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An Essay on Rights

Hillel Steiner

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An Essay on Rights Hillel Steiner
This book addresses the perennial question: What is justice? The usual answer draws on ideas such as fairness and impartiality. Hillel Steiner departs from this approach: he seeks an answer through an exploration of the nature of rights.People standardly express their demands for justice in terms of rights, the items created and parceled out by just principles. So, the author argues, it must surely be possible to learn something about justice by identifying the characteristic features of rights - and something more by discovering how two or more rights can co-exist: indeed, a central part of his argument is that for a set of rights to be just they must at least be mutually consistent.Every one is commonly thought to have rights to freedom and to some kind of equal treatment. The tensions between these claims have long exercised the minds of philosophers, moralists, economists, jurists and others. And they have informed the issues at stake in ideological conflict, wars and revolutions. How these tensions are handled in law, politics and economic activity affects relations between individuals, not least as members of different societies and generations. Their resolution is found here in a set of rights that is at once libertarian and redistributive in its demands.The author clarifies and analyzes the role played by ideas of liberty and rights in legal, moral and economic reasoning. He then moves to formulate a coherent set of original rights that is at once appropriate for persons' external property and for their bodies, and which takes account of differences between their locations in time and place and their genetic endowments. This original and important book will appeal to readers concerned with central problems in moral, political and legal philosophy, the history of ideas, and theoretical aspects of economics and social policy. Its trenchant argument is accessible, even on technical issues, and is illustrated throughout with real and hypothetical examples. It is also written in an engagingly colloquial style.

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