

MacKinnon's Silencing Argument

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Abstract

Catharine MacKinnon, a famous anti-pornography feminist, believes that pornography harms women in a very special and serious way: by silencing them or violating their civil right to free speech. Pornography may thus prevent women from communicating their ideas to others, not by preventing them from producing or distributing sounds and scrawls, but by preventing those sounds and scrawls from being understood by hearers. In this paper, I will argue that MacKinnon fails to show how pornography violates women's civil right to freedom of speech, and suggest that thus far we remain a long way from showing why pornography harms women.

Key Words: a right to pornography, Ronald Dworkin, Catharine MacKinnon, MacKinnon's silencing argument, MacKinnon's assumption