

Introduction

Feminism has radically altered Western culture in the latter half of the twentieth century. Perhaps no other social movement has wrought such profound changes in social mores and attitudes. Sexual revolution and liberation meant that sexual relations should be freed of the constraints associated with traditional Christian virtue.

The gay rights movement extended the demand for freedom regarding sexual relations to homosexuality. Moral censorship was relaxed in print media, cinema and television, and pornography burgeoned. General standards of taste in speech and behavior devolved in response to the dictates of prints, films and broadcasts. Family ties were weakened and the divorce rate soared. In Scandinavia it is estimated that roughly half of all infants are born to unwed mothers.

It was a bewilderingly abrupt relaxation of the restraints of centuries... The sudden sexual revolution was not just the lifting of censorship. Landlords and hostellers, long forbidden by law to accommodate unwed couples, could now be told not to ask personal questions....The courts were left facing stubborn new problems regarding marital or quasi-marital responsibilities and titles to property. Deeper dislocations of a social kind are being wrought by the weakening of the family. [1](#)

At the same time, women became an increasingly visible force in the workplace, the academy and the political arena, the most outspoken among who have been feminists.

The changes mentioned are not solely the work of feminists. The anti-establishment attitudes among the youth of the 1960's and the popularity enjoyed by the left contributed to these changes and also to support for feminism itself.

Nevertheless, feminist thought has been a major force in the social upheaval in the West since the sixties that continues to exert its influence, and among the explicit goals feminists have advocated have been the abolition of the family and traditional gender roles, to which ends they have championed homosexuality and promiscuity.

Feminists have managed to set standards for the use of 'nonsexist language' in most universities and

publishing houses, the most visible result of which has been an explosion of the population of feminine pronouns.

They have also managed to enforce their own preferences in areas as diverse as script writing, advertising and public employment practices. They have introduced a popular jargon in terms of which important social issues are debated, and they have begun to export their ideology abroad.

Feminism began to establish itself in areas outside the West through its use by colonial powers to undermine local culture in the areas under their control, and although it has met with some resistance, particularly among Muslims, there continues to be a great deal of confusion about what feminism is, about its goals, history and branches.

In what follows a brief introduction to feminism and its history is presented, with particular attention to philosophical and theological issues relevant to Islam. There follows a comparison between feminist and Islamic doctrines in which their utter incompatibility is elucidated. Finally, some observations are drawn with regard to the Islamic women's movement.

¹ W. v. Quine, *Quiddities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 207–208.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/fr/islam-versus-feminism-muhammad-legenhausen/introduction#comment-0>