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Inequality, poverty and the grounds of our normative concerns

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Abstract

Policy debates surrounding poverty and inequality try to find practical solutions to what we should do to tackle these phenomena. But what are the grounds for being concerned about poverty or about inequality? To what extent do these overlap? These questions invite us to explore the conceptual links between the two notions from the standpoint of their normative justifications. This paper clarifies the normative debate surrounding poverty and inequality, highlighting both moral and non-moral reasons that ground our concerns. The result is a clear map of the key philosophical positions, connected to current empirical debates in social policy. What emerges from this analysis is the possibility of endorsing a broader social justice justification for which poverty and inequality do not generate competing concerns, but see, instead, our normative reasons to care about both overlap.

Key words: poverty; inequality; social justice; political philosophy

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Summary

Why should we care about poverty and inequality?

Policy debates surrounding poverty and inequality try to find practical solutions to what we should do to tackle these phenomena. But why should we care about poverty? Why should we care about inequality? Do our reasons for caring about one contrast with our reasons for caring about the other? Identifying these different reasons can lead us to claim that we should prioritise one issue over the other and can justify a different policy focus. This research outlines different philosophical positions and theories that underlie our concerns about poverty and inequality and explores the extent to which these are compatible and can, in fact, overlap.

Giving priority to inequality

A rich tradition in philosophy focuses on inequality: the basic idea this tradition supports is that inequality constitutes injustice. A 'just' society not only affirms and secures basic rights and liberties for all citizen; but it also requires a) equality of opportunity and b) that social and economic inequalities should always benefit the worst-off (Rawls,1971) for example by increasing the overall size of the 'cake' available to be divided. In practice, tackling poverty may be necessary to move towards a just society but poverty is thought to "follow from political injustice… once the gravest forms of political injustice are eliminated by following just (or at least decent) social policies and establishing just (or at least decent) basic institutions, these great evils will eventually disappear" (Rawls, 1999, 6–7).

Equality of what? This question generated a longrunning debate in philosophy (Cohen, 1989; Sen 1980) arguing about whether social justice obliges us to go beyond focusing on resources, and wealth and income (Anderson 1999, Wolff, 2015; Fraser 1998; 2007). The distribution of these is seen as connected to asymmetrical relationships of political power, of status, and also of exclusion and discrimination. Inequalities of wealth and income are important determinants of these social inequalities, but overcoming distributional inequalities is not sufficient to achieve social equality, because, for example, certain forms of exclusion can be rooted in

reasons other than the possession of material resources (e.g. gender, race or disability).

Giving priority to poverty

Sufficiency views

So called "sufficiency" views stress that "what is important from the point of view of morality *is not* that everyone should have *the same* but that each should have *enough*" (Frankfurt, 1987, 21-22). It is whether people have good lives, not how their lives compare to others, that we should care about. This position can support redistribution policies, but only because they might be instrumentally necessary to reach sufficiency. Given the choice between a) achieving sufficiency through redistribution of income and wealth inequalities and b) reaching identical gains for the worst-off with equal or greater gains for the better-off, there is no reason to favour the former solution over the latter. Sufficiency positions thus justify being concerned about poverty, but distinguish this sharply from being concerned about inequality.

Humanitarian approaches

A perspective that is uniquely related to poverty stresses humanitarian reasons to help the poor, putting 'humanity before justice' (Campbell, 2007; Singer 1972). According to these views, our moral reason to care about poverty springs from the sheer horrible suffering that is associated with it. This approach has some important upshots:

1) humanitarian aid is not sensitive to how a certain state of affairs came to be.

2) this position can lead to rather radical conclusions because it holds that our duty to aid is demanded on all of us, as individuals, in accordance to our capacity and irrespective to proximity. This calls into question a focus on domestic poverty over global poverty (Singer, 1972, 232).

3) while it might be that extreme experiences in the context of global and absolute poverty elicit this "elemental response of aiding", these intuitions are not always clear in relation to domestic and relative poverty.

Human rights approaches

Freedom from poverty can also be considered as a fundamental human right. Rights-based views generally consider poverty as a harm that is possible to foresee and avoid and that infringes on human rights (rights humans have simply in virtue of being human). These approaches offer strong justifications for policies intended to eliminate poverty. At the same time, especially since they focus on 'subsistence rights' and on extreme and absolute poverty, it might seem that such views do not in turn justify concerns with relative poverty or inequality (Gewirth, 1996, 72-73, 110).

Some authors also stress that the causes of poverty are of moral significance (Thomas Pogge, 2002; 2007): we care about the reasons *why* there is persistent poverty in the face of material abundance. According to Pogge, "severe poverty today, while no less horrific than that experienced by the early American settlers, is fundamentally different in context and causation. Its persistence is not forced on us by natural contingencies of soil, seeds, or climate. Rather, its persistence is driven by the ways that economic interactions are structured" (2007, 3). Instead of solely caring about the consequences, such as the suffering experienced by the poor, this view focuses on the relations that brought these consequences about.

How reasons for caring about poverty and inequality overlap

Human Dignity

The approaches discussed in the last section can support a view for which tackling poverty, especially extreme poverty, has priority over tackling distribution gaps. At the same time though, recognizing the priority of poverty "need not commit us to the very different assertion that this is *all* that justice requires" (De Vita, 2007, 108; Beitz, 2001). Both poverty and inequality can be seen as violations of human dignity. As such, the two are inextricably linked: they both introduce a distortion in economic, social and political relationships (Fleurbaey, 2007). We can thus have an overlapping concern with poverty and inequality that originates from a common commitment to respecting human dignity.

Deprivation and capabilities

A broader concern with deprivation can lead us to care about both poverty and inequality: in fact, the social exclusion, material

deprivation and disadvantage that result from these are mutually reinforcing. Capability approaches (Sen, 1995; Nussbaum, 2006) can be understood as supporting this kind of view: poverty and inequality are both barriers to people's capabilities to function in ways that elemental to human life within society. They are barriers to what people can be and do.

Instrumental reasons

We can also have instrumental reasons to care about poverty and inequality: we care because they are obstacles to other social, economic and political goals. In this sense, our interest in tackling them follows from the fact that poverty and inequality are associated with certain consequences. For example, some current research suggests that inequality has negative effects on social cohesion (Bridstall, 2007), political stability (Stewart, 2013; Salomon, 2011) and democratic participation (Solt 2008, 2010). We can also care about inequality because it is economically inefficient (Stewart, 2013; Solomon, 2011; Wade 2005), or because it slows down growth and development (World Bank 2006, Benabou, 1996; Berg and Ostry, 2011; Stiglitz, 2012, 2015) or because it has a negative effect on social mobility (Corak, 2013). This evidence needs to be balanced against classic claims that inequality has a positive effect on growth (Lazear and Rosen, 1981; Kaldor 1957) as well cases where, for instance, inequality and poverty trends appear to move in different directions (Toth, 2014; Forster and Vleminckx, 2004).

Generally, in order to claim instrumental reasons to avoid generating or exacerbating inequalities, we need empirical evidence that supports the links that connect inequality to these different social and political phenomena. Notably, even someone who gives priority to poverty can hold that there are instrumental reasons to care about inequality, recognising the mechanisms through which inequality contributes to poverty.

Does responsibility matter in relation to poverty and inequality?

Who is responsible for poverty and inequality? Questions of responsibility seem to arise in relation to both poverty and inequality: these phenomena, are seen to have some relation to people's behaviour and choices, but also to social institutions.

Attributing responsibility to the poor or to the worst off

We can have humanitarian concerns or reasons based on human rights to care about poverty. From these standpoints, issues of responsibility are less relevant. But in relation to both poverty and inequality, many ethical theories think that there is a significant moral difference between those who are worst off through no fault of their own and those who are responsible for their condition (Dworkin, 1981; Arneson, 1989, Cohen, 1989).

Attributing collective responsibility for the causes of poverty and inequality

Responsibility is discussed not just in relation to individuals but also in terms of our collective responsibility for structures and institutions (Cruft et al. 2015; Tasioulas, 2015). We can see how structural responsibility is particularly central for rights-based views: the legitimacy of institutions is dependent on their fairness and on their ability to respect moral rights.

Both at the individual and structural level, we find parallel problems in establishing how certain states of affairs came to be and how a meaningful idea of responsibility should be defined (Wolff *et al*, 2015; Anderson, 1999; Fleurbaey, 2007; Christman, 1998; Young, 2003). While the discourse of responsibility and desert is prominent in the way our society approaches poverty and inequality, these difficulties invite us to consider the limits of our intuitions, and require us to focus on the causes and processes underlying both poverty and inequality.

Conclusions

Different philosophical theories provide different reasons why we should care about poverty and inequality and for some authors these appear to be in conflict, inviting us to prioritise one issue over the other. These different theories also lead us to focus on different aspects of inequality (e.g. one can focus solely on differences of wealth and income or on the inequalities that characterise social relationships) and on different aspects of poverty (one can focus on global poverty over domestic poverty; or focus on absolute rather than relative poverty; or care about how the poor came to be in this position or not).

Nevertheless, it is possible to hold that our concerns with poverty and inequality are not mutually exclusive: we can hold that both poverty and inequality are relevant for human deprivation, or that they are both violating human dignity, or that they stand in mutually reinforcing relationships and hinder other social goals.

A 'pluralist view' incorporates different justifications: one can prioritise poverty (seeing it as the most important determinant of deprivation, or acknowledging human rights and humanitarian concerns) while also allowing that inequality matters, both in itself and instrumentally. In this context, the growing empirical literature being explored in the wider programme of research of which this paper is a part that connects poverty and inequality and points at the mechanisms through which poverty is entrenched by greater inequality is highly relevant.

1. Introduction

What are the grounds for being concerned about poverty or about inequality? To what extent do these overlap? These questions invite us to explore the conceptual links between the two notions from the standpoint of their normative justifications. In what follows I will discuss the various philosophical perspectives on both moral and non-moral reasons that ground our concern about these phenomena. In section 1 I will firstly explore how inequality has occupied the centre stage for theories of social justice and then point at important differences in how the concept has been articulated. Through a discussion of the concept of 'sufficiency' in section 2, I will move on to consider poverty as the basic concept, with inequality significant only in so far as it contributes to meeting a certain minimum threshold. Social justice, humanitarian and human rights justifications in relation to poverty are discussed. Lastly, section 3 briefly focuses on how questions concerning responsibility have been, in different respects, shaping the debate around both inequality and poverty.

2. Inequality

Our special normative concern with distributional inequality derives from the idea that inequality constitutes injustice. In this sense, Rawls's work on social justice remains the obvious reference point. Rawls (1971) advances a political conception of justice that pertains to the 'basic structure of society' and offers the conditions of fairness for political institutions through two principles (ibid. 42-43). These principles, he argues, are the terms of cooperation free and equal citizens would agree to under fair conditions and they are expressive of citizens' respect for one another as moral persons. According to Rawls the consensus reached over the principles of justice does not entail a comprehensive theory of the 'good'. It is because of this that, rather than referring to particular ends, Rawls's theory is explicitly focused on 'social primary goods', the 'all-purpose means' which are valuable whatever one's individual conception of the good is. These primary goods include liberty, opportunity, the powers and prerogatives of office, the social bases of self-respect, income and wealth. The first principle affirms for all citizens familiar basic rights

and liberties; while the second constrains social and economic inequalities by requiring fair equality of opportunity and affirming the 'difference principle', which regulates the distribution of wealth and income. According to this principle, a just society is one where inequalities of wealth and income work to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society.

As a so called 'ideal theory', Rawls's view attempts to set out the principles of justice that abstract from particular conditions but also provide the model to which society should aspire. At the same time, the ideal nature of the theory allows us to understand why poverty does not figure prominently in this discussion. According to Rawls poverty is one of the "great evils of human history", but it is thought to fundamentally "follow from political injustice… once the gravest forms of political injustice are eliminated by following just (or at least decent) social policies and establishing just (or at least decent) basic institutions, these great evils will eventually disappear" (Rawls, 1999, 6–7). Instead, in this ideal approach, inequality is the primary concern, because it defines the grounds of justice.

Much of the debate that *The Theory of Justice* originated preserves this focus on inequality and has developed both in the direction of spelling out the "currency" of justice (Cohen, 1989), the things which people should have equal amounts of in an equal society; but also in the direction of articulating the principles defining which inequalities amount to injustice (Dworkin, 1981a; 1981b; Frankfurt, 1987, Parfit, 1998). Answers to the question "equality of what?" present us with a rich debate juxtaposing thinner or thicker conceptions of equality. On the one hand, libertarian perspectives dismiss the concern with distributive patterns and consider fair treatment and equality of process as the solely relevant definitions of justice: respecting liberty and fundamental, non-contractual, entitlements to ownership that trump concerns of social economic distribution. At the other end of the spectrum, we find views that oppose the Rawlsian emphasis on resourcism, which focuses predominantly on distributional inequalities (Sen 1980, Robeyns and Brighouse, 2010). Developing these insights, conceptions of social or democratic equality (Anderson 1999, Wolff, 2015) have stressed that we should be concerned with patterns of socialization, defining social relations, rather than merely patterns of distribution. According to these views, inequality is

conceived as a fundamentally relational notion. They do not dismiss the importance of inequalities of wealth and income and hold that certain patterns of distributions are inextricably connected to relationships that fail to amount to those of a 'society of equals'. This means that, on the one hand, distributional features of society are important determinants of social inequalities, which consist of asymmetrical relationships of political power, or status, but also of exclusion and discrimination. On the other hand, overcoming distributional inequalities is not sufficient to achieve social equality, because, for example, certain forms of exclusion can be rooted in reasons other than the possession of material resources (such as gender, race or disability). In this sense, we can see a more explicit attention to forms of horizontal inequality[1]. This also means that, in these relational models of equality, the relevance of distributional inequalities is relative to the extent to which they can result in social inequalities, for example by being converted in social status and political power. In this direction, Nancy Fraser (1998; 2007) has proposed a broad conception of social justice as "parity of participation": in order for this to be achieved, economic redistribution, social recognition and political representation should not be considered antithetical and mutually exclusive, but seen as rather defining different, entwined and reciprocally reinforcing dimensions of justice.

Views that see inequality as central to social justice need to be distinguished from instrumental views, according to which our concern with inequality is derivative of other social, economic and

[1] There seems to be little attention in the philosophical literature about the question 'equality between whom?', which led, in the social policy literature, to distinguishing horizontal and vertical inequality. Sometimes these notions seem to be simply articulated in different terms. We find, for example, Rawls's difference principle as fundamentally overlapping with concerns with vertical inequality. As it is hinted here, a lot of the criticisms developed by authors holding a relational view of equality (and also thanks to the crucial contribution of capability approaches) points at the limits of resourcism emphasizing the cogency of concerns with horizontal inequalities. It is important to stress that underlying commitments of the philosophical literature to either horizontal or vertical inequality can be extrapolated, but they are, for the most part, not directly addressed. Disentangling the general unclarity surrounding these notions in the philosophical literature would be of particular interest in order to engage and contribute to the ongoing debate in social policy. This is, however, beyond the scope of this contribution.

political goals. From this perspective our interest in inequality follows from the empirical fact that inequality is associated with certain consequences. It can, for example, hinder social cohesion (Bridstall, 2007), political stability (Stewart, 2013; Salomon, 2011) and democratic participation (Solt 2008, 2010). Moreover it can have a negative effect on economic efficiency, by reducing human capital or the size of domestic markets (Stewart, 2013; Solomon, 2011; Wade 2005); on development (World Bank 2006); on social mobility (Corak, 2013); and on growth (IMF, 2014; Benabou, 1996; Berg and Ostry, 2011). Stiglitz's work (2012, 2015) in this area has been particularly resonant: it points at how, reversing longstanding assumptions, inequality can be shown to lead to weaker economic performance, negatively affecting medium-term growth and tending to shorten growth spells (Cingano, 2014). In all these cases, there are prudential reasons to avoid generating or exacerbating inequalities because these are considered obstacles to the achievement of further goals. In this sense, empirical evidence that disproves such links, or suggests a different relation between inequality and these primary goals, can justify abandoning our concern with inequality in a way that a view conceiving inequality as central to social justice does not. This is not to say that empirical evidence has no place in views that conceive inequalities as basically unjust: empirical evidence shows particular states of affairs to be unjust. In these cases, evidence can thus support the case for taking particular actions, while also explaining the specific mechanisms generating inequalities. Empirical evidence does not, however, ground our normative concern with inequality.

Here it is worth noting that utilitarianism also presents reasons for caring about inequalities that are instrumental, contingent and incidental. In fact, while utilitarianism holds an egalitarian principle in treating the interests of all equally, it lacks a concept of justice or fairness that isn't derivative of its own guiding principle of maximizing utility. This means that, for utilitarians, the extent of inequality should depend on which distribution maximizes utility. This position remains contingent on the empirical connections between inequality and utility maximization. While this can lead to highly egalitarian conclusions, for example on the basis of arguments for equality based on diminishing marginal utility (Pigou 1920), it can also justify material inequality in order to avoid negative incentives to work or promote

positive incentives rewarding productivity. Because utilitarianism defines what is right only as a function of the good, understood as utility maximization, it allows to justify the inequalities instrumental to this good.[2]

Finally, within the debate surrounding inequality and social justice we find views that deny that the demands of justice involve comparative principles, let alone equality principles. So, Harry Frankfurt (1987) has stressed that "what is important from the point of view of morality *is not* that everyone should have *the same* but that each should have *enough*. If everyone had enough it would be of no moral consequence whether some had more than others" (21-2). Frankfurt refutes the argument for equality based on diminishing marginal utility and discusses how the concept of "equal share" is simpler and more accessible than the concept of "having enough" and has thus been - mistakenly, in his view - the focus of attention. Frankfurt sees comparative perspectives implicit in our concern with inequality as fundamentally mistaken and potentially alienating: the mistake "lies in supposing that it is morally important whether one person has less than another regardless of how much either of them has" (34). Instead, a sufficiency view gives normative priority to reaching the central standards of a dignified life: it is whether people have good lives, not how their lives compare to others, that we should care about. Setting aside for the moment what "having enough" entails, we can see that it is possible for a sufficiency view such as Frankfurt's to be consistent with Rawls's difference principle, but this is only incidentally and contingently so. Instrumentally, redistribution and policies tackling vertical inequalities might be necessary to reach sufficiency; however, given the choice between achieving the goal of sufficiency through redistribution that diminishes wealth inequalities and reaching identical gains for the worse-off with equal or greater gains for the better-off, there is no reason to favour the former over the latter. Frankfurt's sufficiency position thus justifies being concerned about poverty, but distinguishes it sharply from being concerned about inequality. While it must be noted that Frankfurt's

[2] I cannot do justice here to the array of utilitarian positions that have elaborated on these themes. Given the centrality of the utilitarian influence in economic debates I pointed at the inherent difficulties in resolving tensions between utility and justice. For further discussion of possible utilitarian solutions and rule utilitarianism see Hooker (2014).

target here is very narrow (he is focusing on discrepancies of income and wealth and is attacking strict egalitarianism) it nevertheless supports views that dismiss comparative perspectives that are at the core of inequality concerns, and, in this sense, also at the core of the notion of relative poverty.

From a sufficiency perspective, we might be interested in reducing inequalities for instrumental reasons. This argument would have the following structure: we have a normative claim, concerning the value of sufficiency and establishing the primary concern with poverty; and an empirical fact, connecting poverty and inequality. In light of this our concern with inequality has a derivative moral significance and empirical evidence is of central importance in order to support this relationship.

3. Poverty

As we saw, ascribing normative significance to sufficiency rather than inequality gives us reasons to prioritize concerns about poverty. In this view, inequality does not have an independent moral significance, but it can be of instrumental importance as a cause of insufficiency. At the same time sufficiency views need not be as narrow as Frankfurt's. In fact, answers to the question 'enough of what?' can be articulated in various forms: for example, in terms of resources, welfare or capabilities.

Capability approaches (Sen 1980, 1999; Nussbaum, 1988, 2000) have been particularly prominent in the discourse surrounding the analysis of poverty (Hick, 2012) and allow us to develop an understanding of poverty that is broader than material resources. Capability approaches are concerned with what is necessary for human functioning: what matters is not what you possess, or how happy or satisfied you are, but what you are able to 'do or be'. So, while a functioning is what a person can 'do or be' (such as achieving nourishment, health, a decent life span, self-respect and so on); a capability is the freedom to achieve a functioning, which does not pertain just to fixed personal traits and divisible resources, but to one's "mutable traits, social relations and norms, and the structure of opportunities, public goods, and public spaces" (Anderson 1999). From this perspective, poverty is viewed as the deprivation of certain

basic capabilities, and these can vary, as Sen has argued, 'from such elementary physical ones as being well nourished, being adequately clothed and sheltered, avoiding preventable morbidity, and so forth, to more complex social achievements such as taking part in the life of the community, being able to appear in public without shame, and so on' (Sen, 1995, 15). As a result, capability approaches acknowledge the multidimensional nature of poverty, with a broader scope than focusing solely on 'material' poverty. While capability approaches are compatible with different principles of distribution (from strict egalitarianism to the Rawlsian difference principle), Nussbaum has developed a list of core capabilities which offers universal standards to set a social minimum that is 'worthy of the dignity of the human being' (Nussbaum, 2000, 5). Nussbaum thus endorses a 'sufficiency view' of capabilities according to which the goal of social policy is to bring each person to a threshold level of sufficiency in each capability (Nussbaum, 2006). This minimum, defined in terms of capabilities, is a way of measuring and defining poverty but it is also a condition for a just society that all governments must respect and all societies must meet.

While we find a growing adoption of multi-dimensional approaches to the measurement of poverty - such as the Global Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (Alkire et al., 2015) - it remains an open question whether and how it is possible to operationalize the capability approach for the measurement and assessment of poverty.[3] There remain fundamental difficulties in defining what counts as the appropriate threshold and how this is to be set in a meaningful manner.

Nevertheless, even if we maintain a definition of poverty that is closer to the ordinary understanding, as material deprivation, we can see that the reason that we should be especially concerned with poverty derives from its being the most important cause of deprivation understood more broadly. On the one hand, debates originated from

[3] As a broader attempt in this direction, it is important to mention the Equality Measurement Framework (EMF), which represents a multi-dimensional approach to monitor inequalities in the position of individuals and groups in terms of their substantive freedoms. EMF encompasses aspects of equal treatment, equality of opportunity and equality of outcome and draws on the capability approach as one of its key inputs (see Burchardt and Vizard, 2011).

capability approaches allow us to consider the limits of the ordinary focus on the lack of material resources for explaining all deprivation: because of this we cannot assume that relieving poverty will be enough to eliminate deprivation. However, at the same time, these approaches point at a broader social justice justification for our concern with poverty.

There is an interesting parallel to draw here with the social equality considerations we explored above: there we saw that the ability to participate in the life of society does not have disparities and lack of resources as only constraints. Here we find a normative inseparability of the concepts of poverty and deprivation understood more broadly, in the same way in which we saw distributional inequalities being constitutive, but not exhaustive, of the concept of social inequality. In fact, we can hold that these concerns with poverty and social inequality are not mutually exclusive, but instead invite us to understand their relationships within an overarching concern with deprivation: in this perspective, poverty, as lack of material resources, and inequalities, material as well as relational, all raise normative concerns because they are barriers to people's capabilities to function in ways that are elemental to human life.

In this perspective, we can see that a principle of sufficiency does not necessarily exclude an interest in relative poverty.[4] This follows from recognizing that human beings have vital needs for health but also social needs to be included in their social groups. What is enough to meet these social needs, for example to function as a participant in a system of mutual cooperation, and stand as equal in society, varies with cultural norms, individual circumstances and natural environment. Particular community and status needs bring the concern with relative poverty to the forefront, because not only the latter can lead to social exclusion, but can in turn be one of its by-products. This is the case for example because the stigma that characterizes certain groups standing in relative poverty can

[4] From a capability perspective, poverty is viewed as the deprivation of certain basic capabilities and Sen, for example, holds that prevailing standards will influence the selection of relevant capabilities (e.g. Sen, 1984: 84-85).

constitute a barrier to the development of redistribution policies.[5] A broader approach to deprivation invites us to investigate these seemingly reinforcing mechanisms.

The views explored so far discussed how poverty is a fundamental social justice concern. There is, however, another powerful perspective that puts 'humanity before justice' (Campbell, 2007), by stressing humanitarian reasons to care about poverty. According to these views our core moral reason to care about poverty springs from the sheer horrible suffering that is associated with it. According to Campbell (2007) this concern is compatible but distinct from instrumental justifications (that see, for example, subsistence as a precondition for other human activities, which in turn one might value for moral or non-moral reasons); but also from justifications based on the consequences of poverty, which are associated with the broader concerns with social exclusion discussed above. Ultimately, in this humanitarian perspective, poverty is an evil experienced by the poor and the core moral reason to care about it is the suffering "that lack of the means of subsistence causes: hunger, pain, misery, sickness, and death" (63). Humanitarian concern gives rise to a positive duty to help the poor. Along these lines, Singer (1972) has famously developed what is probably the most influential version of this humanitarian view in relation to global poverty.

Singer's position points first at the basic normative claim that "suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad" (Singer, 1972, 231). Next, Singer introduces the principle according to which "if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it" (ibid.). Because alleviating poverty is in our power, we have the moral obligation to do so. This kind of view has some important consequences for our approach to poverty: on the one hand, in promoting desirable consequences for the poor, humanitarian aid is not sensitive to how a certain state of affairs came to be. Our moral obligation holds, irrespective of who is suffering or why that suffering came about. In light of this, Singer's position seeks to alleviate poverty regardless of

[5] For an analysis of the problems attached to the idea of relative poverty, especially in relation to positional goods and identification of the relevant reference groups see Wolff (2015) and Wolff *et al.* 2015.

its being the result of unjust institutions or natural disasters. Alleged moral failures of those in need also do not allow exculpatory rationales for those who can offer aid. On this view, poverty is "the basis of a universal, unqualified claim based on the moral relationships between those who suffer and those who can do something about it" (Campbell, 2007, 66). This position can lead to rather radical conclusions because it conceives of our duty to aid as demanded on all of us, as individuals, in accordance to our capacity and irrespective to proximity (Singer, 1972, 232).

An in-depth discussion of humanitarian view and its critics cannot be fully explored here. However, it is worth pointing out that, aside from practical concerns with Singer's solution (Wenar, 2011), there are difficulties in defining the limits of beneficence as an obligation. It is because our duty of beneficence does not specify exactly how much assistance we must provide to others that Kant defined it an imperfect duty (G 4:421).[6] This thought can be drawn on from a libertarian perspective to claim that positive moral duties of charity, humanity and aid, while morally permissible, and even commendable, only call for a supererogatory, non-enforceable obligation. Duties of assistance would lack stringency and would leave to donors' discretion how much to give, and to whom. While this position has room for compensation, for those cases in which poverty is the result of theft or violent aggression, and hence would accept the right of certain poor groups to receive assistance, it does not entail any universal right to subsistence. From this perspective it is good to help, but the poor have no right to be helped. It is in light of this that we find a common criticism to the humanitarian view claiming that it is too weak, pertaining to a moral ideal (Gert, 2005), as "charity", rather than a moral obligation.

Furthermore, we find authors advocating for a humanitarian concern with poverty claiming that "the principle of benevolence or 'humanity' (as in 'humanitarian') is based on the propriety of the elemental response of aiding another human being arising from seeing, imagining, or knowing of the suffering" (Campbell, 2007, 65). Appealing to benevolent sentiments is not unproblematic: on the one hand, there has been a long-standing discussion about the extent to

[6] For an analysis of how the duty to relieve extreme poverty is an imperfect duty of charity, rather than a perfect duty of justice see O'Neill (1989, 225).

which our feelings can ground normativity and provide the basis justifying our concern (Korsgaard, 1996). According to this Kantian objection, "[m]oral feeling succeeds the moral concept, but does not produce it" (Kant, NF 19:150, 6757). Moreover, this might suggest an emphasis on compassion that brings to the forefront questions regarding the limits of empathy: on the one hand, the variance of feelings of empathy from person to person leaves undefined the suffering we are morally obliged to alleviate. On the other hand, while it might be that the extreme experiences discussed by these authors in the context of global poverty elicit this "elemental response of aiding", these intuitions are not always clear. For example, in some cases, but not in others, painful experiences of the poor (e.g. shame, stress, fear of the future, absence of control over one's destiny as well as degrading working conditions etc.)[7] seem to be balanced against judgements about their responsibility. Appeals to humanitarian concerns are thus not as simple as it would appear and nuances underlying them deserve further attention.

At the same time, some authors have emphasized that, unlike in the scenarios envisaged by Singer, our moral intuitions deciding what we should do regarding global poverty do concern the reasons *why* there is persistent poverty in the face of material abundance (Gomberg, 2002). This kind of intuition has been prominently developed by Thomas Pogge (2002, 2007), according to whom people have the human right of being free from severe poverty and the persistence of poverty today. He sees causality as having a particular moral significance, making poverty a violation of human rights. According to Pogge, "severe poverty today, while no less horrific than that experienced by the early American settlers, is fundamentally different in context and causation. Its persistence is not forced on us by natural contingencies of soil, seeds, or climate. Rather, its persistence is driven by the ways that economic interactions are structured" (Pogge, 2007, 3). Instead of solely focusing on the consequences, such as the suffering experienced by the poor, this view turns to the nature of the relations that brought these consequences about. Poverty is not simply a fact in the world, but instead, it is a foreseeable and avoidable harm, which sees institutions violating human rights through their policies, even if creating poverty was not the explicit

[7] There is a vast literature on this topic. See Fleurbaey, 2007; Creegan et al., 2009; Taylor-Gooby, 2013; Walker 2014.

aim of policy. Charity, towards which Pogge is not as critical as others (Gomberg, 2002) does not necessarily require the deeper structural and institutional changes that are needed to avoid infringing the rights of the poor. This makes Pogge's view radically different from ones focused on humanitarian aid in two respects. On the one hand, because of the complexity of interrelations among individuals, it is hard to hold individual agents morally accountable; we do, however, all share a collective moral responsibility for our institutions and the structure of society. On the other hand, setting aside the question concerning our positive duty to help the poor, he stresses a strong negative duty not to harm them by imposing a political, economic and social order that systematically sustains poverty.

One of the strengths of Pogge's position is that it supports the urgency of acting against poverty even for those who only recognize the stringency of negative duties. There is, however, also substantial support to the idea that a human right to basic necessities imposes both negative and positive duties (Sen, 1982; Cruft, 2005; Ashford 2007, Shue, 1996). Critics of Pogge's approach point out that it is limited to the kind of impoverishment that other agents are causally and morally responsible for, while it also hinges on establishing complex causality in regards to poverty which is, in the literature, both elusive and controversial (Risse 2005; Cohen, 2010; Vizard, 2006). In this sense, the humanitarian approach provides a rationale for our normative concern with poverty that is uncomplicated and does not need to be grounded on empirical assumptions regarding its causes. Moreover, it is important to stress that humanitarian positions do not exclude ideas of violation, justice and rights. For example, Campbell sees failures to implement humanitarian obligations as gross injustice, but he holds that issues concerning who causes poverty and how it comes about are not decisive in deeming it a violation of a human right.

The idea that poverty constitutes a violation of the human rights of the poor has gained considerable prominence in the context of philosophical discussion of global poverty. Rights-based justifications of our fundamental concern with poverty see it as violating human rights in a moral sense. Moral obligations are the grounds for legal rights as well as the grounds for the legitimacy of institutions. Where poverty is considered as a violation of human rights (Pogge 2007,

Gewirth,1983, 2007, Ashford 2007; Cruft, Liao and Renzo, 2015) freedom from poverty is taken to be a right humans have simply in virtue of being human, hence constitutive to realizing valued features of human life. This can be understood in three ways: 1) as respecting human dignity (Griffin, 2008), especially in connection with agency and autonomy; 2) as promoting fundamental human interests (Tasioulas, 2007; 2015, Ashford 2007) and hence a good life; 3) as protecting the opportunity to meet human needs (Miller 2012), the conditions for a minimally decent life (these are needs all human beings have *qua* human beings and are not dependent on any specific goal).

Rights-based approaches offer strong justifications for policies earmarked to eliminate poverty. At the same time, especially since they focus on subsistence rights and have been developed in relation to extreme poverty, understood predominantly in absolute terms, it might seem that such views do not in turn justify concerns with inequality (Gewirth, 1996, 72-73, 110). One might reach the same conclusions in regards to humanitarian views. This, however, need not be the case. One can hold that poverty is our primary normative concern, in virtue of being connected to basic human rights as a right to subsistence, or in virtue of humanitarian reasons. In both of these approaches, making it possible for the poor to escape poverty, especially extreme poverty, has priority over tackling distribution gaps. At the same time though, recognizing the priority of poverty "need not commit us to the very different assertion that this is *all* that justice requires" (De Vita, 2007, 108).[8] Fleurbaey, for example, sees poverty and inequality inextricably connected to forms of oppression that represent, though in different degrees, a violation of human integrity and dignity. Fleurbaey (2007) sees poverty as a form of oppression, which is not fortuitous but rather serves the interests of the most advantaged who exploit the vulnerability of the poor. Where the wrong of poverty is associated to the oppressive nature of the relationship between rich and poor we find our normative concerns with poverty and inequality to be inextricably linked. In fact, in this view, it is inequality of wealth that introduces a distortion in economic, social and political relationships. Our normative concerns about inequality and poverty originate and are justified by the core

[8] For how these arguments apply both at the domestic and international level see Beitz 2001, De Vita 2007.

commitment to respecting human integrity and dignity, which makes them both instances of violations of justice.

More generally, there are both intrinsic and instrumental reasons why, even in a rights-based view primarily concerned with poverty, inequality of resources above the minimal threshold does matter, morally speaking, from the standpoint of justice. Inequality of wealth and income matters because, as we saw already in the previous section, they are associated with inequalities of social status that produce humiliation and undermine self-respect; but also because they are converted in imbalances of political power that undermine the political liberties of the least privileged (De Vita, 2007, 109).

Finally, there are instrumental reasons for caring about inequalities that point at how the persistence of poverty is self-reinforcing and entrenched in a context of great inequality (Pogge, 2007, 4). Empirical evidence is essential to support or disprove these instrumental justifications. Importantly, this discussion shows that these different justifications are not mutually exclusive and allow for a pluralist approach. For example, while our ultimate grounds to attribute particular urgency to poverty over inequality might rely on a humanitarian approach, we can still hold practical reasons to be concerned with social justice and with inequality, both in order to define the mechanisms underlying poverty but also to formulate solutions.

4. Responsibility

The question of responsibility has been lurking at the background of our discussion but deserves to be directly addressed. Issues of responsibility are central to much of the public debate surrounding measures and policies targeted to inequality and poverty. I will thus provide a brief discussion of how the philosophical debates about responsibility have been articulated in relation to inequality (3.1) and poverty (3.2). More generally, though, we can see how the issue of responsibility arises from the fact that inequality and poverty are distinctively human and social phenomena. As such, they bring to the

forefront questions regarding agency in a way that natural phenomena do not.[9]

4.1. Responsibility and inequality

This is particularly the case when it comes to a discussion of inequality: in fact, fairness and justice are notions that are connected to human actions and institutions. In the first section we saw Rawls presenting the difference principle, concerning distributional inequality, as a principle of justice, which he conceived as "the first virtue of social institutions" (1971, 3). Instead, luck egalitarianism focuses on individuals' personal responsibility. Dworkin has famously incorporated a notion of responsibility within a theory of equality. He asks how people came to be in the certain position they are, distinguishing between bad 'brute luck' (such as having few talents or a disability) and 'option luck', which includes the results of freely made choices. It is possible to make individuals responsible for consequences that derive from their free choices, but society should aim at correcting inequalities due to mere bad luck (Dworkin, 1981b). Individuals' active role in the production of goods is thus a key factor determining the ground of institutional intervention. Luck egalitarianism seems to propose an understanding of fairness which is in line with prevailing intuitions in society (Wolff *et al*, 2015) and supports the idea that we do not have duties of justice towards those who can be held rightfully responsible for their situation. Importantly, Dworkin's luck egalitarianism is offered as an ideal theory and hence it assumes fair background conditions to be in place before ascribing full responsibility.

This view contrasts sharply with Rawls's own dismissal of desert considerations: he holds that these could not have any role in distributive justice, since undeserved factors have a major influence on all would-be desert bases (Sher 1987, 22). Indeed, how to draw the distinction between freely made choice and bad luck has attracted much debate (Arneson, 1989, Cohen, 1989), and it might be particularly difficult to apply luck egalitarian principles in practice

[9] This is not to say that poverty does not also result from natural disaster or natural conditions, but as Lotter (2011) notices, zoo animals might suffer from cruelty or neglect but not poverty. Wild animals starve but do not live in poverty. Poverty, thus, seems to be related in some way to humanity.

(Wolff *et al*, 2015): on the one hand, not all choices are equally free and it is particularly difficult to ascribe responsibilities for choices made under complex circumstances, especially for those at risk of poverty. On the other hand, it would seem demeaning to say that those in poverty are never responsible for the consequences of their choices (Wolff and de-Shalit, 2007). These issues are connected to a large debate surrounding the notion of choice, which is central to agency and as such connected to the concept of human dignity[10]. Furthermore, these principles have to be balanced against practical concerns: so, for example, luck egalitarians might want to exclude society's obligation to accommodate disability resulting from faulty driving (Arneson, 1990; Rakowski, 1991); however, high administrative costs might discourage setting up such a system (Anderson, 1999). In general, we can see that, in practice, potential instrumental reasons (in relation to efficiency, social cohesion, poverty reduction etc.) might prescribe to reduce certain inequalities even where these would be of no concern from a luck-egalitarian perspective.

Anderson (1999) points at more fundamental difficulties with luck-egalitarian principles and sees them as standing in utter opposition to a conception of social, or democratic, equality. The 'comparative' understanding of equality that luck egalitarianism assumes (Temkin, 2001) contrasts a 'relational' notion of equality. According to Anderson luck-egalitarian desert principles lead, on the one hand, to exclude some citizens, as we have seen in relation to the disabled: for example, she argues, the dependency of care takers is taken as a voluntary deviance from a falsely universalized norm of self-sufficiency associated with wage-earning. Ultimately, she argues, luck-egalitarian approaches support a deficit model that clashes dramatically with the goals of social equality: it excludes people

[10] Where libertarian perspectives appeal to an unconstrained will and focus on the act of choosing (free from imposition); liberal egalitarian as well as capability approaches conceive the processes of choice as rooted in one's context, never independent of material conditions. In these respects, structural factors bear on the range and quality of options and affect the processes underlying choice. Capability approaches have placed particular attention on the phenomenon of adaptation (Sen 1987). See Nussbaum (1997, 2008) for a discussion of choice and human dignity juxtaposing libertarian perspectives to Rawlsian and capability approaches. For a critique of the very notion of human dignity as an essentially individualistic concept see Gutman (1985), Claassen (2014).

through stigmatizing pity or intrusive judgement that clashes with privacy and liberty. While it is not possible to explore this debate here, it is important to understand the essentially individualistic framework luck egalitarians adopt. This means that while we might understand luck-egalitarians advocating for the elimination of horizontal inequalities (based on circumstances outside people's control such as race, gender, disability), responsibility and desert are attached to individual choices and this can lead to particular exclusions within groups.

It is important to note, however, that the core ideas underpinning the luck-egalitarian notion of fairness are at the foundation of a substantial growing body of economics literature centred around the notion of equality of opportunity (Barros et al. 2009; Roemer 1998; Brunori et al. 2013; Fleurbaey and Peragine 2009).[11] This research seeks to operationalize the notion of equality of opportunity distinguishing it from income inequality and inequality of outcome more generally. On the one hand, this shift of focus hopes to facilitate political and policy consensus. On the other hand, while recognising cross-country variations and the importance of understanding specific contextual challenges (Barros et al. 2009), this empirical evidence has made important steps in investigating the relation between inequalities of income and opportunities. For instance, Brunori et al. (2013) suggest that an important portion of income inequality cannot be attributed to differences in individual efforts or responsibility, and see inequalities in income and opportunities as both endogenously determined (13). The correlation between income inequality and inequality of opportunity is also consistent with the empirical literature on social mobility and points at a negative correlation between inequality and mobility (Corak 2013). This supports the idea that higher inequality skews opportunity and lowers intergenerational mobility. More generally, however, the discussion of this empirical research allows us to refocus the debate surrounding inequality and responsibility, while also problematizing the notion of choice: for a theory of equality of opportunity to become operationally or empirically meaningful, one must decide which factors should be

[11] See Barros et al. (2009, 30) and Roemer (1998) in particular, for a discussion of how the instruments developed by this research (such as the Human Opportunity Index) are based on an "egalitarian" rather than a "meritocratic" framework to conceive fairness.

classified as circumstances beyond the control of the individual, and which should be counted as choices for which individuals are to be held responsible. This, on the one hand, hinges on our understanding of the mechanisms underlying these relations[12] and their bearing on policy solutions (Bourguignon et al. 2007); on the other hand, it calls for a robust understanding distinguishing between a direct effect of circumstances on outcomes and an indirect effect via choice or effort.

4.2. Responsibility and poverty

In relation to poverty, we have briefly touched upon Pogge's idea that our moral concern with poverty is connected to the causes of its persistence. At the same time, public debate has shared the intuition that there is a significant difference between those who are in poverty through no fault of their own and those who are responsible for their condition. Where some see the behaviour of those in poverty to be a key factor of the persistence of poverty (Karelis, 2007), a consistent portion of the philosophical discussion surrounding poverty points at its effects on agency. Where poverty is seen as reducing real freedom, some choices are choices only in appearance (Fleurbaey, 2007). So, for example, Christman (1998) questions a common misconception about the incentives structure of the poor that sees labour as constituting a disutility for them. He argues that such claims are based on a misunderstanding that makes "independence" rather than "autonomy" a goal of social policy. He argues that, when we acknowledge the value and the place of interdependency in our lives, we cannot consider 'dependence' as an evil to eliminate, but we should rather see "autonomy" as a basic value when discussing welfare programs. Autonomy, unlike "independence" is not committed to the deceivingly neutral assumption of a life of wage labour and paid employment as the norm; moreover, Christman argues, autonomy is essential for both democracy and markets because they both require the choices of participants to be made from a condition which truly reflects an authentic, non-distorted appraisal of their interests. Since the incentive structure of welfare to work programs is such that employment decisions are taken from a position of deprivation and diminished autonomy, the resultant choices/outcomes will likely be ones from which the person will be,

[12] For a focus on institutions in Europe see Checchi et al. 2016.

upon critical reflection, deeply alienated. Programs that induce market entrance without securing autonomy conditions are, in a sense, self-defeating.

At the same time, institutions, rather than individuals, can be seen as fundamentally responsible for promoting human relations and conditions that are fair and fulfill fundamental needs. As we saw, rights-based views see poverty as violation of human rights and point at our collective moral responsibility for the terms of our institutional structure, in light of the foreseeability and avoid-ability of poverty. We can see how structural responsibility is particularly central for rights-based views: the legitimacy of institutions is in this sense seen as dependent on their fairness and on their ability to respect moral rights, including welfare rights. These moral rights ground institutions, which are meant to protect them and translate them into legal rights. While it is not possible to explore these positions in detail, I will point at challenges that anybody wishing to hold a right-based view of poverty should answer. On the one hand, Geuss (2001) holds that welfare rights are characterized by a problem of enforceability, based on the impossibility of identifying duty bearers. O'Neill (1996) has argued that positive duties raise the issue of claimability: subsistence rights, as positive rights, do not allow to definitely connect one right to one duty and result in weaker obligations. These objections see 'welfare rights' as pure 'manifesto rights' (Tasioulas, 2007): welfare rights violate the 'ought' implies 'can' maxim and are thus disqualified from being a genuine right of all human beings. Replies to these arguments have explored the relationship between rights and duties: for example, Shue (1996) questions the positive/negative distinction by debunking the one-to-one relation between duties and rights and adopting the idea of dynamic, "successive waves of duties" (Waldron, 1989). Ashford (2007) argues that the Kantian distinction between imperfect/perfect duties does not in fact map the one between positive/negative duties.

This discussion points at how, if we are to understand the role responsibility plays in shaping our concerns with poverty and inequality, issues of causation and of possible solutions need to take the forefront. At the same time, it is important to point at philosophical debates that surround the very notion of responsibility: for example, the work of Iris Marion Young (2003) invites us to

question a "liability" conception of responsibility (causally connecting agents to harms) and she points at how this fails to understand structural injustice which, while it is socially caused, is not resulting from the action of few specifiable actors. According to Young, we need to acknowledge the shortcomings of this dominant conception of responsibility because it is inadequate to evaluate the relationships of individual actors to large scale social processes and systemic injustices.

In concluding this section, we can point at certain asymmetries between the notions of inequality and poverty in relation to this idea of responsibility: in relation to inequality, the desert principle defines the very notion of fairness, and hence, in the ideal theory formulation given by Dworkin, it bears directly on the forms of inequality equity justifies. Instead, since our concerns with poverty *are not solely* justified in terms of social justice, we can see that issues of responsibility do not have the same application (for example, in a humanitarian perspective). On the other hand, there remain parallels between the two notions in regards to the intuitive appeal of the idea that our choices affect our justice claims. Most importantly, in regards to both, practical and conceptual difficulties in defining "chosen" behaviour arise. This invites us to problematize the notion of choice, which is central to agency and as such connected to the concept of human dignity. At the same time, current empirical debates bring to the forefront of discussion the mechanisms underlying inequality of opportunity, underscoring its relation to income inequality and inequality of outcomes, but also to social mobility and development.

5. Conclusions

By way of conclusion, I will address more concisely one of the main questions that prompted this analysis of the philosophical literature: to what extent do our concerns with poverty and inequality overlap? As a starting point, we can see how these might seem to be based on rather different grounds:

- On the one hand, we have seen how ideal theories of social justice ask a question about the conditions for a just society. Rawls' prominent approach defines the grounds of social justice granting a priority to the notion of inequality over poverty. The

difference principle, for example, does not equate the "worst off" and the "poor": while these notions can coherently overlap in practice, Rawls's theory addresses fairness in relation to the former, going beyond confronting poverty. We have also seen how, in such ideal approach, poverty is considered an evil that *follows* from social injustice.

- This kind of view stands in opposition to one, developed by Frankfurt, that sees a principle of sufficiency as grounding of social justice and envisages a sharp contrast between sufficiency and the comparative approach that is entailed by our concern with inequality. In this perspective, a view that sees sufficiency as a goal can have incidental, contingent and instrumental reasons to care about inequality and support redistribution policies, but it is not committed, in principle, to a normative idea of fairness that prioritizes tackling inequality.

- These kinds of position thus draw a sharp distinction between a principle of sufficiency (which would seem to justify our concern with poverty, defined in a non-comparative manner) and egalitarian principles, such as the difference principle, that focus on reducing inequalities. What emerged from our analysis, however, is the possibility of endorsing a broader social justice justification for which inequality and poverty do not generate competing concerns, but see, instead, our normative reasons to care about both overlap. Capability approaches, as well as theories focused on social and relational inequality, seem to point in this direction. These approaches do not try to define the grounds of justice (its principles as well as necessary and sufficient conditions). Instead, their point of departure is the broad real world social justice concern with social inequalities and deprivation. From the standpoint of a broader conception of social justice, we find that poverty and inequality are constitutive of human deprivation. This allows for a framework that can focus on their relationship, bringing to the forefront their mutually reinforcing relationships. For this task, an understanding of the mechanisms underlying these phenomena is essential in order to tackle human deprivation.

- This means that, in light of a broader social justice concern, we can prioritize poverty, because we consider that it is the most important cause of deprivation, but this does not need to dismiss our concerns with inequality. I have also pointed out how a conception of social justice that focuses on patterns of socialization and not solely on patterns of distribution does not deny the importance of material inequalities: these are considered a key determinant of broader social inequalities, inextricably linked to their reinforcement. Most importantly, though, what emerges from this picture is that concerns with inequality and poverty need not to be mutually exclusive. In this sense both poverty (understood as material deprivation but not solely identified with low income) and inequality (as distributional but also social/relational) constitute injustice.

- We have, however, also pointed at arguments that assign a unique normative value to poverty, for example, in light of humanitarian concerns. By putting 'humanity before justice' these arguments do not hinge on our conceptions of social justice. This position can lead to the weak claim that we have supererogatory charitable and compassionate motives; but it can also lead to more stringent endorsement of positive duties and moral obligation to aid. This obligation is quite substantial: it holds irrespective of who is suffering and why that suffering came about; it binds all individuals; and also puts into question the focus on domestic poverty. At the same time our discussion emphasized some important difficulties with humanitarian views in specifying the limits of such obligation.

- We also explored positions that ascribe a normative priority to poverty by conceiving it as a violation of human rights. These views, which, by being developed especially in the context of global poverty, privilege an absolute understanding of the concept, seem *prima facie* to have no place for the concept of inequality. This need not be the case. On the one hand, we saw how one can see concerns with both poverty and inequality as originating from the same core reference to human dignity and integrity. In this sense poverty is prior because it constitutes a higher degree of violation of human dignity as a failure to meet basic needs, interests or as an infringement of basic rights.

- On the other hand, one can hold that the priority accorded to poverty (in light of humanitarian or human-rights concerns) does not entail that poverty is all that matters from a standpoint of justice. This means that it is possible to advocate for a pluralist view that incorporates different reasons of normative concern. So, for example, one can prioritize poverty while also allowing that inequality matters, both in itself and inasmuch as it is instrumental to poverty: thus seeing poverty as entrenched and sustained in a context of inequality. The priority of poverty does not exclude a pluralist approach that endorses social justice concerns, relating to both material and relational inequalities, as well as instrumental concerns that are based on empirical connections between poverty and inequality.

- Instrumental concerns about both poverty and inequality can also ascribe value to these phenomena inasmuch as they are related to other outcomes. From this standpoint we might care about poverty or inequality inasmuch as they affect growth, efficiency, social cohesion and so forth. In general, though, it is important to stress that all instrumental arguments hinge on establishing empirical relationships between poverty and inequality and the phenomena they are instrumental to.

- With this in mind, we can see that when we claim that it is possible to hold a pluralist approach, we conceive it as building connections among these different reasons (instrumental and intrinsic, moral and non-moral) rather than considering them mutually exclusive. The capability approach seems to allow such a view. We have seen how capability approaches are concerned with ensuring people's capabilities to function in ways that are elemental to human life. Material deprivation is probably the most important barrier to this goal. At the same time, material inequalities can be seen as an important determinant of unequal treatment and discrimination, which are constitutive of deprivation, broadly understood. So, from a capability approach perspective, these aspects of social equality are also necessary for one's capability to function. At the same time, instrumentally, income redistribution is likely needed to meet the thresholds set by the capability approaches.

- Finally, questions of responsibility emerge both in relation to poverty and inequality and complicate the picture. On the one hand, the very fact that these are distinctively human phenomena brings to the forefront issues of agency in a way natural phenomena do not. On the other hand, both at the individual and structural level, we find parallel problems in establishing how certain states of affair came to be and how a meaningful notion of responsibility should be defined. While the discourse of responsibility and desert is prominent in the way our society approaches poverty and inequality, these considerations invite us to take into account the limits of our intuitions, and require us to focus on the causes and processes underlying poverty and inequality.

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