

[Home](#) / [Op-ed](#) /

Sex and '68: Liberal movement revolutionized 'sexuality' but at what cost?



Slavoj Žižek is a cultural philosopher. He's a senior researcher at the Institute for Sociology and Philosophy at the University of Ljubljana, Global Distinguished Professor of German at New York University, and international director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities of the University of London.

Published time: 8 Feb, 2018 16:41





© Lucy Nicholson / Reuters

625

10

This year marks half a century since the May 1968 events in Paris (and elsewhere) which launched a youth-driven liberal movement that changed the world.

Thus, now is a good time to reflect upon the similarities and differences between the sexual liberation and feminism of the 1960's and the protest campaigns that flourish today, from LGBT+ to #MeToo.

In the aftermath of '68, the French "*progressive*" press published a whole series of petitions demanding the decriminalization of paedophilia, claiming that in this way the artificial and oppressive culturally-constricted frontier that separated children from adults could be abolished and the right to freely use one's body be extended also to children. They claimed that only dark forces of "*reaction*" and "*oppression*" could oppose this measure and among the signatories were iconic cultural figures such as Sartre, de Beauvoir, Derrida, Barthes, Foucault, Aragon, Guattari, Deleuze and Lyotard.

Read more



[Whistling at women & asking for phone number could cost men €350 in France](#)

Today, however, paedophilia is perceived as one of the worst crimes imaginable and, instead of fighting for it in the name of anti-Catholic progress, it is mostly associated with the dark side of the Catholic Church itself. Which means that fighting against paedophilia is today a progressive task directed at the forces of reaction.

And the funniest victim of this shift was the politician Daniel Cohn-Bendit, still living in the old spirit of the 60's, who recently described, in an interview, how while in his younger

years, when he worked in a kindergarten, he regularly played masturbatory games with young girls.

Subsequently, to his surprise, he faced a brutal backlash, with many voices demanding his removal from the European parliament and legal prosecution.

Changing Mores

CHANGING MOSES

The gap separating the '68 sexual liberation from today's struggle for sexual emancipation is clearly discernible in a recent polemical exchange between Germaine Greer and some feminists who critically reacted to her negative remarks concerning #MeToo. Their main point was how, while Greer's main thesis – that women should sexually liberate themselves from male domination and assume active sexual lives without any recourse to victimhood – was valid in the sexual-liberation movement of the 1960s, today the situation is different.

And what has happened, in between, is that the sexual emancipation of women (i.e. their ability to freely assume a social life as active sexual) was itself commodified. While it's true to say women are no longer perceived as passive objects of male desire, it's also the case that their active sexuality itself now equates (in male eyes) to their permanent availability and readiness to engage in sexual interaction.

In these new circumstances, forcefully saying NO isn't considered mere self-victimization since it implies the rejection of this new form of sexual subjectivization of women, and demands women not only passively submit to male sexual domination but act as if they actively want it.

Read more



[Sign a contract before sex?
Political correctness could
destroy passion](#)

Who's to Blame?

While there is a strong element of truth in this line of argument, one should nonetheless also admit how problematic it is to anchor one's political demands to status of victimhood. Is the basic characteristic of today's subjectivity not the weird combination of the free subject who believes themselves ultimately responsible for their own fate and the subject who bases their argument on their status as a victim of circumstances beyond their own control? Every contact with another human

being is experienced as a potential threat – if the other smokes, if he casts a covetous glance at me, he already hurts me; this logic of victimization is today universalized, reaching well beyond the standard cases of sexual or racist harassment.

For instance, think of the growing financial industry around paying damage claims.

This notion of the subject as an irresponsible victim involves the extreme Narcissistic perspective: every encounter with the Other appears as a potential threat to the subject's precarious balance. The paradox is that, in today's predominant form of individuality, the self-centred assertion of the psychological subject paradoxically overlaps with the perception of oneself as a victim of circumstances.

Billionsaire 'Leftists'

One cannot shed the suspicion that the Politically Correct cultural Left is getting so fanatical about advocating "*progress*," and fighting new battles against cultural and sexist "*apartheids*," to cover up its own full immersion into global capitalism. This is the space where LGBT+ and #MeToo meet Tim Cook and Bill Gates.

How did we come to this? As many conservatives have noticed (and they are right here), our time is marked by the progressive disintegration of a shared network of customs which ground what George Orwell approvingly referred to as "*common decency*."

Today, these standards are dismissed as a yoke that subordinates individual freedom to some proto-Fascist, organic social forms. In such a situation, the liberal vision of minimalist laws (which should not regulate social life too much but just prevent individuals encroaching upon - or "*harassing*" - each other) reverts into an explosion of legal and moral rules, and into an endless process of legal argument and moralization, which is labelled as "*the fight against all forms of discrimination*."



RT
@RT_com

In the aftermath of [#Weinstein](#)'s downfall, we at risk of broadening the definition of sexual harassment too widely (Op-Ed by Danielle Ryan) on.rt.com/8rqn

9:25 PM - Nov 8, 2017

Coverage of sexual harassment claims carelessly blurs lines ...

Amid the Weinstein scandal furor, there's risk the line between minor misconduct and real sex abuse may be erased, writes journalist
rt.com

39 54 people are talking about this

If there are no shared mores that are allowed to influence the law, only the fact of “*harassing*” other subjects, then a new question arises. Who – in the absence of such mores – will decide what counts as “*harassment*”?

After all, in France we see associations of obese people which demand that all public campaigns against obesity and for healthy eating habits be stopped, since they hurt the self-esteem of obese persons. Meanwhile, the militants of “*Veggie Pride*” condemn the “*specieism*” of meat-eaters (who discriminate against animals, privileging humans – for them, a particularly disgusting form of “*fascism*”) and demand that “*vegetophobia*” should be treated as a kind of xenophobia and proclaimed a crime. And so on and so forth, until perhaps one day the debate reaches things like incest-marriage, consensual murder and cannibalism.

Read more

Will the new rules of sexuality be like an ashtray with a no-smoking sign?

Free-For-All

The problem here IS the obvious arbitrariness of the ever shifting rules. Let us take child sexuality: one can argue that its criminalization is an unwarranted discrimination, but one can also argue that children should be protected from sexual molestation by adults.

And we could go on here: the same people who advocate the legalization of soft drugs usually support the prohibition of smoking in

public places; and the same folk who protest against the patriarchal abuse of small children in our societies, worry when someone condemns members of foreign cultures who live among us for doing exactly this (say, the Roma people preventing children from attending public schools), claiming that this is a case of meddling with other “*ways of life*.”

It is thus for necessary structural reasons that this “*fight against discrimination*” is

It is not for necessary structural reasons that the fight against discrimination is an endless process endlessly postponing its final point, a society freed of all moral prejudices which, as Jean-Claude Michea put it, "would be on this very account a society condemned to see crimes everywhere."

[Several sections of this article have been excerpted from previous publications by Slavoj Žižek.]

The statements, views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of RT.



Reporting what the mainstream media won't: [Follow RT's Twitter account](#)



Condi Rice warns #MeToo movement risks 'infantilizing' women



French women are brave to speak up for sex, but their #MeToo opponents want power, not pleasure

More From the Web

Sponsored Links

You will start speaking a new language in 3 weeks thanks to this app made in Germany

Babbel

UK inflation 'peaks' as sterling hits post-Brexit high

IW

Singles in Southwark - Feel Free To Look Around!

Top 10 Sites | Sponsored Links

More From RT.com

Vagina masterpiece cost me my Facebook account, teacher tells court

Masturbation is killing up to 100 Germans a year, warns forensic physician

Clandestine sex doll brothel opens in Paris (PHOTO)

Topless 'sextremist' sends 'get the f**k out' message to Ukrainian leader at Vienna ball (PHOTOS)

'F**k your period': Pornhub urges women 'self care' for pain-reducing orgasm

Tu-160 Blackjack piercing snowy skies at low altitude caught on camera (VIDEO)

by Taboola

Conversation (150)

Sort by **Best** ▾

 **Log In**



Your nickname...

Add a comment...



1234



They did not revolutionized sexuality. They degraded it to insignificancy or perversion.

Reply · Share · 81 Likes ·  



evilution → 1234

in other words nothing new under the sun : back to the times of Sodom and Gomorrah

Reply · Share · 33 Likes ·  



Bert → evolution

Like the current AIDS epidemic in Russia.

Reply · Share · 4 Likes ·



Golem4 → Bert

Thanks to the heroin the CIA is pushing.

Reply · Share · 13 Likes ·

Show 13 more replies ▾



Amused

I will never stop chuckling at a campaign against sexual assault and harassment that unwittingly uses the slogan "Pound Me Too!!" ;)

Reply · Share · 52 Likes ·



Onionize → Amused

Lol

Reply · Share · 4 Likes ·



ernie → Onionize

Edited
the liberal movement was/is a decadent movement, and it's ongoing, and definitely is not "leftist". if you looked at the cultural revolution (the closest thing to "leftist"), you never really saw any gay pride parades, porn, or women sleeping around like you do in most kapitalist/rightist societies today (ie usa, europe, canada, australia).

Reply · Share · 11 Likes ·



Jean-Marie L. ★ Leader

Edited
The left is (etymologically) the heir of the 1793 French revolutionaries. Their goal is to destroy the Christian civilization. Since they've oversold class struggle and seek to avoid association with the 100 million murders of Marxist regimes, they are now using other "oppressed groups", LGBT's, hostile foreign cultures and religions, as new vectors of discord and chaos.

Reply · Share · 40 Likes ·



Goingcloud ★ Leader → Jean-Marie L.

I think you mean 1789-1799 French revolutionaries.

Reply · Share · 5 Likes ·



Jean-Marie L. ★ Leader → Goingcloud

Corrected. Thanks.

Reply · Share · 2 Likes ·



Diz → Jean-Marie L.

Yeah correct that you are facist fool.

Reply · Share · 4 Likes · [thumbs up/down icons]

Show 13 more replies ▾



why

How is that West liberals do not understand that expression "common sense" is product of evolving Christian culture and it is unique. Do we need to bring forward certain prophet age preference.

Reply · Share · 30 Likes · [thumbs up/down icons]



you are right → why

"but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." That is why ispaedophilia wrong.

Reply · Share · 13 Likes · [thumbs up/down icons]



fact check → you are right

Except it isn't actually mentioned in the bible, is it.

Reply · Share · 2 Likes · [thumbs up/down icons]



Watchman → fact check

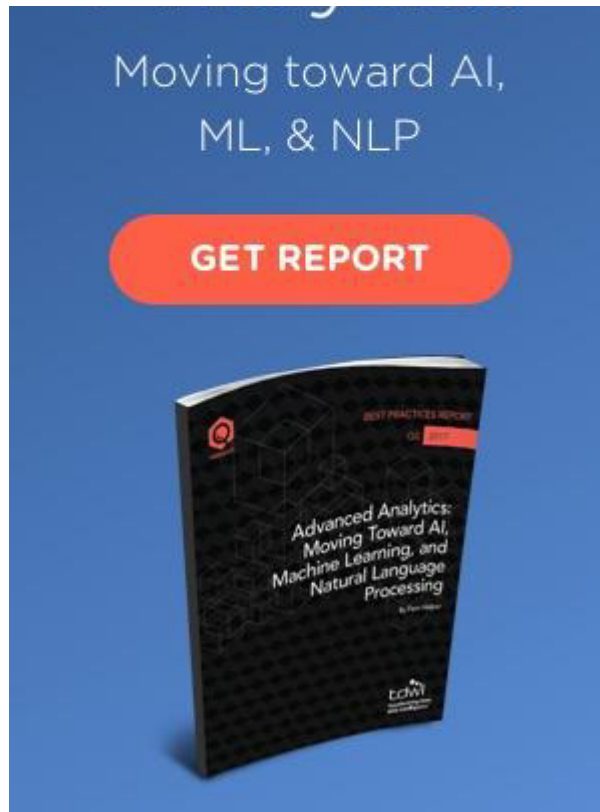
"but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."
Matthew 18:6

Reply · Share · 8 Likes · [thumbs up/down icons]

Show 12 more replies ▾

SHOW MORE COMMENTS...





Recommended

Promoted Links by Taboola

6 Online Dating Sites that Actually Work in Southwark

top10.me

Topless FEMEN activists tackled by anti-abortionists during protest clash (EXPLICIT VIDEO)

You'll start speaking a new language in 3 weeks thanks to this app made in Germany

Babbel

Sophisticated technology unearthed beneath ancient Greek 'pyramid'

Find Out Now If Your Mortgage Was Mis-Sold

Mortgage.Claims

Jet slides on runway & bursts into flames at airshow (PHOTO, VIDEOS)



'Gender trouble': Museum removes 19th century painting to 'prompt conversation'



Sexist paradise? Luxury island resort to open – for women only



UK's first sex doll brothel forced to shut down & now it's giving away latex lovers for free

العربية ESPPYCDEFR

ИНОТВ

РТД

RUPTLY

RT News App

News

Op-ed

Live

Legal disclaimer

USA

RT360

Applications

Privacy policy

UK

Shows

Where to watch

About us

Russian politics

More

Schedule

Contact info

Business

Business projects

Feedback

Sport

On-Air Talent

Vacancies



© Autonomous Nonprofit Organization "TV-Novosti", 2005–2018. All rights reserved.