

Philosophy and the Poverty of Children and Families

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Abstract

Although the philosophical literature on both poverty and childhood is certainly increasing, the status of children living in poverty has been largely ignored as a philosophical subject. We consider that the condition of children and the justice-related issues that derive from it compel us to look more deeply into the particular sources, disadvantages and responsibilities of and towards children living in poverty. In the first part of this chapter, we highlight four challenges that affect studies of child poverty, and the mechanisms through which philosophical analysis may aid in tackling them. Philosophy can work as an important tool (1) to conceptualise what child poverty is, (2) to assess the problems and limitations of current research on the subject, (3) to normatively evaluate how should this condition be addressed, and (4) to offer guidelines on how society, law and the polity ought to act in response to child poverty. We consider that child poverty must be looked at from what it is in itself, and how it intersects with other features of the child's life which may exacerbate the condition. The role of the family is fundamental in any evaluation of what child poverty is, and how to tackle it. Understanding child poverty in the vacuum may omit fundamental sources of it, and solutions to it. Other intersecting conditions such as the child's social and cultural ethos, her citizenship status, gender or disability may play a fundamental role. The second section provides an overview of the volume, and an introduction to each of the chapters included.

Introduction

Child poverty is a structural issue of our contemporary world. The fact that hundreds of millions of children suffer from under- and malnutrition, lack access to sanitation and clean water, sleep on the ground without a proper floor, and become sick, dying of preventable diseases is a severe injustice and moral evil. The inequality in today's world, in which millions of children live in luxury while billions cannot satisfy their basic needs poses great burdens on our moral commitments. Unlike, maybe, previous generations, child poverty today can be effectively alleviated and eradicated, and this suggests, if not proves, that child poverty is a structural, human-made and unnecessary injustice. We have the resources to tackle it; we are just missing the willingness to do so. That said, the

philosophical, political and academic debate is still not resolved, by whom and how child poverty should be alleviated.

Child poverty is also not an isolated phenomenon. It intersects with and is reinforced by other disadvantages, being strongly determined by an individual's social, cultural, and political position in her community (Boyden and Bourdillon 2012; Biggeri, Trani, and Mauro 2010). Although children (through brute luck, let us say) inherit their socioeconomic position from their elders, it is the social, economic and political institutions and practices (economic exploitation, social stratification and exclusion, and cultural and political oppression) which enable and sustain their disadvantaged position by limiting the options available to the poor to escape from poverty.

Talking about child poverty puts the focus on how this condition affects children and their lives directly. But, who is a 'child'? The concept of childhood is itself contested and dependent on social assumptions and cultural interpretations (Schapiro 1999; Cunningham 1995; Gittins 2009; Graf 2015). This book does not follow a distinct definition of childhood, but most chapters either take the pragmatic route, following the definition given by many legal documents like the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which defines a child as every born person under the age of 18, or they simply assume a common sense position, which largely overlaps with this legal definition. The common sense position, though, often assumes younger children (not teenagers) to be the pragmatic case, aligning with certain other common sense assumptions about typical childlike-features such as immaturity, innocence, incapacity, vulnerability or dependency.

But child poverty is not only about children: much social research on child poverty, and also various philosophical reflections in this volume, look at children as embedded in families (Broussard and Joseph 2009; Fernandez et al. 2015). The "black box" of the household is both a useful tool and a problem for a proper understanding and measuring of child poverty. Certainly, most children in poverty live in families, whether they are constituted through the traditional family structure or not, and the family is an important factor to be considered when evaluation the poverty suffered by children. Thus, many chapters in this book are concerned with children as part of a family, how family and child poverty are intertwined and how policies can deal with families and parents to support children in poverty. On the other hand, looking at children solely as an element of the family structure may hide certain manifestations of poverty which affect children in particular. This debate about the right unit of concern is present in philosophy and the social sciences exploring poverty across all populations (Wisor 2012). This volume intends to offer, thus, both views: some chapters explore poverty as it is lived by children within the family structure; and others intend to account for the particularities of poverty as it relates to children.

But why should philosophy come into the picture? Is child poverty not an issue of the social sciences, and social and development policies? There are various reasons why it may be important to have the philosophical discipline reflecting about poverty and childhood. Firstly, we believe that philosophy has something valuable to contribute to the understanding, evaluation and alleviation of child poverty. If one does not stand on an assumption that pure quantitative analyses of efficiency can solve poverty, we need philosophical reflection on how we understand what poverty is, on its particular

manifestations during childhood, and the moral groundwork which should guide our policies and practices to alleviate this evil. As we will show in the next sections of this introduction, philosophical questions arise from many different philosophical branches. Although this book is overwhelmingly concerned with ethical issues in moral, social, and political philosophy, this is certainly not the only area of concern. Epistemological, conceptual and methodological issues are of equal importance. Secondly, a philosophical take on child poverty does not substitute social research on the issue, but rather complements it. We believe that philosophy, if concerned with real world issues such as child poverty, does not only depend on the data produced by social research but should enter into a closer cooperation and engage in a mutual learning process with more empirical research on the subject. Social research on child poverty is full of conceptual, theoretical and methodological considerations worthy of philosophical attention. Likewise, social research can be enriched and improved by learning from philosophy and its particular perspective, its analytical and evaluative work. Finally, it is worth noting that although the philosophical literature on both poverty (Barry and Overland 2016; Gilibert 2012; Ingram 2018; Schweiger and Graf 2015) and childhood (Bagattini and Macleod 2014; Brighouse and Swift 2014; Gheaus, Calder, and De Wispelaere 2018) is increasing, the status of children living in poverty has been largely ignored. We consider that the condition of children and the justice-related issues that derive from it compels us to look more deeply into the particular sources, disadvantages and responsibilities of and towards children living in poverty. With this aim in mind, the book intends to fill a significant gap of child-specific philosophical discussions on poverty by bringing together original contributions from an international group of scholars who can shed light on this important topic.

In the next section of this introduction we will now name and discuss four challenges posed by child poverty, which are not exclusively philosophical but nonetheless are of philosophical importance. But before that, we also want to say something about the limitations of this book. It was not the aim of this volume to cover all philosophical topics related to child poverty, but to provide an original and substantial treatment of a variety of particular issues. Otherwise we would have aimed for a handbook or similar and not a collection of research papers. Still, three shortcomings are worth noting. Firstly, this book is overwhelmingly concerned with child poverty in highly developed countries, although some chapters do not mention this explicitly but speak about child poverty in general. There are, though, important differences in the extent, depth and severity of poverty between the developed and the developing world. Secondly, and connected to this focus, is the lack of reflections on global justice and the institutions, which could or should be responsible for change on the global level (Pogge and Moellendorf 2008). Thirdly, this book lacks chapters on the philosophical (ethical, epistemological etc.) issues involved in poverty research and methods used to investigate and analyze child poverty (Bostock 2002; Abebe 2009; Sime 2008).

Four challenges: conceptualizing, researching, evaluating, and responding to child and family poverty

The first challenge is *conceptualizing* child poverty. We can briefly name some interrelated aspects of this challenge here, without going into much detail and also avoid technical issues. All conceptions of poverty are highly contested because poverty is a complex and dynamic social phenomenon (Wisor 2012; Addison, Hulme, and Kanbur 2009; Anand, Segal, and Stiglitz 2010; Besharov and Couch 2012). Partly, this contestation is grounded on the combination between the dynamic nature of poverty in itself, and its descriptive and evaluative (moral) interpretations. Conceptions of poverty tend to be concerned with suffering, deprivation and harm. But defining what this suffering, deprivation and harm is, cannot be neutral but, rather, closely related to normative evaluations about what is (morally) good and bad, just and unjust, and what it means to suffer, to lack and to be deprived. Furthermore, this definition is conditioned by socioeconomic contexts. Conceptions of poverty that fit one purpose (for example, to analyze it in the European Union at the country level) might be inadequate for a different purpose (to understand poverty in rural India). Depending on our moral commitments, and the case in mind, what is understood by ‘poverty’ and how it should be evaluated changes drastically. The same variation is true for the case of child poverty, where not only our definitions of poverty change due to the incapacity of certain traditional metrics to apply to childhood (think of income metrics, for example) (Alkire and Roche 2012; Main and Bradshaw 2016; Minujin et al. 2006); but also because what is understood as ‘childhood’ varies. Standard measurements and analyses of poverty (in general) fail when assessing child poverty because the condition and experience of poverty during childhood cannot be framed within these standard evaluative mechanisms. It is no surprise that within poverty research so many different concepts of (child) poverty have been developed, based on different normative concepts and theories about what matters in life and how to best capture it: capabilities, basic needs, social inclusion, well-being, just to name a few. How these concepts and related theories can be applied properly to children (as opposed to adult) remains a key challenge. These discussions are philosophically relevant, and philosophy might contribute to them. They are philosophically relevant because all discussions about (social and global) justice for children or rights and responsibilities of and towards children somehow have to deal with the obvious fact that some children are worse-off than others and that poverty plays an important role here. So, if philosophy wants to engage with the real-world problems children face today, what might be unjust about them and how they should be resolved it is dependent on such conceptual questions, which underlie all knowledge we have about child poverty as well other inequalities in children’s lives. The contribution philosophy has to offer to these debates is equally important. As far as all conceptions of child poverty, and poverty in general, are somehow related to normative issues, philosophy can help to clarify them. This should not be understood as saying that philosophy has the key to solve all normative and conceptual issues in poverty research, but it does claim that philosophy can offer a unique approach to how these normative and conceptual issues can be understood.

The second challenge is *researching* child poverty. This is a double challenge because research with children comes with methodological and ethical issues as does research with marginalized groups and people in poverty. Let us further differentiate this challenge: firstly, children as well as people in poverty are often not given a proper voice when it comes to evaluate their situation. They face

epistemic injustices, and their opinion and knowledge is undervalued (Schweiger 2016; Murriss 2013). There are approaches that challenge these limitations, researching children in a way that takes them, their views and feelings seriously, providing more depth and better knowledge about their situation and the deprivations they face from their particular perspective. For children in poverty both their status as children and as poor individuals needs to be taken into account here, as both these statuses poses its own obstacles for carrying out a respectful and thorough investigation. Secondly, research with children in poverty often involves a certain degree of attachment to those children and their families, for example, if ethnographic or participatory methods are employed. Doing ethically sound research with poor children thus can be emotionally and socially demanding for both those researched and those researching (Sime 2008; Abebe 2009). Thirdly, the families, in particular parents, or other care givers or guardians will be involved when researching poor children. Consent to research raises its own problems, especially if children are older and more mature but legally unable to give consent. Guardians may withdraw consent for unsubstantiated reasons of fear, shame, humiliation or because they want to cover-up parts of the children's lives (for example that they are exploited, beaten or abused). In many countries there are no functioning child protection services, and researchers are confronted with messy realities, which they have to navigate. Fourthly, poverty research should probably not be *l'art pour l'art*. It comes with obligations towards those researched both in respect to how the research is conducted and also what the aims of this research is. Participatory methods aim to empower those in poverty and to respect and enhance their agency, although these are sometimes not more than "buzzwords" (Cornwall and Brock 2005). This is crucial for the research with children in poverty, because they are often active agents in their lives (they must be when, for example, they take care of themselves or family members socially and economically), and because it follows the moral imperative to support the transition of children to become autonomous. Fifthly, conceptualizations and research in poverty are often not detached from politics. Poverty research is often used to guide politics and policy (which groups, regions, deprivations should be tackled and how) (Harriss 2009). This implies certain responsibilities on the side of the researchers, the funders of this research and those, who use this research for certain purposes, like policy design.

The third challenge relates to the *normative evaluation* of child poverty and the deconstruction of the many ethical issues involved in child poverty. We already mentioned that the conceptualization and research of child poverty are in themselves involved with normative questions, but many more come to the fore. Is child poverty unjust or otherwise morally bad? What kind of theory of justice or morality is needed to make such an evaluation? As many have noticed before, philosophy and theories of justice are often based on assumptions about the rationality of agent, which do not fit in the case of children (Macleod 2015). Furthermore, it needs to be examined what kinds of goods are at stake when normatively assessing what is owed to children in poverty, and how can we value and evaluate them. The discussions about *kindergoods* and the value of childhood and child well-being feeds into this question (Bagattini and Macleod 2014; Graf and Schweiger 2015; Gheaus 2015). Such evaluations must navigate also in between the extremes of considering children as fully mature (thus, overestimating their agency), and viewing them as fully immature (thus, lacking agency all together). Here, descriptive empirical observations and normative assumptions meet again, forcing

philosophical analyses to face the task to come up with a substantial concept of childhood both as a social and a biological phase, of the social setting in which children are embedded, and of their agency, capacities, vulnerabilities and development. It also needs to be acknowledged that child poverty is not a matter of material deprivation or family income alone. It also affects political participation, subjective well-being and emotions such as shame and humiliation (Ridge 2011; Schweiger and Graf 2015). It relates to the way in which children understand themselves and their situation, what they aspire, their education and social behavior. All these are of (potential) ethical weight to a normative evaluation of child poverty, especially when evaluating the potential interests and claims that children have as individuals being in poverty in the present, and how this affects and frames them throughout their whole life-course. Lastly, we must name the under-researched area of global justice for children, which takes a true global look at children and the differences among childhood(s) and the normative commitments tied to them. Children's lives differ vastly according to cultural norms and practices, and injustices often intersect: disadvantages based on sex, gender, disability or race and poverty can become toxic and corrosive in many ways.

Finally, the fourth challenge we want to flag relates to the (moral) *duties, responsibilities, policies and politics* tied to child poverty. Closely related to the evaluative challenge is the task of reflecting on reasonable and feasible applications of the theory to prevent and alleviate child poverty. This involves the search for ways to pin down particular responsibilities and the agents (individual or collective) who must carry them out. Most often, discussions on responsibility targets the family and the state as primary duty-bearers (Archard 2003; Archard and Benatar 2010; Adams 2008; Brighthouse and Swift 2014). Both are certainly important, for various ethical reasons. States have particular duties of justice towards the children within their borders or to those who are their citizens. Furthermore, states are powerful actors, and have a wide range of mechanisms for intervention at their disposal. The family is of obvious importance because it is the social sphere where child poverty most often takes place, and those within the family are at the closest physical and emotional distance to bear responsibility over poor children. Children are often poor because they are embedded in poor families, and these heavily influence their well-being, their options and their development. The relation and allocation of responsibilities between the state and the family is not straightforward, involving issues of privacy, consent, self-determination, parental and children's rights (and duties) and paternalism, to name just a few. This picture becomes even more complex if one admits that, in many countries, the state and its institutions are weak, failing children and families in poverty. On the other hand, the role of the family (its structure, internal duties and relations) varies greatly across cultures and social practices, thus, making a strict and universal allocation of responsibilities impossible in many instances. Likewise, tendencies of the state to shift responsibilities to poor parents, in many cases poor mothers, and to blame them for what is truly a structural problem, needs to be countered. Even if, in some cases, "bad" decisions may lead families to fall in poverty, the thick of the problem is beyond the poor individual's control. State policies, economic deregulation and lack of social safety nets and supports tend to be the core reason for most, if not all, cases. Besides the family and the state other potential agents of justice with moral responsibilities might be pinned down: companies and multinational corporations, who exploit children and their parents, transnational organizations like the World Bank

or the International Monetary Fund, which shape the economic and social policies of poorer countries and how child poverty is tackled. Understanding responsibility for child poverty, thus, must think beyond the state and the family as the sole duty-bearers.

The chapters in this book

Finally, we want to present an overview of the sections and chapters in this book. The first section of the book ('Definitions and Measurements') will deal with philosophical questions on the conceptualization and measurement of child poverty. An important task at hand is to explore the ways in which philosophical and ethical research may contribute to our understanding of poverty during childhood. The chapters in this section address structural questions on how to conceptualize what childhood and poverty are, and the amendments required by the particularities of children when assessing their poverty status.

Douglas Hanes' chapter explores how our normative assumptions regarding what childhood is, strongly affect the way we understand poverty during childhood, and the responsibility of parents towards their children. Hanes argues that the particular way in which 'childhood' is defined and understood in the Global North (namely, as a preparatory stage of life in which children are taken as innocent, and in need of special protections) is used to understand who children are across the globe, having a problematic impact on how child poverty is addressed in the Global South. He considers that the "neontocracy" which pervades the Global North's relation towards children, and its use as a ruler to evaluating child poverty worldwide fails to take into account the historical and cultural particularities of childhood in different social and cultural settings. After presenting his critical analysis of present approaches to child poverty, it offers an alternative understanding of it that does not impose a Westernised normative model on the rest of the world.

Pitasse Fragoso's addresses the epistemic and moral problems that derive from current poverty measurements within populations. She argues that using the household as the unit of analysis when measuring poverty may come with problematic omissions and biases when assessing the poverty of individuals within the household. She considers that inequalities within the family may not be assessed through household measurements, and that we should do well in amending current poverty indexes in order for them to include the voices and claims of all representative groups. She considers that there are both epistemic and moral reasons for doing this: regarding the epistemic reasons, the particular child-perspective on how poverty affects them can be omitted if children's voices are not heard; regarding the moral reasons, the status of children as equal moral beings entitles them to be included directly in poverty measurements, in order to show the respect that is owed to them in their own right, instead of being taken merely as appendixes to adults. The chapter considers the role that story-telling exercises may play for including children directly in assessment of their own poverty condition.

Jonathan Wolff's chapter questions the validity of certain assumptions regarding the reasons why families are poor. Namely, those that put the whole burden of their poor condition on the poor person's own incompetence, improvidence or irresponsibility. Developing a framework inspired on Amartya Sen's capability approach, Wolff claims that an individual's choice and behavior is much less relevant than structural factors in creating and sustaining their condition as poor. He argues, however, that choice and behavior of parents do play an important role in determining what kind of disadvantages take priority over others, thus leading certain families to suffer from either primary or secondary forms of poverty.

The final chapter of this section, written by Cabezas and Pitillas offers an original understanding of what child poverty is, and how this conceptualization can reframe the way poverty is addressed, and of the individuals and groups responsible for its existence. They consider the possibility of understanding child poverty as a "moral damage", thus expanding how child poverty is understood, beyond its material and social dimensions. Understanding child poverty as a moral damage implies looking at the different forms in which individual or collective intentional actions may lead to morally relevant psychological damages to the child, even if she is unaware that the damage is being inflicted on her. The objective of this chapter is to expand our conceptualization of the actions which may affect an child living in poverty, and the psychological responses which these actions trigger on the poor child.

The second section ("Children and Families Living in Poverty") brings together papers that explore the condition of children and families living in poverty. The situation of children living in deprivation is also intertwined and highly conditioned by various phenomena, while affecting how we understand other relevant philosophical issues. Thus, this section intends to explore the ways in which research in other philosophical topics (such as gender, migration or disability) may feed into the discussion on child poverty. Furthermore, chapters in this section address the issues that arise from the dependence of children on the family structure and their parents' quality of life. If the family structure suffers great deprivations and parents cannot fulfil their own basic needs, children tend to get the worst out of the situation. Intergenerational transmission of poverty creates many problems to child poverty research: focusing only on the child may be insufficient for tackling the foundational causes that locate her in a deprived situation.

The chapter by Bagattini and Gutwald also uses the concept of vulnerability to explore the problems of child poverty, and, through a capability approach as their evaluative framework, they explore the role that resilience may play in the life of a poor child. The chapter introduces the different ways in which a child may be considered as "vulnerable", and argues that, on top of the inherent vulnerabilities tied to the biological condition of the child, poverty during childhood reinforces certain vulnerabilities and creates others which could be labelled as pathogenic. The latter, they argue following Catriona Mackenzie's work, are created by harmful social arrangements and institutional responses to the condition of poverty. As such, they cannot be addressed exclusively through the individual's own actions but requires political and social responses in order for them to be eliminated.

They consider that understanding social justice through Amartya Sen's capability approach is the most appropriate framework to evaluate who is being wrongfully affected by their social arrangements, and offers the most effective tools to tackle these potential setbacks to an individual's basic interests. The chapter, then, explores how the promotion of resilience during childhood may be fundamental for ensuring that children have the tools to counter their poverty status. The chapter considers that the creation of resilience in children should not be seen as an individual matter, but as a matter of justice: the fact that social institutions are partially responsible for the pathogenic vulnerabilities of children, compels them to compensate these harms by ensuring that children have the tools to respond to these forms of harm.

In his contribution, Gottfried Schweiger explores an entitlement of children, namely, to have positive self-relations (self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem) and considers the ways in which we may understand humiliation as a fundamental obstacle for children to be able to develop these fundamental traits. The chapter, first, explores why are positive self-relations fundamental entitlements of justice, and examines what this entails regarding what should be provided to children as it relates to their self-confidence, self-respect and their self-esteem. He, then, looks at the concept of humiliation and explores the ways in which humiliating acts restrict a child's capacity to develop positive self-relations. Finally, Schweiger links the discussions between self-relations and humiliation with the particular condition of children living in poverty, and considers five different arguments which show why poverty is humiliating for children, thus, an injustice that should be amended.

Alison Denham's chapter explores the issue of poverty in its intersection with debates about gender equality. Through an analysis of individual cases of low-income, employed single mothers, Denham dwells into certain underrated tensions that affect their choice-vectors. Namely, the tragic choices that many women must make, due to their particular disadvantaged condition, regarding their opportunity to fulfill their valued interest in being a worker and a mother. Childrearing is a valuable capability for many women, and one of the great inequalities that many women suffer is precisely tied to their incapacity to have access to this valuable good. Through an in-depth exploration of the particular condition of two women, Denham considers questions of who they are, what they value, what gender inequalities affect her the most, and how they should be addressed. She argues that these women stand in a position in which they cannot avoid certain tragic choices regarding the functioning-sets which they can aspire to achieve due to their condition both as women and as poor.

The chapter by Anke Snoek looks at another important intersection between the family and poverty; namely, the case of substance dependent parents. Children of substance dependent parents very often suffer from their parents' choices and dependence. Proclivity towards being neglected, and towards having both their present and future wellbeing and agency affected are consequences of children living under these family conditions. Addressing the issue of substance dependent parents tends to take a punitive approach: parents tend to have their children taken from them, they face jail time and other punishments. Snoek intends to argue that the burden which tends to be imposed on substance dependent parents' responsibility over their actions must be reduced, and that the practices intended to solve their condition should change. The fact that poverty plays a structural role in shaping an

individual's reasoning capacities and self-control, implies that we should revise the actual sources of their behavior. Snoek considers two effects of reasoning in substance dependent parents: a shift from global to local reasoning (meaning that the individual's priorities and behaviours change from fulfilling long-term preferences and interests, to more immediate ones), and second, a resignation regarding their inability to escape their condition, and thus of improving their lives and their children's. The chapter claims that when resignation appears in the behaviour of substance dependent parents, policies should aim at reducing their punitive approach to their actions, and rather search for more constructive mechanisms which may support them into "turning their live around" and avoiding the pitfalls of resignation. This, Snoek argues, is necessary in order to avoid long-term effects on the agency and well-being of the parents themselves, and, very importantly, to address at its root the vicious influence that resignation of substance dependent parents has on the intergenerational transmission of this condition and behaviour to their children.

Sarah Gorman uses philosophical tools to study a different type of case. Namely, she looks at the intersection between disability and child poverty, and argues that the ways in which a society frames who is considered as disabled may have very problematic implications on her (and her family's) poverty status. Based on her personal experience as a child living with two parents with disabilities, she considers the way in which social and political institutions may affect the family's socioeconomic condition, and the well-being of children living with parents who have disabilities. The chapter studies the ways in which certain inherent vulnerabilities may turn oppressive through their stigmatization. The fact of living in poverty with disabilities already poses certain difficulties to a family's life and welfare, but the social stigmatization (of both the condition of poverty and of disability) reinforces these difficulties and obstacles making it even more difficult for families in this situation to counter them. Gorman argues that a political system responsive to vulnerabilities is necessary in order to better address the particular condition of many families living in poverty.

Ang analyses the situation of children living in the ASEAN member states through Judith Butler's ideas of precariousness and livability. She considers depending on how society frames whose life has value may hide the precarious reality of many children in this region of the world. The widespread exploitation of the lives of children in ASEAN member states, and the income that children are expected to bring home, argues Ang, forces them to embrace not having a childhood in order to be recognized as valuable beings who contribute to their family's income. She considers that Butler's work does not only help to diagnose why many children in this region are forced to not have a childhood, but also presents a way out. The idea of livability, and the conditions that it imposes on how we understand what poverty is can challenge the current status quo by reframing our definition of whose life has value.

In a similar line, the chapter by Cummins and Sharifi uses Victor Turner's concept of liminality and Vittorio Buffachi's three-dimensional approach to social injustice to assess the condition of asylum-seekers and refugee children in Ireland and Iran. Although the cultural, institutional and political situation for each case of the two cases is very different, this chapter considers how an analysis of liminality and social injustice allows us to see certain fundamental commonalities among the Irish

and Iranian situation. The chapter argues that, through diverging practices (and to a varied extent) both Ireland and Iran, through their legislation and treatment of asylum-seekers and refugee children have institutionalized and enforced a life in poverty to those children who come within their border with these two statuses. The fact that in both cases children are kept in a liminal state with relation to the state's protections and securities leaves them in an especially vulnerable situation from which they are unable to escape by themselves. The chapters objective is to make the reader reflect on the potentially pernicious relationship between institutional practices and how they impact child poverty.

Finally, the third section ('Rights, Responsibilities and Policies') explores certain responsibilities and policy mechanisms tackling child and family poverty. Many social institutions and agents play a determinant role on a child's life, and the sources of responsibility towards the alleviation of childhood poverty may rest in many hands. The last part of the book intends to explore the potential ways in which responsibility may be assigned, and possible mechanisms that could deal with poverty during childhood. Furthermore, the peculiar position of children in our society and their condition as especially vulnerable and dependent beings demands a reflection on how their characteristics makes them relevant subjects of justice, and on how the social institutions that surround them may frame their deprived condition.

The first chapter in the section, written by Stamatina Liosi, revisits the debate on children's rights, the duties of others towards children, and the particular way it affects the socioeconomic rights of children (with a focus on the right to be free from poverty). The chapter takes Immanuel Kant's work as its guiding theory to argue for a duty-based approach to children's right to freedom from extreme poverty. Although not dismissing the discourse on rights in its entirety, the chapter does argue that, especially in the case of children, duties must be considered as taking the center stage. The particular vulnerabilities and dependencies of children makes the rights-discourse feeble in order to address urgent political questions, and, following Onora O'Neill's Kantian approach to children's rights, the chapter considers that we should start with the moral duties that are imposed on others in order to ensure children's wellbeing, prior to talking about rights. Liosi clarifies the particular way in which these duties, and their consequent rights, ought to be understood, by clarifying the relation between duties and rights, the distinction between human and socioeconomic rights, and the role that constructivism should or should not play in a Kantian approach to moral duties.

Justin Clardy's contribution introduces the concept of "civic tenderness" as a response mechanism to the situational vulnerabilities suffered by children who live in poverty. The chapter considers how certain stigmas attached to living in poverty (with ascriptions such as being lazy, incompetent and irresponsible) lead to a certain social invisibility and institutional indifference towards the lives and outcomes of individuals who are poor. Clardy argues that this indifference is particularly problematic in the case of children who live in poverty due to the special and prominent vulnerabilities that poor children have. Not only do they (in the present) suffer from inadequate nutrition, bad health, lack of education, violence and homelessness, but their long-term prospects in these areas and others are also

threatened by their condition. The chapter, thus, considers that the social development of the process of *tenderization* is necessary in order for the public *ethos* to address the particular vulnerabilities that affect children living in poverty. The objective to be achieved is, thus, the formation of the public emotion of civic tenderness supported by a society's members, institutions and systems towards poor children is necessary in order to alleviate the vulnerabilities that threaten their well-being.

The contribution by Karakis also considers the value of similar mechanisms in order to tackle the problems that affect children in poverty. Standing on Martin Heidegger's concept of "being with others in solicitude", the chapter considers the appropriate way in which the social responses to child poverty must materialize. It argues that mechanisms to tackle poverty must go beyond mere provision for basic needs, requiring an ethics of care in which society actually re-evaluates how it understands the relational requirements to support the fundamental needs of certain individuals. Karakis approaches children's particular relation to death from an ontological angle, in order to assess the particular threats that their incapacity to understand this event has over their condition. He argues that an ethics of care in which children's lives are supported and guided through solicitude is necessary in order to actualize their potential to address their condition. The chapter considers, in this respect, the concept of *de-severance* as a fundamental tool to reframe the social response to the condition of children living in poverty. The objective is to revise the perception of distance between those who suffer from poverty and those who do not, in order to allow caring ties and networks to develop.

Douglas MacKay offers an ethical evaluation of a different type of policies which may be implemented to address child poverty, namely, those that target parents decision-making. In this chapter, he looks at a particular type of anti-poverty policies labelled parent-targeted paternalistic policies. These are supports given to parents by the state, as long as parents comply with certain conditions (vaccinating their children, sending them to school, etc.). The chapter asks whether this type of paternalism which is intended for ensuring the wellbeing of children within the family are pro tanto wrong, and offers an account of the elements which would allow policy-makers to evaluate whether these mechanisms should be implemented or not. He considers that an assessment of a threshold of parental competency (together with other fundamental elements) is required in order to evaluate whether parent-targeted paternalism can be seen as justified or not. MacKay considers the particular cases of the *Bolsa Família* policy in Brazil and the Housing and Urban Development policy in the United States, in order to exemplify the validity of parent-targeted paternalism, and to explore the elements which must be taken into account when evaluating anti-poverty policies.

The final chapter of the collection, written by Mornington and Guyard-Nedelec, addresses the problematic tension between policies of forced adoption and the rights of parents who have their children taken away from them. Forced removal of children from their parents has become an increasingly normal practice in the UK. A concern with a rise in the harms suffered by children from the hands of their parents, made British policies to turn more inclined towards removing children from their parents if there is likeliness of them being unduly harmed. Mornington and Guyard-Nedelec explore the moral limits of these types of policies, especially concerning the potential bias against poor parents when enforcing them. Although acknowledging that the interests of children

should not be harmed within the household, they consider alternative mechanisms that reduce threat of harm, while not violating the parents' rights to keep their children. They argue that potential biases in British policy which hints that poverty is a factor that justifies forced removal ought to be addressed.

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