



Just Work

Russell MUIRHEAD

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This elegant essay on the justice of work focuses on the fit between who we are and the kind of work we do. Russell Muirhead shows how the common hope for work that fulfills us involves more than personal interest; it also points to larger understandings of a just society. We are defined in part by the jobs we hold, and Muirhead has something important to say about the partial satisfactions of the working life, and the increasingly urgent need to balance the claims of work against those of family and community.

Against the tendency to think of work exclusively in contractual terms, Muirhead focuses on the importance of work to our sense of a life well lived. Our notions of freedom and fairness are incomplete, he argues, without due consideration of how we fit the work we do.

Muirhead weaves his argument out of sociological, economic, and philosophical analysis. He shows, among other things, how modern feminism's effort to reform domestic work and extend the promise of careers has contributed to more democratic understandings of what it means to have work that fits. His account of individual and social fit as twin standards of assessment is original and convincing--it points both to the unavoidable problem of distributing bad work in society and to the personal importance of finding fulfilling work. These themes are pursued through a wide-ranging discussion that engages thinkers from Plato to John Stuart Mill to Betty Friedan. *Just Work* shows what it would mean for work to make good on the high promise so often invested in it and suggests what we--both as a society and as individuals--might do when it falls short.

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