



Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought

Sharon K. Vaughan

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The number of people who live in poverty has always far exceeded the number who do not. The normative question of how governments ought to treat the poor goes to the heart of the idea of justice and thus it is an essential element of political theory. Yet, there has been no formal study of the treatment of poverty in Western political thought. The chapters of *Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought* include an analysis of the main arguments of Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, Smith, Mill, Tocqueville, Hegel, Marx, Rawls, and Nozick about the causes, effects, and solutions to the problem of poverty and how their treatments of poverty relate to the idea of a just society. This book asks: What is the relationship between poverty and justice in the state? If we are to understand the relationship between the poor and the idea of a just state in the tradition of Western political thought, then we must be able to recognize how these theorists' definitions, assumptions, and conclusions about poverty contribute to or detract from the idea of justice. At the core of this work is the claim that the demands of justice necessarily entail that the political theorist engage with the problem of poverty, with the goal being to suggest some thoughtful and reasonable approaches to the problem.

Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought demonstrates that historical analysis and reconstruction of the treatment of poverty is critical because we are part of a historical community. Rather than being artifacts of scholarship, philosophical debates and ideas that are hundreds and thousands of years old continue to be relevant today because they are part of the foundation for society's beliefs about who the poor are, why they are poor, and what responsibility, if any, society has to them.

This book will benefit political theorists and philosophers interested in the history of political thought, poverty, or distributive justice, as well as non-theorists.

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