



Protecting the Vulnerable: A Re-Analysis of our Social Responsibilities

Robert E. Goodin

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Our narrower obligations often blind us to larger social responsibilities. The moral claims arising out of special relationships—family, friends, colleagues, and so on—always seem to take priority. Strangers ordinarily get, and ordinarily are thought to deserve, only what is left over. Robert E. Goodin argues that this is morally mistaken. In *Protecting the Vulnerable*, he presents a comprehensive theory of responsibility based on the concept of vulnerability. Since the range of people vulnerable to our actions or choices extends beyond those to whom we have made specific commitments (promises, vows, contracts), we must recognize a much more extensive network of obligations and moral claims. State welfare services, for example, are morally on a par with the services we render to family and friends. The same principle widens our international, intergenerational, and interpersonal responsibilities as well as our duties toward animals and natural environments. This book, written with keen intelligence and unfailing common sense, opens up new perspectives on issues central to public policy and of critical concern to philosophers and social scientists as well as to politicians, lawyers and social workers.

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