Nationhood and Political Theory

Margaret Canovan, Emeritus Professor of Political Thought, University of Keele, UK

In Nationhood and Political Theory, Margaret Canovan argues that universalist political theories unconsciously rely upon the collective power generated by national solidarity. By focusing on nationhood as a source of power, Dr Canovan’s book obliges political theorists to face the dilemmas involved in reconciling particularist power bases with universal principles.

‘The puzzle of national identity is explored illuminatingly by Margaret Canovan. . . . Political theorists have recently begun to take such issues seriously and this book is a welcome addition to the literature.’
– Brian Barry, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

‘As we have come to expect from Canovan, this is both a lucid and a deeply reflective book, a valuable antidote both to nationalist enthusiasm and to shallow liberal cosmopolitanism’
– David Miller, Political Studies

‘Dr Canovan’s lucid study of contemporary intellectual attitudes towards nationalism is one of the most important works of political philosophy to have appeared during the past decade. Her subject is an extraordinary one. She shows how the current discourses of democracy, social justice and liberalism take for granted the existence of features of the nation state which they themselves refuse to acknowledge explicitly. The book includes a measured appeal for a deeper appreciation of the complexities of political life, and above all of the darker passages which always lie behind the creation of political identities.’
– Noël O’Sullivan, University of Hull, UK

‘Highly recommended, especially for academic libraries at all levels.’
– F. Tachau, Choice

‘The author leads the reader through a penetrating discussion of some of the basic explicit and implicit presumptions of modern political theory.’
– Nils Butenschon, The Ethnic Conflict Research Digest