To the Editor:

I have recently returned from a year and a half in Japan, and of course, have found that quite a few things have changed over that period of time. Some of these changes I think are good changes ("progress," perhaps), but what is disconcerting to see is some of the changes that are in my mind only regression. Perhaps I can begin with an example.

Frankly, I was a little surprised upon my return to find the subject of pornography in such heated discussion. Apparently, over the past year and a half, quite a fuss has been raised about the Lecture Series Committee's traditional practice of showing sexually explicit films during the semester. I found this interesting because I personally find absolutely nothing good and almost everything that I don't believe is wrapped up in pornography. Could we have made some progress in this area at last? Could it be that the student body had finally scrutinized their own feelings about the issue, found that pornography usually only leads to a very artificial substitute for those relationships, and decided to do away with the stuff? Probably not.

And sure enough, I've found that it seems to be that the fuss seems to be a few people and administrators who wave their banners high.

I certainly can understand their concern, too, the degrading influences of pornography are something I will not tolerate in my own life, but the key elements here are "to me" and "my own life." The decision must be made on a personal level. What really surprises me is the notion (apparently even somewhat supported by the administration) of banning these options in the lives of others as a solution to some kind of problem.

As I hear most contentions of those who have these films, I've noticed that the primary arguments seem to be centered around the dehumanizing nature of such a practice. I can certainly understand this concern but I really don't feel that a couple of movies a term are really contributors to this moral consciousness but more of a reflection of a coarseness that already exists. In other words, the sad truth is that if these movies were not met with such popularity, I'm sure they would not be shown. Hence the real question, for someone genuinely interested in improving this situation, is how to bring about a change so that the films lose popularity and naturally are not shown anymore.

One possible solution might be a "moral screening" process before admission to MIT. Questions concerning one's background (especially matters pornographic) and moral convictions could be analyzed and candidates accepted on a basis that ensured only the most virtuous and morally upright became students. Perhaps an affidavit similar to one signed by dormitory residents, which says they will comply with the Basic Regulations, could be required before final acceptance. My point is simply that an institutionalized policy will either be foolish (like the preceding pornography) or sidestep the real problem (as would banning films).

Unfortunately, the above is only one isolated case of the many I've noticed on my return. I use it only as an example of a growing tendency I see to deprive the individual of something most fundamental, his need to be able to choose freely.

We seem to be losing hold of one of the most cherished freedoms in either democracy, religion, or philosophy, namely the virtue of individual choice. In denying people the right to think and choose, we also deprive them of the very more basic important chance for growth.

So finally, to those who would wave their banners of truth, justice, and virtue in support of one cause or another, I would pose one question. Isn't it about time that we begin to really deal with these issues by directing our lives to helping others live their dreams as the front line in the battle against birth defects, our nation's major child health problem. In schools, offices, homes, factories, and civic organizations, it's people power that makes the difference.

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