

Book Reviews

Athena Leoussi (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Nationalism*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2001. ix + 314 pp. £105 (hbk).

By the standards of encyclopaedias, this is a relatively slim volume, comprising barely over 100 entries. Many are concise and largely definitional. Some serve mainly to document the origins of ideas and phenomena. Many other entries are essentially short essays by the most distinguished authors, displaying their latest understandings. Overall, the constellation is bright indeed, a tribute to the editor's judicious selections and persuasive powers. It is a treat to read Pierre van den Berghe on sociobiology, Anthony Smith on the chosen people theme, Jacob Landau on diaspora nationalism, Michael Billig on stereotypes, Michael Banton on rational-choice theories of nationalism, and Crawford Young on decolonisation. These are contributors at their predictable best.

The volume was skilfully planned. The forms of nationalism – ethnic, territorial, civic, cultural – are all well covered, and so are its evolution, psychology and manifestations, such as secessionism, irredentism, xenophobia and balkanisation. (Conflict and warfare would have been useful additions.) Nationalism and citizenship, cosmopolitanism, foreign policy, language, minorities, music and myth are all ably represented, as are most of the main theorists: Herder and Fichte, Isaiah Berlin, Elie Kedourie, Hugh Seton-Watson and Hans Kohn. Whether Frederik Barth, celebrated in connection with nationalism principally for an essay on interactionist theories of ethnic boundaries, warrants a separate entry in an encyclopaedia of nationalism; whether Ernest Gellner warrants two (the second, by Kenneth Minogue, is devastatingly critical); and whether Carlton Hayes ought to have been omitted: these are all judgement calls on which reasonable people could differ. On the whole, however, the coverage is ample and apt.

There are some standout essays. John Klier's entry on anti-Semitism distinguishes among several bases of prejudice. His impressive survey ranges from medieval demonisation to pseudo-scientific based hostility, and it emphasises, appropriately, the extraordinary range of political movements that adopted anti-Semitic themes. Christie Davies's fine explication of ethnic humour points, interestingly, to behavioural excess – in the sense of deviations from an implicit Aristotelian mean – as the source of amusement in ethnic jokes. The essay on modernisation theories of nationalism by Josep R. Llobera is a truly helpful survey that groups the theories into those that rest on ideas about social communications (beginning with Karl Deutsch), those that are based on assertions about economic interest (whether Marxist or not) and those that derive from the development of the modern state. The entry on fascist nationalism by Stanley Payne emphasises differences among strains of fascism and the failure of fascism to grow vibrantly outside of Europe. (Japan's militarism and emperor-worship, Payne maintains, were something else again.) Payne also points out that neo-fascist movements that have gained significant electoral support 'have always adopted somewhat more moderate and post-fascist doctrines'. The whole essay is a useful corrective to sloppy generalisations and careless 'fascist' labels. In this respect, the chapter is typical of several contributions by leading students of their respective subjects.

The collection contains some disappointments. There is some over-inclusion. Under various entries, Eric Hobsbawm, Homi Bhabha and Benedict Anderson make multiple appearances that are arguably disproportionate to their contributions to the understanding of nationalism. Post-modernist entries in the encyclopaedia are decidedly less intellectually satisfying than are many others. The short essay on nationalism and the 'other' is particularly uninteresting, failing as it does to acknowledge that only some interethnic relationships are fraught with tension, that most so-called 'others', most of the time, are not met with hostility but indifference.

There is also under-inclusion. Four paragraphs on tribalism are not sufficient to do justice to the subject. John Armstrong's entry on ethno-nationalism, which ought to have been one of the more comprehensive of the collection, pursues only one interesting line of analysis and omits even a mention of the works of Walker Connor on the subject. The psychology of nationalism also deserves a much fuller treatment than the one provided in the entry under that title. The three-paragraph synopsis comprising that entry emphasises unproven psycho-speculations about nationalism, which is said to entail expulsion of that which is regarded as bad 'outside the nation's boundaries so that the good may be retained within it'. The same brief entry also manages to conflate in-group affinity and out-group hostility, in spite of work showing that one does not necessarily lead to the other. Psychology receives somewhat less than its due in the encyclopaedia, and it is a pity that the specific entry on psychology is so deficient.

These shortcomings do not spoil the rich repast offered by the *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism*. If there is occasional homage paid to clichés, there is also (on other pages) serious criticism of their inventors, and there is sustained consideration of categories conventionally misunderstood and possibly unfairly disdained. (See, for example, Steven Grosby's thoughtful treatment of 'Primordality'.) Along with many of the best and most well-established thinkers on nationalism and related subjects, a promising new generation of scholars, many trained at or associated with the London School of Economics and with this journal, makes its appearance here.

Concise as it is, this volume is surely an encyclopaedia, but it is not encyclopaedic. There is, for example, no entry for Mazzini or for the particular nationalisms of most countries. What there is instead is a volume of topical essays, many of them truly outstanding, by authors with various interesting intellectual axes to grind (some sharper than others), overseen by an editor quite obviously grinding none of her own. The encyclopaedia is a considerable accomplishment for Dr Leoussi and the impressive team of advisers and assistants deployed for the task. This is a work that, well conceived, will be equally well used.

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