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Parents, the State, and the Care Rights of Children

Good Enough Parenting

Danielle Levitan

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ISBN 978-3-032-09437-7 ISBN 978-3-032-09438-4 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-09438-4>

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To my mother and father, Hanja and Amos, with love.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following essay was originally part of my dissertation and is an attempt to state a theory of good-enough parenting. I owe a profound debt of gratitude to David Enoch, who not only taught me philosophy and provided exceptional academic guidance, but whose influence on my work—and on my thinking more broadly—is unmistakable throughout these pages. It is his rigorous philosophical standards that I have consistently aspired to meet in my own work.

I am also indebted to Louise Chapman, with whom I shared many hours of philosophical discussion. Her insights were invaluable.

There are others whose support came in different forms. I am deeply grateful to my partner, Gur—who may never read this book—yet whose sharp criticism and our ongoing debates helped to refine my arguments. Without his enduring support and patience, I would not have had the freedom to acknowledge any debts at all.

Finally, I wish to thank my wonderful children—Yotam, Nitzan, and Or—who did not contribute directly to this work (certainly not academically), but who are the reason I write at all. Their existence shapes how I see the world and gives meaning to everything I do. The presence of Gur and the children in my life makes everything worthwhile. I love them deeply.

Basel, Switzerland
July 2025

Danielle Levitan

Competing Interests The author has no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this manuscript.

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Introduction

Abstract The introduction frames the book's central question: what level of care are children morally entitled to from their parents, and what role should the state play in securing it? Using the case of Gypsy Rose Blanchard as a point of contrast, the chapter distinguishes three caregiving standards – adequate, good and best – and outlines the book's central argument: while children have a right to adequate care (enforceable), and a right to good care (non-enforceable), they have no moral right to best care. This framework sets the stage for a nuanced account of parental duty, children's rights and the ethical limits of state enforcement.

Keywords Children's rights • Parental duty • Caregiving standards • Best care • Good care • Adequate care • Moral obligation • State intervention • Gypsy Rose Blanchard

In the quiet community of Springfield, Missouri, neighbours viewed Gypsy Rose Blanchard as a tragic figure: a chronically ill child bravely facing numerous debilitating conditions. Confined to a wheelchair, enduring feeding tubes, countless medications and invasive surgeries, Gypsy was presented by her mother, Dee Dee Blanchard, as a survivor of leukaemia, muscular dystrophy, epilepsy and cognitive impairments. Their lives were