

## Beauty Standards

Richards and Dworkin

### Overview

- Different Feminisms
  - Liberal vs Radical
- Argument for Beauty Standards in General
  - Beauty is a Good
- Argument Against Beauty Standards as They Exist
  - Critique of Romantic Love

### Feminisms

#### **Liberal Feminism** (Richards)

Liberation of Individual Women

#### **Radical Feminism** (Dworkin)

Liberation of the Group: Woman

### Richards

- **Goal:** Try to figure out why someone might take beauty to be a problem
- **Method:** Explore different *colloquial* claims
- **Conclusion:** Beauty practices are, in general, perfectly acceptable

### Richards

- **Claim:** If you do not “adorn” yourself, then you will not be loved just for your beauty. [Men “only want one thing” argument.]
- **Response:** Eliminating it will also get rid of good men.

### Richards

- **Claim:** Enjoyment of sex is a bad, negative thing.
- **Response:** This is personal preference, not a serious feminist ideal.

### Richards

- **Claim:** Beauty is not important.
- **Response:** We recognize beauty as important in other areas (art, nature), so it makes no sense to reject it in the area of people.

### Richards

- **Claim:** Valuing beauty discriminates against ugly women.
- **Response:** Beauty is like natural talent: the distribution may be unjust and we may want to correct it, but the solution is not to pretend it is not important.

### Richards

- **Claim:** All people are naturally equally beautiful.
- **Response:** This is simply false. Arguing otherwise would entail arguing that beauty is not important (see previous points).

Does Richards successfully prove her conclusion:  
Beauty practices are, in general,  
perfectly acceptable?

### Dworkin

- **Goal:** Show that current beauty standards are highly problematic and explain why.
- **Method:** Examine egregious example of beauty standards (footbinding) and figure out why it is wrong. Show that current beauty standards are wrong in the same way [Argument from Analogy]
- **Conclusion:** Current beauty standards are wrong because they are based on problematic perceptions of gender relations, represented by the concept of "Romantic Love."

Describe Chinese Footbinding

Dworkin

**Derived from the Practice of Footbinding:**  
“Standards of beauty describe in precise terms the relationship that an individual will have to her own body.”

Dworkin

“The pain [in the grooming process] teaches an important lesson: no price is too great, no process too repulsive, no operation too painful for the woman who would be beautiful. The tolerance of pain and the romanticization of that tolerance begins here, in preadolescence, in socialization, and serves to prepare women for lives of child-bearing, self-abnegation, and husband-pleasing.”

Dworkin

**Argument from Analogy:**  
Two things are similar in *important* ways

Dworkin

**The Analogical Leap:**  
Most (perhaps all) present beauty standards are problematic in the same way as Chinese Footbinding

Name Current Beauty Practices

Dworkin

**The Solution:**  
“A first step in the process of liberation (women from their oppression, men from the unfreedom of their fetishism) is the radical redefining of the relationship between women and their bodies. “

Does Dworkin successfully prove her conclusion:  
Current beauty standards are wrong because they are based on problematic perceptions of gender relations, represented by the concept of "Romantic Love?"