

# 3

## Responsibilities for Children in Poverty

Children in poverty are the victims of severe injustices. They suffer from deprivations in important functionings and live, thus, in a state of avoidable ill-being and of an increased likelihood of ill-becoming. In this chapter, we will now turn our attention to the question of who is responsible for securing justice for children in poverty and why. We want to examine this question in more detail than just stating that the state and its institutions are responsible or that taking care of children is primarily a task for the family. We would like to go beyond such simplified answers and show what kind of responsibilities persons, collectively and individually, and institutions, the state and other ones, have and for what reasons. The capability approach in general has not dealt often with these questions, being first and foremost a theory about the information that should be used in comparative quality-of-life assessments. It has in particular not engaged with questions of personal responsibility to achieve functionings and capabilities or for closing the door on some of them because of bad choices. Ingrid Robeyns has made the same observation and traced it back to the focus of the capability approach on global and severe poverty.

There is a remarkable absence of discussion on issues of responsibility in the capability literature, in sharp contrast to political philosophy and welfare economics, where this is one of the most important lines of debate, certainly since the publication of Dworkin's work on justice and equality. Nevertheless, whether or not one chooses to discuss it explicitly, any concrete capability policy proposal can be analyzed in terms of the division between personal and collective responsibility – but this terminology remains largely absent from the capability literature altogether. This may in part be explained by the

fact that much of the work on capabilities deals with global poverty, where issues of responsibility seem to be less relevant since it would seem rather grim to suggest that the world's most destitute people are individually responsible for the respective situations they are in. Philosophical puzzles, such as the issue of expensive tastes (for expensive wine, caviar, fast cars, etc.), are simply beyond the radar screen of the child labourer or the poor peasant. (Robeyns 2009, 114)

Martha Nussbaum, who has expanded the capability approach to a minimal (partial) theory of justice, has not as well addressed in much depth the question of responsibilities, as a result of the fact that she understands the approach as providing guidelines for states to secure a minimal dignity of life for its citizens. Related questions of responsibilities beneath or above the state level are not so much her concern, and it is unclear how responsibilities between states and beyond state borders should be divided to make sure that every human on this planet is put above the threshold in the central capabilities she selected in her list (Gasper 2006). She has outspokenly rejected the idea of establishing a world state but also argued that there is a need for principles of global governance, which she understands as thin and decentralized (Nussbaum 2006). But Nussbaum also agrees – the same applies to Sen and many other capability theorists – that it is important to answer questions of responsibility. We see two main reasons for that: on the one hand, every concept about justice for children should be interested in the means to realize it, especially for children who have been shown to fall short of what they are entitled to. Our interest in justice is fueled by the hope that the clarification of these philosophical issues can also be translated into political change and the design of better policies, although we know that empirical knowledge that goes far beyond the scope of our book is needed to actually do that. On the other hand, every examination of the responsibilities of different agents of justice will also shed some light on the issue that child poverty is a socially produced and sustained condition. Child poverty is not natural, not something that cannot be changed and overcome, and the examination of responsibilities underpins this claim. It is simply not enough to show that child poverty is unjust if this does not lead to coordinated actions; the failure to attribute responsibilities to specific people, individually or collectively, or institutions (like the state) may also lead to diffusion, leading in the end to no one feeling actually responsible. In addition, we want to criticize the common discourse which often blames close caregivers, particularly mothers, for the poverty of their children.

It is therefore necessary to try to name and enumerate particular “agents of justice” and to discuss on what grounds responsibilities can be attributed to them (O’Neill 2001; Deveaux 2013). One core question always concerns the relation between these agents of justice and the victims of the injustices in question. Why are some people, whether individually or as group, or some institutions responsible for changing and enhancing the living condition of others? In which way do they need to be connected to each other? For example, by living together in a country (as particularists would claim), or is it enough that they are simply other humans sharing one world (the cosmopolitans’ position; Brock and Moellendorf 2005)? Our account is not explicitly particularist or cosmopolitan – there are, moreover, so many versions of these two out there that it is hard to define them neatly – since we will attribute some responsibilities to the state and some, although far less so, to international institutions. In the case of child poverty in modern welfare states, the debate between particularism and cosmopolitanism is not so important for us: First, most controversies are concerned with how much responsibility can be laid upon richer states (and the people living within them) to support poorer states (and the people living within them) because the latter are overburdened or in a much poorer position to alleviate poverty themselves. In the case of welfare states, it is obvious that they are powerful, at least much more so than poorer states; it would not be fair to ask poorer states to contribute and support richer states in order to alleviate child poverty within them. The issue of child poverty is always an issue of redistribution within rich countries and only to a very limited extent between rich countries, although the economic crisis of the last years in Europe poses some questions in that regard (e.g., the support of Greece and Spain by richer countries in the EU), but we will leave these questions aside. The second important point in the discussion between particularists and cosmopolitans refers to the nature of the relations between richer and poorer countries. Some scholars, most prominently Thomas Pogge, claim that the first harm the second via one-sided trade agreements (Pogge 2007). Virtually no one would claim that the opposite is the case and that poorer states have any substantial responsibilities towards richer states because they would unjustly gain an advantage over them. Thirdly, many particularists claim that the social relations within a state are of particular importance to justify justice and responsibilities attached to it. They conclude that, due to the social basis of justice, cosmopolitanism is not well justified. Whether or not one supports this view, child poverty in welfare states is without a doubt an issue that has to be tackled by that very state, the state and its citizens having some responsibilities. The

fourth issue concerns rights and institutions: there exist no social policy institutions on the global level and no functioning legal framework that would guarantee social protection from poverty. This is a major obstacle, and while most cosmopolitans argue that such global institutions are needed, most particularists contend that they will not succeed for various reasons. In the case of child poverty in welfare states, the situation looks different. Here we have states which all have at least some kind of social policy in place; social protection and poverty alleviation is embedded in certain social rights directly granted to families in poverty or children in poverty. It is therefore much less necessary to debate whether global institutions are feasible and if so, in which form. Although we support the view that child poverty in welfare states is best tackled by changing the international and global institutions, most of the work needs to be done in welfare states themselves in terms of designing and implementing more inclusive social policies and allotting enough funds to support poor children and their caregivers. It seems likely that cosmopolitans and particularists will come to very similar conclusions in regard to child poverty in welfare states, both probably agreeing to some extent that its alleviation is first an issue of social justice within a rich state (or a community of them, like the EU) and that global justice is not primarily concerned with it. The reduction of child poverty in richer countries is part of an ideal of global justice but not its primary problem.

Our own account will analyze the relation different agents have to children in poverty, and we will then try to attribute responsibilities based on a set of morally relevant criteria; in this sense, we will defend what the literature calls an agent-centered approach (Deveaux 2013; O'Neill 2001). Instead of focusing on one or two important agents, like the state and the family, we wish to distinguish more of them, including those with limited responsibilities. Furthermore, we wish to emphasize that there are some very important agents who often get neglected in theories of responsibilities; in this context, we point to peers and enterprises, for instance, which raise particularly challenging questions for the concept of responsibilities towards children affected by poverty. All this leads to the conclusion that child poverty is not only a social policy issue but touches many policy areas: the labor market, public infrastructure, health care, education.

Before we outline our own theory, let us briefly comment on one of the few philosophical debates that has emerged on the topic of responsibilities towards children and why we connect our argument only loosely to it and build it mainly on other approaches to responsibilities which have not so far addressed the specific case of children. The debate we have in mind

addresses whether there is a responsibility among all adult members of a society (parents and nonparents alike) to share the costs arising from having children and parenting (George 1987; Vallentyne 2002; Casal and Williams 2004; Olsaretti 2013). This issue is a matter of controversy in the literature, but there seems to be a good argument in favor of the pro-sharing argument in terms of the contributions children make, on average and in the long run, to the welfare of a society. Most children will become taxpayers, support the older generations and therefore create a general benefit for the society in question. This again makes it reasonable that those benefiting from the fact that there are enough children in their society (independent from other relationships they have to them) have duties to secure adequate conditions for their upbringing (Olsaretti 2013). But for the purposes of this chapter, where responsibilities towards children in poverty are the focus, we see only limited use for this line of reasoning, first and foremost for two reasons. First, the responsibilities debate typically takes place in the realm of ideal theories of justice, assuming that having and bringing up children happens against fair background conditions. Such strong assumptions help to get to a high degree of philosophical clarity; however, it is often difficult to say what the arguments imply for nonideal circumstances (Sen 2009). We do not want to suggest that this is an impossible or useless enterprise. We prefer to situate our approach to responsibilities from the beginning in nonideal circumstances; this better fits the general orientation of our theory. The second, related reason is a general worry about the strategy of grounding moral responsibilities for children (struck by poverty or not) onto other agents than their parents primarily on their being “public” or “socialized” goods. Especially in contexts where it is unclear if some groups of children (e.g., those living in poverty or those with disabilities or chronic illnesses) will be able to contribute economically to a society it seems to follow from such a perspective that no one but the parents has a responsibility, which is an indefensible conclusion. As will become clear later on, one ground for attributing responsibilities to an agent is that she benefits from a certain situation. But this is only one aspect of a theory of responsibilities, and there are others which are relevant for the injustice of child poverty and which do not get discussed comprehensively in the philosophical debates just mentioned.

### **3.1 Attributing responsibilities to agents of justice**

There are many different ways of attributing responsibilities to agents of justice. We begin by discussing the approach of Iris Young. In *Responsibilities for Justice*, she distinguishes two models of responsibilities

(Young 2011). First, there is the liability model, which can be roughly described by means of two components. It (a) connects responsibility with directly *causing* harmful outcomes and (b) assigns responsibilities only to agents who perform the action in question voluntarily and with adequate knowledge of the situation. The liability model is the dominant one in legal reasoning, and it can also be considered the standard account of moral responsibility found in ethical theory. In this model, it is clear that responsibilities are assigned to concrete agents; there is, from this point of view, no problem for the agent-centered approach we want to develop. Difficulties arise, however, when we are confronted with structural injustices, where the causal relationships of causing harms are often diffuse. As Young argues, such structural injustices are often the result of numerous uncoordinated individual actions, which, taken one by one, cannot always be deemed morally problematic. Taken together, however, they might lead to consequences that impose significant constraints on many members of society, leading to inequality and poverty.

We can easily imagine the story of a child, Sabrina, living with her single mother in London. The mother, let's call her Anne, is not well educated and has to make a living from insecure low-wage service jobs. She would like to give Sabrina a good education and a life in a calm neighborhood, but she struggles to pay the rent for her small flat in one of the most dangerous areas in London, and Sabrina has to go to a public school with a bad reputation. Anne spends a lot of time working and, due to health problems, is increasingly worried about how long she will be able to keep up the current situation; it is likely that things will get worse in the future, leading to feelings of despair and helplessness. Her daughter is often on her own, neglecting her schoolwork and having trouble developing aspirations for her future. Many more aspects of their situation would surely be relevant for an analysis of poverty, but what is important here is that it might be difficult for Anne and Sabrina to blame particular individuals for their difficult circumstances. Of course, it is possible that they are confronted with greedy and abusive employers and landlords, who try to take advantage of their lack of options, or with biased teachers who are convinced that children of single mothers will never be able to get to respectable academic achievements. But it is also conceivable that they usually find helpful persons who understand their situation and are willing to support them: teachers who put in an extra effort to motivate Sabrina or landlords who don't have a problem if the rent is not always paid on time, for instance. Still, despite these morally praiseworthy actions and attitudes, something surely has gone wrong,

something that cannot directly be explained by how individuals behave in direct interactions with them. Anne's and Sabrina's lives are characterized by what Young sees as *structural injustice*.

Structural injustice [...] exists when social processes put large groups of persons under systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time that these processes enable others to dominate or to have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities available to them. Structural injustice is a kind of moral wrong distinct from the wrongful action of an individual agent or the repressive policies of a state. Structural injustice occurs as a consequence of many individuals and institutions acting to pursue their particular goals and interests, for the most part within the limits of accepted rules and norms. (Young 2011, 52)

For such contexts in which structural injustices exist, Young introduces a second account of responsibilities: the social connection model. Here, the central idea is that everyone participating in and contributing to structural processes that lead to unjust outcomes shares responsibilities for these injustices, even if they do not intentionally act to create the respective harms. Not being at fault in such a sense is not enough to be exempt from responsibilities. These responsibilities are essentially political, demanding that everyone takes steps towards the transformation of unjust structures. Unlike the liability model, which is first and foremost backward looking and focuses on the identification of those who are actively and directly involved in causing harm, the social connection model focuses on the future and the importance of joint actions. On this account, it is not enough that a citizen follows acceptable norms and rules of moral conduct if she wants to be absolved from responsibilities. As long as the society in which she lives possesses unjust background conditions, she is called upon to go beyond her own interests and work towards a fairer society. There are also good reasons to weight the responsibilities stemming from such a social connection model differently for different agents. In one way or another, almost every member of society contributes with her purchasing decisions, preferences on the job market or education choices to a social order with immense inequalities and asymmetries of power. It is, however, surely necessary to rank weights of responsibilities according to a variety of reasons. It is exactly here where an agent-centered approach fits the social connection model. Young introduces four different grounds, or "parameters of reasoning", as she

calls them, which are relevant for balancing and weighing responsibilities: power, privilege, interest and collective ability. They are related to the social position of an agent and can be used to identify the kinds and degrees of responsibilities different agents – individual and collective ones – have to confront structural injustices.

*Power* is relevant because agents are positioned differently in the social structure and have varying options for actions at their disposal. Leading politicians or CEOs of big companies are much closer to processes producing unjust outcomes and in positions to influence them than the unemployed or people with low-wage jobs at the company's bottom rank. As a consequence, it is sensible to connect an agent's power with her responsibilities. Furthermore, responsibilities should be connected to structural processes an agent effectively can influence. It makes no sense to demand actions and behaviors that are not within the reach of an individual; it would even go against the basic moral principle that "ought implies can".

The category of power can be joined with two other influential ways of reasoning about responsibilities and duties. The first is the ability-to-pay principle, which is highly prominent in particular in the design of tax systems (Gaisbauer, Schweiger and Sedmak 2013) and in recent discussions about climate change (Page 2008). It states that the burden of taxation – or any other burden – should be distributed according to the ability to carry the burden and to contribute to the solution of the problem. The ability-to-pay principle is hence often used to justify progressive taxation, where not only the absolute amount of taxes but also the tax rate itself increases according to income or wealth. Three distinct reasons support this principle: First, the ability-to-pay principle rests on the idea of the decreasing utility of wealth and income and that every taxpayer should make about the same sacrifice. For example, person A earns €1,000 per month and person B earns €5,000 per month; both live in Germany. If both have to pay the same amount in taxes, say €200, it is obvious that the living standard of person A is heavily affected while that of person B is nearly untouched. The case is slightly different if both have to pay the same tax rate; for example, 20 percent. Person A would again have to pay €200 and person B €1,000, but it can be argued that the living standard of person A is still more affected and decreased than that of person B. Many tax systems hence favor a progressive taxation, one that would make person A pay 10 percent of her income, which would be €100, and person B 30 percent, or €1,500. Still, the idea of marginal utility suggests that the €100 in taxes are maybe an even bigger sacrifice for person A than the €1,500 paid by person B, which is

a reason in favor of even higher progressive taxes. The system, however, already seems to be fairer than one with a “flat tax”.

Second, the ability-to-pay principle assumes that it generates more resources and funds. The total income of the persons A and B is €6,000, and if both paid the same absolute amount of taxes, say €200, the total income for the state would be €400; a tax rate of 20 percent that applied to both would amount to €1,200, and a progressive tax rate based on the ability-to-pay principle would amount to €1,600 without harming either A or B to an unjustifiable extent. We are aware that the ability-to-pay principle has its friends and foes, but we think there are good reasons to use it to assign responsibilities for injustices like child poverty: those who are able to contribute more should contribute more. A third supporting reason for progressive attribution of burdens based on the ability-to-pay principle is that it decreases inequalities. Before taxes, B had five times more income than person A, but after taxes, the inequality decreased to a ratio of about 1 to 4.

Another prominent principle connected to the idea of power was introduced by Onora O’Neill in her important article on agents of justice (O’Neill 2001). There she distinguished between primary and secondary agents of justice: primary agents have the power to assign duties and responsibilities to secondary agents and are in a position to use coercive measures if secondary agents do not comply with their duties. O’Neill had in mind that states are typically powerful primary agents. If they are weak or have failed altogether, however, as often happens in states where absolute poverty is prevalent, she argues that international and global institutions have to take on this role. However, in such cases, which are typical for the global poverty discourse and where conflicting interests exist between states, it is extremely difficult to identify institutions that should be seen as powerful primary agents of justice. Since we focus on child poverty in rich welfare states in this book, the situation is clearer and her argument has more force. In general, these states operate quite well, have command over a lot of funds and resources and the power to enforce most of their laws. Sometimes their powers are restricted, of course, but they definitely fit O’Neill’s definition of primary agents of justice. Hence, they have the power to set up institutions and rules that help to achieve justice or that can significantly influence and mobilize other, weaker agents – in many different contexts and particularly regarding structural injustices. Rich states – or in the case of Europe, the European Union – can introduce binding laws and policies and therefore provide standards that come up to the demands of social justice.

There are other agents that hold considerable power over others as well and thus possess at least some features of primary agents of justice. Companies, for example, have the power to hold suppliers responsible for producing under fair conditions or to provide incentives for employees to support the local community and do charity work. The wealthy members of a society often have greater influence on policies than the “normal” voter; it makes therefore a big difference if they lobby exclusively for their own interests or instead support measures empowering the weaker members of society. The media constitute another agent, one which is often forgotten but has some real power in terms of influence and shaping the discourse about and attitudes towards poverty. It supplies people with information they have to trust and influences policies in campaigning for or against it. The media cannot hold anyone responsible for what they do or how they think about poverty, but as they certainly influence public opinion, they are an important agent of justice.

There are also those who benefit and who are able to live comfortable lives due to, for instance, the economic order of a society or the world as such. According to Young, such *privileges* also confer responsibilities: those who benefit from unjust structures are morally obliged to initiate change. Furthermore, privileged agents can usually adapt their lifestyles without jeopardizing their well-being, something that also adds to their responsibilities. Privilege *often* goes hand in hand with positions of power, yet this is not necessarily the case. In industrialized countries, for instance, broad parts of the population benefit from unjust international trade relations; at the same time, their power to directly alter them is limited and difficult to grasp. Nevertheless, their privileged position per se grants them special responsibilities. Of course, a full account of responsibilities must also look at the variety of privileges within industrialized countries, which collectively profit from an unjust global order; there is definitely a hierarchy of privileges, and in varying degrees they are connected to different forms and forces of responsibilities.

This idea of privileges is close to the beneficiary principle (Butt 2014; Page 2012), which can be interpreted in at least four different ways. (1) People or institutions have certain responsibilities to victims of injustices insofar as they voluntarily benefited from injustices as a result of a wrongdoing they were at least part of. In this case, the beneficiary principle is closely connected to Young’s liability model: the ones held responsible here benefited from an injustice which they at least partially caused, and the beneficiary principle only adds another argument. (2) People or institutions have certain responsibilities to victims

of injustices insofar as they involuntarily benefited from injustices as a result of wrongdoing they were at least part of. In this case, the one held responsible did something wrong but did not intend to benefit from the wrongdoing. For example, a company may cheat a family out of its farm in order to build a factory on that land, only to discover that beneath the land there is oil, a fact they were unaware of. Extracting the oil will be much more profitable than building the plant. (3) People or institutions have certain responsibilities to victims of injustices insofar as they involuntarily benefited from the injustices as a result of a wrongdoing they were not part of. In this case, someone is held responsible even though she did nothing unjust and wrong and did not even intend to benefit from it; it “accidentally” happens to her. For instance, someone buys a house in a cheap area; after some time a rich company comes and pressures most other owners to leave. It develops the area, leading to an increase in the value of all houses there. A person who stayed in her house, unaware of what was going on, certainly did not plan that to happen and did not intend to profit; she simply stayed because it was her home and the general situation allowed her to. Is she in any way responsible for undoing this wrong or providing compensation – for example, by giving money to the families that had to leave? (4) People or institutions have certain responsibilities to victims of injustices insofar as they voluntarily benefited from injustices as a result of wrongdoing they were no part of. For example, a person knows that a company is going to develop a neighborhood and that it will use illegal and immoral means to achieve that; she then buys a house in that area to profit from this wrongdoing.

How should we evaluate these examples from a moral point of view? Does it matter if someone benefited voluntarily or involuntarily or if she played a part in the origination of the injustice from which she benefited? The first case, because of its closeness to the liability model, is not very controversial. Causing voluntarily an injustice one benefits from clearly confers a strong responsibility to the respective agent. The second case is mainly relevant for the extent of the responsibility in question. It seems reasonable that a company is responsible not only for giving back the land but also for paying part of the profit it made exploiting the oil. The beneficiary principle in this case extends the company’s obligation. The fourth case seems also easy to accept, since one can argue here that the beneficiary took part in something she knew to be wrong, even if she did not dirty her hands directly. The trickiest case is certainly (3): should someone, without doing anything wrong and without intending to benefit, be held responsible? On what grounds can that be? The cases

can be made more complicated if certain background information is added: For instance, the house owner who profits from the wrongdoing of the company planned to do the same and already established a sham firm but was just a few days late. Or the company is owned by the house owner's brother, who wanted to help raise the house's market value without telling him. In these two cases, most would agree that the house owner is in some sort of way responsible for trying to undo the wrong that happened, even though it is highly unclear how he can succeed in doing that. Similar examples, on a smaller scale and involving the loss or benefit of no more than US\$1,000, have been discussed by Daniel Butt, who concludes that the beneficiary principle should not be legally enforceable on the individual level but can play an important role on the level of institutions or collectives, helping these types of agents determine responsibilities based on an evaluation of how much they benefited (Butt 2014). The beneficiary principle of case (3) responds to a certain moral intuition to owe something to those from whose suffering one benefits but whose extent is still to be determined. Obviously the house owner is neither obliged to sell his house at the higher market price nor give the funds to his wronged neighbors. He might, however, be responsible for helping them sue the company. Thus, we deal here with a responsibility that should not be legally enforceable but still has moral weight.

We have discussed the beneficiary principle in relation to concrete injustices or wrongs that happen to other persons. But as Young suggests, its moral force also applies to cases of structural injustices, where it is very difficult to disentangle who benefits and who does something wrong. The case of Anne and Sabrina, presented as an illustration of structural injustice, makes this clear. We can think of an employer, for example, who will give Sabrina a job in the future. He pays her a very low salary because of her bad education, and she has to work in precarious conditions. The employer thus profits from an injustice that happened long before he takes advantage of poor Sabrina. He might not even intend to exploit her but is pressured by shareholders interested in high profit. He might sincerely think that giving her a low-wage job is better than no job at all, since she will at least be able to pay her bills and keep her apartment. Still, he benefits from the mere existence of people in vulnerable positions in the labor market, forced to take any job they get. Consumers who buy low-priced products because of the exploitation of Sabrina's labor benefit as well. Assuming that they do not know that she works under harsh conditions, what responsibilities should be given them? This small example illustrates how child poverty is, in fact,

beneficial for many people. Some of them know about the relationships and voluntarily take advantage of it, but there are many others who are unaware and would even oppose it if they knew what was happening.

Another relevant ground for distributing different kinds and degrees of responsibilities is captured by Young with the term *interests*. Challenging unjust social structures will have a positive effect on certain groups – first and foremost (but not exclusively) on those who are negatively affected by the current inequalities and imbalances of power. It is in their interest that injustices are remedied and that the society they live in becomes a fairer one. Hence, they should also play an active part in these transformations; indeed, a social connection model sees them as agents of justice who bear responsibility for their own situation. One must, of course, proceed with caution here so as not to overburden the least advantaged members of society, attributing their weak social position to their own failure. But without their involvement, dedication and struggles for recognition, it is unlikely that improvements will occur. Furthermore, their firsthand knowledge and experience of the harms they suffer puts them in an epistemologically privileged position; it, too, generates certain responsibilities. In the case of child poverty, it is clear that there is also a wider interest of society and the state to alleviate it because of the many social and economic problems it creates. A society's interest is in having children grow up to become healthy, productive members; this way, they are able to care for themselves and their own children with little state support, from which a society benefits as a whole. The fight against child poverty should, hence, be driven by a state interest to keep the subsequent costs of benefits, unemployment, medical care and the like low.

Monique Deveaux has argued in a similar vein that most agent-centered approaches, in particular that of Thomas Pogge, focus on powerful agents and on institutions either on the national or international level (in questions of global poverty) and that this focus neglects the contribution of the poor themselves to overcoming their poverty (Deveaux 2013). They are conceptualized mainly as beneficiaries with very limited power or none at all to contribute to poverty alleviation and the realization of justice.

On this framing, the designated moral agents are specifically persons and entities not suffering from poverty but rather responsible for contributing to that poverty, or thought to be capable of alleviating it (or both). By contrast, the would-be recipients are construed as mere recipients of justice, rather than as potential agents of change. [...]

In the absence of adequate attention to perspectives and needs of the putative recipients of poverty reduction efforts, a focus on agents' duties and capabilities risks marginalizing the role of poor communities in devising and implementing solutions to chronic poverty and inequality. By failing to see the poor as actual or prospective agents of justice, such approaches risk ignoring the root political causes of, and best remedies for, entrenched poverty. (Deveaux 2013, 23–24)

Deveaux uses the concept of agents of justice for all who can and should have an active role in the process of fighting injustice. This is further supported by insights provided by participatory approaches to poverty and pro-poor initiatives, as well as research on ways to empower the poor by taking them seriously (Drydyk 2013; Chambers 2008). Conceptualizing the poor as agents of justice is empowering; it acknowledges that they still have the capacity to alter their lives and that they are not completely dominated. Furthermore, such a view entails that there is a responsibility on the side of other agents of justice to provide poor people with the means and resources – in capability terms, conversion factors – they need to make choices, acquire capabilities and realize functionings. In the case of child poverty, children themselves have an interest in not being poor and not suffering from severe deprivation in functioning; young children, however, cannot articulate that interest, and older children typically do not understand the breadth and depth of the problems they face and their long-term consequences. Consequently, the main beneficiaries in the battle against child poverty are, in this sense, the weakest agents, who are at least to some extent dependent on others who advocate their interests and claim justice for them. That is, it seems, a central difference between children and adults in poverty. Poor adults are often treated like children, which is humiliating and degrading, while children are actually able to act as agents of justice for themselves only to a limited extent. This does not mean that children should be treated as objects without agency or the ability to express some of their interests; but some kind of paternalism is usually justified and needed in order to protect their interests. Again, it is very difficult to draw a line from what age, on a child's view, should be taken as authoritative; the context is certainly relevant to an adequate answer to that question. Especially for younger children, it is very likely that those who have the strongest interest in realizing justice for them are not the children themselves but their parents, families or other caregivers who have a close bond to them. They should have at least such a strong interest as part of their parental responsibilities.

One additional important issue is connected to the idea of interest as a ground for attributing responsibilities to agents of justice: adaptive preferences. We have already argued that adaptive preferences are normal during childhood and that development during childhood itself is always an adaption to the environment in which one grows up and lives. No child is in a position to choose these things autonomously, naturally coming to terms with her situation. This is one of the reasons why functionings, not capabilities, are to be preferred as units of justice for children: it is simply unreasonable to emphasize freedom of choice when the agent in question has only very limited knowledge and experience of what she is choosing. Hence, the normative core of adaptive preferences is tricky to catch in the case of children, because it seems as if, from an objective (adult) point of view, children often tend to alter preferences based on what is made available to them by adults. Children sometimes neglect injustices happening to them; in extreme cases they still love and bond with abusive parents and view themselves as responsible for the parents' behavior. Adaptive preferences can also affect the parents and other caregivers who directly interact with the child daily. Parents can have adaptive preferences in the sense that they do not want their children to be educated or that they neglect their health issues. Here, the issue of parental autonomy, parental rights and duties and the responsibility of other agents of justice to interfere becomes crucial; we will come back to this later, when we discuss the responsibilities of parents and caregivers. For now, we highlight that the idea to put responsibilities on the poor as agents of justice always faces the difficulty that those who should have the most interest in overcoming an injustice often support its existence. In such cases, it might be justified to neglect the choices of the poor and to enforce certain changes, even if it goes against their will. Expert-driven poverty alleviation is sometimes necessary, and in the case of children, even justified. They certainly cannot be expected to always make the right choices and know what is best for them in order to reach justice.

Finally, Young argues that *collective abilities* are relevant. Fighting structural injustices is usually a matter of joint actions. Individuals have to work in a coordinated way in order to effect change. There are typically networks and groups concerned with questions of social justice – NGOs, trade unions, several faith-based organizations – but universities and other educational institutions also unite many individuals. Consequently, their structures can be used to initiate or maintain movements aimed at undermining structural injustices. Their collective abilities provide a very helpful starting point, and it is reasonable to

suggest that this particular characteristic puts them in a position where special obligations arise.

In summary, it is crucial for both the liability model and the social connection model of responsibilities to identify *specific agents of justice*. The liability model puts the focus on the intended causation of harm (or the knowing omission of an act causing harm); it is predominantly backward looking and suitable to circumstances where the causal relationships are clear and where agents who deliberately and knowingly bring about and keep up morally untenable outcomes can be located. The social connection model, in contrast, starts from the assumption that many injustices cannot be grasped in this way, because causal relationships are blurry and those contributing to and upholding unjust social structures have no bad intentions. It suggests, however, that there are different grounds for attributing different agents with different kinds and degrees of responsibilities, depending on their social positions. According to Young, primarily the categories of power, privilege, interests and collective abilities can be used to decide who actually has which responsibilities to act.

We think Young's model provides a very helpful way of looking at responsibilities for justice. However, making it fit the special issues we are concerned with in this book requires some additional considerations. The model has to be extended and refined in some parts for our purpose of identifying grounds relevant to assigning responsibilities for acting against child poverty. Let us start by adding another ground, one Young touches on only superficially, one rooted in every child's dependency on love, care and respectively close relationships. We separate the interest of someone that child poverty should be alleviated and overcome from the relation to the child and the particular responsibility that stems from being a parent or close caregiver, having the duty and right of parenting. Young seems less concerned with close relations and how they influence the kind of responsibilities we have. We have argued that her grounds can and should also guide attribution of responsibilities in contexts where the connection between an agent of justice and those who benefit is less blurred. Child poverty, as we have often said, is almost always family poverty, and parents have a major influence on their children. Parents, however, do not only have such an influence, their poverty does not only cause their children to be poor as well; they have different kinds of relations, which are constituted by being a family. Parents have some rights but certainly also responsibilities towards their children; some of them can be caught by using the grounds discussed before. This does not, however, apply to all of them.

The fact of being close to the child, the fact that the child is attached to her parents, which is essential to the child's development, constitutes another strong ground for responsibility. Children depend on having caregivers and being parented – whether by their biological parents or a different person – and it has been shown that continuity of care matters heavily. Parents and caregivers have thus a responsibility solely based on the relation they have to these children, a relation that cannot be broken without causing serious harm. So to our existing list of four grounds on which an agent can be held responsible, we add a new one: the relation of a child being attached to this agent and depending on her to continue to care and take on some responsibility.

The different grounds for attributing responsibility have produced different variations of understanding responsibility. In the liability model it is closely tied to causing an injustice; the social connection model attributes responsibility on other grounds, but it is unclear what this means exactly. Does responsibility of an agent of justice imply that she is to blame? Does it imply that she has the duty to act, a duty that can be enforced by others (primary agents of justice)? How is responsibility tied to autonomy and choice, hence the ability to do something different, and how is it related to knowledge and the ability to know about the result of one's actions, participating in a web of social relations that are structurally unjust? And what do we want to do with these five grounds? Can they help us rank agents of justice and their responsibilities, for instance? Answering these questions is our aim in what follows.

An agent of justice is, so we suggest, responsible if any of the five criteria discussed above can be applied, with two refinements. On the one hand we need to consider knowledge; that is, what an agent of justice has known or could have known with reasonable effort about the results of her actions or the structural injustices she helps to create. The grounds presented by Young, which we also endorse, suggest that not knowing does not mean no responsibilities exist, though it can reduce the responsibility one has. On the other hand we need to put more weight on choice and if an agent might have acted differently or did act differently in the future. The ability to act differently in the past, that is, in creation of an injustice, is important. Nevertheless, the possibility on the part of the agent to alter her actions now and in the future, undoing the injustice or at least helping something change for the better, counts as well. It seems that agents are completely free of responsibilities only if two things can be shown: First, if they did not participate in any actions that led to an injustice or helped create or sustain a structurally unjust

context; and second, if they did not benefit in any way from the existence of an injustice and were in no position to alter their actions in a way that would create more justice. Applied to child poverty in welfare states, this means that basically everyone – except for people with severe disabilities or dementia or in coma or for (young) children – has some sort of responsibility and should therefore act to counter child poverty.

Young uses the grounds she specifies under the social connection model to specifically address injustices which are structural. In these circumstances, it is very unclear who is directly or causally responsible for the existence of a harm, making it virtually impossible to attribute responsibilities on the basis of the liability model. Child poverty is certainly such an issue; it is to a large extent a structural injustice rooted in the cultural, social, political and economic order of a society. It is upheld and reproduced by the way capitalistic societies work and how they are supported by nearly all people living within them, directly or indirectly, voluntarily or involuntarily. There is nearly no way to escape these social connections besides moving to a detached island and cutting off all contact to the outside; but doing many little things differently can make a difference: voting for another party, supporting the state and its institutions, not avoiding taxes, buying clean clothes, doing some community work and supporting those who are let down by the state via charity, paying fair prices and – if one is an employer – fair wages. Such actions and behaviors have an effect on poverty and on how it affects children. These effects are often indirect, but it is still important to anchor moral responsibilities in these “small” domains. If many people come up to these demands, important changes will be seen.

We want to use these grounds to assign responsibilities to agents of justice where the causal relation of causing an injustice is simply unclear. These are the cases Young developed her model for, and we follow her in this respect. At the same time, we wish to suggest that they also apply to cases where agents of justice have a more direct relation to the victims of injustices than just via taking part in a context of structural injustice. As Young presents the liability model, only those who willingly and knowingly cause an injustice should be held responsible; we believe this to be too narrow. Those who cause an injustice directly but unwillingly and/or unknowingly should be held responsible, though to a lesser extent. As we saw in discussing the beneficiary principle, doing something involuntarily and/or unknowingly does not let one off the hook. Moreover, there are many cases in which agents of justice are not far away from the victims of injustice. In the case of global justice, where relations between

people living in rich states and poor states are discussed, arguing with closeness is usually beside the point. Thousands of kilometers separate them, and often no emotional bonds are present at all. In the case of child poverty in welfare states, however, many possible agents of justice interact directly with the child and influence her well-being and well-becoming, both directly and indirectly, through contributing to structural injustices within which child poverty is embedded. We therefore argue that these four grounds – power (we will later show that this includes the ability to take collective action), interest, privilege and closeness – together with the main ground of the liability model, causation, are all relevant in attributing responsibilities.

In a nutshell, there are many different ways in which agents of justice can be directly or indirectly connected to the existence and sustenance of child poverty and what it does to children. People can have many different relationships to children in poverty, and we suggest that this position in the child's "environment" matters for the attribution of responsibilities. This category of closeness, the specific nature of the relation to the victims of injustice, can be implicitly found in all other grounds. An agent's power to help can increase if she is closer to victims of injustice and is able to provide direct help (e.g., providing shelter for a homeless child). Likewise, the benefits gained through an unjust situation can also depend on the closeness (e.g., an employer who exploits a single mother benefits more from doing so than the middle-class man who buys the cheap clothes produced by the company to save money). It is also reasonable to think that state institutions such as social welfare departments and their employees have particular responsibilities due to their professional relation to families in poverty and the power they have to influence their lives; the responsibility to treat everyone in a fair way and with due respect certainly falls into this category. A neighbor not detecting that a child is maltreated or undernourished can be excusable, but if a social worker fails to do so, something is certainly wrong (either because the social worker is just not good at her job or because the state failed to provide the working conditions and resources she needed to do it).

Such a broad concept of responsibility as we endorse here makes clear that everyone has some share of responsibility; we cannot just lie back and say that it is not our problem, that others have to solve it. But there is danger involved, too; if everyone is responsible, this easily leads to the conclusion that, in the end, no one is, shifting the responsibility back to the "usual suspects": the state and the families these poor children grow up in. We are well aware of this problem; using the grounds we laid

out to clarify and help identify concrete agents of justice and determine their responsibility is what is needed. In the best case, it would even be possible to determine what has to be done. We will not be able to go into these details here, but we will propose a first model of how these five grounds should be ranked and weighed against each other.

Our proposal is vague to some extent, in that we cannot attach exact numbers to each ground and then calculate a given agent's responsibility based on that. Notwithstanding, we will be more specific than most other models are, going far beyond just saying that each and every ground has the same normative force and leaving it wide open which agents should be held responsible.

The strongest reason for being responsible as an agent of justice is if an injustice is caused and upheld willingly and knowingly, even if this happened due to negligence. It seems uncontroversial that such a causal role carries strong responsibility for the agent in question; in fact, this reasoning motivates the liability model. By holding someone responsible we mean that she is the first one to whom the victims of injustice can go and claim that the injustice should be undone or compensated. The respective responsibilities are therefore not only backward looking, as Young's interpretation of the liability model suggests. They have a forward-looking component as well and demand that actions be taken to improve the situation in the future.

Second to that is power, especially the power to be a primary agent and to create institutions and hold other agents responsible. If an agent can help undo an injustice (with reasonable effort, be it noted), she should do so even if she did not cause it. Third on the list is the relation a certain agent has to the child, in particular if it is a caring relation, which is essential for the child. We put this high on the list simply because of the particular needs and vulnerabilities of children. Fourth in our ranking is gaining privileges and benefiting from the existence of an injustice. The fifth and weakest reason to be held responsible is to have an interest in overcoming the injustice, in particular if the interest stems from being a victim of this injustice oneself. Let us support this ranking with an example. Consider a family with three children that is pushed into and held in poverty because of the action of an agent, A. The father was the only one working in the family, but A employed him in precarious and exploitative conditions. He had to work more than he could bear and eventually quit his job due to health reasons, leaving the whole family without an income. It is reasonable that agent A is the first one to be held responsible. We also have agent B, who has nothing to do with what happened but has a lot of power and is well

equipped to step in and support the family. In a rich society, the state typically meets these criteria. If agents A and B cannot do anything to help, then it is up to the mother to try to find a job, leaving her children alone during the day. But if she cannot find anything or finds only jobs she cannot accept for good reasons, she will be in a situation in which she no longer is able to provide a decent living for her children. In these circumstances, another agent comes into play: a person in her neighborhood, who works closely with the father's employer and who has benefited from the fact that A exploits his workers and his profits are high. The neighbor did not intend to do anything wrong and was not aware of the schemes of his business partner, but he surely benefited; if there is no one else to turn to, his responsibilities are strong. The children themselves have the weakest obligation in respect to their own poverty. The two younger ones, aged one and three, obviously cannot do anything. The older one, aged ten, could work for the neighbors and support her mother and siblings, but from a moral point of view, this fact can confer only very weak responsibilities.

Three important things should be noted here. Firstly, in many cases more than one reason to be responsible can be applied. The state, for example, is powerful and has some interest in keeping children out of poverty. Then there might be an uncle that is well off and close to the children; he certainly ought to step in and support the mother if the state fails to do so. It is possible that the state might fail but the society has other powerful institutions like charities. Secondly, responsibility rises if more than one reason can be applied. Take a company that has the means to pay fair wages and provide good working conditions but, due to its focus on maximizing profits, exploits women and hence harms both them and their children. This company is more to blame and needs to shoulder more responsibility than an equally powerful company that makes only moderate profit because it pays fair wages but could do more in respect of better work-life-balance programs for its workers. It is again important to keep in mind that the responsibilities individuals have are attached to their positions within an institution. A politician has the responsibility to make the state and its institutions work in such a way that injustices do not occur or are alleviated; this may happen by trying to increase the working conditions and introduce a minimum wage. As a private person, her responsibilities are different and have more to do with paying a fair wage to her cleaner instead of exploiting her, for instance. Finally, it is possible to construct examples in which arguments speak against our weighting or in which the case is less clear. Such an example would be another very rich neighbor who is powerful but did

not profit from the precarious conditions the father was employed in. Is she responsible for stepping in even before the mother tries to work to make ends meet, because power ranks higher than closeness? We would agree that, in such a case, the rich neighbor has a responsibility towards these children and has to step in if the mother could provide for her children only by excessive and harmful means like leaving them alone and moving to another country for work.

### **3.2 Important agents of justice and their responsibilities**

In the previous section, we tried to narrow down grounds on which agents of justice can be held responsible and presented a ranking of the grounds. A still missing but equally important point is to identify agents of justice in the first place. Some clarifications are needed before we can do that. On the one hand, we need to distinguish between agents responsible for doing something about the child being poor and agents responsible for doing something about the negative effects of being poor. These are different issues. We argued that child poverty is unjust because it leads to severe deprivations in important functionalities. Hence, it is a state of ill-being and leads to ill-becoming; it is a major obstacle to developing important capabilities adults should have. But these negative effects of child poverty can certainly be alleviated to some extent without changing the poverty condition itself, at least if one uses a monetary definition of poverty. Think of the example of social inclusion from the previous chapter. Children in poverty are more likely to be excluded due to a lack of adequate transportation and because they are often stigmatized by other people, including their peers in school. Both aspects could be different without moving the child out of poverty measured by household income. In such a case, the harsh effects of poverty are alleviated, and the deprivation in this aspect might not even occur. Again, household income is just one measure for poverty in welfare states; measures like deprivation indicators could use access to transportation and being stigmatized as indicators for poverty. In that case, providing transportation and a change in the behavior and attitudes of other persons and children towards their poor peers would translate into a move out of poverty. It is also very likely that some agents who cannot do much about the poverty of the child can do a lot in regard to how poverty translates into disadvantages and deprivations. A more inclusive health care system that provides free and low-threshold health care might be combined with outreach social work. Taken together, these measures can certainly make a difference and

help increase the health of many poor children. Some agents may be able to do much about the poverty status of the child while not directly influencing other dimensions of its well-being and well-becoming. The employer of the father or mother, for instance, who decides to pay a higher wage and improve working conditions, aiming at more family-friendly working hours, certainly influences what a child is able to do and be. Eventually such changes can move her and her family out of poverty, but the employer still can influence the health and education of the child only indirectly.

Since the relation between poverty and the deprivations discussed in Chapter 2 suggests that poverty is a very important cause for them, we argue that poverty should be targeted directly if possible. Alleviating the effects of poverty is like fighting the symptoms and not the disease. This in no way implies that one should not care about alleviating the effects of child poverty. Setting up more inclusive health care systems that directly target poor children is definitely a good thing. We know that they are a particularly vulnerable group and in need of support. In situations where it is unlikely that poverty can be directly tackled or in which it is foreseeable that progress on that front is coming very slowly, it is necessary to use all means available to counter what poverty does to children, even if they cannot be moved out of poverty. One must not forget, however, that the fundamental normative problem is that children grow up in poverty and that there is a need for a systematic change to this.

Identifying agents of justice for child poverty is a task that should be informed by empirical evidence. The relations between different agents in the child's environment and the way they actually influence her well-being and well-becoming is complex, and we have already indicated that a focus on state and family is too narrow. A very influential theory that guides our specification is the ecological model proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, a psychologist who worked on child development (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2007). His bioecological model aims to conceptualize child development based on an understanding that development is the change and continuity of biopsychological characteristics of humans over the life course, a development shaped by direct and indirect interactions between the developing human being and her environments. Bronfenbrenner's model, used in empirical work for more than three decades, is also applied in research that aims to understand the effects of child poverty and in social work (Eamon 2001; Jack 1997). Such ecological approaches are especially fruitful in concepts of child well-being and well-becoming, which follow

a multidimensional approach and want to understand the embedding of children in different environments and how they are influenced by them (Aldgate 2010; Graf and Schweiger 2015). Bronfenbrenner distinguishes five so-called systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem. Bronfenbrenner's model is not a philosophical one; it is also not primarily interested in child poverty and not conceptualized to identify agents of justice in the sense explored before. It simply tells us what different kinds of environments are important in children's lives, as well as something about how child poverty can affect the child through these different systems by affecting the microsystem and the direct interaction between parents and child and other environments in which the child is present, like the school, the neighborhood and social service. Furthermore, this model can provide relevant information for a general concept of justice for children by showing what necessary conversion factors children need to develop – hence for developing functionings and, once they have reached a certain level of freedom, capabilities. In a nutshell, such a bioecological model shows that children's development, the very acquiring of any functioning on which later functionings and capabilities can grow, is a process in which many different agents are present and where they have direct and indirect influence.

This ecological approach gives further weight to Young's approach, according to which one must look not just at those who directly and knowingly cause harm and injustice but at the broader context in which children grow up to see whether this context is suitable and supporting or harming and disadvantageous for some children. In political philosophy and most theories of justice, there is a focus on the state and its institutions (basic infrastructure, as one might say) or on powerful international and global institutions that shape the lives of hundreds of millions of people by their policies and actions. We have already argued with Monique Deveaux that weaker individuals can also be seen as agents of justice, in the sense that they can do something important to overcome an injustice. In general, we think it is very plausible to view both persons and institutions as possible agents of justice. Since all institutions are made up of persons acting within them, the attributed responsibilities are transferred to them as far as they are in institutional roles. For example, if a certain company is called upon to change its behavior, the call is directed more at that company and less at the managers leading it. This becomes clear if a change in management does not lead to a change in the attribution of responsibility on that company. The people running the company are the ones responsible for its actions

but only insofar as they have roles within the institution. The managers of the company may have many other responsibilities in their other roles: being members of a particular society, living in a certain community, having children, profiting from structural injustices or injustices they cause directly through their jobs and the like. The same can be said of politicians who are in charge of designing their society's institutions and also those of the world in general through an international agency in which they act and which they support or help design. If one understands agents of justice in this sense, the categories of power and collective ability seem to collapse into each other and become one. An institution is often powerful because it can coordinate the actions of many people through their being members of that institution.

Partially following this ecological approach, we distinguish eight agents according to their relation to the child. The agents are listed such that they grow ever more distant from the child in poverty in terms of direct interaction. This says nothing about other parameters, like influence on the child via indirect interaction or structural injustices or in terms of causing the child's poverty and connected harm and deprivations. We use "agent" in a loose sense and in some cases prefer to name environments and institutions, not particular individuals. In accord with what we said before, however, we always address the relevant individuals within these environments and institutions, since in the end they must start acting against child poverty.

- (1) The child herself. The child herself is an active agent interacting with her environments and also influencing and shaping them to some extent. Children in poverty are not mere passive objects. From an early stage on, they position themselves within their living conditions and must try to cope with them in some way, whether successfully or not. Participatory research has revealed many different ways that children try to do so (Ridge 2009). Poverty makes living harder for children; if it is very severe, it can kill them. It would, however, be wrong to deny them any agency when it comes to evaluating their condition or determining how it should be changed. We have argued that any justifiable theory of childhood nowadays incorporates a strong agency aspect that actively involves children in their own development. At the same time, one has to be clear that the exact moral status of their perspective has to be weighed by their age and maturity.
- (2) The family and close caregivers. The family is obviously crucial to alleviating child poverty and securing justice for children. Child

poverty most often happens in the family children grow up and live in, and the condition of the family is a major source of the child's ill-being and well-being alike. Furthermore, it largely shapes the future of the child and influences what capabilities and functionings can be developed and achieved. Early development especially is based on interactions between the child and close caregivers, which can hardly be replaced adequately. Attachment and love and care are needed for the healthy development and well-being of a child. Poverty can, as we have already shown, disrupt families and even destroy them (Barnett 2008; Goodman et al. 2009). As the exact meaning of "family" is still in dispute, the mentioned relationships of love and care can – within certain limits – take on different forms depending on the social and cultural context. However, the importance of some form of family relationship for a child's well-being and well-becoming is recognized across different cultures and times.

- (3) Friendship, leisure and neighborhood. This category describes all the different agents with which, besides the core family, children in poverty interact in a nonprofessional way. This group is obviously very heterogeneous and encompasses close friends as well as neighbors, school peers and relatives. Although their influence on the poverty condition of the child is typically limited and they are not in a position to alleviate material hardship, they still exercise some influence. For instance, they are crucial for the way a child experiences her situation in terms of social exclusion and feelings of disrespect and humiliation. Children are often excluded, stigmatized and denigrated for being poor by their environment, which is highly stressful. Such experiences are likely to lead to isolation, shame and low self-worth, factors that make reaching important functionings and capabilities difficult.
- (4) The social and political institutions on the local and state level (e.g., public infrastructure, health care, education). This group of institutions and persons acting within them is crucial for children's development and well-being. Children in poverty are to a great degree dependent on the existence of public health care, education and social services in order to achieve capabilities and functionings. Without them, they are in danger of ill-being and ill-becoming in various ways, and poor families have no resources to take the place of a failing public infrastructure. Therefore, they are the ones hardest hit by austerity measures that cut the welfare system. It is important to note that these institutions have to be inclusive and set up in a way that they can also be afforded, reached and used by those who need them.

- (5) The economy and the labor market. Besides the public infrastructure and the welfare system, the economy and the labor market are probably the most influential institutions when it comes to child poverty, although children are kept out of both to a large extent in many countries. It is a widely shared conviction in many countries, especially in the highly developed world, that children should not work to provide for themselves, and up to a certain age it is certain they cannot do so anyway. The economic position of the family, however, determines the life chances of the children who live in them in many ways. Work, income and wealth, education, health, social status and power are interdependent throughout the life course, even before birth and early childhood. It is therefore no surprise that welfare and workfare are very close and that work and improvements to the family's economic position are seen as primary child poverty alleviation measures in many countries. They enable families to provide for children without aid from the state or other national and international institutions and NGOs.
- (6) The community of citizens in a society. Every child is a member of a wider community; in most cases, children are citizens of the states they live and grow up in. Citizenship is important for access to services and institutions and determines which rights children have on the national or local level. The citizenship of their parents or caregivers is equally important. On the one hand, if children and their families are illegal immigrants or have refugee status, they usually have significantly lower opportunities in the country they live in; they may be denied political and social rights. On the other hand, being member of a bigger community provides certain opportunities. In many states, the welfare system is supported by the majority of citizens who finance it, and there is a certain degree of solidarity between them. Whether or not one agrees that justice is dependent on such a mutual sense of community, it is certainly the case that citizens influence each other's well-being even if they never interact directly. Prominent examples are tax systems, to which everyone contributes and which are crucial to financing the welfare system from which the worst-off profit the most. Other examples are political institutions: on the one hand, they might be designed in an inclusive way, supporting poverty alleviation and creating a sense of solidarity; on the other hand, they might opt for gated communities, private schools, cuts in the welfare system and the criminalization of begging, thereby marginalizing poor families and their children.

- (7) The economic and political institutions on the international and global level. The local and national economy and labor market, as well as local and national public institutions, are not insular and detached from the international and global level. The global economic and political architecture and the power of transnational companies to avoid taxes, to put pressure on states and to lobby their interests highly influence child poverty and pose challenges for the supporting welfare systems. Especially in poorer countries, poverty alleviation is directly financed and designed by international institutions and NGOs; international treaties and agreements shape such countries' economic and social development and their ability to design and control policies in areas from health care to the labor market (Craig and Porter 2006). Hence, particularly in poor countries dominated by such international rules, child poverty is shaped to a large extent by forces external to their own political and social institutions.
- (8) The global community of humans. Humans share one earth, and through the various forms of globalization, the connections between them have intensified. The global chains of production and trade, which certainly produce winners and losers, mass tourism across the whole world and a globalized aid system in which resources from rich countries are transferred to poorer ones in the name of charity are just three examples of how people living in very distant places can effectively influence each other's lives. These connections are typically manifold and interlaced, making it difficult to isolate and specify an individual's exact position in the overall "network". Nevertheless, these relations exist, and their normative dimensions must also be considered in an account of responsibilities.

We now have eight different groups of agents that are obviously involved in the well-being and well-becoming of a child in poverty and her being poor in the first place. Each of these groups and the agents within them, such as companies, deserve a close examination so as to scrutinize their responsibilities based on the grounds we distinguished before. Unfortunately, this would go far beyond the scope of this book, and so we present only a first systematization and ranking. After that, we will focus on two agents, the family and the state, since they are crucial to the alleviation of child poverty.

- (a) High level of responsibilities. The group with the highest level of responsibilities encompasses social and political institutions on the

local and state level (public infrastructure; health care, school, social care) and close caregivers. Based on our criteria for attributing responsibility, it is clear why these two are so important. Within the family, parents especially are closely related to their children, influencing them heavily and having direct power to alter their lives. They have (or should have) a strong interest in overcoming the child's poverty (this often implies that they themselves escape poverty). At the same time, the family is often weakly positioned to change the poverty condition because it is most likely poor and marginalized, a state that can be reinforced by health issues or related problems. Thus, its power has to be seen in the relevant context, acknowledging that it is often severely limited. The state, on the other hand, is the most powerful agent, especially if it is a modern welfare state. It can hold other agents and parents responsible and define what they owe children. Moreover, the state can be said to be a major source for the existence of child poverty in the first place, because it failed to set up an inclusive labor market and a well-working economy in which everyone finds a decently paid and secure job. The state has a strong interest in alleviating child poverty as well, because it is founded around such ideas as equality of opportunity and justice for adults, to which child poverty is a major obstacle. The state can furthermore be interested in avoiding many of the functional deprivations connected to poverty, since they amount to high costs over the life course (e.g., in the health care system or the social welfare systems that have to pay long-term unemployment benefits to adults who did not get a decent education when they were young). Social and political institutions on the local and state level are in the best position to help – if they are financed and equipped properly, as we assume here for argument's sake – and they can do so without any sacrifice on their own. They can successfully support children and their families and can provide them with such crucial conversion factors as health care, education and public infrastructure. We believe this analysis still widely holds true for the states we focus on. However, we acknowledge that the state's actions are limited insofar as it is embedded in wider international and global relations and institutions. In fact, there is an observable tendency that many states give up some of their power to transnational companies, which are more and more in a position to blackmail rich states and avoid taxes and lobby to weaken labor laws. These are trends that must be observed closely, since they clearly have the potential to alter the account of responsibilities we are developing here.

- (b) Midlevel of responsibilities. This group of institutions includes the community of citizens within a society, friendship, leisure and neighborhood, the economy and the labor market, as well as political institutions on the international and global level. The community of citizens has only midlevel responsibilities that include the obligation to financially and politically support institutions and policies necessary for alleviating child poverty. They should do so to the extent they can without their own claims of justice being infringed. Citizens can have more comprehensive responsibilities to help if institutions fail or are not sufficient, as in cases of natural disasters. Persons interacting directly with poor children, like their peers, friends, neighbors and other persons they meet in public, have only midlevel responsibility, too. Naturally, this group has the same types of responsibilities as the community of citizens, since it is a subgroup of it, but there are some additional factors. As these agents are closer to the child, their direct influence is greater, as is their ability to intervene; therefore, their responsibilities have more weight. One very important obligation in this domain is treating the child respectfully and refraining from humiliating and excluding behaviors. Another is to keep the neighborhood safe and child-friendly, not make it a dangerous and insecure place. Surely, friends and peers who are themselves children have fewer responsibilities than adults; they usually belong to the last group we will discuss. But again, the line is difficult to draw; with teenagers, there might be cases where responsibility is relatively high. The economy and the labor market are in this midlevel because of their important influence on the child's poverty by providing families with decent jobs or goods and services at fair and affordable prices. The economy and labor market – together with failed policies to regulate them properly – are among the main initiators of child poverty. Political and economic institutions on the international and global level are often overlooked, and child poverty is conceptualized as a local or national problem – but it is not in any exclusive sense. Every state is embedded in the global economic and political regime, and effective poverty alleviation will have to include significant changes on this level as well.
- (c) Low level of responsibilities. The group with the lowest level of responsibilities is composed of the global human community and the child herself. The child is clearly in the weakest position to change her situation, at least until a certain age. We would argue that older children, who have achieved a certain level of competency and are

therefore also allowed a certain degree of autonomy and choice for themselves, have a certain degree of responsibility for their choices and actions. They do not have an obligation towards themselves in the strict sense, but if they make deliberately bad choices that lower their well-being and well-becoming – like criminal acts and dropping out of school – they should also face the consequences. Still, the degree to which adolescents should be held responsible is debatable. The global community of humans – we exclude here those in high positions of power – has only weak responsibilities towards children in poverty living in other countries. The possibility of influencing their condition is limited, especially compared to the local and national public institutions available in all developed countries, about which we next speak. This does not mean that they have no responsibilities at all, such as to support change on the global level.

### 3.3 The family and the state

Having presented a first systematization and ranking of agents of justice, we wish to comment further on the family and the state. The first issue that needs to be addressed is causality and responsibility for the child's being poor. The second is causality for the negative effects of child poverty and whether the parents are largely to blame for it because their behavior is an important mediating factor. The reason for discussing these issues is that if the parents are held responsible but obviously fail to fulfill their responsibility, strong intervention could be justified. We will then explore what the state and society in general owe parents as support for them in taking care of their children.

If the parents of poor children are responsible for their children's poverty and/or for severe but preventable deprivations due to their poverty, the state has basically four options: to support the parents and help them become better parents and escape poverty; to take the children away and put them in state care; to take the children away and give them to other parents; and as a preventive option, to make it less likely that poor parents have children in the first place. All the options are based on the assumption that the parents of poor children are not in a position to prevent and overcome their own poverty and that of their children, at least not without being helped by others. This assumption is very important, because in most literature regarding responsibilities towards children it is argued that the parents have to take care and that it might even be unjust to put the costs of care on other agents, including the state. In the case of poverty such a conclusion is not of

much help, because poor parents cannot do what might be reasonably demanded of nonpoor parents under the circumstances of a just society. As soon as a child comes to exist, she has a claim to justice; if her parents fail to provide for her, someone else must. Anything else would be unjust and cruel, since children cannot be held responsible for being born to parents who are ill adapted to meet their needs and claims of well-being and well-becoming. In this sense we take here a child-centered line of argument and are not closely concerned with the question of whether fulfilling claims of justice of poor children puts unjustifiable burdens on other agents. We think that it does not and that each and every citizen has a responsibility to support its state to realize justice for all children, whether or not the citizen is a parent. In the nonideal circumstances in which we live now, this is even less controversial than it might be in an ideally just society, where everyone has a fair share and would be expected to give something from it. Today we are far from that situation.

We begin by discussing briefly the relationship between parents and their children and the rights parents have. It is now widely acknowledged that children have certain rights and parents also have rights and that parents can make and need to make important decisions for their children. Compulsory education is a case in which the state itself exercises a right to determine large parts of children's lives. The tension between parental and children's rights and the right of the state to intervene in the family is obvious. We take here a child-centered approach that argues that in this triangle children are the primary right bearers and parents have rights that flow from them. In terms of justice this means that children have claims of justice towards their parents and that it is the parents' responsibility to fulfill these claims up to a just minimum. Hence, we do not think that a property view of parental rights, which views children as the property of their parents, is appropriate. Under the premise of the capability approach, no person is the property of another, because this would violate the demand of equal respect. This is similar to an argument developed by Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift that argues convincingly that parental rights should be based on the children's rights to be cared for in their interest – though maybe not their best interests, because these are hard to define and unlikely to be accomplished perfectly. There is no society-wide feasible alternative to the family as a place for children to be raised, although in thought experiments such options can be imagined. In theory, it is thinkable that a well-run orphanage might do a better job than any parent could do and that such a society would be more just in terms of equality of opportunity, but this comes at very high costs

(Munoz-Darde 1999; Schoeman 1980). It is very unlikely that parents would be willing to give up their children. They would sooner consider leaving the country or trying other ways to keep and raise their children themselves. The same applies to such ideas as redistributing babies to better (i.e., richer) parents as a generally used mean to secure justice for children. To deprive poor parents of their children simply because they are poor would be fighting one injustice with another. Some practical issues stand against such an idea as well, such as the problem that there might not be enough rich families who would want to raise another person's children. There is also some evidence that suggests that the risk of being abused and mistreated is higher for children raised by those to whom they are not biologically related (Daly and Wilson 1999). Taking away the child is, thus, a last resort. Moreover, attachment theory suggests that taking away a child always mean harming the child; staying with close caregivers the child is attached to is very important for the child. Still, in cases of abuse and severe neglect, taking away the child is justified. This means that parents, even poor parents, have a right to act as parents only as long as they provide their children with a minimally decent life. A similar argument was made by David Archard in his defense of parental rights.

We have said both that parents' rights are limited and that they are conditional on parents' protecting certain of the children's interests. Failure to protect those interests amounts to a forfeiture of the right, in the same way that failure to obey just laws implies forfeiting one's right to freedom of association. All accounts of parental rights, in order to be plausible, have to make them conditional on parents' meeting certain of their children's interests adequately (Brighouse and Swift 2006, 103).

In sum, the rights individuals have as parents within a liberal society are the rights to bring up their children as they choose so long as they discharge the morally prior duty of ensuring that their children enjoy a minimally decent life. They do not have the rights of property owners to dispose of their offspring as they would their estate. However they are not required, as liberal principles might seem to demand, to bring up their children to enjoy maximally open futures; nor must they do so in such a way as would satisfy a liberal principle of legitimacy. (Archard 2010, 50)

The tricky question in regard to poverty is if being poor falls below the threshold and if parents who can be said to be poor through their own fault should lose their rights as parents. In this case, it would be justified

to take away their children, because the harm of being taken away would be less severe than the harm of staying in the family. Poverty would then fall into the same category as abuse and severe neglect, which also count as legitimate reasons for state intervention today. In fact, empirical research shows that children from poor families are more often taken away, and it has also been suggested that social workers are more likely to intervene in poor families than in richer ones, even if the level of neglect or abuse is similar.

We now want to discuss why parents are not fully responsible for being poor and why this leads to the conclusion that even if poverty should constitute falling under the threshold necessary to uphold parental rights, parents should be supported instead of having their children taken away. Most people in poverty are not poor by choice, in the sense that they wish to be poor. The question is whether poor parents can be seen as being poor because they made bad and wrong choices, which lead them to become poor against their will and desire. This would be evaluated as a kind of deserving poverty. The first argument that speaks against such a conclusion is that poverty is very often grounded in childhood, and the intergenerational transmission of poverty suggests that people move through the life course on a trajectory that is very hard to change. It is certainly not impossible to escape poverty, but it is hard to because of the many disadvantages we discussed, like deprivations in health and education. The second argument in favor of our conclusion is the structural nature of poverty. The economic crisis of the last years pushed millions of people into poverty and made it much harder to escape it, showing impressively that the individual is dependent on the economic and social chances she finds. If there are simply not enough jobs available, someone will be unemployed, and if the economy changes in a way that transfers jobs from one country to another, the individual worker with a family and a mortgage to repay simply cannot move along (in fact, in most cases this would not help much, since it would still be too expensive).

The counterargument, that uneducated persons are much more vulnerable to poverty, captures only one dimension and so must be rejected at least partly. Educational choices are in many countries made very early and depend on such things as available schools in the neighborhood or the support from parents. Children cannot control them, and when they reach an age at which they can be held partially responsible for their educational achievements and choices, it is often too late. We do not wish to dismiss adolescents completely, but they are at least partially the victims of their circumstances and the environments in which they grew up, which makes it more likely that they will leave school early,

become teenage parents or start to work early in insecure low-wage jobs. Furthermore, education is important, but so are other factors—for example, health and disability. The fact that single parents are much more often poor speaks not so much against these mothers and fathers as it reflects gender inequalities in the labor market (England 2005), the undervaluing of jobs done mainly by women and the lack of economic recognition of care work, as well as the difficulties of supporting young children with a part-time job in an environment which does not have enough affordable child care facilities. Many poor adults have certainly made bad choices and are partially to be blamed for them, especially if they are responsible for children, in which case their bad choices' consequences fall upon others who are particular vulnerable. But all the knowledge and evidence about poverty in welfare states suggests that most people are victims more of their circumstances than of their bad choices.

This conclusion is closely connected to the second point concerned with the behavior of poor parents and how they influence their children's well-being and well-becoming. We saw in the last chapter that parents mediate how poverty affects their children. Two examples from research illustrate this point. An older study on the effects of severe economic hardship on children during the Depression found that parenting behavior plays a crucial role (Elder, Nguyen and Caspi 1985). The most interesting result, however, was that the rejecting behavior of the fathers had a significant negative impact on the psychosocial well-being of their daughters, a behavior related to the physical attractiveness of the daughters. Put simply, fathers treated their daughters better if they were more attractive, which led to higher psychosocial well-being in these girls. This means that the child's development and her well-being and well-becoming were influenced by the economic downturn, and this had influenced a major agent in their lives and the interactions taking place between the child and this agent. More importantly, this interaction was also shaped by a characteristic of the girls themselves, although they had no control over it. In a 2002 study, Mary Eamon investigated the relation between poverty and antisocial behavior of children from twelve to fourteen (Eamon 2002). She found that physical punishment, lower levels of parental emotional support, deviant peer pressure and neighborhood problems all predict antisocial behavior and that children living in poverty are more likely to experience these. The effect of poverty on antisocial behavior is therefore influenced by both the interactions within the family (parenting behavior) and the interactions with peers and with the wider social environment (neighborhood).

Both these examples show how important parents' behavior is in the translation of poverty into negative outcomes in other areas of well-being and well-becoming. How much blame for the outcomes can be attributed to the parents, then, and can it lead to a justification of state intervention? Again, we argue that it is enough to show that parents are not fully responsible for many of their choices that affect their children and that this suggests that the state has a responsibility to support rather than punish them. Parents living in poverty in most cases have limited opportunities – and capabilities and functionings – when it comes to improving their own living conditions and those of their children. Lack of resources translates into a lack of freedoms in this respect, which becomes evident for such things as paying for heating, a better flat, moving to a different neighborhood or paying for repairs and special treatments not covered by general insurance (in some modern and highly developed societies, millions of children and families are not covered by any medical insurance). Trickier from a moral point of view are “choices” such as taking drugs or drinking during pregnancy, child neglect due to addictions or simple bad parenting (as in the two earlier cases). We make a much weaker claim here: namely, that behaviors are themselves partially determined by socioeconomic position and how one grows up and is socialized; this claim seems to be supported by some evidence now (Pinderhughes et al. 2001; Russell, Harris and Gockel 2008). The claim that at least some important aspects of the choices we make are socially determined is, we believe, uncontroversial. The case of fathers treating their attractive daughters better shows that. Under better circumstances, such behavior probably carries little weight or does not happen at all. It is hence something that is not under full control of these fathers, and so we argue that the responsibility should be at least partially shifted from the fathers to the economic downturn and the state, which was unable to compensate adequately. We cannot specify how many of the choices poor people and parents make can be attributed to factors they cannot control themselves, but we would claim the portion is large enough to support our interpretation that the behavioral influence on their children's life is not in their full responsibility and that as they have often limited possibilities to alter their behavior, they cannot be held fully responsible for it. William J. Wilson has come to the same conclusion in his influential study on urban poverty in the USA:

This is not to argue that individuals and groups lack freedom to make their own choices, engage in certain conduct and develop certain styles and orientations, but it is to say that these decisions and actions

occur within a context of constraints and opportunities that are drastically different from those present in middle-class society. (Wilson 1997, 55)

This does not indicate that they are not responsible at all and that poverty is an excuse for everything. It is certainly not. Let us consider another example: a study has shown that the economic downturn of the last years increased significantly the cases of children suffering from abusive head trauma (shaken baby syndrome; Berger et al. 2011). It seems as if stress caused by unemployment and financial strain leads more parents to behave in this abusive and severely harmful way. In such a case we believe two lessons can be learned: On the one hand, poverty does not excuse such behavior. Parents' responsibility is to support their children, not hurt them. On the other hand, if poverty helps us understand why parents act in such a way, it certainly implies that other agents of justice for children, mainly the state and its institutions, should either alleviate poverty and unemployment in the first place or act preventively to support families and parents so that they do not display this kind of destructive behavior.

Where does this leave us now? Parents are an important mediator, they are not fully responsible for being poor or for all of their (moderately) bad parenting, and there is no really feasible alternative to them, since placing children either in state care or with other, richer parents incurs many other problems. Would it be best if poor parents did not have children in the first place? The state then would not have to intervene, and there would be no issues of responsibility for poverty or bad parenting to begin with. There is actually some support for this claim to be found in the literature, not only with a focus on children that would not be born and then could not be harmed. We leave aside the nonidentity problem and do not discuss whether it would be good if no one had children, considering it to be always harmful. We start with the assumptions that being born is good and that children born into poverty are more likely to have a bad life, in the sense of an unjust life, hampered by deprivations in important functionings and capabilities. We assume furthermore that the state has the ability to intervene and that it could alleviate poverty for these children by supporting their parents or that it could at least alleviate most negative effects of child poverty, limiting them to an extent that is within reasonable range of the risks every other child has to live with. Hence, if the state changes, it can secure justice for children having been born poor, which certainly comes at some costs the state could use otherwise if these children were

not born at all. Under these circumstances – and we think they more or less accurately reflect what is possible in all modern welfare states – the state is allowed to enable and responsible for enabling all people, adolescents in particular, with a real choice if and when they want to become parents. It is thus responsible for providing knowledge about reproductive health and helping them plan their parenthood. Again, we are confronted here with a very sensitive issue about which many different opinions exist (e.g., religious groups that argue that family planning is always wrong and the state should never provide mandatory sexual education). Adaptive preferences, or to put it more moderately, unreflecting choices of younger adults and adolescents are an issue here. The reasons why young women get pregnant are multifold and can include gender roles, carelessness, lack of knowledge and the hope of stabilizing a relationship with a baby. Considering this, there is a fine line between education, helping people make good choices for themselves – this is the ideal of the capability approach – and manipulating or pushing them to make a choice that is good for the state. Under the circumstances described above, all adults and, to a lesser extent, adolescents are entitled to become parents if they wish, and the state has the responsibility to support them in making that decision freely and with respect to their own life plans. The state has the further responsibility to support the parents on their way to parenthood, providing prenatal health care and social services in cases where there is an indication that problems exist, as for parents-to-be in poverty. Furthermore, the state certainly has the responsibility to support the parents after birth and in their efforts to be good parents; it is not allowed to compel poor persons to not become parents in the first place for the sake of merely sparing some funds. Reproduction and the capability of becoming a parent and acting as a parent – on the condition that one provides for that child sufficiently, with the help of the state, if needed – are part of what constitutes justice for adults.

Our arguments so far have been concerned with the claim that the state is not allowed to take children away from poor parents solely because they are poor or to hinder them from becoming parents. We have said little about the responsibilities the state has subsequently in regard to children born into poor families or living in families that become poor while the children are young; we also have not explored the responsibilities poor parents have in respect to their children, besides having to care for them sufficiently – for which Brighthouse and Adams used the term “interests” and Archard used “a minimal decent living”. We wish to use here an argument developed by Anne Alstott, who argues that parents

have an obligation to stay and no right to exit their parenthood; based on that responsibility, the state has the responsibility to support them in doing that. She derives the obligation to stay from an analysis of the importance of continuity of care. Put otherwise, children's well-being and well-becoming are dependent, not totally but largely, on continuity of care, on having caregivers who stay and do not leave them.

No Exit is the flip side of continuity of care. We have seen that society expects parents to provide continuity, and it depends on them to do so. But when parents commit to continuity of care for their children, they limit their own capacity to exit, in two senses. Most obviously, parents undertake to stay with their children for the long term and not to leave them. But in addition, continuity of care requires parents to reshuffle their priorities: parents must strive to meet their children's material and emotional needs, and they must, if need be, limit their own aspirations and forgo opportunities to do so. (Alstott 2004, 51)

Alstott is interested in what continuity of care, hence the no exit obligation, implies for parents – namely, that they are limited in their autonomy, both in local autonomy to make choices (like going on a spontaneous romantic trip) and global autonomy, which concerns long-term choices. Such a parent-centered approach coincides with a child-centered approach that asks not what the state owes to parents but what the state owes to children; from this the parents benefit only because they are the mediators and conversion factors of state resources that cannot be directly given to children due to their limited capacities, vulnerability and powerlessness. Such a child-centered line of argument can even conclude that poverty-alleviating measures targeted at children benefit parents only as a side effect, since they are the necessary mediators. In some policy areas, such an argument is more likely to receive support than a parent-centered approach that claims parents have certain entitlements or rights regardless of the benefits for the children. The parent-centered argument, according to which parents fulfill a necessary responsibility towards children that demands certain sacrifices and in which they deserve to be supported, and the child-centered argument – according to which children are entitled to certain functionings and parents being the best mediators to help realize them, parents need to be supported because of that – come to very similar conclusions.

Parents have basically eight different types of responsibilities towards their children; they show a great overlap in regard to what we demand

of justice for children in terms of functionings they are entitled to. The first, as Alstott convincingly shows, is the responsibility to stay parents and not to leave, unless staying is either unbearable for them or would harm the child more. Parents should stay because children need them to. This implies that whenever parents make a decision that could affect their children, they are to take them into account and give them due weight. The second responsibility is to provide for them materially and give them decent living conditions. This encompasses a wide range of functionings: having adequate shelter, clothes, toys, time for play and the like. It is not possible to draft a final list detached from a particular context, but deprivation indicators that select necessary goods in a particular society can be used here. The third responsibility is to meet the health needs of their children and provide them with access to health care when they need it, seeing that they are healthy, develop healthy lifestyles and acquire knowledge about their bodies and minds. The fourth responsibility is to provide for them emotionally and let them experience deep attachments and security. Others have discussed whether a child has a right to be loved (Liao 2006); we see good grounds to deny that (Cowden 2012). An emotion can never be enforced by others – this is the only meaningful interpretation of having a certain right. But parents or other caregivers can be required to let the child experience attachments necessary for her healthy development. The fifth responsibility is to take care of children's well-becoming and see that they acquire functionings that will help them develop important capabilities in the future. This includes being responsible that children get some good options in their life so that they can participate in their own development. Joel Feinberg has prominently argued that children should have a right to an open future (Feinberg 1980). This claim, however, should not be interpreted in terms of maximization (Mills 2003): No one can ever provide a child with a fully open future, because growing up and developing functionings and capabilities always closes the door to other options. The life course is in many ways structured, not only by parents but by the whole environment and the state (Kohli 2007), and nothing more can be demanded from parents than to help their children develop into autonomous beings who have a broad range of options, selected on the available knowledge at that time. Parents are, thus, not to be blamed if they support a child in becoming a journalist and she later becomes unemployed because the news branch is hit hard by new technological developments; at the time, becoming a journalist might have seemed a very good option and life plan. The sixth responsibility of parents is to aim for inclusion in social activities and groups.

They should help their children make friends and be in the public. The seventh responsibility is to give their children room for making decisions themselves according to maturity and competencies. To guide their children, parents are allowed to prevent them from doing things, but children should be heard, be given voice and be able to decide (small) things for themselves from a certain stage on. Parents are responsible for letting children take on some responsibility for their actions. The eighth and last responsibility is to protect children from harm and dangers. This responsibility to protect, based in the vulnerability of children, is never fully comprehensive. Growing up and exploring the world always implies some dangers and the risk of accidents, injuries or other bad experiences. Parents cannot and are not responsible for fully protecting their children; this would be possible only by applying very restrictive measures that would rob the children of other valuable experiences. Parents should therefore protect their children, but exposure to potential risks is always necessary and justified within reasonable limits.

The parents' responsibilities that focus on their own child also imply that they have good reasons to favor the best result for their child, even at the expense of other children. This partiality is unavoidable in parenting not only because of the special relationship between children and parents but also because parents have only little influence on the choices of other parents; it is reasonable for them to expect that other parents will increase the functionings and capabilities of their children even if this has negative side effects on other children. The state, on the other hand, can set up and run education and health care systems which provide every child with a fair chance and produce healthier and better-educated children regardless of their socioeconomic background. As the state has to look after all its children and citizens, it also has the responsibility to interfere with parents' decisions and actions that either harm their own or other children. This leads us to propose a first systematization of responsibilities of the state towards children in poverty based on our examination of justice for children.

At first, the state has to come up with a list of important functionings and capabilities and discuss whether or not these are all of equal value. We argued in Chapter 1 that fertile functionings should be treated with priority because of their positive influence on other functionings and capabilities (e.g., for their instrumental value). We further argued that this means that corrosive disadvantages should be tackled with a higher priority because they undermine many important functionings and capabilities. We discussed lists and methods to select dimension; this is an ongoing effort, particularly in regard to formulation of

concrete policies. We are confident that the functionings and capabilities discussed – health, education and inclusion – will be on any such list and also will come out with a high priority.

Secondly, this means that child poverty is a corrosive disadvantage; to put it in positive terms, the functioning of being not poor is a fertile area and so should receive close attention. This implies two different tasks: the first is to alleviate poverty itself, to provide for the material well-being of child and family; as this can be done in many different ways, further scrutiny is needed to see which way shows the best results. The second task is to alleviate the corrosiveness of child poverty, hence its negative influence on other functionings and capabilities. Health, education and inclusion, for example, can be enhanced for children in poverty without alleviating their poverty directly. For example, if it is known that stress due to poverty during pregnancy affects the birth outcome, it could be a good measure to include a mandatory stress screening in prenatal care and to reach out to at-risk women and provide them the opportunity for counseling or other forms of stress management. In some countries such programs have already been set up and show positive results (Loureiro et al. 2009).

Thirdly, in regard to these functionings and capabilities, the state needs to further specify them and set adequate thresholds; it should aim to set them in a way that shows equal concern for each and every child, that minimizes inequalities in them based on such arbitrary and undeserved traits as being poor and that secures an equal opportunity for well-being in later life. It does that adequately only if it invests as many resources in children's well-being and well-becoming compatible with its other responsibilities of justice to all its citizens. Here, again, the idea of a priority view is important: the state should prioritize children in poverty and help them overcome the group-based injustices they suffer from. The limits to this priority view are drawn by the justified claims of other children and adults, which should not be put below the threshold, and also by the supply-side sufficiency view, which claims that the state should not overburden itself.

Fourth, the state is responsible for supporting parents or other caregivers in their responsibilities, which we laid out earlier. It has to give them the means to be good parents to the extent that is possible, but it is also responsible for dimensions of justice that cannot be covered by the parents, such as equality of opportunity for all children. Parents can support their children in being educated and can also make some crucial choices regarding their education, but whether the education system itself produces equal outcomes is far beyond their control. If

parents or other caregivers cannot fulfill their responsibilities, the state is obliged to step in. The particular vulnerability of children and their limited capacity to take care of themselves adequately imply necessarily that the state – or if the state fails then a different agent of justice – has to substitute and provide for these children, whether it does so by seeking new guardians for them or by putting them in protective care.

We have derived responsibilities of the state towards children from the perspective of what is owed to these children in order to provide them with well-being and well-becoming. Because poor children most often live in poor families, the costs attached to these state responsibilities cannot be shouldered by them. We have said much about the family and the state, which could lead one to the conclusion that justice for poor children is an issue concerned just with these two agents. This is, however, certainly not what we argue. The responsibilities of family and state derive from their relation to the child, from their power and interest in overcoming child poverty to support these children. Other agents have other reasons to be responsible; the state, as one important primary agent, can influence them much more than the family, which is faced with such problems as how the economy works, how gender roles are attributed and how to deal with the stigma of being poor.

### 3.4 Conclusions

In this chapter we have explored the issue of responsibilities towards children in poverty, focusing on the relevant agents of justice who can be held responsible for doing something about it. Our model is still vague, but this vagueness reflects both the complexity of the issue and the limits of philosophical inquiry. Based on the criteria presented, to attribute concrete responsibilities to the groups of agents we named would require a much deeper empirical knowledge. To some extent it would not be possible to disentangle relations and interferences. We argued that families in poverty are limited in their power and that parenting behavior is shaped and influenced by how these parents grew up and lived in poverty. It is not possible to disaggregate exactly how much of their harmful behavior can be attributed to circumstances for which they are not responsible themselves and how much responsibility they have to shoulder. Being poor comes with a restriction of freedom, one that is, however, not total. It would be unjust to neglect poor parents completely as agents of justice; this would either degrade them to children, which they are not, or to persons with severe mental disabilities who are not able to make choice for themselves. Likewise, it

is not possible to calculate the responsibility of any given company, one that just does what nearly all others do: try to take advantage of their workers, make a profit, avoid taxes and so on. But even without exact calculations, we believe that our extension of Young's model of responsibilities to the issue of child poverty is a step in the right direction. The identification of different reasons for attributing responsibilities and agents of justice can offer initial guidance to coordinated actions necessary to achieve real improvements.



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