

Nationalism and Feminism: Similarities and Differences

Two different, yet similar in some aspects social movements are under consideration in the paper. Both phenomena have sometimes the same aims, sometimes they are opposite. But both - nationalism and feminism - are outsiders in some particular sense. There is no necessity to say much about the topicality of the problem, because both nationalism and feminism play important role in society.

As interest in both nationalism and feminism grows and the analyses of both become demonstrably more sophisticated in academic circles, the popular discussion both movements becomes an object of controversy. We should admit that it is only in the last decade that nationalism and feminism are discussed jointly.

Nationalism encompasses many meanings – from simple patriotism, to a quest for independence that would change the political structure of the country, to a conviction of the superiority of one's culture. It is necessary to say, that nationalism is dangerous as a misused theory, useful as an organizing principle, and essential as a tool for understanding political and social reality. By the way, the same holds true for feminism.

Feminism also expands multiple meanings – the movement toward equality of the sexes; the incorporation of women into all aspects of knowledge and society; the recognition of the difference between the male and female and the overcoming of that difference; the study of women within a broad societal context; focus on women as a category in themselves, the use of the idea of the female as an analytical tool in philosophy, and its use to subvert analytical approaches.

As we can see, there are many scholarly and unscientific interpretations of both phenomena. However, we should emphasize a big difference between studying nationalism and feminism: nationalism is studied by outsiders in seemingly scientific terms, while the nationalists themselves prefer emotional slogans to theory. Feminism is mostly studied by its own adherents who seek increasingly nuanced formulations of what feminism encompasses. That is why we should be careful in a way to avoid subjectivism.

While on the subject of considering nationalism and feminism as social movements, we should say: except for very brief intervals, feminism, unlike nationalism, has not been a mass movement. But on the occasions when women created a critical mass they were able to achieve some significant results – suffrage in the western industrialized countries; equal rights in the 1970's United States. As regards the nationalism – it is known from world history - was and is very popular movement in different countries including Ukraine. By the way, the situation with feminist movement in contemporary Ukraine is not very good. There are several centers of theoretical feminism in Ukraine - Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odessa. They are occupied mostly by philosophy and theory of feminism, what is undoubtedly important. Besides that, on my opinion, there are few hundred of different feminist organizations in Ukraine, which are not too active, working without being in touch between each other and competing for grants. Sometimes there are wonders whether those organizations were made as single grant project.

In conclusion, we should say, it is impossible to avoid either feminism or nationalism – we have gender and we belong to a group, even if it is only to assert our individuality by denying that belonging.