

In Defense of Non-Liberal Nationalism*

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I. Introduction

In the first half of the twentieth century, no political movement has played a more prominent role in the colonized nations¹ of the non-liberal Third World than nationalism. Nationalism, understood as a political movement to achieve and maintain national independence, had ignited in the collective consciousness of colonized peoples a fervent yearning to break free from the shackles of colonial domination and motivated them to plunge into arduous and dangerous struggles for national independence. It is debatable whether nationalist movements by themselves, unaided by contingent international events such as the end of the Second World War that brought about the demise or weakening of colonial masters, would have enabled formerly colonized Third World nations to attain national independence. Regardless, it must be borne in mind that many, if not most, members of such nations devoted themselves to the nationalist cause, urged by ardent

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¹ I follow Will Kymlicka in using “nation” to refer to “an intergenerational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and history.” *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 18. Nation, in this sense, does not refer to the “statist” nation, which is primarily a territorial-political unit, but rather to the “ethnicist” nation, which is predicated on a common descent and culture and is often used interchangeably with “people.” See, Anthony Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London: Duckworth, 1983), pp. 176-80.

aspirations for national independence.

Western political theorists, including some leading “liberal nationalists,” however, are ambivalent, if not outright skeptical, in their assessment of non-liberal nationalisms in formerly or currently colonized Third World nations. One major reason for this is that many historical manifestations of nationalisms in non-liberal Third World nations have been oppressive to marginalized members, such as women, lower castes, or visible minorities. Liberals claim that the source of such oppression lies with the “illiberality” of national cultures that such nationalisms aim to restore and protect: Non-liberal—to replace the loaded term “illiberal”—national cultures are essentialist and static monoliths that do not recognize the fundamental value of individual rights. Hence, individual rights of co-nationals are often trumped under the banner of the collective goal of national independence in non-liberal nationalisms.

In this article, I shall advance an unorthodox position that non-liberal nationalisms of previously or currently colonized nations that are culturally homogeneous—what I call non-liberal *polycentric* nationalisms—are morally justifiable, provided that a certain condition is met, namely that they are *democratic*. Democracy, a more precise definition of which will be given later, can be roughly defined as a politics that enables the equal participation of members in determining various aspects of a larger societal system that profoundly affects their life prospects. While I do not deny that the majority of non-liberal nationalisms that are state-sponsored and top-down have been undemocratic, not all non-liberal nationalisms can be so characterized. Popularly supported grassroots, bottom-up nationalisms in formerly and currently colonized non-Western nations, while still far

from ideally democratic, have promoted democracy as well as nationalist goals.²

Given empirical traces of pro-democratic non-liberal nationalisms, I believe it is by no means quixotic to attempt a philosophically plausible construction of democratic and emancipatory non-liberal nationalism as an *ideal type*. As a *normative* endeavor, my construction represents a crystallization of a feasible ideal type, distilled from actual instances of pro-democratic non-liberal nationalisms, meant to provide a vision to be emulated. When the overwhelming majority of Western political theorists are skeptical of the possibility of democratic non-liberal nationalisms and dismissive of the emancipatory potential of such movements, I believe my construction may provide a much needed and long-overdue philosophical justification for an important type of social movement in non-liberal nations that has contributed to liberatory ends.³

I shall proceed in the following order: In the next section, I shall examine Will Kymlicka's liberal nationalism and focus in particular on his assessment of non-liberal nationalisms as morally indefensible, which leaves liberal nationalism as the only

² Although often overlooked by those who criticize non-liberal nationalisms, newly industrialized nations of East Asia, such as South Korea and Taiwan, provide prime examples. For a more detailed account of Korean nationalism, see my "The Possibility of Nationalist Feminism," *Hypatia* 18:3 (2003):135-160. Any nationalist/indigenous movement supported by the majority of the population in *currently* colonized or recently independent nations/peoples, such as Palestine, Zapatistas, East Timor, among others, may also offer such examples.

³ In advocating democratic polycentric nationalism, I am *not* claiming that this is the only defensible kind of political movement on the current global stage. I support cosmopolitanism that aims to achieve a more just and comprehensive global governance system, whereby problematic policies of individual nation states that negatively affect weaker nations could be effectively constrained. Hence, my position is compatible with David Held's cosmopolitanism which recognizes the role of nation states in a more globalized world order, albeit in a much weakened capacity. See, Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: from the Modern*

defensible form of nationalism. I shall refer to this position as the *liberal nationalist thesis* and argue against it by showing the moral justifiability of democratic non-liberal nationalisms. In order to make my case, I shall first consider a puzzling phenomenon that poses a direct challenge to the liberal nationalist thesis in section III: Many women of previously or currently colonized nations defend their non-liberal nationalism while being disadvantaged by it. In order to make these women's viewpoint intelligible, I shall develop communitarian conceptions of moral agent and culture,⁴ distinct from those of mainstream liberalism, in sections IV and V respectively. Building on these conceptions, I shall then construct a philosophically plausible conception of democratic non-liberal nationalism in section VI.

II. Liberals and Nationalism

Traditionally, liberals have not considered nationalism particularly interesting or morally pertinent. With their steadfast adherence to the core liberal assumption that we are first and foremost free, rational and equal individuals and should be treated as such, the fact that the world is increasingly fractured by various nationalist movements has been to liberals an “uncomfortable anomaly,” indicative of the deplorable state of yet to be

State to Cosmopolitan Governance (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

⁴ Although my position is communitarian, it goes beyond mainstream communitarianism in embracing non-liberal values. Most communitarians who discuss non-liberal cultures at all remain within the liberal camp and refuse to endorse non-liberal values. See, Charles Taylor, “Politics of Recognition,” in A. Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism and the ‘Politics of Recognition’* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 62, 66-68, 72-73; David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 192, 193, 195.

fully enlightened humanity.⁵ In fact, most liberals have advocated cosmopolitanism that advocates a “global conception of democratic citizenship” as a corollary of liberalism.⁶ In the last couple of decades, however, there has been a “growing acceptance of the legitimacy of some or other form of *liberal nationalism*.”⁷ Many liberals have come to realize that liberal nationalism is preferable to cosmopolitanism, since it not only resolves the problem of limiting ethical boundary for the application of liberal principles, but is also predicated on a more realistic view of who we are, beings for whom national affiliation matters.⁸

While there are many variants of liberal nationalism, ranging from liberal to communitarian,⁹ I shall concentrate on the brand of liberal nationalism elaborated by

⁵ The term was used by Benedict Anderson to describe the Marxist attitude toward nationalism but seems perfectly applicable to liberalism as well. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 13.

⁶ Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (N.Y., N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 312.

⁷ Kymlicka, “Liberal Culturalism,” *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship* (N.Y., N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 39, emphases in the original.

⁸ Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 261; see also p. 264. While I am favorably inclined toward liberal nationalism, I think Pogge provides a much needed proviso on liberal nationalisms of powerful liberal states, such as the U.S., that they must operate within the “minimal constraint on the scope of acceptable partiality.” See, Thomas Pogge, “The Bounds of Nationalism,” *World Poverty and Human Rights* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2002), p. 124.

⁹ Some of the pioneering works are Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), Miller, *On Nationality*, Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship and Politics in the Vernacular*. Among these philosophers, Miller’s view is communitarian and I am sympathetic to many aspects of his theory, despite his insistence that his conception of nationalism is not “illiberal” and that most communitarians adopt “recognizably liberal political positions” (pp. 192, 193, 195). I shall indicate later where my critique of Kymlicka’s liberal nationalism may not apply to Miller’s position. Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz’s position on self-determination, elaborated in their “National Self-Determination,” *Journal*

Will Kymlicka for two reasons: First, his view is faithful to its liberal origin and theoretically robust, as well as being widely influential, and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Kymlicka is the only liberal nationalist who has directly tackled the issue of “illiberal” nationalisms,¹⁰ which is the focus of this article. According to this conception of liberal nationalism, nationalism is seen to provide “an important basis for the achievement of liberal ideals of justice and liberty.” Hence, liberals, while continuing to advocate fundamental human rights and the neutral state to protect freedom and equality of individuals, can also endorse “social unity” that arises out of “a natural bond of solidarity, and a natural desire, to exercise self-government” among co-nationals.¹¹

What makes this nationalist position particularly *liberal*, rather than communitarian, is that social unity endorsed by this view is not predicated on a conception of the national common good, but rather on a “thinner and more diffuse sense of belonging to an intergenerational society, sharing a common territory, having a common past and sharing a common future.” Co-nationals share a national identity, not because they subscribe to a common conception of the good nor because they are ethnically or religiously homogeneous, but because they share a language and history, participate in common public institutions, and see their lives as intricately connected to

of Philosophy 87:9 (1990):439-461, is also widely considered as an example of “liberal” nationalism. However, I believe that there are many indications that they may have abandoned mainstream liberalism, at least in the article itself. See, pp. 450, 456.

¹⁰ As Margaret Moore points out, most liberal nationalists have primarily focused on *liberal* national minorities such as Quebec, Catalonia, or Scotland, expressing their disapproval of “illiberal” nationalisms only in passing. Moore, “Nationalist Arguments, Ambivalent Conclusions,” in N. Miscevic (ed.), *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict: Philosophical Perspectives* (Open Court, 2000), pp. 178, 189-190.

the perpetuation of their nation and its institutions into the indefinite future. Accordingly, the liberal state may legitimately protect and promote the national culture and language, *not* to advocate a particular conception of the common good but rather to increase the likelihood that citizens will fulfill their liberal obligation of justice among co-nationals.¹²

Liberal nationalism, conceptualized in this way, sounds plausible, and I shall simply agree with Kymlicka here that it is *a* defensible form of nationalism. What I want to focus on in this article, however, is Kymlicka's assessment of "illiberal"/non-liberal nationalisms. Before we examine this, however, it would be helpful to distinguish between two categories of nationalism, since nationalism is notoriously Janus-faced. One face reveals a frightening countenance: Exclusion, xenophobia, fanaticism, expansionism, aggression, ethnic cleansing, endless bloodshed. The other face is the relatively positive side of nationalism: Community, national sovereignty, independence, self-determination, pluralism. Although in reality these two faces sometimes overlap, it is possible to distinguish theoretically between "ethnocentric" nationalism of colonizers/aggressors and "polycentric" nationalism of the colonized/aggressed.

Ethnocentric nationalism's central thesis is that power and value dwell *exclusively* in one's nation, and it consequently justifies the domination over and subjugation of weaker nations. It is exemplified in the expansionist and aggressive nationalisms of European imperial powers leading to the First World War and of Germany and Japan leading to the Second World War. Since it seems beyond debate that this form of

¹¹ Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 261.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 264, 265-266; "Liberal Culturalism," p. 39

nationalism cannot be morally justified, I shall hereinafter exclude ethnocentric nationalism from my discussion. On the other hand, polycentric nationalism is the type of nationalism advocated by currently or formerly colonized peoples both in the West and the Third World, struggling to (re)gain or maintain national independence in the face of hostile elements that threaten the survival or autonomy of their nation. Its central thesis is that one's nation has a right to "join the 'family of nations,' the international drama of status of *equals*." ¹³

How does Kymlicka evaluate polycentric nationalism? While Kymlicka wants to defend polycentric nationalisms of "national minorities" in the West, as he believes these to be liberal, ¹⁴ he is not willing to support polycentric nationalisms in general. One of the major reasons for this is that Kymlicka believes that many polycentric nationalisms, and national cultures that they aim to protect/maintain, are "illiberal" and therefore oppressive to marginalized groups of the nation, including women. While some sort of social unity is crucial for liberal nationalism, Kymlicka adheres to "the traditional liberal belief in personal autonomy" and rejects "the communitarian idea" that there are constitutive values that form the essence of members' national identity. ¹⁵ National cultures advocated

¹³ Smith, pp. 158-59 (emphasis added). The distinction used here is adopted from Smith. Similar distinctions have been made by Neil MacCormick, Stephen Nathanson, and Michael Walzer, as indicated in Miller, pp. 9-10. MacCormick, "Nation and Nationalism," *Legal Right and Social Democracy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 254, 260; Nathanson, *Patriotism, Morality and Peace* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993), chapter 3; Walzer, "Nation and Universe," in G. Petersen (ed.), *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, xi (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990).

¹⁴ Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 338, cf., pp. 339, 343; *Multicultural Citizenship*, p.153.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

by non-liberal nationalisms, on the other hand, presuppose some national common goals that can be legitimately imposed on members because such goals are partly constitutive of their national identity. Also, these cultures do not affirm the inalienable right of individuals to make choices concerning values and projects based on their individual judgments alone and discourage individual autonomy, since it entails the critical scrutiny of constitutive national goods that are often viewed as “an ancestral inheritance to be cherished and transmitted as a matter of loyalty to their forebears.”¹⁶

As a result, non-liberal nationalisms tend to be essentialist, coercive/violent, oppressive, and exclusionary. In contrast to liberal nationalism, which does not impose a national identity on citizens who do not share it, non-liberal nationalisms promote and forcibly impose a common national identity on all within the national boundary. Unlike liberal nationalism that allows political activities that challenge the privileged national identity, non-liberal nationalisms often seek to prohibit such political mobilizations. As opposed to liberal nationalism that grants public recognition to national minorities advocating group autonomy within a state, non-liberal nationalisms may use coercive and often violent measures to suppress minorities. Unlike liberal nationalism that subscribes to a more open definition of the national community and thereby enables easy admissions of foreigners, non-liberal nationalisms often prevent non-nationals from integrating into the national group while at the same time prohibiting them from expressing their own

¹⁶ Bhikhu Parekh, “Dilemmas of a Multicultural Theory of Citizenship,” *Constellations* 4 (1997): 54-62, p.59.

national identity.¹⁷ For these reasons, non-liberal nationalisms, even the polycentric kind, are indefensible, and therefore the only philosophically justifiable form of nationalism is liberal nationalism. I shall refer to this as the *liberal nationalist thesis*.

III. Polycentric Nationalism and Women

This liberal assessment of non-liberal nationalisms seems to be well supported by ample evidence. Even in polycentric nationalisms, marginalized groups such as women, lower castes, or visible minorities have often been oppressed under the banner of nationalism. To focus on the case of women, nationalists tend to override women's individual rights as they posit the protection and preservation of an authentic national culture as the overarching political aim. Often, an "august and immemorial" national essence is postulated which often takes on familial characteristics. The family analogy, which is adopted to bolster the impression that the nation is as natural as the biological family, also naturalizes the social hierarchy based on the subordination of women. The subjugated status of women in a colonized nation, then, becomes a symbol of authentic national identity for nationalists which therefore must be maintained or restored.¹⁸ Even when national independence is achieved, nationalism as an attempt to solidify and promote an essentialist national culture continues to oppress women. Women's role in the

¹⁷ See, Kymlicka, "From Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism to Liberal Nationalism", *Politics in the Vernacular*, pp. 208-9; "Liberal Culturalism," pp. 39-40.

¹⁸ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), p.352, see also, pp. 357-58, 365; Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1986), p. 257; Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism*. (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 17-19.

nation (re)building is seen primarily in terms of reproduction, and women are regarded as “gendered subjects,” discriminated against, for example, in laws regulating inheritance or the custody of children after divorce.¹⁹ The prevalence of women’s subjugation in even polycentric nationalisms seems to support the liberal nationalist thesis that only the liberal form of nationalism is philosophically defensible.

However, a curious paradox concerning women of previously or currently colonized non-liberal nations may provide a decisive piece of evidence to refute the liberal nationalist thesis and establish that non-liberal polycentric nationalisms are also philosophically defensible. This paradox concerns the advocacy of non-liberal nationalisms by many women of formerly or presently colonized nations. The degree of these women’s endorsement of their non-liberal nationalism varies: Many indigenous women of currently colonized national minorities in the West are quite unequivocal and forceful in advocating their national culture and renouncing outside criticisms by liberals and Western feminists, even in cases where they are clearly suffering from pervasive

¹⁹ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997), chapter 2; see also Sherna Gluck, “Shifting sands: The Feminist-nationalist Connection in the Palestinian Movement,” in Lois West (ed.), *Feminist Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 106; Julie Mostove, “Sexing the Nation/desexing the Body: Politics of National Identity in the Former Yugoslavia,” in Tamar Mayer (ed.), *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 91, 98-99; Geraldine Heng, “A Great Way to Fly: Nationalism, the State and the Varieties of Third World Feminism,” in M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra T. Mohanty (eds.), *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 37, 38, n.15 and 16; Seungsook Moon, “Begetting the Nation: The Androcentric Discourse of National History and Tradition in South Korea,” in Elaine Kim and Chungmoo Choi (eds.), *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 52-56; Ayelet Shachar, “The Paradox of Multicultural Vulnerability: Individual Rights, Identity Groups, and the State,” in Christian Joppke and Steven Lukes (eds.), *Multicultural Questions* (New York City, NY: Oxford University

intra-cultural sexism.²⁰ They adamantly assert that for them, as people suffering from virulent forms of colonialism, “culture is a larger reality than ‘women’s rights.’” As members of national minorities, their aim is to pursue “self-determination within [their] own cultural definitions and through [their] own cultural ways.”²¹ For these indigenous women of colonized nations, their non-liberal nationalism holds emancipatory potential to liberate not only their nation from the chains of colonialism but also women themselves from patriarchal oppression. Hence, women’s liberation, understood in a most inclusive sense, is possible only when the sovereignty of their nation is recovered. The unequivocal championing of nationalism by these indigenous women is some times backed up by the belief that their pre-colonial culture had once attained gender equality, or something quite close to it, before contamination by sexist colonial impositions.²²

Press, 1999), pp. 92, 95.

²⁰ The starkest example is the angry response of Australian aboriginal women to a white feminist anthropologist’s research finding, “co-authored” with an aboriginal woman that revealed the rampant intra-racial rape among Aborigines of Australia. See, Diane Bell and Topsy Nelson, “Speaking about Rape is Everyone’s Business.” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 12 (1989): 403-16.

²¹ Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai’i* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1993), pp. 265-6. See also, Trask, “Feminism and Indigenous Hawaiian Nationalism,” in *Feminist Nationalism*; Annette Jaimes with Theresa Halsey, “American Indian Women: At the Center of Indigenous Resistance,” Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (eds.), *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

²² In the case of Native Americans in the U.S., see Jaimes with Halsey, pp. 301-9, James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 193, and Monique Deveaux, “Conflicting Equalities? Cultural Group Rights and Sex Equality,” *Political Studies* 48 (2000), pp. 525, 527. In the case of Africa, see Hazel Carby, “White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood,” in R.Hennessy and C. Ingraham (eds.) *Materialist Feminisms* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 121-22, and Nkiru Nzegwu, “Recovering Igbo Traditions: A Case for Indigenous

For some other currently colonized women who also strive for national independence but cannot resort to a relatively non-sexist national culture, their allegiance to nationalism is fraught with more self-doubt and tentativeness. Nevertheless, these women in colonized nations seem to concur that national self-determination is one of their most urgent goals.²³ Even in formerly colonized nations that have obtained at least nominal independence from a colonizing power, those feminists who are well aware of the neo-colonial realities at the international level collaborate with nationalists in order to protect national autonomy as well as to promote the well-being of women.²⁴

The support for non-liberal nationalisms by many women in formerly and currently colonized nations poses a quandary for liberals. These women's position is puzzling to liberals in general because it is widely believed that women in such nations are oppressed and that the colonizing/dominant liberal culture offers a "better"

Women's Organizations in Development," in C. Koggel (ed.), *Moral Issues in Global Perspective* (Petersborough, Canada: Broadview Press, 1999). In the case of the pre-colonial Philippines, see, Lilia Santiago, "Rebirthing of *Babey*: The Women's Movement in the Philippines," in Amrita Basu (ed.), *The Challenge of Local Feminisms: Women's Movements in Global Perspective* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 110-11; in the case of pre-colonial Burma, see Maria Mies, "Colonization and Housewifization," in *Materialist Feminisms*, pp. 177-8.

²³ For such examples in the Palestinian nationalism, see Gluck, p. 106, pp. 115-6; Nahla Abdo, "Nationalism and Feminism: Palestinian Women and the Intifada—No Going Back?" in V. Moghadam (ed.) *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies* (Karachi : Oxford University Press, 1994); Islah Jad, "Claiming Feminism, Claiming Nationalism: Women's Activism in the Occupied Territories," in *The Challenge of Local Feminisms*. For other similar situations, see, Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1990), p. 62; Lynn Kwiatkowski and Lois West, "Feminist Struggles for Feminist Nationalism in the Philippines" in *Feminist Nationalism*, p. 150; Chinchilla, "Nationalism, Feminism and Revolution in Central America," *ibid.*, p. 211.

alternative to these women in promoting women's rights and interests. Further, their position has serious implications for liberal *nationalists* in particular because it seems to directly contradict the liberal nationalist thesis that the only defensible type of nationalism is liberal nationalism. If these women are right, then the liberal nationalist thesis would be wrong.

How do liberals respond to these women's position? One liberal theorist argues that Third World women in general "have no sense of what they are justly entitled to as human beings" because they have "internalized their oppression so well."²⁵ Although this assessment may seem rather extreme, such an indictment is not an aberrant view of few "hard-core" liberals. In fact, it follows from a crucial liberal assumption accepted by even liberal nationalists, such as Kymlicka, that moral agents are autonomous individuals capable of pursuing their freely chosen personal goals. According to this liberal assumption, agents are not only *capable* of "detaching" themselves from any particular values and ends previously adopted, but they *should* be willing to review such values and ends critically, ready to revise or reject them should they turn out to be unduly imposed from without.²⁶ These women, however, seem unable to detach themselves from the contingent circumstance of national origin, despite their victimized status in their nation, and revise their imposed values. Therefore, their agency seems

²⁴ See my "The Possibility of Nationalist Feminism," pp.143-44, 146-47.

²⁵ Okin, "Gender Inequality and Cultural Differences," *Political Theory* 22 (1994): 5-24, pp. 5, 19. This assumption is subtly replicated in her most recent work when she claims that the right to exit is "unthinkable" for racial ethnic immigrant girls. "Mistresses of Their Own Destiny?: Group Rights, Gender, and Realistic Rights of Exit," *Ethics* 112 (2002): 205-230, pp. 222, 229.

²⁶ Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, p.80; *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 221.

flawed.

Further, most liberals, including liberal nationalists, assume that liberal cultures are far ahead of non-liberal cultures in many respects, including gender equality, and that non-liberal cultures are somehow unable to transform themselves in the direction of gender equality on their own.²⁷ Hence, members of minority or Third World nations defending their non-liberal culture are often viewed as unreasonable and/or reactionary. Men are taken to be overly invested in an anachronistic culture that privileges them; women are seen as *more* unreasonable because they are defending a cultural system in which they are not even beneficiaries but rather victims. As a result, liberals may feel justified in raising doubts about the full agency of such women and viewing them as suffering from some form of false-consciousness. This liberal assessment, which follows from the previous two liberal assumptions, neatly aligns with a prevalent stereotype that reduces these women to mere puppets of patriarchal ideology²⁸ and easily leads liberals to the dismissal of these women's voices as unreasonable and

²⁷ In addition to Okin and Kymlicka, many liberals seem to believe that non-liberal cultures lack internal resources of moral progress. See, Joseph Raz, "Multiculturalism: A Liberal Perspective," *Ethics in the Public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 184-5; Jeff Spinner, *The Boundaries of Citizenship: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in the Liberal State* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 70; Amy Gutmann, *Identity in Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), chapter 1; Michele Moody-Adams, *Fieldwork in Familiar Places* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 215; Seyla Benhabib, *Claims of Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 4, 8, 16.

²⁸ For a stark portrayal of a stereotypical Third World woman presupposed by most Westerners, including many Western feminists, see, Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes," in C. T. Mohanty, A. Russo and L. Torres (eds.), *Third World Feminism and the Politics of Feminism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 56.

therefore not worthy of serious consideration.

However, the generalization that all or most such women in non-liberal nations are so constrained is at best debatable, although some women may indeed suffer from constrained agency.²⁹ Women who advocate their non-liberal national culture are found in all ranges of social strata, with different social and educational backgrounds, disadvantaged and marginalized by their culture in varying degrees. Hence, subscribing to such stereotypes is extremely problematic because it is complicit in illegitimately writing off these women's voices and experiences as unworthy of serious consideration with respect to phenomena, non-liberal national cultures and nationalism, that not only directly concern these women but of which these women have insider's knowledge. By discounting their perspective, the liberal account of non-liberal nationalism is woefully incomplete and biased. A fuller and fairer assessment of non-liberal nationalism is possible only when these women's perspective, that the nationalist movement aimed at protecting and maintaining their non-liberal national culture has liberatory potential not only for their nation but also for themselves, is taken seriously.

In order to take these women's advocacy of non-liberal nationalisms seriously, though, it must first be shown that such women are full moral agents and that a non-liberal national culture, despite temporary lapses, still retains liberatory potential for even its most disadvantaged members. Taking these women's voices seriously, however, requires abandoning the liberal framework concerning agency and culture,

²⁹ See my "A Third World Feminist Defense of Multiculturalism," *Social Theory and Practice* 30 (2004): 73-103, pp. 83-86.

since the dismissal of these women's position is entailed by the two core liberal assumptions. In the next two sections, then, I shall elaborate on communitarian conceptions of moral agent and culture that will illuminate these women's full moral agency. These will provide steps toward constructing a philosophically defensible conception of democratic non-liberal nationalism, which will be taken up in section VI.

IV. Agents as Strong Evaluators

These women's agency would be better illuminated if we understood moral agents as "strong evaluators" rather than as autonomous individuals. As strong evaluators, we deploy strongly evaluative language of contrastive characterizations—such as right and wrong, higher and lower, noble and base—and thereby articulate not only our preferences but also our values and identity.³⁰ This contrastive evaluative language, however, presupposes fundamental moral values and ideals—or "hyper goods"—which we deem as "incomparably more important than others but provide the standpoint from which these must be weighed, judged, decided about." Since hyper goods function as the criteria by which we make second-order valuations, subscribing to and living in accordance with certain hyper goods is not only important for our sense of self-worth, but it is "essential to [our] identity."³¹

The sources of hyper goods, however, are not some transcendental or universal

³⁰ The concept of strong evaluator has been elaborated by Charles Taylor in his "What Is Human Agency?" in *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 24-26.

³¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.63; see also pp. 27-28, 42, 43, 44. Although I borrow the concept of hyper good from Taylor, my

values that all rational agents can endorse by virtue of their rationality, but *culturally specific* values that are ineluctably tied to one's national culture, an intricate and unique cultural plexus of a certain locality, predicated on a distinct language and history, that has persisted throughout a sustained period of time, albeit in evolving forms. National culture, though, is not monolithic but rather inevitably hybrid, containing multiple national/cultural values that result from constant interactions with other cultures. Also, national values themselves are not some objective entities whose meanings are uniform to all those who encounter them; rather, they are made meaningful only through interpretations, of which there are numerous in a national culture. In this way, no monolithic "essential" set of national values exists to be engraved in the identities of every member. But members subscribe to different sets of national values as their personal hyper goods, with different interpretations chosen from those available within the national culture, depending on their upbringing and/or disposition.

Still, national values and their interpretations circulating in a particular nation at a particular historical juncture are rendered intelligible only in a specific language, predicated on a particular hybrid cultural mixture that members take as their unique national culture. In this way, our national culture is already inscribed in whichever national values we adopt as our personal hyper goods. Given the crucial role that hyper goods play in structuring our lives and defining who we are, our national culture, as the source of hyper goods, becomes partly constitutive of our identity.³² Rather than being

focus is on a dimension neglected by Taylor himself, namely the cultural specificity of hyper goods.

³² For a similar assessment, see Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p. 111.

a non-essential baggage that we can unload if we so choose, as many liberals seem to think, national culture is a constitutive part of our identity, which has direct implications for our self-esteem. As such, national culture is intrinsically valuable to us whether or not it directly promotes our self-interest, especially when its very survival is threatened.

Many members of a nation, however, may not be fully conscious of the national specificity of their identity. Not only is national identity discursively constructed, predicated on an “imagined” national community not based on actual face-to-face acquaintance among the members, but it is also just one dimension that intersects with other dimensions of identity, such as gender, race, class or even regional differences in a nation. In the absence of situations that immediately call for attention on the national dimension, other dimensions of identity may preoccupy the members and national identity may recede to the background. Yet, the national aspect of identity will emerge on the center stage when members of a nation encounter the “Other.” In other words, national identity, like other aspects of identity in general, is not “the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity,” but emerges only via contrast and exclusion.³³ Especially when a hostile and powerful Other threatens one’s national integrity through conquest, subjugation, domination, oppression, exploitation, or marginalization, one’s national identity, while discursively constructed, gains real significance. As members’ sense of national integrity and self-esteem suffers, they will tend to focus only on the

³³ See, Stuart Hall, “Introduction: Who Needs ‘Identity’?” in S. Hall and P. du Gay (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), p. 4.

depreciated aspect of their identity; “[w]hen my parochialism is threatened, then I am wholly, radically parochial.”³⁴ Under such precarious conditions in which the very survival of the nation is at risk, most members of the denigrated nation come to realize their nation as the source of their cherished hyper goods, the annihilation of which would imply the degradation of their value system on which they have built their self-worth. As such, the nation will assume an *intrinsic* value in the eyes of the members and the protection and maintenance of the nation would become a matter of maintaining one’s self-worth.

This is not to deny that many who had been colonized have opted, whether individually or collectively, for assimilation. Some have concurred with and internalized the negative evaluation of their national culture by the colonizing Other and tried to assimilate with the Other as much as humanly possible. However, some others, whether by choice or through the lack of choice—for some exhibit “entropy-resistant” traits such as distinct “racial” features and wear their difference on their faces,³⁵ react to it by inverting the Other’s negative projection and redeeming the despised qualities as virtues. It is precisely at this juncture, when members of a misrecognized nation suffering from

³⁴ Michael Walzer, *Thick and thin* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), p. 82. Isaiah Berlin refers to this loss of national self-esteem as “wounded pride.” See “The Bent Twig,” *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 252. As Honneth and Taylor, echoing Hegel, have rightly argued, the formation of our identity and its healthy maintenance is an intersubjective process, requiring positive feedback from those with whom we encounter. See, Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflict*, trans. J. Anderson (Oxford: Polity Press, 1997), pp. 95, 135, chapters 6 and 8. For related discussions, see Margalit and Raz, pp. 448-450; Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 89; Taylor, “Politics of Recognition,” p. 36.

³⁵ Gellner, p. 64.

“wounded pride” turn to resistance against the Other’s devaluation and the valorization of the despised traits shared by co-nationals, that polycentric nationalism awakens.³⁶

This conception of agent as strong evaluator renders women of colonized nations as agents who have reasonable grounds for defending their non-liberal nationalism. Given that national culture is impressed upon their hyper goods at the center of their identity, these women attempt to protect their national culture from outside threats in order to maintain their sense of self-worth. While liberals may concede that this provides an acceptable psychological explanation of these women’s behavior, they may still question whether it is justifiable. After all, psychologically explaining a person’s behavior and thereby rendering it *understandable* does not necessarily *justify* the behavior. These women may have reasonable grounds to advocate their national culture, but if the culture severely undermines their well-being, their position would be self-defeating in the end and hence morally unjustifiable. In order for these women’s position to be justifiable, there has to be some independent grounding to support their claim that their non-liberal nationalism has liberatory potential for themselves. I believe this can be shown, and so I now turn to the next step in my argument that involves constructing a conception of culture as complex and emergent.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 58-62, 69; Berlin, pp. 245-47; Charles Taylor, “Nationalism and Modernity,” in R. McKim and J. McMahan (eds.), *The Morality of Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 44-46.

V. National Culture and National Identity

Liberals tend to regard non-liberal national cultures—although not liberal ones—as essentialist and monolithic. However, national culture, whether liberal or non-liberal, is multilayered and multidimensional at any moment in time. National culture contains multiple and potentially conflicting national values—the sources of personal hyper goods—some of which are indigenous to a specific locality, some others adapted from different traditions, and still others syncretic to an amalgamated culture. Among them, some national values may be more prevalent or pronounced, even promoted as “official” national values by the government authorities, with concomitant institutions and practices to support them. Some others, in contrast, may remain marginal without any institutional support. To complicate matters still further, multiple interpretations may be vying for dominance within the nation even with respect to prevalent national values. Although national culture is in this way a hybrid of various cultural influences, the specific mode of hybridity will vary with the locality depending on its indigenous traditions and the manner of interaction with other cultures. It is this particular cultural mixture found in a specific location that members identify as their “own” national culture. All personal hyper goods, chosen from national values, are embedded in this particular culture.

Secondly, national culture is in perpetual flux. Every culture is constantly shifting due not only to interactions with other cultures, but also to the internal dialectic that takes place as insiders engage in cultural dialogues among themselves concerning the meaning of their national values, institutions, and practices. Multiple national

values and their diverse interpretations will often lead insiders to disagree with one another not only on which national values should be promoted as their official national values, but also on what type of socio-politico-economic system would best realize them. As insiders try to negotiate their differences and attempt to arrive at reasonable agreements on the future direction of their nation, modifications and revisions will be made on various aspects of their national culture. As a result of such reconfigurations, no national culture ever stays static.³⁷

Undeniably, there are morally problematic institutions and practices in every culture and sexism plagues most cultures, whether liberal or non-liberal. Liberal theorists, however, deem patriarchy as an acute problem for non-liberal national cultures, while they take liberal cultures to be well ahead in gender equality. However, this liberal assumption suffers from a selective perception and is at best debatable. First, it is doubtful whether the liberal West, with patriarchal assumptions and customs of its own, has fully attained sex/gender equality to serve as the incontestable feminist model for other cultures.³⁸ Second, although liberals may respond that numerous sexist phenomena within liberal cultures are merely indications that the ideal form of liberalism is yet to be achieved, many theorists, especially Western feminists, express skepticism as to whether “ideal” liberalism is fully compatible with feminism. Care ethicists, in particular, point out the androcentricity of liberalism, even in its more

³⁷ See for related discussions, Edward Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), chapters 5 and 6.

³⁸ Third World feminists/women point out the preponderance of the patriarchal ideal of beauty, the idealization of masculine characteristics as norms of success, and rampant violence against women as

defensible philosophical manifestations, such as Rawls's theory of justice.

Yet let us grant for the sake of the argument that non-liberal national cultures are more patriarchal than liberal ones. Accepting this presumption, however, does not condemn such cultures to eternal patriarchy because of the complex and emergent nature of cultures. Any national culture contains within itself seeds of novel and innovative reforms and reconstructions. The hybrid mixture of multiple national values, both indigenous and imported, and their diverse interpretations within a culture provide insiders with resources needed to reinterpret and redefine their national values and reorganize their national institutions and practices. Insiders, who are able to discern subtleties of the complex web of cultural meanings behind various customs, can challenge the corrupt status quo by identifying plural national values, constructing multiple interpretations of them, adopting and transforming foreign ideas and values in culturally sensitive ways, or formulating hybrid valuational constructs that are conducive to gender equality.³⁹

This account of national culture has implications for the national identity of members as well. Since national culture has no monolithic national essence that can be branded in the identities of co-nationals, the notion of essential national identity shared by all "authentic" members is ideological, even for non-liberal nations. Surely, certain

anti-women examples in the West.

³⁹ See for examples, Leila Ahmed, "Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem," *Feminist Studies* 8 (1982): 521-534, pp. 524, 528-9; Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar, "Challenging Imperial Feminism," *Feminist Review* (1984): 3-19, p. 15; Carby, p. 114; Basharat Tayyab, "Islam," in A. Jaggar and I. Young (eds.), *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998), pp. 237, 244; see also, Azizah Al-Hibri, "Islamic Law," in *ibid.*, pp. 544, 545, 548.

commonalities such as history, geographic location, and language will be shared by national insiders. Yet, national culture also encompasses potentially conflicting multiple values that are subject to divergent interpretations. Hence, configurations of national identities of members may vary as they subscribe to different sets of national values as their hyper goods. Even if we grant that most insiders subscribe to a prevalent and/or official set of national values, their national identities would still diverge as a result of adopting different interpretations. Further, national identity intersects with other dimensions of the identity, such as class, gender, and sexuality, and the plural ways in which these dimensions intermesh would further complicate matters.⁴⁰ The contingent fact that the notions of essentialist national culture and identity are often fabricated for self-serving purposes of powerful groups and imposed on other members cannot thereby obliterate this reality.

VI. Democratic Non-Liberal Polycentric Nationalism?

Understanding national culture and identity in this way enables us not only to overcome the persistent liberal charge that non-liberal polycentric nationalisms are essentialist and oppressive but also to identify their democratic potential. Polycentric nationalism is typically understood in relation to the outside world. It is primarily

⁴⁰ As postmodern theorists claim, an agent may experience inner discord due to the conflicting demands of multiple dimensions of her identity and experience her identity to be “fractured.” See, Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980’s,” in L. Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 196, 191, 220; Judith Butler, “Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory, and Psychoanalytic Discourse,” in *ibid.*, pp. 339, 336, 338.

defined as a political movement for “the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence” of the nation.⁴¹ I believe, however, that self-government is valuable as a means to a higher end: Self-government is necessary so that a national collectivity would be able to mould and promote its own unique national culture free from outside interventions. By making this higher goal of nationalism explicit, polycentric nationalism can be more precisely defined as follows: Polycentric nationalism is the political movement for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence in order to protect and promote a unique national culture among co-nationals. If so, in contrast to liberal nationalism which has been defined by Kymlicka as excluding the pursuit of common national goods, non-liberal polycentric nationalisms in general encompass such pursuits.

However, polycentric nationalism, predicated on my conceptions of national culture and identity, would not only avoid essentialism but also hold emancipatory potential for all members, including marginalized members, through democracy. As previously argued, national identities of members diverge greatly in large part due to the complexity and multi-dimensionality of national culture. There is no monolithic national “essence” from which a unanimous consensus can be derived on either national culture or identity. Two conclusions that follow from this premise, among others, are relevant in the present context: First, disagreements among insiders on various aspects of national values, their interpretations, institutions and practices are unavoidable. Second, the only morally defensible way to determine national

⁴¹ Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, p. 171.

membership is the *self-identification* of a culturally embedded agent as a member.⁴²

This second conclusion is especially significant for democracy.

Self-identification as a member consists first in the recognition, either explicit or implicit, that some national values, interpreted and articulated in a certain way, partly constitute one's identity as hyper goods and the commitment to actualize such national values in national institutions and practices. In other words, it consists in the acknowledgement that one is a member of the nation and is committed to promoting the good of the nation, as one sees fit. Such a commitment is not necessarily conformist to the status quo because, given the multiplicity of national values and their diverse and conflicting interpretations available within a nation, the set of national values and its interpretations one advocates may not be those officially endorsed. In such cases, upholding certain national values, interpreted in a certain way, as one's hyper goods and attempting to actualize them in the national context may call for reforming the existent national institutions and current practices that are inconsistent with one's preferred interpretation of the chosen national values.

Because of this potential for conflict with the status quo, self-identified members may face reactionary attempts by the powerful individuals or groups to suppress their participation. To withstand such oppression, it is important for the self-identified members to recognize a second implication of their self-identification, which is that they are entitled, as culturally immersed and emotionally attached members of

⁴² Young makes a similar point by using the term "a sense of identity." See Iris Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1990), p. 44.

the nation, to participate in national discourses that determine the future of their nation. If these two normative implications of national membership are actualized—which often are not—co-nationals, whose identities are partly constituted by their national framework, will in turn (re)constitute the very national framework itself through defining and interpreting national values and (re)structuring national institutions and practices in accordance with them. This is the *dynamic* dimension of national membership.

Once this dynamic dimension of national membership is articulated, the significance of democracy becomes clear: The dynamic dimension of national membership, as a normative *ideal*, calls for democracy for its realization. Democracy, which literally means “rule by the people,” is a politics that enables self-identifying national members to participate equally in internal contestations and negotiations concerning their national culture and, consequently, to exercise equal power in determining the national system. This politics encompasses various political, social, and economic mechanisms to empower co-nationals to deliberate collectively, free from coercion and deception, about which sets of national values they, as a collectivity, want to uphold, which interpretation best represents the true spirit of national values, what institutions and policies to establish and implement, and what customs to encourage and propagate. Polycentric nationalism would be democratic if, in an attempt to achieve independence and/or promote a unique national culture, all self-identifying members are encouraged to participate equally in an inner dialectic of collective deliberations.

Democratic polycentric nationalism is primarily an *internal* process in the sense that agents in nationalist discourses who determine the national direction are national *insiders*, understood as self-identifying members of the nation.⁴³ Since national culture is a dense cluster of at times conflicting plexuses with interlocking values, institutions, and social practices constantly shifting over time, one cannot make a fair assessment of it by focusing on just parts in a time slice. In order to assess current national problems accurately and to imagine a realistic vision of a unique national culture, which may require undertaking a strenuous and charitable rediscovery of national culture, one must adopt a holistic and organic perspective of national culture as a complex entity that is perpetually evolving and potentially self-correcting. This perspective, however, presupposes an ability to decipher intricate interconnections and subtle interstices among its national values, institutions, and practices, which is possible only for those who are sufficiently embedded in and emotionally attached to the national culture as their *own*, the future of which is entwined with their personal future.

While some liberal critics may acknowledge that the above characterization of democratic nationalism is acceptable, they may insist that my conception of democratic nationalism is fundamentally liberal in that I emphasize the *equal* participation of national insiders in national discourses. As John Dewey has aptly pointed out, however,

⁴³ Iranian dissidents, persecuted by the fundamentalist Islamic state of Iran, provide support for my emphasis on internal democracy. See, "Reformers at Risk: A Special Report on Iran," *Newshour with Jim Lehrer* Transcript, PBS, Feb. 25, 2005, www.pbps.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/jan-june05/iran_2-25.html, accessed on 2/27/2005.

moral concepts such as equality may generate multiple and possibly conflicting interpretations.⁴⁴ They are by no means exclusively liberal values, but strong candidates for “universal” human values, subject to different cultural interpretations. To highlight the non-liberal aspect of my conception, let me contrast it with Kymlicka’s liberal nationalism. In liberal nationalism, equality that matters is still the equality of *individual* citizens endowed with the same set of fundamental *rights*, to be exercised without undue outside interference. That citizens consider themselves as members of a particular nation, while important in liberal nationalism, is still secondary, gaining significance only to the extent that it will promote their “liberal obligation of justice” among co-nationals who are first and foremost equal right-holders.⁴⁵

In my democratic non-liberal nationalism, by contrast, political participants are considered *equal members* of a particular nation and therefore equally entitled to contribute to national discourses. This notion of equality is not necessarily liberal because whether or not members are endowed with fundamental liberal rights does not have direct relevance in this context. Their equal participation may be guaranteed only to the extent that they self-identify as culturally embedded members of the nation who subscribe to some, although not necessarily the official, set of national values and are committed to promoting the well-being and flourishing of the nation. Conversely, their participation may be restricted if they do not so identify. Also, since members are not necessarily construed as free and equal individuals, their equal participation in

⁴⁴ See, Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1954), pp. 149-151.

⁴⁵ Miller has a slightly different position on this (p. 11).

collective deliberations may be mediated by groups with which they strongly identify.⁴⁶

Another related contrast between my position and liberal nationalism has to do with the role of government. In Kymlicka's liberal nationalism, since citizens are individuals with the fundamental right to pursue their own private goals without undue outside interference, the state should stay *neutral* and not promote a national common good that may interfere with such an individual right. "Nationhood" has come to matter to liberals because it provides "the best basis on which to promote communal trust and solidarity *without limiting the freedom of individuals* to form and revise their conceptions of the good." Hence, liberal nationalism involves "no violation of liberal neutrality" in that nationalist policies are good only to the extent that they will make "citizens more likely to fulfil their obligations of justice."⁴⁷

By contrast, in my view, a national government may legitimately endorse and protect a set of non-liberal national values that gains popular support of self-identifying members in democratic national discourses. Liberals may worry that non-liberal national values are inherently oppressive, whether or not they are endorsed by the majority. However, most long-standing non-liberal national values upheld by a sizable national population—such as social/cosmic harmony, deference, filial duty, loyalty, etc.—are idealizations of different human capacities and potentialities that have contributed to human flourishing in unique ways. They are highly esteemed and

⁴⁶ John Rawls's account of "decent nonliberal peoples" and their "consultation hierarchy" provides an excellent illustration. *The Law of Peoples* (Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 66, 71-72, 73.

⁴⁷ Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, pp. 265, 266, 267, emphasis added. Kymlicka gives an extensive defense of a neutral state on pp. 212-19. For a different liberal nationalist position on this, see

staunchly defended by the insiders as refined expressions of their own moral and aesthetic sensibilities, equal in status to liberal values.⁴⁸ Also, these national values entail basic moral injunctions against murder, unjustifiable infliction of bodily harm, or unjust violations of other important personal goods, *not* because such wrongdoings violate human rights but rather because they vitiate the well-being of the community itself.⁴⁹

Since non-liberal national values are not predicated on the fundamental value of individual rights, however, it is in principle possible that certain liberal rights of individuals may at times be legitimately restricted in non-liberal nations. Those who obviously lack cultural immersion in and/or emotional attachment to the national culture and are uninterested in promoting the common good of national survival or flourishing may be limited, for example, in the exercise of their liberal individual right of speech within the nation to publicly denounce national values cherished by the members and, *a fortiori*, in their participation in national discourses.

This may raise the specter of oppression. However, restricting the participation of such individuals in national discourses need not entail oppression. First, it is worth repeating that these are individuals whose lack of cultural immersion in and/or

Miller, p. 195.

⁴⁸ Some theorists even argue that certain non-liberal cultural values, such as the panentheistic Native American “Wakan Tanka (the Great Spirit),” are “more moral or ethical” than liberal values. See, J. B. Callicott and T. W. Overholt, “Traditional American Indian Attitudes toward Nature,” in G. Kessler (ed.), *Voices of Wisdom* (Belmont, CA : Wadsworth, 2000), pp. 287, 284-285.

⁴⁹ As even Rawls recognizes, such basic moral injunctions are fundamental moral rules that all decent human communities, whether liberal or non-liberal, must subscribe to in order to maintain “any system of

emotional attachment to the national culture is clearly recognized by themselves and recognizable by others. Hence the number of such individuals would be relatively small. Also, they should be offered an option to develop cultural immersion in and/or emotional affinity to the national culture. In case they refuse to do so and desire to leave, they must be allowed a safe exit from the nation.⁵⁰ If they choose to stay while remaining unconcerned about the national culture, on the other hand, legitimate restrictions of certain liberal individual rights would not ordinarily involve direct violations of their life or bodily integrity or lawfully earned personal possessions, unless they were patently harming or planning to harm “grave” national interests—to be decided in specific contexts through a democratic process—or other members.

In defending non-liberal national values, I am not denying that there is a real danger of these national values ossifying into essentialist and oppressive monoliths as self-interested powerful groups adopt, propagate, and impose a single set of national values with a distorted interpretation. Liberals may argue that the only way to prevent such eventualities is to institute and implement liberal mechanisms to protect individuals from such abuse. I believe, however, that it is naïve to think that this danger

social cooperation” (p. 78).

⁵⁰ One might claim that this guarantee of “safe exit” is liberal, citing Chandran Kukathas’s work which heavily relies on the notion of the “right to be free to leave” to argue against multicultural accommodation of cultural minorities. See, “Are There Any Cultural Rights?” *Political Theory*, Vol. 20 No. 1 (1992): 105-139, p. 116. What I have advocated is that members who desire to leave should be “allowed a safe exit.” Formulated in this way, there is nothing quintessentially liberal about it. From a communitarian perspective that values the flourishing of national common goods, detractors who desire to leave the community should be *allowed* to leave, not because they have a “right” to do so, but because the community would be better off to let go of these individuals.

can be diminished by simply requiring the powerful groups to adopt and implement the liberal protection of individual rights. As argued previously, basic moral injunctions are already entailed by most non-liberal national values, rightly interpreted. Hence, in most cases, the problem is not the absence of moral constraints but rather the lack of will to abide by or the propensity to obscure such moral constraints on the part of the powerful. Crude egoism of powerful groups is seldom cured by moral injunctions alone, whether liberal or non-liberal. This is not to say that moral admonitions are meaningless, but just to clarify that liberal morality is no more effective than non-liberal morality in the face of unscrupulous egoism.

The real source of oppression, as many nationally embedded insiders rightly believe, is often *not* non-liberal national values themselves, of which only one set may have been selected as the official set while numerous others are floating at the periphery of the national culture. The source of oppression is rather corrupt and arbitrary social institutions or stifling and oppressive customs/practices, backed up by a distorted dominant *interpretation* of an arbitrarily selected *official* set of national values that illegitimately promotes the interest of dominant groups at the expense of others. Therefore, even those members who are critical of certain national institutions and practices, the official interpretation, or even the official national values—we might call them “social critics”⁵¹— may still maintain their unswerving commitment to ensure the survival of their nation as the reserve of cherished personal hyper goods and to improve

⁵¹ For more on social critics, see Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

their national culture as a whole, by incorporating other national values into the official set to remedy the constricted vision of the previous set, replacing distorted interpretations with innovative and liberatory ones, and/or reorganizing national institutions and practices accordingly.

VII. Conclusion

Women of non-liberal nations who uphold their national values, while at the same time criticizing various aspects of their national culture, are prime examples of social critics. These women are firmly ensconced in their national culture and contribute to its gradual transformation in the direction of gender equality by actively participating in an *inner* dialectic of democratic nationalism.⁵² As thoroughly immersed insiders in their national matrix, they can recognize ways in which their current national culture has been warped by dominant groups, while still upholding non-liberal national values. They can challenge the oppressive status quo and offer alternative, more inclusive visions of the national culture by identifying alternative national values, constructing alternative interpretations of them, adjusting foreign ideas that are conducive to gender equality or creating hybrid national values. In such ways, insiders of non-liberal nations may find ingenious ways to correct internal problems, including sexism, and promote a more egalitarian and inclusive national culture in its unique trajectory.

⁵² For examples, see, Jayawardena; Trask, *From a Native Daughter*; Deveaux, "Conflicting Equalities?" pp. 523, 527-9, 532, 533; Deveaux, "A Deliberative Approach to Conflicts of Culture," *Political Theory* Vol. 31 No. 6 (2003):780-807, p. 800; Melissa Forbis, "Hacia la Autonomia: Zapatista Women Developing a New World," in Christine Eber and Christine Kovic (eds.), *Women of Chiapas : Making History in Times of*

If this is the case, then the liberal nationalist thesis turns out to be false: liberal nationalism is not the only defensible form of nationalism, and democratic non-liberal nationalisms are also morally justifiable. Admittedly, the path of democratic non-liberal nationalism would be uneven and full of unexpected obstacles, even under the best of circumstances. Still, most, if not all, progressive social movements are at best works in progress. Democratic processes by which national cultures are formed and restructured would be primarily “experimental” with “diverse degrees of blindness and accident” and potentially result in radically different types of national/cultural systems.⁵³ This, however, is another reason to support, rather than to criticize, democratic non-liberal nationalisms, as they would be conducive to genuine cultural diversity and pluralism at the global level.⁵⁴

Struggle and Hope (New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁵³ Dewey, p. 33.

⁵⁴ Supporting democratic non-liberal nationalism does not necessarily imply advocating secession. As Walzer aptly points out, forms of national self-determination other than secession—such as “border revision, federation, regional or functional autonomy, cultural pluralism”—should be given serious consideration in specific contexts (*Thick and Thin*, p. 80).