

Zoe Dewitt

On 'The Sexual is Political'

A reply to Slavoj Žižek's remarks on 'transgenderism'

Shortened version of the essay as presented in the lecture performance of the same title given at the Athens Museum of Queer Arts (AMOQA) on May 7, 2017.

As known from mainstream internet media, the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek is specialized in the philosophy of toilets.¹ Therefore it came as no surprise that he recently entered the discussion about segregated toilets and the problem which kind of bathrooms transgender persons should be allowed or forbidden to use by law, as it has been conducted during the last years in many US states [...]. I respect Žižek as a philosopher, and – although I had expected the opposite – found him quite sympathetic in his neurotic and erratic demeanor when I saw one of his recent lectures in Vienna. Nevertheless his article on transgenderism, entitled 'The Sexual is Political'², is highly questionable – not only because it shows a severe lack of knowledge regarding the subject, but also for its slightly pejorative undertone that is implicit to his perspective – so that I feel compelled to reply to some of his remarks. I'm not specialized in contemporary academic discourses on gender and its socio-political implications as the main focus of my philosophy is a different one, so I will here mainly write from the position of a person that has adopted transgender practices as her way of everyday life.[...]

So let's see what Slavoj Žižek has to say about the topic. To begin with, the article starts with a fatal error: Žižek describes transgenderism as something that occurs when an individual experiences discord between his/her biological sex (and the corresponding gender, male or female, assigned to him/her by society at birth) and his/her subjective identity. This is simply wrong - it describes not transgenderism but transsexuality. A transgender person, according to my understanding, is rather a person that adopts certain ways of living, dressing, behaviour, thinking and sensation that are traditionally attributed to the opposite sex. Transsexuals on the other hand indeed experience this discord between biological sex/attributioned gender and their subjective identity, and the solution is usually to transform their bodies by a surgical gender reassignment. Although there might be a certain overlapping between these two groups (e.g. when trans men remove their breasts to provide a male look) and both groups show some similarities (i.e. the tendency to switch to the other sex or gender), they are essentially quite different. According to my experience, transgender persons usually don't feel a big discomfort with their natural body – while transsexuals may greatly suffer from the experience of 'being born with the wrong body'. One could assume that this distinction between transsexual and transgender is commonly known, so it's even more astonishing that Žižek mixed up these two terms. [...]

I would like to place here also some remarks on the term 'identity' which inevitably appears in connection with this topic and which often is used in a misleading way. I often hear transgender persons say that they identify themselves as man or woman, or they may ask: 'As which kind of gender do you identify yourself?' Well, that's not only ungrammatical, but also doesn't describe what happens in reality. I cannot identify myself *as* something. I can identify myself *with* something (i.e. a certain gender), or I can be identified by others *with* something. When I identify myself with a certain gender, this does not necessarily mean that I

will be perceived by others as a representative of that gender – It can be just a subjective feeling. On the other hand I can present myself in my social surrounding with outward signs that are associated with a certain gender, and then others will – more or less – identify my person with that gender. That's what transgender practices are about: they are not a matter of subjective feeling, and also not a matter of proclaiming a new identity – they are a game on the ground of 'being seen', a tricky manipulation of the impressions that others have of me, so that they will associate my person by traditional equalizations with a certain gender. [...] When we speak of identity in terms of gender we also have to be aware that the adoption of attributes that are usually ascribed to the opposite sex is not a single step from one symbolic category to another one. This process rather takes place on an imaginary level, and in terms of Deleuze/Guattari it would represent a molecular way of 'becoming'³, not a change between two molar entities (as the symbolic differentiation of 'man' and 'woman' would suggest). 'Molecular' means in this case that what we perceive as these entities (a man, a woman) is in fact an assemblage of countless small features that in sum create the impression of a person being either man or woman – which are the 'molar' or codified wholes that we recognize according to our common traditional concepts. As I have already mentioned, you will not become a transgender person by simply proclaiming that from now on you assume the opposite gender. It's a continuous work on various construction sites: as a trans woman for example you might have to pluck your cilia, remove your body hair, use a little or more make-up here or there, find appropriate clothing that matches somehow with your personality, as well as find shoes which fit to that clothes. A trans women may face the same problems as cis women encounter: you never have enough shoes (not because they are a sexual fetishes, but rather and very simply because different clothes require different shoes – problems that men usually don't understand in their severity), you might be annoyed by men occupying more space than their own seat offers in public transport facilities, or you are being followed at night by a man in short distance, who didn't see more of you than a skirt and perhaps a handbag. Transgender practices belong – in Lacanian terms – to the order of the imaginary, as all these little particularities resemble the pixels of a digital image, which in the end gives the impression of what we recognize as depicted in the image. Although this impression comprises also other senses (smell, voice etc.) most of it works on a visual plane.

[...] But let's come back to Žižek and the problem of segregated toilets. In his article he writes:

Transgender subjects who appear as transgressive, defying all prohibitions, simultaneously behave in a hyper-sensitive way insofar as they feel oppressed by enforced choice ("Why should I decide if I am man or woman?") and need a place where they could recognize themselves. If they so proudly insist on their "trans-," beyond all classification, why do they display such an urgent demand for a proper place? Why, when they find themselves in front of gendered toilets, don't they act with heroic indifference—"I am transgendered, a bit of this and that, a man dressed as a woman, etc., so I can well choose whatever door I want!

Here we encounter not only a basic misunderstanding but also what I would call a pejorative representation of transgender persons as they are characterized as hyper-sensitive, proud of themselves and unheroic at the same time. What Žižek seems to suggest here is that transgender persons are wrong in their reaction towards the enforced choice of segregated bathroom doors - instead of acting indifferently they sink into self-pity and the feeling of being oppressed. The basic misunderstanding here is that transgender persons don't need a special bathroom to recognize themselves – as we usually don't go to toilets for the purpose of self-recognition. The problem is not that they don't know which door to choose because they are uncertain about their own gender identity, the problem is rather a very pragmatic one,

i.e. that they may face a bunch of problems when entering either door. I guess most trans persons know the situation, that when for instance they enter the bathroom corresponding with their biological sex, they will be politely informed: "Sorry, this is a men's (or ladies') bathroom!" In case they chose the bathroom corresponding to their adopted gender, they may fear to encounter equally irritated reactions. As I don't want to disturb cis woman in their bathroom, nor want to have the feeling that cis men look at me as a fag in a men's bathroom, I have a problem. [...] Segregated toilets are for transgender persons indeed an irreducible problem, not because these persons have a problem with their identity and don't know what they are (i.e. man or woman), the problem is rather that the signs or designations on the doors do not correspond with what they are, i.e. the symbolic order, that reduces sex to a binary concept, does not fully correspond with the ontological reality of their actual nature. [...]

One could of course argue that transgender practices are not a natural but a cultural phenomenon, a kind of aberration from the natural order of the sexes and their respective roles, an argument that is similarly put forward against homosexuality. Yet we can find not only homosexuality among many species in the realm of nature, but also transgender practices: As recently discovered there are female lions in Botswana that have grown manes to fool invading prides into thinking they are male as well as developing a deeper and more masculine roar, which is interpreted as a kind of survival strategy when the male alpha animal is missing or has died⁴. And not only animals are genderfluid and queer: As a report in The Guardian said in 2015⁵, England's oldest tree, the Fortingall Yew in Perthshire, was undergoing a sex change. Although classified throughout history as male (the tree is considered to be 3000 - 5000 years old and thus probably the oldest living being in Europe), it recently began to grow fruits which in case of dioecious plants is the privilege of the female plant. It was already known that yews may change their sex, the amazing bit in this case was rather that it occurred to this particular tree.

Žižek continues to illustrate the absurdity of transgenderism by predicting new forms of anti-discriminative claims that will follow from such efforts of emancipation. Without explicitly mentioning, but obviously referring to same sex marriage, he asks:

Why not marriages among multiple persons? What justifies the limitation to the binary form of marriage? Why not even a marriage with animals? After all we already know about the finesse of animal emotions. Is to exclude marriage with an animal not a clear case of "speciesism," an unjust privileging of the human species?

At this point his own arguments are going to be definitely contemptuous as he sets transgender practices in a line with – if not as a starting point for – further degenerations of human culture. It's the same argument that Putin used to justify the Russian laws against 'propaganda for non-traditional relationships', echoed by European right wing groups that favour a maintenance of traditional (i.e. patriarchal) family values. [...] What Žižek tries to suggest with these examples is obviously that: if we are going to meet the emancipatory demands of so called sexual minorities, we may quite well end up in a situation that marks the end of culture and civilization as such.

Another argument put forward by Žižek in favour of the binary gender concept is a rather old one. It says that whatever we try in order to escape a binary concept of sexuality, we still are condemned to reproduce the opposition of male and female in further variations and combinations:

The multiplicity of gender positions (male, female, gay, lesbian, bigender, transgender...) circulates around an antagonism that forever eludes it. Gays are male, lesbians female; transsexuals enforce a

passage from one to another; cross-dressing combines the two; bigender floats between the two...
Whichever way we turn, the two lurks beneath.

Here Slavoj Žižek falls into another error: Homosexuality is not a gender position. To equal gender position with sexual orientation is the foundation of heteronormativity: If I am a trans woman or a trans man, this does not necessarily imply that I am homosexual. If I am homosexual, this does not necessarily imply that my gender position differs from the traditional roles assigned to my biological sex. We should note at this point that in fact transgender positions are in a way incommensurable with the notions of hetero- or homosexuality. If I'm a trans woman and my sexual desire is for women, am I then homosexual or still heterosexual? If I'm a trans man and love women, everyone would say I'm still a lesbian, but in fact that's not the whole truth. The problem that arises here is that in the case in transgender persons the layers of biological sex and gender position are different ones whereas in a heteronormative context these are identical and firmly connected. To avoid the problem I had suggested once to substitute the terms 'homo-' and 'heterosexual' by the terms 'andro-' and 'gynaesexual' – which could also be replaced by any other expression with the meaning of 'men loving' or 'women loving'. The advantage of these terms would be that they only define the gender of the desired object, not the gender of the desiring subject. Žižek's article is full of examples where he mixes up the different notions of sex and gender, which might be understandable for a person who is deeply rooted in a traditional heteronormative worldview – yet when entering a philosophic discussion on the topic it is to my mind indispensable to fully internalize this distinction, otherwise one is inevitably condemned to fail fundamentally.

Žižek's argument that the antagonism of male and female is the very basis of all sexual orientations and gender positions resembles a common objection to homosexuality: of what sense is a homosexual relation, when one partner is taking a male and the other one a female position? As I have already said I'm not specialized in gender or queer theory, but I guess there have already been a lot of replies to this argument. I will instead answer with an example from the field of particle physics. As we are told, our universe consists of energy and matter, whereby either of these can be transformed into the other and vice versa. Matter is compounded by particles that basically consist of nothing but infinitesimal electric charges, i.e. energy. There are two kinds of charges, the positive and the negative (very much like in the binary gender conception, which one could say then is a reflection of this basic antagonism of forces in the universe). Thus the binary conception would be justified. But that's not the whole of the story, for we have also neutral particles, the most prominent one being the neutron, which together with the proton (a particle with positive charge) forms the nucleus of each atom. The electron, bound by its negative charge to the nucleus, circulates around it. So do we have here two or three elements? Let's go one step further: The electron is a fundamental particle as it is not compounded by other, smaller particles. On the other hand, both the neutron and positron are no fundamental particles – each consists of three quarks that are surrounded by a sea of gluons and quark-antiquark-pairs. Also quarks have electric charges ($-1/3$ or $+2/3$ of the elementary charge), but that's not all. Quarks can also bear another kind of charge, the so called colour charge. There are three colours (red, green, blue) and three anti-colours (anti-red, anti-green, anti-blue) – together they sum up to zero charge. As these descriptions usually elude the understanding of non-physicists (and many physicists as well), we can simply consider all these different charges as the information a particle can bear. The information a particle bears is constitutive for its identity. So as we can see, the particles of which this universe – and we as a part of it – consist of, are a quite motley crew, colourful and committed to diversity, very much like the queer communities of our time. The fundament, on which the whole particle zoo is based, is thus electric (and in case of the quarks also colour) charge – not positive and negative, but positive, negative and neutral (zero charge). Also the colour charge of quarks is not based upon a binary

opposition, as there are three colours, each of equal importance. The sense of all that is that even if nature is based on the opposition of positive and negative electric charges (and as modern physics shows there are more than these), this is just the beginning of a multiplicity of further variations that can be built up from this basic code of two opposed forces.

Žižek yet follows another line. To him the sexual relation is sufficiently described by a binary conception that includes the difference between its constitutive factors as a third element:

Lacan already pointed out that the “formula” of the sexual relationship as impossible/real is $1 + 1 + a$, i.e., the two sexes plus the “bone in the throat” that prevents its translation into a symbolic difference. This third element does not stand for what is excluded from the domain of difference; it stands, instead, for (the real of) difference as such.

Patriarchal logic is sometimes hard to follow, but I will try. At first, what does ‘the sexual relation as impossible/real’ mean? In Žižek’s interpretation the term impossible/real indicates that the sexual relation (i.e. of the two sexes) defies any classification, but still is unavoidable and real. In regard to Lacan’s system of the three orders the term ‘real’ implies that the sexual relation eludes both a symbolic (i.e. language based) and imaginary (i.e. visual) representation. In order to avoid sophistry we may ignore here the fact that this is somewhat contradictory as Lacan’s formula is already a symbolic representation. Yet this is not the entire impossibility associated with the sexual relation as described by Lacan. As he has pointed out in several of his writings, he considers the sexual relation as ‘impossible’ at all, as summarized in his maxim ‘there is no such thing as a sexual relation’ (*Il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel*)⁶. The sexual relation does not exist for the simple reason that sexual jouissance is ever a matter of subjectivity, which means that the male jouissance or sexual pleasure does not reach its object, i.e. the woman (in heteronormative terms), it always remains a jouissance of the phallus itself. There is nothing that connects the two sexes except the phallus which acts here as a copula (as symbolized in the formula by the sign +). Thus there is an irreducible asymmetry between the sexes: they neither correspond nor complement each other, and their union will never lead to a consistent whole.

What’s interesting in the formula is the letter *a*, which according to Žižek stands for the difference between the sexes that is constitutive for the sexual relation. Literally taken this would mean that homosexuality is not a sexual relation at all as in this case no difference between the sexes exists. Or the formula would then consist only of a rather poor $1 + 1$ which would reduce its explanatory power to pre-primary school level. So we can see that Lacan’s formula only makes sense in a heteronormative context. Moreover, it does not only exclude the possibility of homosexuality, but also the possibility of a sexual relation with many partners or less than one partner, i.e. autoerotism. Although Lacan named masturbation as ‘the jouissance of the idiot’⁷, his own description of the sexual relation as restricted to a simple phallic jouissance without being related to another person ironically displays itself a basically masturbatory process. Sadly enough that’s exactly what happens in many heteronormative relationships, and if we closely examine Lacan’s description [...] we will find that the status of the subject is always that of the male. From that it becomes already clear what the real tragedy of ‘traditional sexual relationships’ is. [...]

But let’s go on, for now we come to the most delicious part of Žižek’s article. Being not only philosopher but also psychoanalysts, he reveals now the primal scene of anxiety that defines transgenderism:

I stand in front of standard bi-gender toilets with two doors, LADIES and GENTLEMEN, and I am caught up in anxiety, not recognizing myself in any of the two choices. Again, do “normal”

heterosexuals not have a similar problem? Do they also not often find it difficult to recognize themselves in prescribed sexual identities? Which man has not caught himself in momentary doubt: "Do I really have the right to enter GENTLEMEN? Am I really a man?"

We can now see clearly what the anxiety of this confrontation really amounts to. Namely, it is the anxiety of (symbolic) castration. Whatever choice I make, I will lose something, and this something is NOT what the other sex has. Both sexes together do not form a whole since something is irretrievably lost in the very division of sexes. We can even say that, in making the choice, I assume the loss of what the other sex doesn't have, i.e., I have to renounce the illusion that the other has that X which would fill in my lack. And one can well guess that transgenderism is ultimately an attempt to avoid (the anxiety of) castration...

This explanation is indeed interesting, and although it's wrong there is a core of truth in it as transgender practices are undeniably related to the castration complex, yet just in the opposite way as Žižek suggests. As I have already mentioned on the basis of my own experience, the anxiety of a transgender person in front of the two bathroom doors is rather to create irritation amongst other users of the bathroom or to be watched by outsiders entering a bathroom that is reserved for the opposite sex, and thus to draw an attention upon oneself which is not always pleasant. In fact it's not the transgender person, who thinks s/he is going to enter the wrong bathroom, it's the other people who may tell him/her that s/he is entering the wrong bathroom. And it's also not the transgender person with whom something is wrong, there is something wrong with the symbolic designations on the doors as they do not fully correspond with reality. I usually don't have any problem entering either bathroom when there is nobody inside or around, and of course I also don't fear to lose something by either choice. It's much more the other way round – I win something by either choice: In the ladies' room I can sit on the toilet as it corresponds with my adopted gender, in the men's bathroom I can enjoy to use the urinal in standing position (if my skirt allows) and thus feel like a lady without need for penis envy. From that it becomes clear that transgender practices are not so much an attempt to avoid the anxiety of castration, but rather the factual overcoming of any (symbolic) castration. But what actually is the anxiety of symbolic castration? Isn't it the fear of biological males to lose that power which they are entitled to by the simple fact that they have been born with a penis? How could such a loss happen? Couldn't it be caused by a changing world, in which this sexual attribute loses the value of legitimizing power? Isn't this the fear of all those who defend traditional family values? Might it not even be possible that Slavoj Žižek's own decrial of transgender practices results from such a fear, and thus unmasks itself – in psychological terms – as a simple projection? His doubt 'Am I really a man?', that he foists on men in general, would at least point in such a direction. And yes, of course 'normal heterosexuals' may have similar doubts regarding prescribed sexual role models and not feel quite comfortable with them, but it's wrong to assume that transgender persons generally have such doubts or even are defined by them. (Again I have to insist here: heterosexuals are not the opposite of transgender persons and homosexuality is no gender position!) On the contrary, one could say that they overcome such doubts by living out the implicit ambiguity of prescribed sexual identities. From my own experience I can say that I never had such doubts regarding my own sexual and gender identity, neither before nor after I began to live as a transgender person (whereas I still don't feel quite well with prescribed sexual role models).

Obviously the castration anxiety is reserved for male subjects, for female ones Sigmund Freud has invented the penis envy. Freud's explanations how these complexes originate are highly abstruse and constructed. As for example a boy fears to be castrated by its father for its (unconscious) wish to mate with the mother, while a girl is envious of a penis as it doesn't want become like its mother, who has already been castrated

through her own fault. Instead it turns towards the father and (unconsciously) wishes to conceive a baby of him which it equals with penis itself. [...] Lacan's interpretation of castration anxiety follows similar lines: To him the (symbolic) threat of castration represents the *non du père* ('the no of the father'), which also includes the incest taboo. By accepting this 'no' the boy is introduced into the symbolic order of society and law, whose first significant is the phallus. [...]

Still I'm not convinced of both the Freudian and Lacanian version as they make use of connections that do not really match with the knowledge and imaginations of a child below the age of five, especially regarding the connection between penis, procreation and the conception of a child. Also I'm sceptical if a child would trace back the lack of a penis to an act of castration which usually is not part of the knowledge and experience of an infant. Children's fantasies are mostly simple, but still follow a stringent logic. Melanie Klein's notion, that the child believes the phallus would be inside the mother (on which Lacan's remarks are based⁸), is such an example: what is not outside must be inside, and the child here is not wrong considering the clitoris is biologically nothing but a small glans, and the vagina an inverted penis. When I had my first deep insight into a vagina at the age of nine or ten and I saw the girl's clitoris, I can clearly remember that I felt a big ease as I realized that also girls have inside a small penis. Sometimes a child's logic and spirit of research may come to quite different results than the fathers of psychoanalysis.

Whatever we may think about these interpretations, fact is – as my own memory shows clearly – that there is a certain unease within the child's psyche concerning the difference of the sexes. As my example also indicates, this unease results not only from the fact that there is a difference between the sexes, but also that this difference violates the child's inborn logic. We have to be aware here that infantile castration fantasies – no matter if they are authentic or foisted – serve to explain the difference of the sexes and appear mainly as a product of the child's imagination, while symbolic castration – although seemingly unreal – may be a very real and traumatic experience with tremendous and lifelong effects on the psyche. I have been told by many women who in their early childhood (i.e. their pre-oedipal phase) had wished to become a boy, that it was a very shocking experience for them when they had to learn that they cannot become a boy because of this little difference. Even from an infant's perspective it seems to be obvious that to be a boy opens up a privileged world. [...]

When I say that transgender practices are the overcoming of any symbolic castration, then exactly because of the fact that they revert this fundamental circumcision: Even if they have a vagina, in this way girls can become men and outlive their pre-oedipal desires – they may refuse to make themselves look cute and attractive for men by makeup and feminine clothing, instead they may adopt male gender roles, feel more powerful, have the feeling to be taken more serious in everyday situations or simply hook up women with nasty macho-talk (if that's their sexual orientation) as it happens in any lesbian bar. On the other hand men can learn by such practices that to be a woman is no loss, but can similarly open up new and fascinating worlds. In both cases the possession of the phallus is irrelevant which as such loses its predominant role as a first signifier that establishes the symbolic order of society and law. And is not exactly this loss of the phallus as a legitimation for a patriarchal structured society the fear of those who benefit from it? If that's true, then the anxiety of castration is not on the side of transgender persons, but on the side of those who still defend a binary gender code as Slavoj Žižek does in his article. From that it becomes already clear what the political dimension of the sexual is.

Yet Žižek makes quite different connections. In the beginning of the article Žižek speaks of a big legal and ideological struggle about the topic of segregated toilets, His first move is to assert that transgender persons form an alliance with 'big capital' as 80 chief executive officers of Silicon valley based companies

like Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook) or Tim Cook (Apple) - who by the way was one of the first to out himself as homosexual in this industrial sector - had signed a letter to the governor of North Carolina denouncing a law that prohibits transgender persons from using public facilities intended for the opposite sex. While Apple exploits hundreds of thousands of Foxconn workers in China, who suffer there from slavish conditions, they pretend to be on the side of political correctness in their homeland by declaring solidarity with an underprivileged group of transgender persons who demand the abolishment of gender segregation. [...]

As far as the Silicon Valley industries and their role to support the transgender movement is concerned, I think it is – to say it in Žižek's own vocabulary – both disgusting and obscene to defame the latter group by capitalist methods of exploitation that the first group is applying in second and third world countries. It would be equally wrong to construct on the basis of Žižek's recent statement that he would vote for Donald Trump in the American presidential elections⁹ a secret alliance between Ljubljana School of Psychoanalysis and ultra-conservative republican hardliners, Christian fundamentalists, the Ku-Klux-Klan and traditional capitalist sectors such as the oil or armaments industries, which all were supporters of Trump in his election campaign (although – I must admit – I could find arguments in support of this thesis).

Slavoj Žižek is quite right when he says that there is a big ideological struggle going on regarding this topic, although the controversy is not only about segregated toilets but about the principles on which our societies should be based in general. Nevertheless he does not clearly describe which opposed parties are involved in that confrontation. [...] If I were to denominate the basic camps that face each other in this controversy in the most simple terms, I would say that there are on the one hand conservative groups and societies, ranging from Putin Russia over European right wing populist movements to American republican circles, who all share – amongst others - the common idea that they have to 'protect' traditional family values which they consider to be the fundament of our society. For that reason they are against the equalization of traditional marriage with new forms of relationships that are not based on a binary gender code – and that is, however one looks at it, definitely discriminatory. Their attitude is basically homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic and racist, while they favour a totalitarian society with a clear patriarchal organisation. As their main interest is power, they usually seek and come quite often – very different than in Žižek's presentation – to an arrangement with 'big capital' structures. In psychological terms they could be connected with the death drive, as their backward oriented utopia will never come true – by asserting violence and oppression against unwanted tendencies their rise leads – as history proofs – inevitably to social disintegration and war – at least if they cannot be balanced by an opposing (democratic) force.

The other camp one could describe as a heterogeneous field of different groups, parties and movements that favour an open society committed to pluralism, diversity and the protection of ethnic and sexual minorities. They range from civil rights movements, greens and social democrats to even some conservative and Christian groups that share a common objection against inhuman and fascist tendencies. They are basically anti-capitalist and mainly advocate small scale economic structures as opposed to expansive international companies. Their attitude is basically libidinous and they can be associated with Freud's life preserving drives.

Of course this is rather simplified, and there are countless overlaps, variations and partly absurd combinations as Žižek's own position shows, yet still these seem to be the basic camps involved in our controversy (and not only in that). It were basically the civil rights movements that have been initiating a continuing change within society regarding the rights of sexual, ethnic and other minorities or social groups, with the effect that major political forces in western societies had to introduce corresponding laws

(e.g. regarding same sex marriage) as otherwise they would have come into conflict with basic principles of human rights on which these societies are based, i.e. that no person should be discriminated because of sex, religion, origin, sexual orientation etc. For the other group these social changes are highly objectionable as to them this equalization devaluates traditional forms of social organisation, threatens the legitimization of patriarchal power, breaks the monopoly of heteronormativity and thus shakes the foundation of their own (unquestioned) self-conception.

If we favour a society that is based on traditional values, patriarchal logic and a binary gender code, we must be aware that this results in the maintenance of an inequality between the sexes and a continuing underprivileged status not only for sexual minorities as transgender persons currently may be, but in the very first place of women on a whole scale and in every social field – which usually is accompanied with other forms of discrimination along lines of ‘race’, ‘class’ etc. as well as the exploitation of second and third world countries. This is in fact the most important political dimension of the sexual, which Slavoj Žižek sadly keeps silent about throughout the whole article.

1 For a selection of relevant statements see: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=zizek+toilets [this and all following links: Nov. 21st, 2016]

2 The Philosophical Salon, August 1st, 2016 (<http://thephilosophicalsalon.com/the-sexual-is-political>)

3 *Milles Plateaus* (German edition: *Tausend Plateaus*, Berlin, Merve 1992, p. 371 – 390).

4 *Scientists discover ‘genderfluid’ lioness who looks, acts and roars like a male*, pinknews.co.uk (<http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2015/12/23/scientists-discover-genderfluid-lioness-who-looks-acts-and-roars-like-a-male>)

5 *UK's oldest tree is undergoing sex change, botanists say*, The Guardian, Nov. 2nd, 2015 (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/nov/02/uks-oldest-tree-is-undergoing-sex-change-botanists-say>)

6 *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge (Encore) (Vol. Book XX)*. New York, Norton 1998 (See chapter VI, ‘God and the Woman’s jouissance’, p.64)

7 *Encore*, p.81.

⁸ See Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits, The first complete edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York, Norton 2007), chapter 24, ‘The Signification of the Phallus’

9 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4vHSiotAFA>