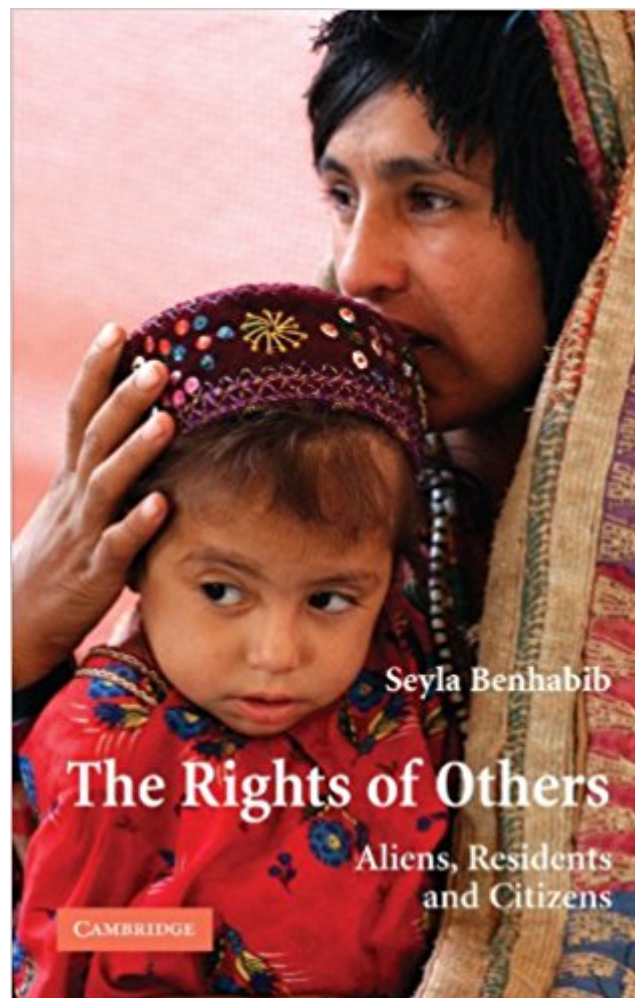


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The Rights Of Others: Aliens, Residents, And Citizens (The Seeley Lectures)



Synopsis

This book explores the tension between universal principles of human rights and the self-determination claims of sovereign states as they affect the claims of refugees, asylum-seekers and immigrants. Drawing on the work of Kant's "cosmopolitan doctrine" and positions developed by Hannah Arendt, Seyla Benhabib explores how the topic has been analyzed within the larger history of political thought. She argues that many of the issues raised in abstract debate between universalism and multiculturalism can find acceptable solutions in practice.

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Customer Reviews

"Benhabib's The Rights of Others shows - unflinchingly, astutely and bravely - that immigration remains such a pitched battle in the West because it is part of a larger war of ideas." The Nation "Benhabib's book does political theory great service: it attends to the consequences of the empirical realities of the 'fraying of state sovereignty' and the 'disaggregation or unbundling of citizenship,' and it makes an impassioned, theoretically substantiated plea for the 'need to decriminalize the worldwide movement of peoples, and treat each person, whatever his or her political citizenship status, in accordance with the dignity of moral personhood.'" Political Theory "... an important contribution to the literature on global justice, offering a promising defense of the cosmopolitan ideal of porous (if not open) borders." Human Rights Review "The value of Benhabib's The Rights of Others is in fostering discourse between the theories underlying our political and

ethical order and the needs of migrants... Hers is a bold statement to theorists that engagement is needed with people as yet neglected in their work... A bold contribution to a dialogue central to refugee studies." *Journal of Refugee Studies*"With this book, Benhabib has done philosophers and political theorists an important service by directing our attention to a crucial issue of global justice; her incisive analysis will no doubt set the stage for the debate that should by all rights follow." *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*"... a rare and remarkable combination of informed political theorizing and contemporary empirical application to real world challenges." Dario Castiglione, University of Exeter"... an important and compelling attempt to connect developments in political theory with efforts to extend citizen rights and protections." Gerald Mara, Georgetown University

The Rights of Others explores the tension between universal principles of human rights and the self-determination claims of sovereign states as they affect the claims of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants. Drawing on the work of Kant's 'cosmopolitan doctrine' and positions developed by Hannah Arendt, the distinguished political philosopher Seyla Benhabib explores how this topic has been discussed within the larger history of political thought. She argues that many of the issues raised in abstract debate between universalism and multiculturalism can find acceptable solutions in practice.

There's a lot to like in this book. The discussion of Hannah Arendt's idea of the "right to have rights" and of Kant's views on cosmopolitanism are very good and useful to anyone interested in either thinker or in human rights. The invocation of Derrida to develop an idea of cosmopolitan democracy was interesting even if somewhat obscure. (I didn't think that invoking Derrida's idea of 'iteration' helped at all but then the idea is not clear to me so perhaps that's the problem.) The discussion of Rawls is, however, no good at all as Benhabib gets both the point and the structure of Rawls's *Law of Peoples* almost completely wrong. If that part is skipped, however, this is a very interesting book both for its discussion of historical figures and for its engagement with current problems such as citizenship, immigration, and cosmopolitanism.

Professor Benhabib's analysis of the relationship between citizenship and community membership provides an innovative and exceedingly compelling way of navigating the conflicting claims of human rights and democratic sovereignty. Drawing heavily on Arendt and Kant, this study traces the conceptual basis for current theoretical problems while also attending to the contemporary situation.

Perhaps most fascinating is Benhabib's usage of discourse ethics and her notion of 'democratic iterations' to move beyond the impasse posed by the false dichotomy of communitarian and cosmopolitan ideals-- in a sense, as long as we construe democratic sovereignty in a way that eschews claims to a permanent unchanging people there need not be any contradiction between maintaining cosmopolitan obligations and respecting communal claims. Though I have some minor personal qualms with Professor Benhabib's interpretation of Arendt, I found 'The Rights of Others' to be an amazing read that combined insightful interpretations of political thought with astute observations of our global situation. A must read for those interested in global justice, cosmopolitanism and human rights theory.

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