



# Distributive Justice and Disability: Utilitarianism against Egalitarianism

*Mark S. Stein*

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## **Distributive Justice and Disability: Utilitarianism against Egalitarianism** Mark S. Stein

Theories of distributive justice are most severely tested in the area of disability. In this book, Mark Stein argues that utilitarianism performs better than egalitarian theories in this area: whereas egalitarian theories help the disabled either too little or too much, utilitarianism achieves the proper balance by placing resources where they will do the most good.

Stein offers what may be the broadest critique of egalitarian theory from a utilitarian perspective. He addresses the work of egalitarian theorists John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, Amartya Sen, Bruce Ackerman, Martha Nussbaum, Norman Daniels, Philippe Van Parijs, and others. Stein claims that egalitarians are often driven to borrow elements of utilitarianism in order to make their theories at all plausible.

The book concludes with an acknowledgment that both utilitarians and egalitarians face problems in the distribution of life-saving medical resources. Stein advocates a version of utilitarianism that would distribute life-saving resources based on life expectancy, not quality of life. Egalitarian theories, he argues, ignore life expectancy and so are again found wanting.

*Distributive Justice and Disability* is a powerful and engaging book that helps to reframe the debate between egalitarian and utilitarian thinkers.

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