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Sommario/riassunto	'We have to assume that the mind is working no matter what it looks like on the outside. We can't just judge by appearance ... If you take away the label they are human beings.' Ed MurphyWhat does it mean to be 'mentally retarded'? Professors Bogdan and Taylor have interviewed two experts, 'Ed Murphy' and 'Pattie Burt, ' for answers. Ed and Pattie, former inmates of institutions for the retarded, tell us in their own words. Their autobiographies are not always pleasant reading. They describe the physical, mental, and emotional abuses heaped upon them throughout their youth and young adulthood; being spurned, neglected, and ultimately abandoned by family and friends; being labelled and stigmatized by social service professionals armed with tests and preconceptions; being incarcerated and depersonalized by the state. Ed and Pattie survived these experiences-evidence, perhaps, of the indefatigable will of the human spirit to assert its essential

humanity-but the wounds they have suffered, and the scars they bear, have not been overcome. They are now contributing, independent, members of society, but the stigma of 'mental retardation' remains. Their stories are both true and representative-powerful indictments of our knowledge of, our thinking about, and our ministrations to, the mentally handicapped. The interviewers argue that Ed and Pattie challenge the very concept of 'mental retardation.' Retardation, they assert, is an 'imaginary disease'; our attempts to 'cure' it are a hoax. Read Ed's and Pattie's accounts and judge for yourself.
