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D. Christopher Ralston
Justin Ho
Editors

Philosophical Reflections on Disability

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PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON DISABILITY

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PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON DISABILITY

Edited by

D. CHRISTOPHER RALSTON

Rice University, Houston, TX, USA

and

JUSTIN HO

*Berkeley School of Law, University of California
at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA, USA*

 Springer

Editors

D. Christopher Ralston
Rice University
Dept. Philosophy
6100 S. Main Street MS14
Houston TX 77005-1892
USA
ralston@rice.edu

Justin Ho
Berkeley School of Law
215 Boalt Hall
Berkeley, CA 94720-7200
USA
J.T.Ho@berkeley.edu

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Preface

This project draws together the various strands of the debate regarding disability in a way never before combined in a single volume. The volume first of all seeks to offer a representative sampling of competing philosophical/theoretical approaches to the conceptualization of disability as such. This theoretical background serves as a crucial backdrop to the remainder of the book, which addresses such themes as (1) the complex interplay between disability and quality-of-life considerations, (2) questions of social justice as it relates to disability, and (3) the personal dimensions of the disability experience.

Consistent with these general themes, the primary goal of the volume is to bring together a collection of essays by important scholars in the fields of moral theory, bioethics, and disability studies to address such specific questions as the following:

- What is the best way to conceptualize disability or theorize about it? Should one adopt either the “medical model” or the “social model” of disability—or take a different approach altogether? What are the implications of adopting one model of disability versus another?
- Are there any identifiable connections between disability and reduced quality of life? Between disability and suffering? What are their moral implications? What should we think of such practices as prenatal testing for disability, and/or abortion on the basis of disability?
- What, if anything, is “owed” to persons with disabilities? Should they be “compensated” for their disability? “Repaired” so as to restore them to a “normal” level of functioning? Do the philosophically-dominant theories of social justice (e.g., egalitarian and consequentialist theories that tend to emphasize questions of distributive justice) offer sufficient resources for addressing the needs and problems faced by those with disabilities? Or should we look elsewhere (e.g., to libertarian theories, virtue-oriented theories, and the like) for the conceptual resources needed to adequately address questions of social justice and disability?

By explicitly locating the discussion of various *applied* ethical questions within the broader *theoretical* context of how disability is best conceptualized, the volume seeks to bridge the gap between abstract philosophical musings about the nature

of disease, illness and disability found in much of the philosophy of medicine literature, on the one hand, and the comparatively concrete but less philosophical discourse frequently encountered in much of the disability studies literature. It also critically examines various claims advanced by disability advocates, as well as those of their critics. In this way, this volume is a unique contribution to the scholarly literature, and also offers a valuable resource to instructors and students interested in a text that critically examines and assesses various approaches to some of the most vexing problems in contemporary social and political philosophy.

Houston, TX, USA
Berkeley, CA, USA

D. Christopher Ralston
Justin Ho

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