

The Foundations of Justice: Why the Retarded and the Rest of Us Have Claims to Equality

Robert M. Veatch



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As medical and social services become increasingly expensive, the demands of those with severe and uncorrectable handicaps pose an urgent social problem. The immediate question--how finite resources should be allocated, particularly to people with inexhaustible needs and meager capacities for improvement--can only be answered by thoroughly examining current concepts of justice, equality, and social responsibility. Drawing on sociology, philosophy, religion and policy analysis, and supplementing the discussion with actual case studies, Veatch traces the historical origins of our commitment to the disadvantaged, examines how fundamental premises underlying this commitment have been secularized, and explores the limits of rational arguments against those who fail to acknowledge any social obligation. Creating an approach acceptable to both the secular and religious points of view, the author concludes with a cogent argument for prioritizing a commitment to the disadvantaged while recognizing realistic limits to their claims. *The Foundations of Justice* will interest the medical ethics community and professionals in philosophy, religious studies, medicine and health policy.

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