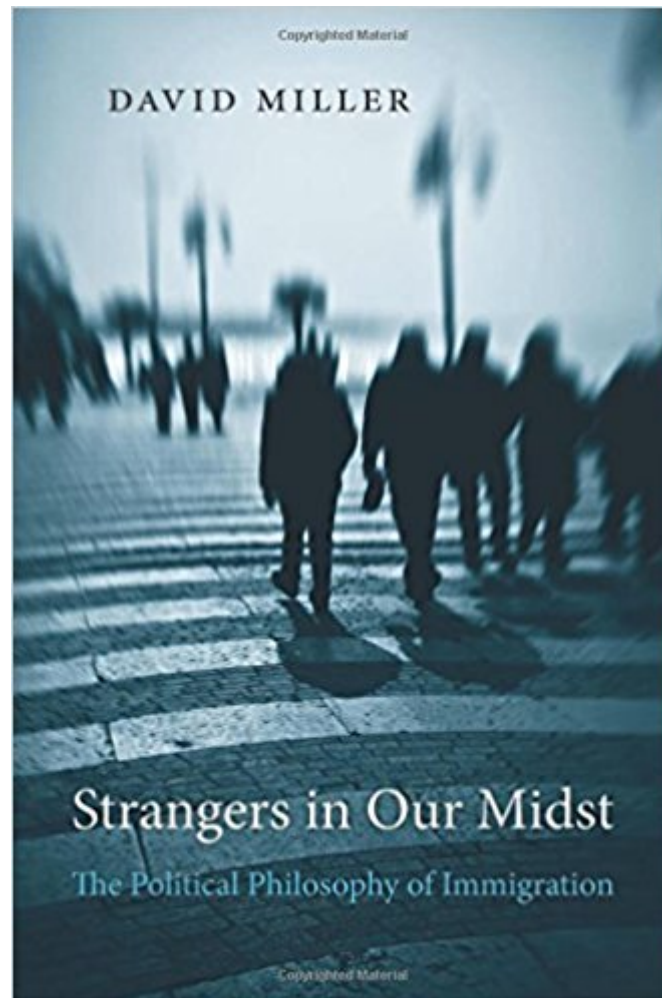


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Strangers In Our Midst: The Political Philosophy Of Immigration



Synopsis

It is not unusual for people in countries with limited job opportunities and economic resources to want to seek a better life in different lands. This is especially so for those who come from countries where they are treated poorly, discriminated against, or worse. But moving from one country to another in large numbers creates serious problems for receiving countries as well as those sending them. How should Western democracies respond to the many millions of people who want to settle in their societies? Economists and human rights advocates tend to downplay the considerable cultural and demographic impact of immigration on host societies. Seeking to balance the rights of immigrants with the legitimate concerns of citizens, *Strangers in Our Midst* brings a bracing dose of realism to this debate. David Miller defends the right of democratic states to control their borders and decide upon the future size, shape, and cultural make-up of their populations. Reframing immigration as a question of political philosophy, he asks how democracy within a state can be reconciled with the rights of those outside its borders. A just immigration policy must distinguish refugees from economic migrants and determine the rights that immigrants in both categories acquire, once admitted. But being welcomed into a country as a prospective citizen does more than confer benefits: it imposes responsibilities. In Miller's view, immigrants share with the state an obligation to integrate into their adopted societies, even if it means shedding some cultural baggage from their former home.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A cool dissection of some of the main moral issues surrounding immigration and worth reading for its introductory chapter alone. Moreover, unlike many progressive intellectuals, Miller gives due weight to the rights and preferences of existing citizens and does not believe an immigrant has an automatic right to enter a country. Full of balanced judgments and tragic dilemmas. (David Goodhart Evening Standard 2016-05-19) David Miller is one of the world's leading political philosophers and an expert on immigration. Strangers in Our Midst is a lucid, succinct, and accessible statement of his views on this important topic. (Joseph Carens, University of Toronto) This is a polished and carefully wrought argument. Really, an extended series of arguments on an urgent topic by one of the best political theorists in the world. (Russell Muirhead, Dartmouth College) [Miller's] timely book Strangers in Our Midst: The Political Philosophy of Immigration may not be the first treatise of its kind, but it aims to be the first to combine such an abstract approach to the topic with such a strong dose of realism. (James Ryerson New York Times Book Review 2016-07-31) A lean and judicious defense of national interest. In Miller's view, controlling immigration is one way for a country to control its public expenditures, and such control is essential to democracy. (Kelefa Sanneh New Yorker 2016-10-31) Much like the title, this book proves to be provocative in its discussion of the philosophy of immigration. Miller provides a broad and deep inquiry into immigration issues found in the current political, social, and global culture that will likely stimulate thought and discourse around this important topic. Miller challenges readers to question the current systems that people are familiar with, examine values, and take a humanistic approach to the question of what is right. He then shepherds readers through analyzing such difficult questions as what is national identity, who should be allowed to leave, where should they be allowed to go, and under what conditions? Once they arrive, what are their rights, and how should they be treated? The author thoroughly examines these questions while thoughtfully considering legal theory, ethics, political philosophy, human rights issues, and economic considerations. Immigration, emigration, and refugee status continue to be hot topics in world news and national politics, and Miller's book is successful in presenting differing views followed by careful analysis and thought-provoking arguments about immigration from a global perspective. (P. Butler Choice 2016-10-01) Miller is generous about refugees but makes a strong case for limiting migrant numbers. It is clear to him that refusing migrants entry on the basis of race is immoral and illegal, but he stoutly denies that capping numbers is inherently unjust. One of the strengths of his extremely lucid book is that it manages to state a strong moral and philosophical case against maximal cosmopolitanism and open borders without using this as any kind of excuse to ignore humanitarian catastrophe. (Rowan Williams New Statesman

2016-12-28) Strangers in Our Midst is not a handbook of political solutions, nor a roadmap to equitable immigration policies. Rather, it is a work of political and moral theory. Miller is most useful not in proposing answers to which everyone will subscribe, but in proposing questions in such a way and within such a context that there can be common moral ground among those who disagree on specifics, and thus an improved prospect of progress toward workable and effective solutions. (Richard J. Hoskins Christian Century 2017-04-12)

David Miller is Official Fellow and Professor of Political Theory at Nuffield College, Oxford.

Lays out strong case for compassionate self interest. Must read vs Carens

David Miller finished writing the main part of this book before the estimated 350,000 immigrants and refugees crossed into Western Europe between January and August 2015. Immigration has become a hot political topic and a matter of intense and emotional debates not just in Europe, but across the world. Yet, how many people who hold strong views about immigration have really thought through the subject rationally and deeply? How many such arguments are packaged in anger? *Strangers in our Midst* is an important book not only for its deep and powerful arguments, its timeliness and rational voice will help us all understand immigrants, immigration, and our very own humanity. Miller begins his discourse on immigration by considering the concept of cosmopolitanism, the idea that free people should be entitled to travel wherever and whenever they wish if they think that they can find a better job or a more suitable climate. Should the receiving country give weight to such interests? He examines the limits of democracy, the extent to which a democratic country should extend the freedom its citizens enjoy, to the benefit of immigrants? He considers the distinctions between economic immigrants and refugees. Miller explores in great detail the application of political and moral philosophy not only to refugees but also to immigrants. Miller appreciates the dilemma that immigration creates in the minds of anyone thinking about it. He says, "Move in one direction and you can be accused of heartlessness toward vulnerable and desperate people; move in the other and you will be called an elitist with no understanding of the impact that immigration can have on the working-class communities." In order to be helpful in debates on this issue, Miller considers the positions and interests of not just the immigrants, the host societies, but also the people the immigrants leave behind. He considers a number of values, including what he calls, the "weak moral cosmopolitan" value

which takes immigrants as humans whose rights cannot be ignored; he considers the value of the rights of citizens in a democracy to decide the future direction of their society; he considers the value of fairness in the distribution of benefits, burdens, and responsibilities in a society, and how an immigrant is expected to take his share in each of these; and finally, he considers the value of an integrated society where people from all walks of life and from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds live in close proximity to one another, associate with each other for common goals, and interact freely and openly on terms of equality.

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