

How Pornography Undermines Personal Responsibility and Freedom

By Robert Knight

This Eye on Culture is adapted from a speech given at the World Congress of Families in Warsaw, Poland on May 12, 2007.

As liberals are fond of telling us, pornography has been part of the human experience since the dawn of time. It's found on the walls of a brothel in the ancient city of Pompeii. It's found on Greek urns and in archeological digs in Asia.

Few people in any culture lost money exploiting the infinite human capacity to transform the God-given gift of sex into an engine of lust, greed and perversion.

But now we are faced with a pornography industry that has many powerful supports:

- An explosion in technology that makes pornography universally available.
- A political movement that wields porn to destroy family-based resistance to its totalitarian aims.
- A shift from indifference to outright promotion and sale of even hard-core pornography on the part of large, multinational corporations.
- A legal and media culture that is hostile to traditional values and is transfixed on atomistic individualism at the expense of families, communities and ultimately, nations.

Those defending traditional values in the United States are thankful for Poland's resistance to the siren song of pornography, homosexual activism and the degradation of the family. It's an inspiration to watch Poland buck the tide of the other nations in the European Union that are drinking the Kool-Aid of sexual "liberation."

When I was first getting into the business of defending traditional values on the think tank level, I saw Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family at a political conference. We were on a panel discussing threats in the culture. I presented a study about America's National Endowment for the

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Arts and its bias towards avant-garde, anti-religious and shocking 'art' that was designed to offend people and to violate standards of decency. Dr. Dobson gave a talk on the effects of pornography, particularly on families. Afterward, I asked him why, given all the well-documented evidence of the harmful effects of pornography, can't we win this part of the Culture War?

He said, and I'm paraphrasing, "Because in many men's closets, or in their dressers, there is a stack of *Playboys* or some other so-called 'soft' pornography. When they hear us attacking obscenity, it's like hearing distant cannons. They know that hard-core porn is bad, but they also know they have no business pointing a finger at anyone else, given their own private stash." Of course, now, we can expand that to include the easy access to porn via the Internet.

The political and cultural Left have a deep interest in promoting pornography. Millions of men who might have championed the moral high ground in the public square feel that they don't have the right to take up any moral causes, given their own moral failures. One of the Devil's best tricks is to persuade us that we are not good enough ourselves to take personal responsibility for publicly favoring good over evil, lest we be found out as hypocrites. In this case, the perfect is the enemy of the good. Everyone is subject to one temptation or another, but that is no excuse for doing nothing.

The Bible says, "The righteous are as bold as lions." Shame keeps men on the sidelines, which is where the Left wants them so it can continue forging a new society based on more government control and less personal responsibility.

The Iron Triangle

The Left advocates strict government regulation of nearly everything in life—from what we can drive to what kind of light bulbs we can use. Singer Sheryl Crow has even suggested that people use only one square of

toilet paper during each bathroom visit, except for those “pesky” occasions when “two or three squares” are necessary.

The exception to this zealous drive to regulate everything is sex. The Left wants unfettered access to abortion, pornography, and homosexual sex because it advances their cause. All three work together in an Iron Triangle.

I used to wonder why homosexual activists were in the forefront of those defending abortion clinics against people praying outside. I thought, “They’re not having children, so why should they care?” But it makes perfect sense. Porn, abortion and homosexuality all work to destroy God’s design for the family, whose very existence is a constant rebuke to their sad and destructive choices. Leftists do not want people to have any loyalties other than to their socially superior masters.

C.S. Lewis once said that the agenda of the Left is to make pornography public and religion private. This has been the agenda of the American Civil Liberties Union and its international allies for many decades. By confusing smut with freedom of speech, the ACLU has managed to redefine public morality while pretending to maintain neutrality. If capitalists were foolish enough, as Joseph Stalin said, to sell Communists the rope with which to hang them, too many well-meaning Americans are turning over their United States Constitution to a group that is distorting its First Amendment freedom of speech protections into a club to destroy all the other protected liberties.

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Many communities attempt to balance the interests of public decency with those of professed civil libertarians who demand public access to pornography. But they are unwittingly siding with the pornographers. It is not a middle ground. In the absence of clear, community standards, the pornographer gets to establish the moral tone at gutter level. Common sense, experience and research all show that the presence of sex-oriented businesses (SOBs) bring crime, prostitution, and neighborhood decline wherever they take root.

The explosive growth in pornography in Western nations did not happen organically, that is, naturally, but is part of an orchestrated, revolutionary movement to replace ordered liberty and personal responsibility with totalitarian control.

It is that serious.

After Russia fell to the communists in 1917, Marxists waited in vain for workers to foment economic revolution in the rest of Europe. It didn't happen. The Communist advance did not come from the bottom up but from the top down. So they switched tactics to target the West.

From Economic to Cultural Marxism

Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci flipped Marxism on its head by proclaiming that the culture, not the economic structure, was the true foundation of society. He proclaimed a new battle cry: "Capture the Culture." Gramsci's pupil, a German, Rudi Dutschke, came up with the strategy: Marxists had to make "the long march through the institutions," which meant subverting universities, media, art, and entertainment.

In Frankfurt, Germany in 1923, Marxists founded the Institute of Social Research, which became known simply as the Frankfurt School. This center was moved to Geneva in 1933 when the Nazis took over, then to New York, then to California, and finally back to the University of Frankfurt in 1955. An excellent history of the Frankfurt School by William Lind is available on video at www.freecongress.org. But to make a long story short, the school spawned the likes of Theodore Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, who preached a new form of cultural Marxism. Their weapon of choice was sexual freedom from Judeo-Christian restraints. I can recall being assigned Marcuse's book *Eros and Civilization* when I was in college. Even then, I thought he was perverse, but my professors liked him.

The ultimate aim of the Frankfurt School and the Gramsci contingent was to destroy the family and the Church, which stood in the way of a radical social order that would usher in the new Socialist Man. This was not a new idea. Friedrich Engels had proclaimed the marriage-based family as the enemy decades before.

It all began coming together in the 20th century, with key elements falling into place.

- 1) a group of dedicated revolutionaries who began selling sexual liberation as a personal and social panacea;
- 2) a rapid growth in media, which increased the availability of pornography.

- 3) two World Wars, which put tremendous pressure on family life and helped to push more women into unconventional roles and kept men away from their families for long periods.
- 4) a new science of sexology, led by Alfred C. Kinsey, which provided the academic basis for the justification of the sexual revolution that was about to explode.
- 5) a degree of affluence that facilitated more leisure and thus the pursuit of pleasure.

As Harvard sociologist Pitirim Sorokin wrote in his classic 1941 study *The Crisis of Our Age*, America was already shifting at that time from being an *ideational* culture, that is, one that extols virtues attainable through delayed gratification, to a *sensate* culture, in which the highest calling is inflaming and satisfying the senses; in short, hedonism. He saw the shift in several places, most notably in advertising, in which the ads began emphasizing the sensual and pushing the envelope in terms of taste.

Using Junk Science to Attack Religion

When Kinsey published his *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948, a large segment of America's intelligentsia was ready to buy into his theme, which was that science had proved that sexual normalcy is a myth, and a dangerous one at that. Marriage, fidelity and restraint were inhibitions to an outlook that prized sexual experiences above all. Religion was at the bottom of it all, so religion had to be neutered, if not destroyed. One way to do that was to unleash wolves amidst the sheep. Hence we are living in a day when openly homosexual clergy are making their claim to moral propriety. Adam and Eve are reduced to the status of "two persons" rather than the first man, woman and marriage.

Without critical examination, the liberal media gave Kinsey a huge megaphone by which he proclaimed his new gospel of sex. In 1953, as Kinsey published his companion volume, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, Kinsey's astute pupil, a young man named Hugh Hefner, unveiled the first issue of *Playboy* magazine. By combining serious articles with pornographic photos, Hefner got around the censors and softened up America, and eventually Europe, for more and more explicit pornography.

Dr. Judith Reisman, in several books including *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud* and *Kinsey: Crimes & Consequences*, details how Kinsey and his associates, most notably Planned Parenthood and the Sexual Information and Education Council of the United States, worked to weaken laws against pornography and sexual predators, and to create a monolithic sex education establishment to rob children of their innocence at younger and

younger ages. Kinsey, himself a compulsive homosexual and probably a pedophile, as revealed in recent biographies, used junk science to justify his perverse predilections.

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In 1956, Pitirim Sorokin published another remarkable book, *The American Sex Revolution*. He argued that America was now awash in pornography, had a shockingly high divorce rate nearing 10 percent, and was headed for decadent decline much in the manner of Rome and Greece. He noted that America's divorce rate in 1867 was 0.3 divorces per 1,000 of the population, and had advanced to 3.4 per 1,000 by 1947. As of 2004, the divorce rate was 3.7 per 1,000 of the population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

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Such is the power of sex that the AIDS epidemic among homosexual men, the rise in sexually transmitted diseases from two – gonorrhea and syphilis in the 1960s – to more than 30 in the last decade, and the litany of broken marriages, child abuse victims and broken men, has not slowed it down. This is due partly to a liberal media and entertainment industry that refuses to count the bodies and show the dark side of the sexual revolution.

Fast forward to today. We are facing a frightening future in which the worst, most explicit forms of pornography are being readily accessed by children via the Internet and even their cell phones and iPods. As C.S. Lewis observed, every power gained by man also becomes a power *over* man.

Positive Signs

There actually is some good news amid all this, so let me conclude by sharing it.

There are signs that increasing numbers of teens and young adults are waking up to the fact that some very wicked people have stolen their innocence and destroyed the possibility of romance. When they perceive this truth, they are able to resist. That's why the Left in the United States is right now attacking abstinence programs so viciously. These courses, which are wildly popular with parents, succeed because they de-program teens from the toxic cultural messages bombarding them via MTV, television programs, movies and music.

The totalitarian Left cannot afford to allow any young minds to escape the conditioning. Their wholesomeness is a direct threat to the cultivation of a universal, cynical outlook that is ripe for manipulation by social engineers. It's not for nothing that German education autocrats are waging war on home schoolers.

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The other good news is that science is catching up and beginning to expose the toxic effects of pornography. Numerous studies now show that exposure to porn results in attitudinal change, behavioral change, and even alterations in brain structure.

Dr. Judith Reisman coined the term “erototoxins” to describe the brain chemicals unleashed by viewing pornography. In grown men, they create a pattern in the brain conducive to ever-increasing urges to seek pleasure through more exposure. In children, they create a profoundly dangerous primary pathway to addiction.

The nature of addiction—any addiction – is really not that complicated, especially when you factor in morality.

Human beings are prone to sin, that is, to misuse our God-given bodies and brains to pursue pleasure at the expense of personal responsibility to our family, community and ultimately, to our relationship with God.

As psychiatrist Dr. Jeffrey Satinover, who teaches at Princeton, notes, the brain is quite vulnerable to accommodating addictions. Here's what happens. A person looks at pornography and experiences excitement through the excretion of chemicals such as adrenaline and pleasure through the excretion of dopamine. This is followed by guilt, since God's laws are written in every human heart. To push the guilt away, the person indulges in the activity once more, with the brain making it easier and easier to access, but harder and harder to please. It takes more and more of a chemical boost to reach pleasure. Thus the addict requires harder and harder materials or activities, whether it is alcohol, homosexuality or pornography.

Satinover notes that the Talmud says, "Sin begins as thin as a spider's web, but soon becomes a thick cord that binds." It's a perfect description of the power of addiction.

To reverse this destructive trend toward societal porn addiction, the demise of family life and the inevitable rise of opportunistic government experts to pick up the pieces, we must expose the porn industry for what it is, to shame the corporations that are trading in it, and to educate the media as to the new science.

As dark as things now appear, there is hope on the horizon. This very gathering is proof that people are fighting back and arming themselves with the facts.

And we must remind ourselves, often, that what is good and perfect and true is uniquely powerful because it comes from an unimpeachable source Who will not change.

We have it from the highest Authority that, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

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