



In Defense of an Evolutionary Concept of Health: Nature, Norms, and Human Biology (Ashgate Studies in Applied Ethics)

Mahesh Ananth

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One of the most controversial contemporary debates on the concept of health is the clash between the views of naturalists and normativists. Naturalists argue that, although health can be valued or disvalued, the concept of health is itself objective and value-free. In contrast, normativists argue that health is a contextual and value-laden concept, and that there is no possibility of a value-free understanding of health. This debate has fueled many of the, often very acrimonious, disputations arising from the claims of health, disease and disability activists and charities and the public policy responses to them. In responding to this debate, Ananth both surveys the existing literature, with special focus on the work of Christopher Boorse, and argues that a naturalistic concept of health, drawing on evolutionary considerations associated with biological function, homeostasis, and species-design, is defensible without jettisoning norms in their entirety.

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