be a way of bonding, of giving and receiving pleasure, bridging differentness, discovering sameness, and communicating emotions. In this sense it is a way of communicating that can be separable from the reproductive need. I emphasise this because in discussions about sex, there is often a confusion of non-procreative sex with pornographic behaviour in the sense of perverse sexual relationships. It is partly because of this that descriptions of sexual behaviour or nudity are called pornographic or obscene by people who insist that the only moral purpose of sex is procreative. Others even argue that any portrayal of sex or nudity is against the will of God.

Contrary to these views, sex has meanings which are realized and elaborated upon in personal relationships over time and in social institutions. From this, I argued in accordance with Cahill (1996:159) that sex has three bodily meanings which are reproduction, pleasure, and intimacy. In most cases discussions about female sexuality revolve first and foremost around reproductive issues. In this section my discussion emphasises the neglected aspects, namely that of pleasure and intimacy in sex.

Sexual pleasure can be described as "a bodily reality which involves sexual drives and attractions" (Cahill 1996:112). These sexual desires are not enemies to be feared but "one set of messages to ourselves about how we are" (Gudorf 1998:11). Sexual pleasure is personalized in the mutual enjoyment of a couple that is sexually intimate. It is subsumed into personal identity when an individual recognizes, and responds cognitively and emotionally to, his or her capacity for sexual enjoyment (Cahill 1996:110ff). To admit the desire for sexual pleasure is for most women frightening to do. Only sex workers are 'allowed' to feel, and are often expected to express, pleasure when having sex. Some feminists argue that erotic depictions are a way of uncovering women's layers of repressed sexuality and confirming their existing desires. Wasserman (1996:58ff) maintains that the display of human bodies provokes an identification with the spectator. It is the identification with the exhibitionism of a scene in which certain fantasies are presented which are stimulating. For women to see their sexuality as a positive power enables woman to enjoy the sexual feelings of her body and the pleasure of desire.

Intimacy in sex consists of the contact of bodies which produces pleasure and may also produce children. Such contact will be intersubjective or personal when physical intimacy expresses affection, mutual commitment, understanding and unconditional love. As depicted in pornography, intimacy is distorted or violated because bodily sexual intimacy occurs in relations of domination, manipulation, and violence. Intimacy is institutionalized in socially recognized partnerships of sexual couples, like marriage. Writers such as Cahill (1996:130f) have stated that it is important to see such relationships within an institutional context in terms of their social responsibility and social contributions. It is also important to analyse contemporary institutions, like marriage, from a gender perspective. Committed relationships that are based on equality, mutual understanding and unconditional acceptance between the partners can transform institutions that do not contribute towards the making of a redemptive community. As Gudorf describes it, a "particular act of sexual pleasure that conveys to a wounded loved one respect, admiration, comfort - unconditional love - may free that person, and the relationship itself, to heroic acts of love for the wider community" (1998:12).

Pleasurable sex and intimacy contribute to ongoing social relationships, commitment, satisfaction and self-esteem of the involved persons. Important to note is, that in current ethics of sex, sexual pleasure and its integration with intimacy is largely ignored, especially as part of female sexuality. The sex act as a mutual self-gift seems strangely disembodied, as well as severed from the dimensions of memory, trust, and hope that make human sexuality unique. I am of the view that human sexual experience is complete only when all three dimensions of sex are developed through the bodily, personal, and social level, and integrated in relationships over time. In short, sexual delight engages the emotional, physical and psychological dimensions of a person in relation to the depth of the relationship between the partners.

2. Be-ing sexual in a holistic way

The experience of being sexually whole leads to a rejection of the view that sexual pleasure is limited to genital contact. It also rejects the idea that women's sexuality is passive and mediated exclusively through active relationships with men.

Feminist insight emphasises sex as mutual pleasuring in a context of genuine openness and intimacy. The affirmation of women's capacity for giving and receiving pleasure and for appropriating female self-worth in and through women's bodies has also begun to lead to an important de-mystification of female sexuality. This relates to what I have outlined above, namely that sex involves pleasure and erotic intensity, but it also expresses playfulness, tenderness, commitment and a generalized sense of well-being. The positive affirmation of women's sensuality also helps to understand that the abuse of sex as one finds it in pornographic depictions for instance, does not happen because individuals or groups have been too free, too permissive or too spontaneous. Harrison expresses this point by saying that it happens because the capacity for intimate and sensual communication has been distorted by manipulative and non-mutual patterns of relationship. She says,

if we cannot tolerate mutually respectful and mutually enhancing erotic communication, if we prefer relational patterns of conquest or subservience, sadism or masochism, or if we are stuck in compulsive, inappropriate, and repetitive patterns of action, it is because we have failed to find the positive power of our own being as sexual persons. If this is so, no repudiation of sexuality, as such, will deliver us. Rather, what we need is a deepened and more holistic sense of ourselves that will enable us to grow sexually, to celebrate, and to respect our own sexuality and that of others (1985:112-114).

Such a celebration includes that women have to experience sexual desire and practice mutuality and equality in sexual relationships. For women to feel empowered in the sexual arena it is useful to develop 'sensitive antennae' for evaluating sexual experiences. It should be mentioned that it is a difficult and often painful task for women to communicate about sexual experiences, whether among themselves or with the opposite sex.

I have chosen to include at this stage Pellauer's (1993) article *The Moral Significance of a Female Orgasm* because it is a reflection on a positive empowering experience of sex. Pellauer herself argues that an exchange of women's sexual experiences empowers them sexually and lets women grow towards a holistic and more comprehensive way of being. She emphasises that women need to pay at least as much attention to their joys and delights as to their pains and disappointments (1993:182).

Having in mind what pornographers say about women and sexual intercourse, this example offers a female voice expressing an understanding of sexual pleasure and intimacy. Compared with the message of sexual gratification in pornographic depictions, it becomes clear in Pellauer's example that sexual intercourse is a very complex process involving various physical and emotional aspects.

Pellauer's basic attitude towards sex is that sexual desire is natural, healthy and good, and that it ought to be the servant of love. She argues that experiences of good sex ground the movement against sexual abuses, because domination and dehumanization do not mix with any of the elements of an orgasm she has discovered. These elements are found in relation to mutuality and equality. I want to summarize these aspects shortly.

In her article Pellauer (1993) describes six aspects she experiences when having an orgasm. She lives in a heterosexual relationship. Pellauer points out that a female orgasm does not come naturally but is learned and needs to be learned. "While this may also be true of male orgasm, it is emphatically the case for women" (1993:165). According to Pellauer, the different dimensions and elements of a female orgasm are: First, being here and now, which includes a full awareness, focusing and concentrating on the sexual act. This creates a way of being receptive and of letting go. Second, there is the realisation of varieties of sensations. It is a stage where one focuses on the partner and realises the feelings and impulses that are happening. The third element is the ecstasy or the orgasm itself. The original meaning of *ék-stasis* is standing outside one's self. For Pellauer this incorporates "the melting into existence and it melts into oneself" (1993:171). Everything becomes one in oneself. It is a quasi-mystical dimension, a paradox in which transcendence and immanence meet. But it is also a limit-experience, where one realises the inmost being, one's capacities. Related to this is the element of vulnerability, of a deep sensitivity to what one receives. It also includes the feeling of not being worth this enriching experience of fulfilment. There is the pleasure of one's partner which is important to oneself. It is the experience of being loved and of a surprise of something unexpected. Pellauer speaks about an experience of grace, "an instance of his vulnerability-to-me reaching out to meet my vulnerability-to-

him" (1993:174). At the same time this is the point where some partners and some circumstances become oppressive, and where the pursuit of orgasm tends to a distortion of sexuality. Here, the fifth element, that of power, comes in. A positive interpretation of power in this act is that one responds to the other. It is a power of connectedness that grows between the partners. It is a power that is based on trusting the other and being committed to one another. This trust needs to be built up in many dimensions of the relationship. There is the mutuality, the confidence in reliability, the sense that this person will not hurt me on purpose, and the ability to forgive each other (1993:174). The sixth and last element discovered by Pellauer is that none of these aspects can be taken for granted because the experience of an orgasm does not happen without communication. However, there might be no orgasm, but this does not mean that sex without orgasm is nothing. "Besides the pleasure ... there is also warmth, comfort, intimacy, the experience of belonging" (1993:175).

Although nothing can be taken for granted, Pellauer chooses the language of "gift or grace, the surprisingly unmerited, gratuitous gift" (1993:177). She explains that "[o]rgasm is a gift *from my own body*. My very flesh has this capacity to burst me open to existence, to melt me down into a state in which my connections to the rest of the universe are not only felt, but felt as extremely pleasurable, as joyous" (1993:178). Pellauer's discussion conforms with my earlier argument that to touch and to be touched in ways that produce delight affirm, magnify, and intensify self-esteem. It awakens rejoicing at the fact that life can enfold such bursting joy. It empowers woman's self-identity and lets her live according to her real being. It also gives woman an awareness of being created in God's image and being invited to share in God's power. The sense of self-goodness, communicated through body pleasure, is essential in understanding oneself as created and beloved by God. Thus, this makes one able to communicate God's love to others.

I agree with Pellauer's explanation that celebrating women's sexuality is a key to good sexual ethics, feminist or not. It seems that good sex, for instance, makes women (and men) more capable of valuing quality in other realms of life. A good sexual experience is a source of worth and value to the participants. It has to do with enhancing human

dignity and empowerment. These are important aspects that are part of being created in God's image. But to achieve this, "a many-meaninged, many-valued, many-voiced complexity" (Pellauer 1993:182) of expressing female sexual experiences is required.

Appreciating that sexuality is multivocal and multivalent, for instance, is not usual in sexual ethics. Many more voices need to be raised to describe, to elaborate and to insist on the positive meaning of women's sexual experiences. Such a reflection on sexuality and sexual relationships are based on women's own experiences and feelings. They are not based on fantasies that are used in pornography to depict what is normal, healthy and good. Feelings, in this instance, provide a way to measure whether something is really normal, healthy and good. Whether a woman feels enriched and empowered after having sex, or whether she feels hurt and worthless, definitely shapes her self-identity, her relation to other people and her behaviour and actions.

The core of this discussion is that it is necessary to communicate about this issue. Women have to find a new language to speak about the good of their sexual feelings and sexual interactions. So far most of the language of, and about, sex seems to be exhausted and meaningless. Women need to find a new language and a new way of categorizing sexual feelings. Such a process has to happen among women as well as in discussions with men.

One can conclude that sexual energy was never meant to be manipulated, used, or taken away from anyone by anybody as it is the case in pornography. Sexual desire and satisfaction should be pleasurable and not painful. My emphasis on the pleasures in sex should not be misinterpreted because pleasure alone is not a sufficient norm for sex. I pointed out that intimacy understood as mutual understanding and commitment is also essential for a fulfilled sexual relationship. Furthermore, sex carries spiritual and aesthetic valences which deserve acknowledgment on their own as I have shown with Pellauer's example. They can provide something like a sacred space in which elemental goods and 'erotic power' can be recognised, transformed or used to improve individual personalities as well as relationships. In this way sex is seen as an expression and channel of God's creative and redemptive love.

On the other hand, because the community shapes one's life, women must always question how the powers, beauties and pleasures of sex fit into the relational context. For some males and females sex is much more about pleasure than it is about relationship. For others, sex is fundamentally about economic and social survival (Sands 1992:30ff). For example, one is forced to have sex on camera so as to earn money. In other cases one is tempted to have sex so as to buy a higher social position. Sex does reflect social structures and it certainly can reinforce them. One has to ask what functions sex is actually serving in the lives of individual persons and communities.

In terms of sexual experiences I want to emphasise that anything that affects a lasting diminishment of one's power cannot be morally acceptable. Nor can anything that drains a person's creativity or ability to see beauty and value in herself and others be part of an integrally good life. Certainly, that which damages a person's capacity for love, trust or loyalty cannot be moral. And further, any sexual practice that fails to protect health or the well-being of women cannot be regarded as good.

3. Act-ing each other into well-being

The whole question about being sexual in a holistic way is related to sexual freedom and sexual justice, especially between men and women. Justice in this sense means to make sure that people can feel good sexually about themselves and each other (Stoltenberg 1993:65ff). In order to free sex from fear, guilt, and shame, it is essential that people communicate about this matter. Communicating is understood here as becoming open and 'real' to one another. For once people are authentic, honest and sincere with one another, the consequences of one's behaviour and acts matter deeply and personally, especially as they directly affect one's sexuality and identity.

To communicate about sex also includes the awareness of seeing sex as communal and relational. Persons are not defined as persons over against other persons but the self is seen as a connected self and as a process involving many selves. A fulfilled sexual relationship based on pleasure, intimacy and procreation requires two people. Desire itself can be seen as a drive toward another. Sex as a bodily reality has its basis in

emotional and biological connections to the sexuality and identity of other human beings. This awareness is fundamental to the way one relates to one's partner. Having connectedness of one's self in mind, one may then ask, how can a person become a self-in-relation? How can partners 'act each other into well-being'? How is this well-being expressed beyond the committed relationship into the wider community?

As indicated above, I argue that the key to bring about well-being is mutuality as a process of sharing power. Mutual well-being "involves learning to stand and walk together and to recognize and honour the differences we bring to our common ground" (Heyward 1989:104). In terms of a sexual relationship this means that desire is structured around the pleasures of being recognized and loved as an autonomous as well as a related being; an autonomous being in the sense that every human being is unique having his or her own character, gifts and skills; a related being in the sense that every person is shaped by his/her socio-economic, cultural and religious background. Mutuality enables one to find true recognition as opposed to false recognition.

False recognition exists in the way that women, for instance, feel recognized by being viewed as sexually desirable. Many women are trapped in their desire to be the objects of men's sexual wants. Hollway (1995:90ff) suggests that this artificiality lies in the fact that vulnerable aspects of the self - aspects that contradict the idealized image of sexual perfection - have to remain hidden according to the contemporary views of being 'sexy' or sexually arousing. Achieving true recognition includes meeting someone's need for recognition and autonomy. This can even be seen as the secret of love. Each person has the power to satisfy or to frustrate the other's pleasure. It is a giving or withholding which signifies mutuality as a process of sharing power. This process creates a tension which is persistent because one is always dependent upon the other not betraying that trust. To remain loyal includes to have unconditional love and acceptance for one another. It is a faithfulness that resists any crisis and temptations.

To stand for true recognition means to emphasise mutual respect in (sexual) relationships. It is a relationship in which the desires and experiences of both partners are highly regarded by the respective other partner. They are understood as having a

validity and a subjective importance equal to those of the individual's own desire and experiences. Each partner should acknowledge the other partner's basic human dignity and personhood. One way to learn relational lessons is that males and females work together on attitudes and mutual respect *with* one another.

From a theological point of view I argue here that the power to act each other into fulfilling relations is part of being created in the image of God. Sensuality, human trust in one's senses - in the capacities to touch, taste, smell, hear, see and thereby know - can teach people what is good and what is bad in relation to one another. Both men and women are given this potential. As humans build on mutually empowering relationships, each creature is given respect and dignity. The potential of absolute honesty, purity, selflessness and love exist in the depth of every human creature. Sexual desires and the wish to express one's sexual feelings to and with another person are part of the goodness of God's creation. Sexual interaction is ordained by God in the context of love and mutuality.

It is important at this point to be reminded of the reality that surrounds one. Feminists, like Hollway (1995:86ff) point out that the historical construction of subjectivity and the contemporary world in which women attempt to negotiate satisfying relationships and enjoyable sex, need to be kept in view. To re-shape sexual desire is only possible in correlation with a re-construction of the patriarchal social and political conditions within which sexuality is defined. How then, in this pornographic climate, can one learn to value erotic and sexual pleasure as an intrinsic good, and live mutual understanding and intimacy?

My answer to this is that humans are not only created in the image of God, but they also reveal God in their relationships with others. In other words, God channels loving relationships through our relationships with each other. Herein lies a huge responsibility and honour for human creatures. This is an important point to be reminded of. It is especially for Christians a privilege to know this. To believe in a God of love and life means to represent this love as individual as well as in living with fellow humans. Everything that destroys the well-being of God's creation in terms of loving and

empowering relationships should be of concern. Knowing that the 'erotic power' is part of a God of love and therefore, also part of being created in God's image empowers a person in his or her self-identity. Experiencing love in terms of trust, respect and care in a sexual relationship further enhances one's well-being. It is a process of becoming a holistic person not only in one's own well-being but also as a transforming agent for the well-being of others. Acting out nurture, care, love and trust in a sexual relationship makes one to be a participant in the making of a redemptive community. It is this precious act of intimacy that expresses profoundly the way the two sexes relate to each other. And it is this act where change has to start in order to bring about redemption from the brokenness between men and women, rich and poor, black and white.

Summary

I have described in this chapter what it means to know about the 'erotic power' of, and in, women; to live as an authentic and holistic human being in all aspects of life; and to act each other into comprehensive well-being. These are three elements of an ethic of sex that are able to oppose the images and sex roles created by pornography. In the first section I have defined sex as a form of expressing and communicating emotions. Sex is understood as having three meanings, that of reproduction, pleasure and intimacy. I argued that pleasure and intimacy belong together, and that these two aspects of sex are often ignored. These are, in my view, the elements that contribute to the fulfilment and satisfaction of human sexual experiences. I have outlined why women have to learn to acknowledge that sexual desire and pleasure are part of their 'erotic power'. Women's 'erotic power' is their creative energy, internal experience and empowering knowledge that they need and feel. I argued that getting to know and to discover female sexuality is part of a process of empowerment. Women's self-identities grow and they become aware of who they truly are. The ability of women to embody their feelings and live their true being enables them to actively shape human relationships.

This means fighting for sexual freedom and justice in such a way that men and women have positive and empowering sexual experiences. At the same time, to live as an

authentic and responsible human being also means to realise that one lives in connection with others. Human relationships should be built on trust and mutuality in all aspects of life, including the sexual sphere. Mutual respect and trust are the strong pillars that enable males and females to empower each other or to act each other into well-being. Respect, trust and mutuality are embedded in the tension between autonomy and dependency. Making mutuality and trust important values of one's life means respecting the other's dignity and personhood. This involves giving up control, meeting the other's needs, caring and sharing, rather than demanding and dominating.

An ethic of sex based on the three elements of knowing, being and acting can guide us in practical action against pornography. The conclusion of this thesis will provide some practical guidelines and suggestions for actions that can be done to confront pornography.

V. CONCLUDING SUMMARY

It is only when the church itself is sensed to be a community in which all alienation caused by age, gender, race and class is decisively overcome that its mission can begin to be authentic among the millions who feel themselves alienated, not only from the church, but from society as a whole
(cited in Borrowdale 1991:136).

"Re-creating women and men in the image of God" is the subtitle of the first chapter of my thesis. I envisioned a community in which men and women are not divided by the evil of class, race and gender differences. This is what I called a redemptive community. My thesis focuses on ethics - a reflection on what ought to be and how it can become real (Nürnberg 1984:26). It is a process of reflection in which people take decisions, act things out and face the consequences. Therefore I argued that the making of a redemptive community is possible through a transformation of attitudes, values and behaviour. I stated that such a transformation creates a new humanity and re-defines power in terms of justice and mutual love. I suggested a theology of relationships as a framework for such a process of transformation. A theology of relationships emphasises the fact that each person's existence is only possible in relation to other individuals, groups and the world around. Accordingly, the quality of relationships between people and groups defines the worth of life. An ethic of care and a value system of equality were recommended as ways to improve the living together of men and women.

My vision comes from a feminist theological-ethical perspective. Feminist ethics begins with a process of de-construction which is an analysis of the structural dynamics of race, class and gender. It then offers a re-construction of the matter as a way forward. I conceived the foundation for the re-construction of an ethics of sex not only from the feminist perspective but also from my Christian faith which brings in the theological perspective.

In chapter one I not only described the approach I chose, and the vision I have, but I also touched upon some real life situations in which women and men meet. Contrary to the vision I created I pointed out that reality is defined by mistrust, carelessness and

physical abuse between individuals and groups. This is particularly true when it comes to sex and sexuality.

In chapter two I concentrated on the phenomenon of pornography, its definitions, arguments for and against it, its ideological background and the legal aspects of pornography in the post 1994 South Africa. In this thesis I dealt with pornography as a commercial product designed for sexual arousal. I pointed out that it is necessary to distinguish between sex education material, erotica, non-violent and violent pornography. I based this distinction on the feminist perspective of pornography that focuses on harm and violence, power relations, and male and female images depicted in pornography. From this definition it is clear that my own position lies in the anti-porn league within the feminist debate on pornography.

I described in chapter two how pornography grew out of the modern Western understanding of life. I explained how it was influenced by an emphasis on individualism and secularism, libertinism and the Enlightenment, as well as free enterprise and urbanisation. Besides the modern Western world view the South African context also knows a traditional African understanding of sex and sexuality. I emphasised that the two world views and their understanding of sex need to be explored when discussing matters related to sex.

In a particular section of chapter two I described the South African situation regarding pornography since 1994. According to the new constitution of South Africa two issues are in conflict: the right of freedom of expression and the right to be free from dehumanisation. The South African constitution offers ways to confront matters around pornography. Nevertheless, in the South African debate on pornography feminist arguments of harm, dehumanisation, sexism and racism, for instance, are not sufficiently considered. Likewise the whole aspect of cultural and religious differences in the understanding of sex and sexuality also seems to have been left out of.

From a general description of pornography I moved to an analysis of the context and the content of pornographic material in chapter three. I explored the context of pornography,

which is the conditions that make the boom of pornographic material possible. I showed how pornography contributes to maintaining and creating an environment in which women experience structural violence. Most of all I examined how it encourages the subordination of women by eroticising male power and sexual violence. What methods and tools pornography uses and what kind of messages it spreads is shown in the last section of chapter three. Here I gave an example of pornographic depictions and their analysis. I concluded by stating that pornography is propaganda material for misogyny. Its most distinct message is that pornographic depictions are said to be the only normal, natural, and true way of sex and male and female sexuality. Its woman-hating ideology is expressed in the violence against women that is depicted as well as promoted. Chapter three confirms and proves that pornography is contrary to a vision of a redemptive community because it objectifies and abuses women, and de-personalizes sex.

I then continued in chapter four to imagine an ethics of sex that is part of a redemptive community. I spoke about the 'erotic power' which is that life force that reaches out toward 'the other' for intimacy, mutual creativity, and exchange. The 'erotic power' is relational, empathic, whole, spirited and imaginative. In contrast, pornography is episodic, performance-oriented, fragmented, standardized, and addictive. Women have to learn to see their sexuality as an integral part of being human which cannot be turned off, but which allows some choice in how to express it and communicate about it. I also said that it is important to understand all three meanings of sex, which are reproduction, pleasure and intimacy. I went on to argue that to know and to discover female sexuality is part of a process of empowerment that enables women to actively shape human relationships.

A major point of attention in chapter four was the quality of sexual relationships between men and women. I explained that sexual freedom and justice can be expressed in such a way that men and women have positive and empowering sexual experiences. In order to bring about such experiences, human relationships should be built on trust and mutuality in all aspects of life. Men and women have to respect each other's human dignity and personhood.

After examining, analysing and defining pornography and its link to sex and sexuality, I have come to the conclusion that the best way to oppose this phenomenon is to provide an alternative. I have described this alternative on a theoretical level in chapter four. But I still wonder how one can implement these ideas in practical terms? It is necessary to have both practical knowledge and an understanding of the emotional and spiritual significance of sex.

Reflecting on the churches and their responsibility in this matter, I think it is important that church teachings include to tell everyone that sex is part of God's creation intended to be shared responsibly in committed relationships. It is important to recognize that God did not create fixed and separated masculine and feminine realms. The fact that one cannot divide masculinity and femininity as opposite principles reflects the God in whose image both sexes are created. This also helps women and men to see more clearly what they have in common. At the same time, it indicates the differences between the sexes.

Censorship as it is promoted by many churches, is in my view, not the solution. I argue that persuasion might be an answer. Our task is good education about what pornography is; what and who is behind the pornographic industry; what messages pornography proclaims; who consumes pornography and why; what harm pornography causes etc. In my view, churches have to educate themselves about these questions so as to be competent when discussing and making decisions about pornography, its nature and impact.

Our task is further to develop a social consciousness, especially with regards to equal rights for women. A grass roots people's movement against sexual injustice needs to be created. Feminist theologians, anti-pornography activists and Christians concerned about these issues should be staging protests against the sale of pornography to raise the consciousness of people who consume it. To challenge or even destroy the profit making part of the whole matter, the goal should be to put producers and sellers permanently out of business, to make the marketing of women as sex objects as impossible as the selling of black people as slaves.

Christians, church members and church leaders have to come up with valid arguments in order to counter the destructive impact of pornography. Another thesis could be written, for instance, that develops a truly biblical view of sexuality and human relationships which will enable people to grow into maturity. Due to the negative influence Christianity had and still has in matters of sex and sexuality it is important to point out the difference between erotica and pornography and to avoid antisexual or antisensual attitudes. It is further important to critically reflect on the role churches and theologies play in defining the position of women. Feminists theologians have to be engaged in these kind of discussions, not only academically but also as activists in grass root congregations. They can provide tools and ways of how to tackle these issues from a gender perspective.

Flashing back to the introduction of this thesis, it has been a long and painful process of reflection and introspection. It is after eight o'clock in the evening. I switch the television off and open the Bible. It reads to me in the *Song of Solomon* in chapter eight verses six and seven:

Set me upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm;
for love is strong as death,
passion fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
a raging flame.
Many waters cannot quench
love,
neither can floods drown it.
If one offered for love
all the wealth of his house,
it would be utterly scorned (NRSV 1995:610).

As I read these lyrical verses I see the two lovers praising each other's beauty, seeking friendship and becoming one flesh. They present to me a union that can be celebrated as image of God's own love. They assure me that they want to give each other what God gave in creating this world. They tell me that they are prepared to fight against anything and anyone that hinders their bond. They offer me to share their love with me.

I feel encouraged and inspired. The disturbing pictures seen on television vanish. I understand that they depict our reality, that they are part of what is called 'life'. But I know now that there exists more and better living. The God of love is alive, and if we do not experience this God today, we should not lose hope.

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