What is Violence?[1]

This chapter explores definitions of violence, a concept with clear political as well as philosophical implications, and that occupies a central place in this volume's investigation of women, violence and agency. Does the term 'violence' capture a narrow range of actions, the paradigmatic personal, physical and direct examples of violence; or does it legitimately apply to an expanded range of actions and practices, the paradigmatic cases of personal violence as well as the harmful consequences of social, political, economic practices? By defining the range of actions, states of affairs, or practices that constitute violence, answers to these questions help to delineate our field of interest, facilitate various perspectives, and inform lines of inquiry.

The aim of this chapter is to uncover a specifically political conception of violence which will capture our interest in violence as it relates to a fundamental problem for society. The chapter will first analyze (and reject) several existing definitions of violence in terms of whether they successfully describe a fundamental problem, then propose a new conception of violence that directs our attention towards problematic *attitudes* rather than types of actions. This new conception allows us to consider the relationship between women, violence and agency from a new perspective, drawing our attention to forms of violence that are generally overlooked on the standard, narrow conception, and redefining the ways in which women may be both subject to, and participants in, violence. Secondly, the chapter will explore how adopting this definition allows us to reconceive the relationship between women and violence, via two test cases. Specifically, it will demonstrate how the conception of violence as an attitude allows us to describe pornography as violence, followed by some exploratory remarks on the implications of this view for feminist philosophy more generally.

I

Politics is fundamentally concerned with preventing, controlling, and countering violence in human affairs. But in order to address the question of how to prevent (or reduce) violence, we first need to know what sorts of actions, or states of affairs, we are interested in minimizing. In other words, we need a definition of violence. A successful definition of violence however, should not be evaluated in terms of how well it captures our common usage of the term, but rather in how well it helps us to identify the actions that constitute this fundamental concern for politics. By including a particular class of actions within a definition of "violence", we offer a direction, a subject upon which the politicians, social scientists and philosophers can fix their gaze. Mis-defining violence therefore, represents more than a simple conceptual error; it is also a serious impediment to our efforts to address the problem of violence.

This worry is expressed in the criticisms of various proposed definitions. Johan Galtung, for example, argues that traditional or "restricted" definitions of violence unjustifiably set aside problematic states of affairs (such as poverty, or "structural violence"), describing the problem of violence too narrowly such that too little is solved by its abolition (Galtung, 1969). Conversely, C.A.J. Coady argues against Galtung-style definitions of 'structural violence', claiming they are misleading and will misdirect our efforts to deal with violence. He writes:

...it may well be that quite different techniques, strategies and remedies are required to deal with the social disorder of (restricted) violence than are needed to deal with such issues as wage injustice, educational inequalities and entrenched privilege. The use of the wide definition seems likely to encourage the cosy but ultimately stultifying belief that there is one problem, the problem of (wide) violence, and hence it must be solved as a whole with one set of techniques. (Coady, 2008, p.34).

There are two different worries expressed in these statements. Coady's concern seems to be that if we adopt the wrong definition of violence, our misunderstanding of the nature of the problem will steer us towards the wrong remedies, potentially wasting effort and resources, or worse, adding to rather than resolving the problem. Alternatively, Galtung's worry seems to be that the wrong definition of violence may mislead us into thinking we have solved the problem when in fact we have resolved but one part of it. I aim to expand on Galtung's worry and suggest that the wrong definition of violence may mislead us into thinking we have solved the problem when we have *not solved it at all*, but only effected a superficial change in its appearance.

A poor definition of violence will be one that mistakes a contingent property for a necessary feature of the underlying problem. Conversely, a useful definition of violence is one that will point to the root of the matter such that if we managed to "solve" the problem it pointed to, we could be confident that violence had truly been resolved. In what follows, I evaluate three prevalent types of definitions of violence in light of this worry, and argue that all three mistake contingent features of violence for the fundamental problem. I then propose a fourth and alternative definition that, in my view, avoids this mistake. I want to suggest that a definition of violence that identifies a genuinely necessary feature of the phenomenon is one that focuses on a particular *attitude*.

1.1 Acting violently

The first group of definitions characterize violent acts as those that are performed in a certain way – specifically, actions that are done *violently*. To act violently is to perform an action forcefully (Bäck, 2004), with suddenness or rapidity (MacCallum, 2009), or in a way that is 'like dealing a blow' (Coady, 2008, p.41). These ways of acting are of concern because they often, if not always, are the cause of injury, damage and harm. An example of this type of view comes from Robert Audi, who claims:

...I believe that in the case of the concept of violence it is apparent that the notion of vigorous abuse comes very close to forming a kind of core; for virtually all instances of violence involve vigorous abuse, and those that do not can be seen to exhibit important resemblances to it or clear potential for it. (Audi, 2009, p.145).

The forcefulness or vigour of an act is not usually considered sufficient to mark an act as one of violence, with most views specifying further conditions that an act must have to qualify.[2]

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[2] In other words, this analysis of violence identifies 'acting violently' as a necessary, but not sufficient condition for violence. Here 'necessary' and 'sufficient' conditions are technical terms; simply, a necessary condition is one that

Many are keen to differentiate between the forceful and damaging nature of a violent storm, for example, and the violent acts of a person, marking the violence of nature off as one kind of problem (perhaps a scientific or technical problem), while the *intentional* forceful and damaging acts of people present a different kind of problem, namely a political problem.[3] To this end, many definitions include some requirement for intentionality, though there are variations on which aspects of the act must be intended (the foreseen effects, the direct act itself regardless of the foreseen effects, etc.). Regardless of these additional conditions, proponents of this type of definition insist that the way of acting is a necessary condition. As a result, certain "gentle" or "non-forceful" yet harmful actions will not be classed as violence on this view. Audi for example, claims that murder by gassing or infection by deadly bacteria, while clearly problematic acts, are not appropriately called violence. Similarly, Coady claims that murder via slow poisoning over several years is not violence. Moreover, harms that are the product of certain institutional or political arrangements, termed 'structural violence' by competing views, will be excluded on this definition as well.

I want to suggest that focusing on violence as a *way of acting* focuses our attention on a contingent feature. On this point, I follow John Harris (1974, 1980), who stresses the important distinction between understanding our use of the term violence, and what he calls '*the problem of violence*'. As Harris rightly notes, we are concerned with

> *...the phenomenon of men inflicting injury, suffering or death on one another. We are not so much interested in the particular methods men use to do this, or in the look, the physical appearance of the actions that they use. We are interested in violence because it is a particular kind of activity – the kind of activity in which men inflict injury on one another.*
> (Harris, 1980, p.18)

Harris offers several examples of actions that need not be done violently, but are the sorts of actions that seem to be clear cases of people inflicting harm on each other in a way that is problematic and of obvious interest to political philosophy. For example, rebels who poison a water supply, or who lock residents in their homes and leave them to starve are not acting violently in the sense Audi and Coady describe. But, Harris claims, it is clear that these are fundamentally problematic acts; a group that declared it would abandon the use of Audi-Coady style violence, but who made use of these tactics, remains *just as much* of a concern for political philosophy. The danger of identifying the problem of violence as a particular way of acting, is that it leaves open, and perhaps even promotes the development of new techniques of inflicting damage and injury on one another that avoids appearing as violence in this narrow sense. One contemporary example of this effect can be found in the support for the use of economic

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is required to make the claim in question, or is entailed by it, though it is not enough to support the claim on its own, while a sufficient condition is enough to guarantee the claim. For example, to describe a closed two-dimensional shape as a square, it must have (1) four sides of equal length and (2) equal internal angles. Conditions (1) and (2) are individually necessary, and jointly sufficient for having a square. Having only (1) does not guarantee a square, as parallelograms have four equal sides; having only (2) also does not guarantee a square, equilateral triangles for example are shapes with equal internal angles, but having both (1) and (2) together does guarantee that we have a square (and hence are jointly sufficient). Similarly, we cannot have a square *without* having (1) or (2), which makes them necessary conditions for squareness.

[3] Many are also keen to differentiate between damage or harm caused by accidental human action, for example, tripping while carrying a full cup of hot coffee, or falling into a porcelain cabinet, or accidentally slamming a door on someone's fingers, etc. While these actions can be described as violent in a sense, they are often bracketed off as a different kind of problem – while they look like violence (characterized by strong, uncontrolled force), and are performed by people (rather than nature), and are likely to result in damage/harm, they lack the intentionality that makes such acts problematic for political philosophy.

sanctions against a rogue state rather than traditional military force.[4] Touted as a tactic that stops short of violence, economic sanctions can result in devastating harm and suffering that rivals the injury done by traditional violence (see also Pontara 1978). The worry is that defining violence as acts that are "done violently" will push us towards this type of 'solution', a response that in my view (and Harris') fails to qualify as a solution at all, but merely changes the way in which we inflict harm on others.

1.2 Suffering

The second type of definitions follow naturally from the criticisms raised above. They reject the requirement that violence be done violently, focusing instead on identifying '…what is left when we subtract a violent act from an act of violence' (Harris, 1980, p.14). For Harris, and others, the relevant remainder is the suffering, harm or injury that we inflict on each other.[5] He offers the following definition: 'An act of violence occurs when injury or suffering is inflicted upon a person or persons by an agent who knows (or ought reasonably to have known), that his actions would result in the harm in question' (Harris, 1980, p.19).

Definitions of this type focus on actions that are problematic in virtue of their actual consequences, regardless of whether those consequences are brought about directly through vigorous force, or indirectly through controlled or collective action, or perhaps even omissions or failures to act. While harm and suffering are the central necessary features of this type of view, they are again not sufficient for violence. Proponents of this view want to distinguish between the accidental and intentional causing of harm, as well as between intentional but well-meaning infliction of suffering (such as the pain caused by beneficial surgery), and the malicious or negligent causing of harm. These distinctions provide the criteria for additional necessary conditions that supplement the core requirement of harm, suffering or injury.

A notable feature of this class of definitions is the tendency to argue for rather expansive definitions of the key terms "harm", "suffering", and "injury". Harris for example, takes these to include '[w]rongful action or treatment; violation or infringement of another's rights; suffering or mischief wilfully or unjustly inflicted…Hurt or loss caused to or sustained by a person…harm, detriment, damage' (Harris, 1980, p.20). Holmes distinguishes between *hurt* (which includes pain, suffering, and aguish) and *harm*, where '…people have been harmed only if they have been made worse off as a result of what is done to them', which may include instances of hurt, though not necessarily (Holmes, 2009, p.278). These broad definitions of harm and suffering go beyond the simple intuitive meaning of these terms (the experience of physical or psychological pain), and suggest that *violations* should also be classified as harms – that someone is harmed by wrongful treatment or violation of her rights. This extension is motivated in part by the observation that suffering itself does not always seem to be violence. The pain associated with the necessary extraction of a problem tooth, or the setting of a broken bone does not seem to be the kind of suffering we are interested in as a political problem.[6] I think the

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[4] The use of economic sanctions as an example of a tactic that on the surface appears to be a more tolerable response than traditional military force was raised by Elizabeth Ellis in a talk given at the Brave New World Conference (Manchester, June 2011) entitled "Economic Sanctions: Better than War, Better than Nothing?".

[5] For examples of similarly motivated views, see Honderich (1973) and Pontara (1978).

[6] Holmes makes reference to the pain associated with treatments administered by doctors or dentists (Holmes 2009). Pain of this sort is clearly a still a concern, but not one of a political nature. It is rather a problem for medicine, and science and technology more generally.

concerns about suffering in the narrow sense and harm in the broader sense reflect two different intuitions, and it will be helpful to examine them separately. The remainder of this section will examine and evaluate the focus on suffering in the narrow sense, while the more expansive notion of harm akin to violation will be discussed in the following section.

So, how does a definition of violence that specifies the infliction of suffering as a necessary condition fare? Such definitions again miss the mark and direct us towards the wrong kinds of "solutions". It is easy to imagine ways of continuing to perform acts that strike us as fundamentally problematic that avoid the infliction of suffering. Very simply, it is possible to murder someone in a way such that they feel no pain. It seems clear that we would not consider the problem of violence "solved" if murders, rapes and injuries continued to be carried out, though painlessly. While this might seem obvious, the focus on suffering is perhaps more prevalent than one might initially think, and to my observations currently plays a large role in motivating solutions of just this sort. For example, executing someone via lethal injection versus a firing squad is perceived as "less violent" in virtue of its humaneness. Similarly, a large number of people seem satisfied that eating meat is a permissible practice if the animals enjoy decent lives and are killed painlessly. In the killing of animals, it is the suffering that is cause for concern and, as the meat industry has shown, this problem can be solved while retaining what for the animals remains a problematic practice.[7] The worry then, is that a definition of violence that focuses on suffering will allow, and perhaps even endorse, the development of solutions that will only change the form violence takes rather than resolving the problem.

1.3 Violation

As we saw above, definitions of violence that focus on suffering in the narrow sense push us towards unsatisfying responses to the problem, leaving us with the broader interpretations of harm used or implied by Harris, Galtung, Holmes and others. Importantly, this broader notion of harm is not an extension of the concept of suffering, but a shift to a different sort of wrong, that of violation (of a right). Some of these broader notions directly reference the notion of violation while others implicitly rely on it. Newton Garver, for example makes it explicit in his statement, 'What is fundamental about violence in human affairs is that a person is violated' (Garver 1971, p.242). Holmes however, relies on an implicit notion of harm as violation. He suggests that someone is harmed if they have been made 'worse off', a claim that is too broad unless combined with the notion of violation. I can make my fellow citizens "worse off" by taking a drink from the water supply, leaving less water available than they had before and therefore worse off (though perhaps trivially so, depending on the availability of water). For such an act to be considered violence at all, it must be combined with the assumption that the water was not mine to take, that I have *violated* the rights others had to the water. Recognition of this implicit premise allows us to categorize a variety of definitions as violation-type views despite their use of terms like "harm" or "injury" (for example, Galtung and Holmes).

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[7] It is not that the modern meat industry succeeds only in promoting the perception that the production of meat is (or at least can be) a cruelty-free activity, rather that some producers at least do make serious and successful efforts to ensure their animals are well cared-for and are killed painlessly. My claim is that even if such methods became ubiquitous, (thereby 'solving' the suffering-problem), non-human animals would still be being killed for food, a practice that from the non-human animal perspective at least, remains problematic.

One point of disagreement amongst proponents of this type of view regards the scope and content of rights that people have, and if violation of any of them, or a smaller subset, constitutes violence. Bernard Gert for example, gives a very short list of rights, or rules, the violation of which constitutes violence.[8] Conversely, Galtung's influential definition suggests that people have a general right to the maximum possible realization of their potential (Galtung 1969). There are additionally a host of positions that fall along various points between the two.[9]

This shift to characterizing violence as a violation seems to resolve the problem cases explored so far – it will allow us to describe a murder as violence even if it was performed quietly and with minimal and controlled force, and such that the victim felt no pain. Regardless, the victim's right to her life was violated, and if the act satisfies any other necessary conditions (the act and its consequences were intended), we can confidently describe the act as one of violence.

However, it is possible to propose "solutions" to violation based views that require only changes to our theoretical framework rather than changes in our actual actions. There are several ways to work around a violation based view, that enable us to dissolve the potential violation: First, one could deny that the agent "violated" was in fact entitled to the right in question. This could be because no agent could be said to have that right (a consequence perhaps of minimal conceptions of rights), or because that agent is not entitled to the right in virtue of belonging to a certain group (for example, is an animal, a child, or a non-citizen, etc.). A second route might be to accept that the agent does possess the right in question, but assert that it is justly overridden by other considerations, and the act is therefore not a violation of that right. These other considerations might include conflicts with rights of higher priority, or perhaps the agent has legitimately consented to forego her entitlement to the right, or finally, the agent might perform some other action that constitutes forfeiture of that right.

One may reply that just because one can offer an argument that tries to show why an agent is not entitled to a particular right does not mean the argument succeeds and that a violation has not occurred. While I agree with this point in principle, I think we have reason to be sceptical of our ability to avoid such moves. As political philosophers are keenly aware, the needs, interests, desires, and rights of agents living in society necessarily conflict, meaning the goal of instantiating the ideal that '[e]ach person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all' (Rawls, 2001, p.42) requires determining priorities and specifying the mechanisms by which we endorse some rights over others. Entangled then, as rights-based theorists must be, in the project of balancing, prioritizing and denying rights, I fear the potential for abuse is high. We have in the past made use of the language and theory of rights, to excuse all manner of offences, and to dissolve their status as violations. Slaves could be "owned" and mistreated as they were not thought entitled to the same personal rights that slave owners were. Marital rape was not considered a violation until fairly recently, as marriage was thought to constitute consent to all future sexual activity.[10] Children were not thought entitled to rights that would prohibit corporal punishment, either from parents or schoolteachers. While our modern

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[8]Gert gives a list of five rules (out of a total of ten moral rules) any of which if violated constitutes a case of violence. These rules are "Do not kill, Do not cause pain, Do not disable, Do not deprive of freedom or opportunity, Do not deprive of pleasure" (Gert, 1969, p.616).

[9]MacCallum argues for a definition of violence that focuses on the violation of the integrity of a person (which will include physical integrity as well autonomy) (MacCallum 2009, pp. 122-125). Garver includes a right to one's body and autonomy, as well as ancillary rights including a right to the product of one's labour (Garver 1971, p. 243).

[10] Marital rape was finally criminalized in the United Kingdom in 1991 (BBC, 2008)

views on these issues have thankfully changed, contemporary examples of a similar nature abound. The rights that refugees, immigrants, or other non-citizens enjoy are minimal, and offer a modern example of the urge to assign rights by group membership, as does the case of non-human animals, mentioned previously, criminals, and those deemed to have intellectual disabilities. In light of this troubling historical track record and the lack of evidence for the belief that modern philosophers are somehow less biased or entangled than our predecessors, I think there is good reason to doubt the ability of violation accounts to guide us towards genuine solutions to violence.

1.4 Violence as an Attitude

Focusing on the above worry regarding violation accounts provides the beginnings of an alternative definition of violence. Violation accounts had us focus on those *affected* to determine if an action constituted violence or not. It was either something in the nature (or membership) of those affected that entitled them to a right against the action, and they had not acted in a way that constitute forfeiture of that right. I want to suggest reversing the direction of our focus. Rather than trying to identify some feature of those affected by our actions that allows us to describe the act as a violation, we could try to identify some feature of the actor that may prove useful. I want to suggest that rather than thinking about violence in terms of particular kinds of actions, it is more useful to think of violence as an *attitude*.

There is some support for this view within many of the accounts seen so far. Most versions of all three types of accounts specify some intention requirement in order to differentiate between accidents and acts of violence. However, intention plays only a secondary role in these definitions. For example, a suffering based account might require that the act be done intentionally in order to exclude cases of suffering that result from accidents. It also however, happens to be the case that we would call the intentional infliction of suffering an act of *malice*, we have a name for the attitude the act expresses. Rather than starting with intentional acts that result in suffering (that we happen to call "malicious"), I suggest starting with the attitude of malice, which may be expressed in a variety of ways, some of which will be overlooked if we focus only on one type of consequence or mode of expression.

What exactly is the attitude we need to focus on? It cannot be limited just to malice or greed, as these are tied too closely to the idea that the actor intended to cause suffering or to make others 'worse off' which are only superficial features of violence. The attitude we want must be more general and not tied to these specific forms of violence. Returning again to the problems described with violation accounts, we saw that our efforts were made problematic as a result of bias, specifically self-interested bias. I want to suggest then, that the problematic attitude is one of egoism.[11]

This attitude is more prevalent than one might think, and it may even be impossible to be completely selfless.[12] The impossibility of complete selflessness does not however invalidate the view, but implies only that there may be limits to how far we may succeed in "solving" the problem. As Gandhi writes, "[f]or me non-violence is not a mere philosophical principle. It is the rule and the breath of my life. I know I fail often, sometimes consciously, more often

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[11] The attitude of non-violence then, is one of selflessness.
[12] For example, some may argue that at least some degree of egoism is required to motivate and act on even the very basic actions required to sustain one's own life.

unconsciously. It is a matter not of the intellect but of the heart" (Gandhi pp. 74-75). This raises a further point, that it is not only the malicious and greedy attitudes of murderers and thieves that are of concern, but the egoism that makes an appearance in all of our lives that represents the problem.

It is important to note that a conception of violence as an attitude is not wholly distinct from actions. Actions, and their results are of course the most salient and confronting aspect of this topic. And there is an obvious and familiar connection between particular attitudes and the kinds of actions they result in. It is crucial however to recognize that these familiar connections are not necessary and an attitude may be expressed in other ways than we are accustomed to. Furthermore, attitudes can be expressed in individual actions, as well as those that are part of institutional arrangements. An attitude based account will therefore include the paradigmatic direct and personal acts of violence of traditional definitions as well as so-called "structural violence" where egoistic attitudes are expressed via socio-political or economic institutions.

This is a preliminary pass at identifying the attitude at issue and not to be taken as comprehensive. But it is specific enough for our present discussion. I think it is clear that if we managed to "solve" the problem of egoistic attitudes, in the variety of forms it may take, we could be confident that we had solved the problem of violence.

II

With this conception of violence as an attitude in hand, I turn now to some preliminary remarks on the implications of this view for issues of interest to feminist philosophy. In the first part of this section, I examine how this definition of violence allows pornography to be understood as violence, despite the absence of direct, personal, physical violence by the consumer; circumventing some of the theoretical difficulties feminists have encountered on this issue. I then offer some more speculative comments regarding the implications of this view for feminism more generally, suggesting it may require a more critical evaluation of some familiar feminist aims.

2.1 Pornography

Few who write about pornography refer to it as violence. Those who do, for example Andrea Dworkin (A. Dworkin, 1981), have been criticized for misapplying the term for dramatic effect, unhelpfully misdirecting the debate and alienating potential supporters. The worry is that the term has been used metaphorically, perhaps belittling the suffering experienced by those victims of 'real' violence, and accusing the consumers of pornography of a worse offense than is justified. It is my view that pornography *can* be legitimately conceived of as violence, given the definition of violence defended above, and furthermore, that this understanding will be more fruitful when compared to existing approaches to the wrongs of pornography.

Existing attempts to identify the wrongness of pornography have pursued several avenues and encountered various difficulties. Some have tried to argue that the wrongs of pornography lie in its connection to suffering – either indirectly by encouraging and normalizing rape and violence against women (a complex causal connection), or necessarily in its production. As Dworkin and MacKinnon's experience shows, the causal argument is difficult to make (MacKinnon, 1997). The second claim is difficult to argue in light of other theoretical

commitments, such as the liberal belief that (genuine) consent neutralizes the wrong that may have been present when one person injures or harms another. Supporters of the pornography industry could agree with their critics that forced work in the industry is wrong (as would be forced work in any other industry), and further, would make any harms or injuries sustained as part of that work a further wrong. They could however disagree that the pornography industry is fundamentally and necessarily characterized by such lack of consent, and with the proper regulation and oversight, it could avoid the problems of consent that would make any such harms wrongful. Any critics who insist that even with consent such harms are wrongful run up against further liberal worries about autonomy and paternalism, and risk facing the accusation that they are not treating the women who choose to work in pornography as the autonomous agents they are.

Another approach has been to characterize the wrongness of pornography in terms of a violation. For MacKinnon, this takes the form of a violation of the right to free speech by silencing women (by discouraging women to speak, undermining the authority of their speech, or causing their speech to be misunderstood). Langton (1993) argues that pornography causes women's speech to be misinterpreted, supporting the view that pornography interferes with women's right to free speech. In contrast to the first approach, which tries to undermine support for pornography on the basis of a right to free speech by pointing to the *harms* it causes, this second approach pits one group's right to free speech (pornographers) against the same right of another group (women). This approach also faces several criticisms and difficulties including the worry that accepting that such a conflict of rights implies many other generally acceptable actions are problematic (R. Dworkin 1981). Furthermore, critics disagree with the asserted content of the right to free speech, and that we can legitimately claim that it entails the comprehensive entitlement that MacKinnon and Langton suggest.

In sum, attempts to claim that the violence of pornography lies in the harm it causes or requires, or in its violation of certain rights, faces significant challenges, and in my view has enjoyed little success. This is not to say that these challenges cannot be overcome, but the obstacles are considerable and in the interim, the debate lacks a solid foundation.

The issues critics of pornography encounter provide a good example of the kinds of worries outlined in the previous more general discussion of violence as a problem. Attempts to pin the problem on harm and suffering only directs us to find ways to maintain the practise while appearing to address or dissolve these harms (via regulation or consent). Efforts to characterize the problem as rights violations spawns obfuscating debates that try to reconcile rights that necessarily conflict, generating novel justifications for why some rights trump others, or haggling over the content of key rights and who possesses them. I want to suggest that continuing to focus on these areas will likely motivate further efforts to "solve" those problems in ways that avoid engaging with the underlying, more substantial problem. If we however, understand the violence of pornography to consist in the attitude it expresses and reflects, we will have additional and more fruitful tools with which to grasp and address the problem.

Pornography can be understood to express or reflect the attitude of egoism in at least two ways. The first is in a simple and straightforward way, in that the consumer of pornography seeks to satisfy a self-directed desire for sexual gratification. While this understanding is not incorrect, it is hard to see why this is a helpful description. There is however a more complex understanding available to us. Egoism not only motivates certain straightforward desires, it also works more subtly, in this case, driving the ways in which we like to see ourselves. I think it fair to suggest that most ordinary consumers of pornography would not consider it acceptable to

personally purchase sexual "services" from a life and blood person.[13] The social stigma of being a labelled a "john", having to face the reaction of the prostitute as another human being, and be confronted with the conditions in which she lives. I think many find this prospect unsettling. Pornography however, allows the prospective "john" to bypass or circumvent these unpleasantries. The consumer is able to satisfy a sexual desire that the consumer recognizes and believes to be wrong while avoiding the shame and the uncomfortable dealings with another human being, as well as leaving unthreatened his belief that he is a "good guy". To offer an analogy, the modern meat industry functions in a way that dissociates the clearly necessary connection between killing animals and eating meat (Adams 2010). This dissociation allows people to eat meat and still think of themselves animal lovers. Pornography functions in a similar way, allowing consumers to act in a way they would otherwise consider wrong, without seeing it as a wrong.[14] The focus shifts from trying to prove how pornography constitutes a wrong externally to understanding it as a mechanism for dissociation. Many (though admittedly not all) consumers of pornography already believe that the personal, direct buying of sex from another human being is wrong, though they have failed to see how pornography, by distancing its consumers from the personal act, allows them to 'remotely' express the very same problematic attitudes that it requires. It is this more complex sense in which pornography expresses egoism that allows us to describe it as violence, in a way that offers something new and hopefully helpful to the debate.

2.2 Approaches to feminism

I wish to turn now to a more general discussion on what some of the further implications of this view of violence are for feminism and feminist philosophy. These remarks are intended to be simple preliminary thoughts and suggestions of avenues of further study rather than final conclusions on the matter. Furthermore, the general thought behind these suggestions are not necessarily new, having been raised by many others, though with different fields of interest in mind and starting from different issues. Firstly, I want to draw attention to the point that while the conception of violence as an attitude allows us to describe and conceive of several practices as violence that are not traditionally seen as violence (for instance, pornography), this result cuts both ways, and may require us to re-examine certain feminist practices, aims and projects in a critical light. For example, a feminism that aims simply to acquire an equal share of the currently male dominated and violence-dependent pie will merely shift the burden of violence. This will likely lend support for a radical feminism over a reformist, liberal feminism at least with respect to issues of economic justice.

A critical examination of traditional feminist aims may also support a more radical approach with respect to the range of issues that are considered relevant. We should be wary of the potentially egoistic suggestion that feminism can justifiably focus only on issues of women's oppression or exploitation, leaving other issues "aside for now". As Adams and Donovan write in support of a feminist connection with animal ethics, '…we believe that women, as themselves

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[13] While some may suggest that they see nothing wrong with prostitution in theory, I think they often have different beliefs when it comes to their own actions, and even those who agree it is permissible in theory would struggle to imagine doing it themselves.

[14] Accepting the view that pornography can be legitimately labelled as violence does not imply that it should be legally prohibited (censored). This is a further step that requires substantial background discussion regarding what the appropriate responses are to violence defined as an attitude.

victims of objectification and exploitation, must not abandon other victims of such treatment in their rush to be accepted as "persons" entitled to equal rights' (Adams, 1995, p.7). Fields such as animal ethics, global justice, and environmental ethics for example, should not be thought of as diversionary or optional subjects of feminist inquiry, but essential components of a self-reflective, non-violent feminism.

Clearly, these remarks represent only a cursory sketch of the implications of an attitude based conception of violence for feminist philosophy. Similarly, the application of the view to the case of pornography is only the beginning of a more thorough analysis, as well as but one example of how the theory might be productive for a range of other issues. Despite their preliminary nature, I hope both discussions illustrate the potential of an attitude based conception of violence and can serve as invitations to further investigation and debate.

The aims of this chapter have been three-fold. First, definitions of violence should be evaluated in terms of how well they identify necessary features of a politically fundamental problem, rather than features only contingently related to violence, or conceptual analysis. Each of three common types of definitions of violence were then shown to fail in this regard. Second, I offered an outline of an alternative definition of violence that moves the focus away from problematic actions to attitudes. Third, I explored how this definition might provide a new perspective from which to consider the relations between women and violence, , demonstrating for example, how it exposes the violence of pornography, as well as how it helps answer more general questions about the appropriate aims and scope of feminist philosophy. These two examples however, are but a cursory exploration of the consequences that adopting this view of violence might entail. The shift in focus central to the view may help to motivate further novel approaches to a range of existing questions regarding women, violence and agency, as well as to inspire new lines of questioning in areas overlooked on the traditional narrow view.

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