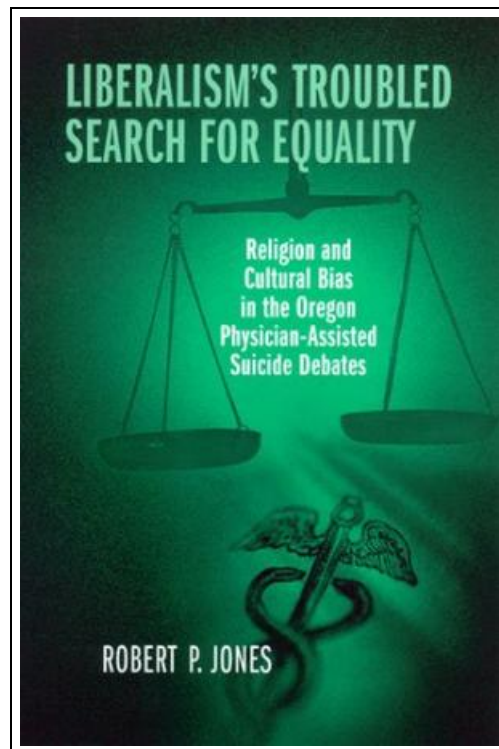


Liberalism's Troubled Search for Equality: Religion and Cultural Bias in the Oregon Physician-assisted Suicide Debates



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Reviews

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LIBERALISM'S TROUBLED SEARCH FOR EQUALITY: RELIGION AND CULTURAL BIAS IN THE OREGON PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE DEBATES

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University of Notre Dame Press. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Liberalism's Troubled Search for Equality: Religion and Cultural Bias in the Oregon Physician-assisted Suicide Debates, Robert P. Jones, Debate surrounding the 1994 Oregon Death with Dignity Act, the first law to legalize physician-assisted suicide (PAS) in America, revealed some surprising contradictions. Most prominently, egalitarian liberal philosophers Ronald Dworkin and John Rawls backed a constitutional right to PAS in direct opposition to many groups of disadvantaged citizens they theoretically supported. These groups argued that legalized PAS in the absence of universal access to health care would potentially coerce the disadvantaged to end their lives prematurely because of inadequate financial resources. In "Liberalism's Troubled Search for Equality", Robert P. Jones asks why these concerns were dismissed by liberal philosophers and argues that this contradiction exposes a blind spot within liberal political theory. Drawing on ethnographic interviews with activists and using PAS as a diagnostic tool, he argues that an egalitarian liberalism must abandon its overconfidence in its own neutrality, which undermines its ability to see the real needs and hear the actual voices of those it promises to champion. This correction would challenge liberals to see PAS differently, through a social justice frame of equality and inclusion rather than through an allegedly neutral frame of individual choice borrowed from the abortion debates. Jones further argues that giving up claims to neutrality will require liberalism and progressive politics to come to terms with an area of human culture that has long caused them uneasiness: religion. Jones argues that religious and other thick moral languages are not primarily problems but potential resources for helping liberalism stay true to its egalitarian aspirations. Jones brings together ethnography, political and social theory, and public policy analysis to offer a fresh perspective on the difficult issue of...

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