



For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism

Maurizio Viroli

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Reconstructing the historical meaning of the terms nationalism and patriotism, Viroli shows how the two concepts have been used within specific cultural and ideological contexts. He reviews the political thought of modern and early modern Europe, with particular emphasis on France, Italy, England, and Germany, and comes up with a fundamental difference between patriotism and nationalism. Viroli argues that patriotism and nationalism are two ideologies that aim to reinforce and channel two different and powerful political passions: the love of a common good and the love of uniqueness and homogeneity. The Patriot is a supporter of the republic, his enemies are tyranny and corruption; the Nationalist supports ethnic, cultural, or religious unity, and fights against impurity, contamination, and diversity. He concludes, therefore, that while it is morally acceptable to be a patriot, it is morally unacceptable, as well as unnecessary, to be a nationalist to defend the values that nationalists hold dear. This work will be of interest to students and scholars of political theory and political science, as well as to historians of political thought.

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