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Searching for theory X: A quality-only approach to the problem of future generations

Merten, Gail, Ph.D.
The University of Arizona, 1993

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SEARCHING FOR THEORY X: A QUALITY-ONLY APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

by

Gail Merten

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1993
As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Gail Merten entitled Searching for Theory X: A Quality-Only Approach to the Problem of Future Generations and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

Various ways of extending utilitarianism to questions concerning future generations have been proposed. These alternatives fall into four classes: a) views that are entirely person-affecting - i.e., that hold that an action can only be right or wrong if it affects the utility of particular persons; b) the view that the total quantity of utility is all that matters; c) views that hold that the quality of the lives that are lived is all that matters; and d) views that hold that both the quality of lives lived and the total quantity of utility that is experienced have some independent value. As noted by Derek Parfit, person-affecting views are problematic because, for example, if following a policy of depletion with respect to natural resources would result in the existence of different individuals by the time the negative effects of such a policy would come about than would exist if a policy of conservation were followed, then there would be no moral reason to conserve resources. More abstractly, on a person-affecting view (that does not claim that a person is affected by being brought into existence) there is no moral reason to bring about a world of one thousand beings that each live at a level of 100 utils. instead of bringing about a world of one different being that lives at a level
of 3 utils. The view that only the total quantity of happiness matters is problematic because, among other things, it leads to what Parfit calls the Repugnant Conclusion - viz. the view that a state of affairs in which every being's life is only just barely worth living is better than a state of affairs in which ten billion extremely happy beings exist so long as there are so many of these barely happy beings that the total utility in that state of affairs is greater. Views that put some independent value on both quantity and quality are problematic because no rationale can be given for holding that quantity has some independent value but is not the only thing that has value.

This dissertation suggests that a quality-only approach should be taken. It is argued that there is no value in the creation of happy people but that there is value in the creation of a more happy person as opposed to a (possibly different) less happy person. It is maintained, then, that whereas there is value in bringing happier people into existence instead of less happy people, there is no value in bringing happy people (or additional happy people) into existence instead of bringing no people (or no additional people) into existence. Two quality-only views put forward by others - viz. the Average View and Peter Singer's 1976 principle - are discussed, and a
modified version of the Average View is proposed.
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation addresses the question of how utilitarianism should be applied to decisions that affect the number or identity of people (or other animals) who come to or continue to exist. The kind of utilitarianism envisioned is classical utilitarianism, according to which utility consists of happiness or some similar mental state as opposed to, for example, the satisfaction of preferences. It is not part of my aim to argue for this interpretation of utilitarianism, much less for the truth of utilitarianism itself, however, but only for how (if it is accepted) it should be extended to questions dealing with future generations.

Whereas it is clear what form a utilitarian theory takes when it is applied to what Derek Parfit has called Same People Choices (i.e., choices that do not affect the number or identity of future people), how utilitarianism should be extended to cover what Parfit has called Same Number Choices (i.e., choices that affect the identity of, but not the number of, future people) and Different Number Choices (i.e., choices that affect both the number and identity of future people) is far from clear.

The most straightforward approach might seem to be to
say that utilitarians should always make the choice that maximizes total utility - regardless of which of the three types of choice situation they are faced with. This view has been called the Total View and is based on the belief that it is just as valuable to increase total utility by increasing the number of happy beings that exist as by increasing the happiness of beings that exist. On the Total View a world of three people each at a utility level of +3 is preferred to a world of two people each at a level of +4. It is my contention that the belief on which the Total View is based - that just stated, namely that it is just as valuable to increase total utility by increasing the number of happy beings that exist as by increasing the happiness of existing beings - is false. The arguments that can be given for rejecting this view may not be found compelling by themselves, but, if not, the consequences of accepting the Total View should provide an ample basis for rejecting it and the belief on which it is based. To be more specific, anyone who accepts the Total View must also accept what Derek Parfit calls "The Repugnant Conclusion." The Repugnant Conclusion is the contention that "For any possible population of at least ten billion people, all with a very high quality of life, there must be some much larger imaginable population whose existence, if other things are equal, would be better, even though its members
have lives that are barely worth living." If one wishes to reject the Repugnant Conclusion, then one must also reject the Total View as a way of extending utilitarianism to handle Different Number Choices.

One might try to avoid the Repugnant Conclusion by altering the Total View to embody the belief that while there is some value in increasing utility by increasing the number of beings that exist, there is not always as much value in increasing utility in this way as there is in increasing utility by increasing the utility of existing beings. A whole host of these sorts of compromise views have been considered by various authors. These are views that maintain that sometimes we should increase the number of lives lived even if this lowers the quality of the lives that are lived and sometimes we should not. The specific views of this type that have been proposed all prove to be problematic in part because the beliefs on which such views are based are vague and any attempt to make them determinate has to be arbitrary.

Another approach it might seem natural for a utilitarian to take is a person-affecting approach that places no value on the creation of happy people. On such a view, the only utilities we need to consider in making a

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choice are those of beings who exist in both of the alternatives. Unlike the Total View, this kind of view does not require existing people to make sacrifices for the sake of beings that need not ever exist. This approach is extremely problematic however. For one thing, it leads to something similar to the Repugnant Conclusion in cases in which none of the same individuals exist in both the smaller and the larger worlds. A person-affecting view that places no value on the creation of happy people also holds that it is morally indifferent whether one brings a being at +1 into existence or a different being at +100. This seems counterintuitive. In essence, an entirely person-affecting view ends up seeming incomplete because it claims that we should be morally indifferent about the level of well-being of future generations as long as our actions do not negatively affect particular individuals who will exist regardless of our choices.

The remaining way to handle questions about the number and identity of future people is to take a quality-only approach. According to a quality-only view, there is only value in increasing utility by increasing the quality of lives lived. On such a view, there is no value in increasing utility by increasing the number of lives lived. The most common version of a quality-only view is the Average View. On the Average View, one should always make
that choice that results in those lives being lived that will result in the highest average quality of life. On this view, then, a world of two people at +4 is preferred to a world of three people at +3. The beliefs that may inspire adoption of the Average View are sound. On this view it would have been correct to increase the human population as long as these increases added to the quality of life, but it began to be undesirable to increase population as soon as these increases started to decrease the quality of life. On a quality-only view the population of any particular environment or planet should be that at which the lives lived can be the best possible. These ideas are attractive, but, as it turns out, ill-captured by the Average View. The Average View fails to distinguish between cases in which additional people lower the average quality of life because they make it impossible for people to live as well as they could were their numbers stabilized and cases in which additional people lower the average quality of life simply because it is not possible for the additional beings to be as happy as are the individuals who already exist. In other words, the Average View fails because it disallows some cases of what Parfit calls "Mere Addition." As defined by Parfit "there is Mere Addition when, in one of two outcomes, there exist extra people (1) who have lives worth living, (2) who affect no one else,
and (3) whose existence does not involve social injustice."² So, for instance, if the world contains two people at +8, and we could add to this world a third person at +7 who would not affect the utility of the original two people, and no social injustice is involved, no reason can be given for the acceptance of the Average View's result that it would be wrong to add the third person.

Another prominent quality-only view, which can handle Mere Addition, is that proposed by Peter Singer. According to Singer's view "If a possible future state of affairs is a world of P people at an average level of happiness A, it is wrong to bring into existence any greater number of people, P + N, such that no sub-group of P + N contains P people at an average level of happiness equal to or higher than A."³ Derek Parfit has shown that, as stated, Singer's view actually fails to be a quality-only view and in fact implies the Repugnant Conclusion. Through looking at Singer's principle, it becomes apparent that the Average View has more merit than first thought, and that, in fact, the Average View can be salvaged if it is combined with something similar to a person-affecting approach.

²Ibid., p. 420.
Revising the Average View to make it somewhat person-affecting hardly solves all of the problems faced by a quality-only approach, however. As noted, such an approach asserts that there is no value in the creation of happy people. It is often claimed that if one asserts this, then one cannot consistently maintain that there is disvalue in the creation of miserable people (i.e., people whose lives contain more disutility than utility). It would be incorrect to be indifferent between a world containing no one and a world containing a miserable person. Therefore a supporter of a quality-only view must show that one can consistently condemn the existence of miserable people and be indifferent towards the existence of happy people. Difficulties increase when one considers a choice between a world in which no one exists and a world in which both happy and unhappy people exist. It seems to me that it would be permissible to choose the latter world so long as the net happiness contained in the happy lives is greater than the net unhappiness contained in the unhappy lives. It can be argued, however, that if there is no value in the creation of happy lives, then the creation of happy lives has no value that can compensate for the disvalue of the creation of unhappy lives. This is a hard argument to refute, and yet it must be refuted. If instead we conclude that there is value in the creation of happy beings, we are
back to endorsing the Total View and the Repugnant Conclusion. If, on the other hand, we reason that, because there is no value in the creation of happy beings, the happiness in happy lives cannot compensate for the unhappiness in unhappy lives, we must conclude that no being should ever be brought into existence if there is even a minuscule chance of it having an unhappy life. But if it is wrong to bring a being into existence if there is a chance of it having an unhappy life, then it would seem to be wrong to allow a being to stay in existence if there is a chance of it having an unhappy life. If so, then if there were no side effects, murder would be a morally obligatory act on the view that the happiness in happy lives cannot compensate for the unhappiness in unhappy lives since every living being runs the risk of living a life that turns out to have been miserable on balance. For the same reason, on this view, even the most happy person alive is irrational not to commit suicide. We would also have to maintain that a world in which no one exists would be superior to a world in which ten billion massively happy people and one person whose life contains a tiny net balance of unhappiness exists. I think that both of these results (either endorsing the Repugnant Conclusion or the conclusion that it is wrong to bring anyone into existence or to allow anyone to stay in existence if they can be
killed without side effects) are so counterintuitive that one should be convinced that it must be the case that whereas happy lives can compensate for unhappy lives if people exist, and chances of happy lives can compensate for chances of unhappy lives, there is no reason to bring happy beings into existence instead of no beings.

Part I argues for the rejection of views that apply utilitarianism to questions about future generations by placing value on the creation of happy beings. It is argued that the only coherent view in this category is the Total View and that this view must be rejected because it leads to the Repugnant Conclusion and is insufficiently person-affecting. Part II goes on to reject both an entirely person-affecting view and two versions of a quality-only view - viz. the Average View and Singer's principle. A modified version of the Average View is proposed, and in Part III objections to this view that arise when the creation of miserable people is considered are presented and an attempt to rebut them is made. It is argued that a view that readily accords with all our intuitions about what is right and about what beliefs can be consistently held may not exist, but that the least objectionable position is a modified version of the Average View that places no value on the creation of happy beings but that allows that the creation of happy beings may
sometimes make the creation of beings with miserable lives permissible.
Useful Concepts Defined by Parfit and Singer

The Three Kinds of Choice

**Different Number Choices** affect both the number and the identities of future people.

**Same Number Choices** affect the identities of future people, but do not affect their number.

**Same People Choices** affect neither.⁴

The Repugnant Conclusion: For any possible population of at least ten billion people, all with a very high quality of life, there must be some much larger imaginable population whose existence, if other things are equal, would be better, even though its members have lives that are barely worth living.⁵

There is Mere Addition when, in one of two outcomes, there exist extra people (1) who have lives worth living, (2) who affect no one else, and (3) whose existence does not involve social injustice.

The **Same Number Quality Claim**: If in either of two outcomes the same number of people would ever live, it would be bad if those who live are worse off, or have a lower quality of life, than those who would have lived.

The **Total View**: the total surplus of happiness over misery in the population should be as large as possible.

The **Average View**: the average level of happiness should be as high as possible.

**Singer's Principle**: If a possible future state of affairs is a world of \( P \) people at an average level of happiness \( A \), it is wrong to bring into existence any greater number of people, \( P + N \), such that no sub-group of \( P + N \) contains \( P \) people at an average level of happiness equal to or higher than \( A \).⁶

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⁴Parfit, op. cit., p. 356.
⁵Ibid., p. 388.
⁶Ibid., p. 420.
⁷Ibid., p. 360.
⁸Singer, op. cit., p. 81.
⁹Ibid., p. 89.
PART I VIEWS THAT PLACE VALUE ON THE CREATION OF HAPPY BEINGS

The purpose of Part I is to argue that happiness that is not experienced because the being that would have experienced it does not exist does not matter. In Section A of Chapter 1, I explain that there is no reason for believing that there is value in the creation of happy beings. In Section B of Chapter 1, I consider the implications of the fact that if there is no value in the creation of happy beings, there is no disvalue in their destruction. In Chapter 2, I argue that, even if not convinced by the arguments in Chapter 1, one should feel compelled to quit the notion that it is good to bring happy beings into existence because of the consequences of accepting the only plausible view based on this notion. That is, it is argued that the Repugnant Conclusion implied by the Total View truly is unacceptable. In Chapter 3, I argue against the suggestion that one can sensibly put some value on the creation of happy people without accepting either the Total View or the Repugnant Conclusion. Several theories that attempt to do this are presented and argued to be inadequate.
Chapter 1 There Is No Value in the Existence of Happy Beings
Section A There Is No Value in the Creation of Happy Beings

There are two ways of increasing happiness. One way is by increasing the happiness of existing beings, and the other way is by increasing the number of happy beings that exist. A sensible utilitarianism should only value the first way of increasing happiness. No value should be placed on bringing happy beings into existence. This is so because happiness is not valuable in itself as some abstract free-floating quality. What is valuable is making the situation of beings that exist as good as possible. There is no reason to care simply about whether there is any happiness in the world or how much happiness there is. What we should care about is whether and the extent to which the beings that do or will exist are happy. It makes a big difference to existing individuals whether their lives are happy. But it makes no difference to potential people whether they ever become actual. It should be clear that if there are to be experiences, it is better if they are happier ones, but it is not clear that we have any reason to care if anything is ever experienced at all.

The existence of a sentient being is a precondition for the existence of happiness, and happiness cannot exist
or have value unless this precondition has been met. No actual value attaches to possible happiness. In order for happiness to have value it must be actual and therefore something that is experienced by an existing being. So in order for happiness to exist and have value, it is necessary that a sentient being exist. It does not make sense, however, to hold that it is valuable to bring a happy being into existence just because something that is only valuable if the being exists will then exist. We have no reason to concern ourselves with bringing about what is a precondition for something that only has value if the precondition is brought about. Surely the precondition - i.e., the existence of the sentient being - has no value in itself. Therefore we have no reason to bring about any individual's existence. If something is desirable only if a certain precondition is met, then the only reason for bringing about both the precondition and the thing that is desirable if the precondition is met would be that there is some further desire or purpose - existing independently of the precondition's being met - that is satisfied or achieved if both the precondition and what is valuable only if the precondition is met are brought about. If there is no independent interest or further purpose achieved in bringing happy beings into existence - i.e., if no being that exists regardless will be made happier - there can be
no value in bringing happy beings into existence. As soon as one admits that happiness per se has no value - that it can only exist and have value if it is experienced by an existing being - then one has to admit that there is no value in bringing happy beings into existence (unless this increases the happiness of other beings who exist regardless).

A couple of analogies may make this point clearer. In order to clean up a mess, it is necessary that a mess exist to be cleaned up. There is no value in, say, mopping a floor if the floor is clean. The floor being dirty is a precondition for cleaning the floor having value. Surely this does not give us any reason to make the floor dirty so that we can go on to clean it up. Likewise there is value in my returning a library book today (as opposed to tomorrow) if it is due today, but no value in my returning the book today (as opposed to tomorrow) if it is not due for another week and no one else wants to borrow it. This hardly shows that there is value in the book being due today given that I will return it today (as opposed to tomorrow) if it is. And of course, there is value in my returning a book to the library (as opposed to not returning it at all) if I have borrowed one. But this does not show that there is value in my borrowing a book from the library given that I would return it if I did. The
fact that there is usually value in returning something borrowed in and of itself gives us no more reason to borrow things than the fact that there is generally value in keeping promises in and of itself gives us a reason to make them. When B has value only on condition of A, the fact that A gives B value hardly provides us with a reason for bringing about A & B. Having and raising happy children is like spilling paint and then mopping it up. There is certainly value in mopping up spilt paint, but this fact hardly shows there is value in spilling paint and cleaning it up. Likewise there is surely value in making an existing child's life happy, but this hardly shows there is value in bringing a child into existence and then making its life happy.

There could be a further purpose that would make the combined actions of spilling paint and then cleaning it up have value. For example, if one would otherwise be bored, enjoys cleaning up messes, or wants to test a new chemical for removing paint stains, there might be value in doing these things. Likewise there might be some further purpose that would make my borrowing of a book valuable - e.g., that I want to read a book, would get pleasure from reading it, or need to read it to do some other project I want to do. Similarly there might sometimes be value in having happy children. If the parents want children or would
enjoy raising them, then there is value in them having the children - not because the children will have happy lives but because the parents will have happier lives than they would have had they remained childless. If there were a god who took pleasure in the existence of happy creatures, there would also obviously be value in their creation. But there is no value in the creation of happy beings if no being that exists regardless is made happier by this. Again, it cannot be held that there is value in the creation of happy beings simply because there is value in the happiness accruing to beings that have been created.

It is incumbent on those who think there is moral value in the creation of happy beings to explain why they think this is. It seems to me that the relationship between happiness, existence, and value is as follows: 1) A person's happiness has value if and only if the person exists. All utilitarians would agree that if a person exists, her happiness has value. And it should be clear that if a person does not exist, her happiness does not exist and therefore can have no value. Obviously it does not follow from 1) that the conjunction of the person's happiness and her existence has value. To derive this conclusion, other premises about the relationship between happiness, existence, and value would be needed, and the
premises from which we could derive the conclusion would not be true.

It might be suggested that from the premise that if a person exists, then if she is happy, this is something valuable; we can derive the conclusion that if a happy person exists, this is something valuable. This argument is flawed, however, because in the premise (if it is to be accepted as true by both sides) "this is something valuable" means "this happiness is something valuable" whereas in the conclusion (if it is to be the one needed by my opponent) "this is something valuable" means "the existence of this happy person is valuable."

As stated earlier, if the value of B is conditional on A, we cannot conclude that there is value in A & B. The fact that there is value in giving a child a happy life in and of itself gives us no reason to have a child. Having a child and giving it a happy life can only have value if we have some independent reason for wanting to do this - i.e., if it increases the happiness of someone else who exists regardless. If we decide to have a child, we incur an obligation to give it a happy life. But the fact that there is value in fulfilling responsibilities we bring upon ourselves does not show there is value in taking on and discharging responsibilities. (Although, again, there could be if doing this achieved something beyond just
fulfilling a responsibility.) Of course on the Total View we have an obligation to bring happy beings into existence, and we do something valuable when we do this. I am not claiming that all our obligations have to be to some individual. But the point is, no one has shown why there is any reason to bring happy beings into existence or why there is any value in doing this. If there is no value in doing this, there is no obligation to do it. I simply do not see how we can move beyond the obvious value in making a person happy to attributing value to making a happy person. Likewise I simply do not see how we can move from the obvious fact that if a happy person exists, she will be glad that she does to the contention that there is a reason for us to bring her into existence. Her pleasure in her existence does not prove that there is moral value in bringing her into existence because it has not been proven that the pleasure she takes in anything if she exists gives us a reason to think her existence has value. It is obviously valuable that she is happy she exists if she does exist, but it just does not follow from this fact that it is valuable that she exists.
Section B There Is No Disvalue in the Destruction of Happy Beings

In the last section I tried to show that there is no reason to place value on the creation of happy beings. If we do not, we should, of course, reject the Total View. It seems, however, that if no value is placed on the creation of happy beings, then no disvalue can be placed on the destruction of happy beings. A classical utilitarian cannot make a distinction between killing and never bringing into existence or between saving a life and bringing one into existence. If we think the happiness that would be experienced by a being does not give us a reason to bring it into existence, we must also think that it does not give us a reason to keep the being in existence. It would seem, then, that if someone thinks there is something directly wrong with killing a happy person, then this might give them a reason to accept the Total View and the proposition that there is value in the creation of happy beings. I will argue that this argument for the Total View is not compelling and that we should regard the killing of happy beings, if there were no side effects, with the same indifference with which we should regard the creation of happy beings.

The only reason a classical utilitarian would have for finding it directly wrong to kill a being would be the loss
of happiness that occurs because the being does not continue to exist and so the happiness it would have experienced will not be experienced. So if one accepts the Total View, one might usually object to the killing of happy beings as this will reduce the total happiness that is experienced. Peter Singer has pointed out\(^{10}\) that, future expected happiness of the beings being equal, the only reasons a classical utilitarian can give for it being worse to kill a person (i.e., a self-conscious being that sees itself as a self existing through time) than a non-person (i.e., a conscious but not self-conscious being) are indirect. Therefore if one cannot give up the intuition that there is nothing directly wrong with killing a non-person, one must conclude that on classical utilitarian theory there is nothing directly wrong with killing a person. This would mean there is also nothing directly right about bringing a happy person into existence.

On the other hand, one might reason as follows. There is something directly wrong with killing a self-conscious being. Therefore if classical utilitarianism is the correct theory, there must also be something directly wrong with killing a merely conscious being. Since the only thing that can make the killing of either kind of being

\(^{10}\)Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 79-80.
directly wrong (on a classical utilitarian view) is the happiness that is not experienced if it is killed, then if one wants to a) accept classical utilitarianism for Same People Choices and b) hold that it is directly wrong to kill self-conscious, or both self-conscious and merely conscious, beings, then c) one must accept the Total View, as it is the only plausible view that gives weight to happiness that is not experienced because the being that would have experienced it does not exist. This would be an argument, then, that if we are classical utilitarians and we think there must be something directly wrong with killing people, then the Total View must be correct.

This is not a very good argument for the Total View, however. If one cannot give up the intuition that there is something directly wrong with killing a person, then one probably will not want to be any kind of classical utilitarian. Being a classical utilitarian who accepts the Total View does not help much because, although there is something directly wrong with killing on the Total View, killing is only held to be wrong on balance if total utility decreases if the being is killed. So, for instance, as Singer discusses, on the Total View there is nothing wrong with killing happy animals for food (if there are not sufficient indirect reasons opposing it) if

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11Ibid., p. 100.
they are replaced with other equally happy animals that otherwise would not have existed. Likewise, on the Total View, there would be nothing wrong with killing happy persons (if there were not sufficient indirect reasons opposing it) if they were to be replaced with other equally happy persons who otherwise would not have existed. I doubt this is satisfactory to someone with a strong intuition against killing.

Can a view according to which there is nothing morally wrong with killing a happy person when there are no side effects be correct? I think it can be and is. The reasons people would probably give for why it is directly wrong to take a life or important to save a life are not classical utilitarian reasons and so do not support any particular way of extending this theory from Same People Choices to Different Number Choices. For example, a person might think another should save her life because she does not want to die. But a classical utilitarian does not put any independent value on people's preferences. On a classical utilitarian view, a person's preference to have her life saved, should this become necessary, only gives others a reason to make her think they will save her life. She will be happier if she believes that others will save her life. If she never becomes aware that her life has not been saved, then she never suffers on this account.
In addition, it should be noted that it is, of course, not the case that accepting a view that places no direct value on bringing happy beings into existence or on keeping them in existence will have such counterintuitive consequences as making it permissible in the real world to allow people to die who could easily be saved. There are indirect reasons why it is usually good to save a life, so saving lives will often be required even on a quality-only view. For one thing, we have a reason to save a person's life if others will learn of our actions. As mentioned above, since while we are alive most people want to stay alive, we obviously will feel better if we can expect others to save our lives should this become necessary. It is going to be hard for people to sustain the belief that others will save them if they are drowning if they have seen people let others drown. More importantly, people will also feel less anxious the less likely they think it is that a person will purposely or carelessly take their lives, so even on a quality-only view there is a strong moral reason not to murder people or take foolish risks that endanger their lives. There is always a possibility that the murder or reckless activity will be discovered and others who wish to live will become fearful.

There is also what is probably the strongest indirect reason against killing to consider - viz. the effects on
people who care about the person who is killed. Obviously any classical utilitarian would say that a drowning child should be saved because if it is not, the child's family and friends will suffer greatly. And obviously one would have to select murder victims with great care if one wanted to murder only those who are unloved or positively disliked. So it is clearly not the case that if one attaches no disvalue to the destruction of happy people, in and of itself, then there is no moral reason to refrain from murder or to save drowning individuals. On the contrary, even on a quality-only view, there will usually be very strong reasons to save and to refrain from taking human lives.

Some types of killings of human beings might be generally permissible on a quality-only view, however. Abortion and infanticide may often be permitted on a quality-only view in cases in which the parents do not wish to keep the child because the killing of such beings does not usually have the large negative indirect effects of killing adults. As Bentham has observed, infanticide is "of a nature not to give the slightest inquietude to the most timid imagination."12 On the Total View abortion and infanticide would be permissible only in cases in which

total happiness would not be increased by the fetus's or infant's survival. It would not seem to be open to a classical utilitarian to oppose infanticide but not non-conception by trying to distinguish happiness that might have been experienced had the infant continued to live from happiness that might have been experienced had the infant been conceived in the first place. It would be groundless to make such a distinction. Either happiness that might have been experienced had a being existed to experience it matters or it does not. If it is morally good to have a happy child when its existence would have no net impact on others, then it is morally good to keep it alive. If there is no moral reason to conceive a happy child when its existence would have no net impact on others, then there is no moral reason to keep it alive (unless killing it would have a net negative impact on others).

If we are classical utilitarians, then, there are two different ways we can calculate the wrongness of killing. If we take the Total View, the wrongness of a murder is calculated by adding the loss of happiness accruing to survivors to the net future happiness that would have been experienced by the victim. On a quality-only view the only loss of happiness that counts is the loss of happiness accruing to survivors. It seems to me that the second method of calculation is far more plausible. This could
just be the result of an intuitive mindset and so something there is no sense in arguing about because people with different mindsets will just feel differently about it. But, at least when I hear that six people in a bar in Northern Ireland have been killed by a terrorist's bomb, my thoughts do not run to the dead people. My heart goes out to their friends and families - not to them. I feel for the survivor who loses 20 units of happiness due to the death of a loved one and not for the victim who loses 100 units of future happiness due to her own death. I care about the suffering of people who exist but not about people ceasing to exist, and perhaps this just shows I am intellectually and morally unsophisticated, but I prefer to think it shows I am in touch with reality and have my feet on the ground. A dead person cannot suffer, and it seems to me that whereas suffering is an evil, nonexistence just is not.
In Chapter 1, it was argued that there is no reason to believe there is moral value in bringing happy beings into existence. In this chapter I will contend that there is good reason to believe there is no moral value in bringing happy beings into existence. Even if one initially has no qualms about saying it is good to bring happy beings into existence, this becomes problematic when we are confronted with cases in which bringing additional beings into existence decreases the happiness of beings that would exist regardless of whether the additional beings are brought into existence. It could easily be that if I kept four cats, for instance, the total happiness contained in those cats' lives would be greater than the happiness contained in the life of the one much happier cat that I could have if I devoted all of my attention to only one cat. But it seems wrong to say that, everything else being equal, it would be morally better to keep four cats under these circumstances. If I have four, none will lead as pleasant a life as a single cat could have. If I have only one, this cat is happier than it would be if I had four,
and the other three would not exist to be deprived of the happiness they could have experienced. Obviously one can take this line of thought further and wonder whether it is morally better to have one very happy cat or a million cats whose lives are just barely worth living.

Parfit illustrates the implications of the Total View using a diagram which is reproduced on the next page. The width of each block represents the number of beings that exist in that outcome. The height of each block represents the quality of life of the beings that exist in that outcome. Total utility increases as one moves from Outcome A to Outcome Z. The view that total happiness should be maximized leads to Parfit's "Repugnant Conclusion" - viz. the contention that "For any possible population of at least ten billion people [or cats], all with a very high quality of life, there must be some much larger imaginable population whose existence, if other things are equal, would be better, even though its members have lives that are barely worth living."\(^{13}\) It cannot be correct to endorse the Repugnant Conclusion. It cannot be better for a couple to continue to have children as long as the total happiness of their children (and the population as a whole) is increasing and regardless of the effect this has on the level of happiness of each child (and of others). In fact

\(^{13}\)Parfit, op. cit., p. 388.
FIGURE 1 The Repugnant Conclusion
it seems wrong to continue to have children whenever this decreases the happiness of those who already exist. There is no way to justify having a fourth child if this makes one's first three children worse off and no one else is affected.

There seem to be severe problems, then, for the view that places value on increasing happiness by increasing the number of people who exist. There are two repugnant aspects of the consequences of accepting the Total View. Firstly, it seems wrong to say that a world containing only people whose lives are barely worth living is better than a world containing ten billion different people who all have a very high quality of life. In addition, it is repugnant to maintain that it can be morally good to reduce the quality of life of people who do or will certainly exist for the sake of beings that need never exist. In my view, it would be wrong to bring even an enormously happy being into existence if this in any way compromised the utility of those who already exist or who will exist regardless of whether the being is brought into existence. This sentiment may sound anti-utilitarian, but it is not contrary to what Singer has identified as "what is intuitively appealing and undeniable about utilitarianism" - namely, "Given that people exist, it is better that they be happy than that they be miserable, and the happier they
are, the better it is."\(^\text{14}\) To extend this idea in the way the Total View does, and claim that there is value in bringing beings into existence if they will be happy, actually leads to conclusions that undermine the attractive feature of utilitarianism identified by Singer.

A bias (if it can even be called this) in behalf of people who do or will actually exist is not immoral. Utilitarians are willing, at least in certain hypothetical cases, to ignore deathbed promises, and I think most of us at least have some qualms about doing what would please the dead if this imposes real losses on existing individuals (or on individuals who will exist in the future regardless of whether the promise is kept). At least the dead person actually did exist - people knew her, felt something about her, felt some commitment to her, and may still after she is dead. Moreover in real life since we all know we will die someday, we want to be able to feel while we are living that certain promises made to us will be kept after our death. But to advocate that a person who does or certainly will exist make sacrifices for a person who has not yet existed at all and need never, should give us some serious pause. Consider a woman who does not want to have a child. Suppose that the child's net impact on people other than

its mother will be neutral, but its impact on its mother will be negative because she will not be able to pursue her career in the way in which she wanted or do a lot of things she had wanted to do. Does the happiness the child would probably experience give the woman a reason to have the child? It hardly seems so. The child will not suffer, be worse off, feel bad, be deprived, care, or in any way notice if it is not born. (And of course any particular child she might have would have failed to come into existence just as completely if she had conceived at a slightly different time as if she had decided to have no child at all.) The mother will suffer, be worse off, feel bad, be deprived, care, and notice if she cannot do with her life what would make her happiest. It would be ridiculous to try to compare some sort of hypothetical lack of happiness that is not experienced by anything to the real sacrifices of a real existing person who fully experiences the impact of her choice regardless of which choice she makes. Happiness that might have been experienced just does not matter if what would have experienced it does not exist during the time it is not experienced. A being cannot miss something unless it is alive to miss it. And morality should not concern itself with something that does not matter to anybody - especially at the expense of something that does matter to somebody.
It seems misguided and wrong for a woman to diminish her own happiness so that she can have babies that will lead happy lives (assuming they have no net impact on the rest of society). And it does not seem right to have ten children instead of six when this is to the detriment of all the other children who already live in one's neighborhood (or who will in the future regardless of how many children one decides to have). It is a failure of compassion when one's compassion does not extend to those who live in a foreign country or adhere to an alien religion or belong to a different race or species. It is not a failure of compassion when one's compassion does not extend to those who do not and need never exist. It is misplaced compassion and compassion gone wrong that asks real people to sacrifice themselves for possible people.

Suppose a 14-year-old has been raped and is pregnant as a result. The happiness her child is expected to experience in its lifetime is greater than the agony that would be spared the 14-year-old if she were to get an abortion. It is not a compassionate person who thinks the 14-year-old should not have an abortion on these grounds. The compassionate person is the one who cares about the 14-year-old enough not to want her to suffer more for the sake of a being whose life can be terminated by imposing (relatively) very little suffering on it. It is not
selfish for an existing person to take a quality-only view. It is humane. People who take a quality-only view think it is right to work for the greatest total well-being of every individual who will ever exist. The only people whose interests (if they can even be said to have any) they disregard are people who never come into existence.

The Total View is misguided precisely because it takes possible people every bit as seriously as actual people. But whereas it matters very much to an actual person what her quality of life is, it does not matter at all to a potential person whether she ever comes into existence or what her chance of coming into existence is. Supporters of the Total View might respond that if the potential person were to become actual, then she would care that she exists and have an interest in existing. This does not seem relevant, though, since if a quality-only view is followed the additional persons who would have existed if the Total View had been followed instead would not become actual. Surely happy self-conscious beings who come to exist are glad they do, but this fact is irrelevant to the choice of a principle regulating the creation of self-conscious beings. On any principle we choose the only people who care whether they exist are the people who do exist. There is no chance of disappointment or disaffection on this account. Because existing people exist, it is important
that they are happy, but it is not clear why we should be at all moved by the fact that if nonexistent people existed they too would be happy. Since they do not exist, this does not matter. It is true that many happy people are not just happy that, given that they exist, they are happy. They are also happy that they exist. But like any other component of their happiness, the only reason their happiness that they exist matters is because they exist.

The Repugnant Conclusion as it is given by Parfit is not the only repugnant consequence of the Total View. There are also many microcosmic Repugnant Conclusions. These are cases such as the examples given above in which, if we accept the Total View, we make an existing person sacrifice her happiness or the happiness of other people who already exist (or who will exist regardless of the choice made) in order to bring a happy being into existence. It might be thought that these consequences could be avoided by imposing a person-affecting restriction on the Total View that guaranteed that a greater quantity of happiness would be preferred to a lesser if and only if the beings that exist in both states of affairs are not, on balance, made worse off by taking the option containing more beings and the larger surplus of happiness. This is not a sufficient solution, however, because the Repugnant Conclusion is still repugnant even if none of the
individuals who would exist in A would exist in Z. It is still the case that lives of an inferior quality are being lived in order that more lives can be lived. Admittedly there is no individual who is worse off in Z than in A if all the people are different, but there is still some, I think compelling, sense in which we can say that the people in Z are much worse off than the people in A because the quality of their lives is so much lower.

Section B Rebuttal of Sikora's Argument That the Repugnant Conclusion Is Not Repugnant

As a part of his argument in favor of the Total View, Sikora suggests that the actual world may not, in fact, be any better than Parfit's Outcome Z - i.e., he thinks it is quite possible that the lives of people existing on earth today are, on average, just barely worth living.\(^\text{15}\) He thinks this shows that the Repugnant Conclusion is not so repugnant after all. I think this is a hard argument to make out. After all, any utilitarian would find the current state of affairs repugnant on the grounds that utility is distributed in a way that is hardly in

accordance with utilitarian theory as it applies to Same People Choices. I guess Sikora means that if we take the repugnant distribution of utility as a given, we can still see that what the Total View recommends (given this distribution) is not repugnant. The argument is also a little strange because, as Parfit has pointed out, in the actual world an outcome like Outcome Z would not be recommended by the Total View. Since the earth's resources are finite and since it takes a large amount of resources just to get a person to the point at which life becomes worth living, it will not maximize total happiness to bring about an enormous population whose lives are only barely worth living. We can take the point of Sikora's discussion to be to argue that by considering the actual world, we can see that an outcome like Outcome Z would not be repugnant, so adopting a theory that could recommend Outcome Z in a hypothetical (though not in our actual) situation is not particularly unattractive.

In any event, especially given the way utility is currently distributed, the judgement that, on average, people's lives are just barely worth living may actually be a charitable assessment of the current situation. The vast majority of people in the world live in extreme poverty. It is not clear that their lives are worth living. In affluent countries it may be the case that most people have
lives that are worth living, or even well worth living, but even this is not clear. Many people have serious trauma (being raped, for example) or tragedy (premature death of a loved one, severely disabling accident, etc.) in their lives for which it takes a lot of good things to compensate. And even many of those who sail through life unscathed by any serious misfortune are remarkably ingenious at creating real (alcoholism, drug addiction) or imaginary (they "need" to lose weight, they "need" more money) problems for themselves which they then spend amazing amounts of time sweating rather than just being able to enjoy their good fortune. As a result it is extremely unlikely that the total net positive utility accruing to the relative handful of us that live in the affluent countries is enough to offset the total net disutility that I would guess should be held to accrue to the bulk of humanity that lives in poor countries. Regardless, if there are any countries in which total utility could be increased by decreasing the population, even the Total View would not endorse a population in that country as large as it is currently.

If it is true that in the actual world people's lives are, on balance, worth living, this hardly shows that the Repugnant Conclusion is not so bad. It is morally bankrupt to prefer a world in which people have lives that are, on
average, only barely worth living to a world in which a much smaller number of people have lives that are well worth living. This claim is not affected by the estimation that the actual world is one in which a huge number of people exist and have, on average, lives that are barely worth living. In fact, I would think Sikora's argument would convince very few because most would either deny that the current state of affairs is as bad as Outcome Z or agree that it is and believe that this hardly shows that such outcomes are acceptable if alternative outcomes in which people are better off are possible.

It might be argued that if a pessimistic assessment of the human condition is correct, then the Repugnant Conclusion is not so repugnant after all - not in virtue of Outcome Z being good but in virtue of the best possible outcome (given human nature) not being that much better. This does not seem true though. Even if a lot of people manage to live some fairly undesirable lives in the best of circumstances, it would be hard to find many people (except those with bad lives even in absolute terms) in the affluent countries who would be relatively indifferent about changing places with the average citizen of Bangladesh (or whatever country contains people whose lives are worth living but only barely). On a pessimistic view, we may be limited to choosing between lives at an Outcome Y
level and lives at an Outcome Z level, but this hardly shows that people do not care at which of these two levels they exist. Therefore it hardly shows that it is morally acceptable for a theory to be indifferent between the two outcomes - much less actually favor Outcome Z. If each of us were to compare the quality of life enjoyed by the person we know with the highest quality of life to that experienced by someone with a life barely worth living, I would imagine that most of us would decide that it is of great moral importance at which of these two levels an individual lives.

Sikora also argues that there is only a "danger of the repugnant conclusion" in the case in which adding population would increase total happiness but decrease average happiness. "But," he says, "the world as a whole is now obviously so crowded that adding extra people is likely to lower both the total and the average happiness."\(^{16}\) This is supposed to make us more accepting of the Total View because it shows us that, since repugnant conditions have already been brought about in our world today, the Total View would no longer be directing us to bring about repugnant population increases. This is not very comforting, however. Many people believe that the world today is overpopulated and that the population should

\(^{16}\)Ibid., p. 118.
be reduced. Of course Sikora could assert that the Total View would recommend some reduction of the population, but only to the point where further reductions would lower total happiness. Reducing the number of people on earth would probably begin to reduce total happiness well before it would stop increasing average happiness, and this is what is problematic for the Total View. Parfit has made up a hypothetical situation in which the Total View has this repugnant result. Of course it could be that in reality the numbers work out differently. Perhaps once we got to the point where further reducing the population would reduce total happiness, we would also be at the point where further reducing the population would have little or no tendency to increase average happiness. If Sikora could make a convincing case for this, then he would succeed in showing that while the Total View can have bad results in theory, it works well in practice. But he makes no attempt to demonstrate this and does nothing to show that the Total View would recommend a significant enough reduction in population to avoid the charge of leading to repugnant practical conclusions.

In fact, Sikora writes the following:

To be forced to the repugnant conclusion, you must not merely advocate a policy that will decrease the average in order to increase the total but the decrease must be from a high average to an average barely above neutrality. If there is to be such a decrease, the original
average would have to be many times as great as the new average for, to be high, the average must surely be many times as great as an average that is barely above neutrality. Thus the new population would have to be many times as large as the old one. Consequently, in order for you to be confronted with the repugnant choice it must not only be possible for you to raise the total by increasing the population: you must be able to raise the total by increasing the population to many times its current size. But that is clearly out of the question for the world as a whole and if it is attempted in some part of the world with a relatively small population such as Canada, there is the further fact that both space and natural resources desperately needed elsewhere would be used up, not to speak of the enormous increase there would be in world pollution problems. 17

Parfit has indeed discussed the Repugnant Conclusion in terms of a move from Outcome A to Outcome Z, but surely it is just as repugnant to refuse to move from Outcome Z back to Outcome A. So "to be forced to the repugnant conclusion" it would also be sufficient to oppose an increase to a high average from an average barely above neutrality. If there is to be such an increase, it would have to be possible for human beings to lead lives significantly above neutral and, if we are barely above neutral now, the new population would have to be many times smaller than the old one. (If, for example, the average happiness would triple if the population were cut in half, the Total View unproblematically recommends halving the population, so the reductions cannot have such dramatic

17Ibid., pp. 118-119. (emphasis deleted)
results if they are to pose a problem for the Total View.) So in order to be confronted with the repugnant choice we must be able to significantly raise the average by reducing the population to a fraction of its current size. This is not clearly out of the question for the world as a whole (at least over the course of a few generations), and if it were attempted in some part of the world with a large population such as Bangladesh, there would be no "further facts" arguing against what would obviously be a change for the better in Bangladesh. (Bangladesh may not seem like a fair example, since the average life there may not be worth living, but each person can take as an example whatever country she thinks meets the description of being populated by people whose lives are only barely worth living. In addition, of course, even if life is judged to be not, on average, worth living in Bangladesh, if the population there were decreased eventually the point where life is barely worth living would be reached, and the choice of stopping there or continuing to increase the quality of life by further reducing the population would have to be confronted.) Again, I do not know that a case cannot be made for the Total View having acceptable consequences in practice. As Parfit points out, when the population is so large that life is only barely worth living, total utility will not be maximized. So in fact, even the Total View
would not recommend stopping a decrease in the population of Bangladesh at the point at which life is only barely worth living. Sikora's discussion gives the impression that the Total View endorses the choice of a population at just the size it is now because he says it would not call for an increase but does not say it would call for a decrease. This is strange since the whole time Sikora was writing the article the world's population was increasing. It is hard to see how it could be sensible to simply talk as though the view endorses the current population size when this is continuously increasing. In addition since the current situation is different in different countries, it seems unlikely that a view could endorse the status quo everywhere.

Sikora also argues that the fact that the Total View implies the Repugnant Conclusion is not a mark against it simply because he thinks that every view implies the Repugnant Conclusion. He gives an example in which a nuclear war has left all of the survivors sterile. They could repopulate the world with very happy test-tube babies, but this would require them to make sacrifices that would further reduce their already very low quality of life. As Sikora argues, on a view such as mine, bringing these babies into existence would be the wrong thing to do.

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18 Ibid., p. 115.
because it would harm everyone then alive for the sake of people who need not be brought into existence at all. (It is hard to believe the survivors would not get great happiness out of raising the happy babies and continuing the species after this disaster, so apparently the hardships the project must impose on the survivors are truly extreme.) According to Sikora, this shows that a view such as mine embraces the Repugnant Conclusion because it prefers a world (without the babies) in which average happiness is very low to a world (with the babies) in which average happiness is very high.

It seems, however, that Sikora is mistaken about what it is that makes the Repugnant Conclusion repugnant. What is repugnant about choosing a world in which the average quality of life is low over one in which it is much higher is taking less happy people when one could have very much happier people instead. In his example, one cannot choose to have the happy babies instead of the very less happy survivors of the war. The only choice involves whether to have the much happier people in addition to the not very happy population. In fact in his example the choice is between having a group of not very happy people or having instead a group of even less happy people and in addition a group of very happy people. Obviously a supporter of a view like mine will maintain that the structural
dissimilarity between Sikora's example and Parfit's is key and that whereas Parfit's Repugnant Conclusion is truly repugnant, the broader conclusion Sikora is referring to is not always repugnant and is, in fact, not repugnant when one chooses a world with a lower average quality of life merely because one fails to advocate adding happy people rather than because one fails to advocate replacing less happy people with happier people. I certainly cannot see why it would be repugnant to prefer a state of affairs in which Planet A is inhabited by people whose lives contain little net happiness and Planet B is uninhabited to a state of affairs in which Planet A is inhabited by the same people whose lives have been made even less happy and Planet B is inhabited by very happy people.

Sikora maintains that at least part of what makes the Repugnant Conclusion repugnant is not the difference between the two states of the world but the low quality of life in the "inferior" world. I think the comparative aspects must constitute the entirety of the repugnancy, but suppose one agrees with Sikora. If it is repugnant that the survivors of the nuclear war have such a low quality of life, how is this repugnancy lessened by actually lowering the quality of their lives still further? Of course doing

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so allows for the existence of much happier people, but why should this lessen the repugnancy of the original people living lives at such a low level? He cannot say it is worth it because it is for the sake of these happier people, as what he claims to find repugnant is not the additional decrease in the quality of the survivors' lives that would occur if the babies were brought into existence but rather the original low quality of life of the survivors. (And they do not live at this low level for the sake of the babies but on account of the war.) It seems clear that it makes a world better if it is inhabited by people who are better off instead of by people who are worse off. There does not seem to be any reason to hold that it makes a world better if it is inhabited by better-off people as well as the worse-off people who existed previous to the influx of the happier people. A correct view would maintain that the survivors do not have to raise the babies because it would prefer these barely happy people to the even less happy people they become if they raise the babies. It is not a case of preferring less happy people to the happier people they could be replaced with as the Total View does in Parfit's example.
Chapter 3 Argument Against Compromise Views

In the first two chapters I have attempted to show that one of the most obvious ways of using utilitarianism to handle questions of future generations - viz. the Total View - fails. One of the problems with this view is arguably that it is insufficiently person-affecting. Since all of the standard views except entirely person-affecting views suffer from this defect and since arguably a person-affecting restriction, which would disallow compromising the utility of particular beings for the sake of beings that need not exist, could be conjoined to any one of them, this issue can be set aside temporarily. The Total View embodies the belief that there is no difference between increasing utility by increasing the utility of those who exist and by increasing the number of beings who exist and experience utility. It says that one should always simply maximize the total utility that is experienced regardless of whether this is accomplished via the creation of more utility per person or of more people who have utility. It seems to me that this view is simply incorrect and that no reason can be given for valuing the creation of happy people but only for valuing making people who exist happy. No proof of this can be given, however, so the strongest
argument against the Total View is that it leads to the Repugnant Conclusion. A person who can accept the Repugnant Conclusion, then, should probably endorse the Total View as the correct approach. If, however, a person finds the Repugnant Conclusion to really be repugnant, alternative approaches exist that can be considered. The next views to be discussed are those that share with the Total View the belief that there is value in the creation of happy beings. Unlike the Total View, these views try to avoid the Repugnant Conclusion by only accepting a qualified or watered-down version of this belief. Advocates of these views seek to draw some fine line that allows them to avoid the Repugnant Conclusion while not committing themselves to a quality-only approach, which is seen by some as extreme. On these compromise views the quality of lives lived is not all that matters but, unlike on the Total View, neither is the total quantity of utility that is experienced all that matters. In Section A of this chapter, versions of these inbetween sorts of views discussed and shown to be problematic by Parfit are considered. In Section B, a version of this kind of view developed by Ng is discussed. It is my contention that no satisfactory compromise view can be found because it is incoherent to place some value on the total quantity of utility. Either one should place all value on it and
accept the Total View or one should place no independent value on it and accept a quality-only approach. In Section C the reasons why people are attracted to compromise views and are loathe to accept a quality-only view in the first place are discussed.

Section A  Parfit's Attempt to Formulate a Plausible Compromise View

Parfit, who rejects the idea of taking a quality-only approach, does a thorough job of rejecting all the possible alternatives to it that he can imagine. He outlines seven possible ways one might answer the question of whether a lower quality of life may always be outweighed by an increase in the number of lives lived. Of the seven views, the only plausible view is the view that only quality has value. This view will be discussed in Part II. The other six views are all hopeless as Parfit goes on to show. The first view he considers is the one discussed in the last chapter, viz. the view that "only quantity has value."\(^\text{20}\)

He, of course, rejects this view on the grounds that it implies the Repugnant Conclusion. The second view he considers is the view that "both [quantity and quality]  

\(^{20}\text{Parfit, op. cit., p. 403.}\)
always have value." Parfit dismisses this view because it also implies the Repugnant Conclusion, as like the Total View it embraces the belief that quantity can always outweigh quality. The only difference is that it would take a larger increase in quantity to outweigh a certain decrease in quality on this kind of view than it would on the Total View.

With the spelling out of the third view, Parfit begins his exploration of views that seem so blatantly implausible that the fact that they are proposed at all suggests that the territory between the Total View and a quality-only view is far from fertile. He explains that according to View 3 "Quantity has no value in lives whose quality is below a certain level [the "Valueless Level"]. If these lives are worth living, they have personal value. But the fact that such lives are lived does not make the outcome better." Parfit points out that this view implies the following version of the Repugnant Conclusion:

(R) If there were ten billion people living, all with a very high quality of life, there must be some much larger imaginable population whose existence would be better, even though its members have lives that are barely above the Valueless Level.

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21 Loc. cit.

22 Ibid., p. 412.

23 Ibid., p. 415.
The view also implies the following variant of what Parfit calls the "Absurd Conclusion":

(A) Suppose that, in some history of the future, there would always be an enormous number of people, and for each one person who suffers, and has a life that is not worth living, there would be ten billion people whose lives are worth living, though their quality of life is not quite as high as the Valueless Level. This would be worse than if there were no future people. This is implied because the theory attaches no value to lives being lived that are worth living but below the Valueless Level, and disvalue to lives being lived that are not worth living. Parfit points out that if the Valueless Level is set only slightly above the point at which life ceases to be worth living, (A) is not very absurd. When the Valueless Level is set this low, however, (R) is repugnant. If the Valueless Level is set higher, then (R) becomes less repugnant, but (A) becomes more absurd.

While these results are surely a sufficient reason for rejecting the third view, there is an even more basic one. The whole notion of a Valueless Level seems implausible. Parfit says that a life can have personal value on this view and yet have no moral value. If a life has personal value it is worth living, but if it is below the Valueless Level, there is no moral value in it being lived. Of

24Loc. cit.
course I agree that (assuming there are no positive effects on others) there is no moral value in any life being lived as opposed to its not being lived at all, but surely the idea of a Valueless Level is suspect. If there were something good about lives being lived (as opposed to not being lived) above the Valueless Level, then there would be something good about lives being lived (as opposed to not being lived) that are worth living but below the Valueless Level. To hold that some lives that are worth living have value but that other lives that are worth living - but less worth living - have no value, seems unjustifiable. If the existence of a million people at +50 is held to be preferable to the existence of no one, then it seems arbitrary to say that the existence of a million people at +1 is not preferable to the existence of no one (if these are the happiest people who can be brought into existence). The only reason to equate moral value with personal value at a higher level but not at a lower level would be that there is something intrinsically repugnant about people living lives that are barely worth living. But the idea of people living lives that are only barely worth living is only repugnant if it is at the cost of people not living as high a quality of life as could have been lived. I do not deny that most of us find the notion of people living lives that are barely worth living repugnant. But I think the
reason for this is that in the actual world there is no excuse for people living these kinds of lives. Obviously in our world it is not the case that the best we could have done was to bring about the dismal state of affairs we have in fact brought about. With a smaller world population, social justice, and more ecological values, people could obviously have lives much better than most do now.

Perhaps Parfit finds the idea that the living of low quality lives lacks moral value whereas the living of high quality lives has moral value plausible because he confuses lives that are not worth living with lives that are. When he discusses Kavka's views, he states that "There may be people who have lives that are worth living, but whose lives are so diseased or deprived that, even apart from effects on others, it is bad that these people ever live." He also says "Though such a life is worth living, and is of value for the person whose life it is, it would have been in itself better if this life had never been lived." How can this be? He is clear that what he has in mind is that it would be better if these people never existed even if it is not the case that better-off

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26 Parfit, op. cit., p. 433.
27 Loc. cit.
people could have existed in their place and even if their existence would not make anyone else worse off or morally require us to make any one else worse off. This claim does not make any sense, so the only thing I can conclude is that when Parfit says these people "have lives that are worth living," he does not mean what he says. He indicates that he is not serious in describing these lives as worth living when he says that in order for it to be intrinsically bad that these lives are ever lived it must be the case that these lives are "gravely deficient in all of the features that can make a life worth living. Though worth living, they must be crimped and mean."28 I'm not sure what a "crimped and mean" life would be like, but it does not make sense to me that a life that is "gravely deficient in all of the features that can make a life worth living" could be a life that is worth living. It may well be true that some people who have such lives consider them worth living, but I doubt that they actually are worth living. If a life is worth living, the life must contain more good things than bad things. If this is so, it could not be a bad thing to experience. If a life is not bad for the person whose life it is or for anyone else, and if a better life could not have been experienced instead, then there are simply no grounds for holding that it is bad that

28Loc. cit.
such a life is lived. It must be remembered that a life that is just barely a positive experience is just that. It cannot be further thought that it would not be because it would be so depressing to have such a life. That depression has already been included in the calculation, and the life turned out to still be, on balance, a positive experience.

The fourth view that Parfit considers is the view that "There is no limit to the value of quantity in lives whose quality is below a certain level, but no amount of this value could be as good as some amount of the value of quantity in lives whose quality is above a certain level." It is not clear what would motivate a person to propose such a theory, but Parfit thinks that it can be seen to be plausible in certain kinds of cases. For instance, he suggests that there is no number of happy oyster lives that contain as much value as is found in the life of Socrates. He calls View 4 "the Lexical View" and formulates it (as it applies to human beings only) in this way: "There is no limit to the positive value of quantity. It is always better if an extra life is lived that is worth living. But no amount of Mediocre lives could have as much value as one Blissful life." Parfit rejects this view.

29Ibid., p. 403.
30Ibid., p. 414.
because it too implies versions of the Absurd and Repugnant Conclusions. (Substitute the word "Mediocre" for the word "Valueless" in (A) and (R) above.)

View 5 is the view that "The value of quantity can never be above certain upper limits. As the actual level of quantity increases, the value of extra quantity declines and asymptotically approaches zero. When the level of quality is higher, there is a higher upper limit to the value of quantity."

View 6 is considered by Parfit to be less plausible than View 5 but is the simpler statement that "The value of quantity has an upper limit, and in the world today this limit has been reached." Parfit is driven to reject both Views 5 and 6 because he thinks that we cannot possibly claim that there is any limit to the disvalue of quantity, and when the view that there is not is combined with the view that there is a limit to its value, the result is the Absurd Conclusion. Basically the point is that happy lives can outweigh miserable lives but only until the upper limit to the value of quantity is reached. When this limit has been exceeded, it is no longer the case that additional happy lives can compensate for additional miserable lives since additional miserable lives continue to be bad, but additional happy lives have

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31 Ibid., p. 403.
32 Loc. cit.
ceased to be good. As a result, our assessment of the relative value of different outcomes ends up depending on whether the people in question are to live concurrently or in succession (since on Parfit's interpretation of the views the limit is reached in the concurrent case but not in the successive case). Parfit notes that such a result is too absurd to accept, and the whole approach seems so implausible from the outset that the fact that Parfit will even consider it suggests that any even seemingly promising compromise approach would be hard to come by. The basic problems with View 6 are readily apparent. Since quantity is a function of both the number of lives lived and the quality of those lives, it is absurd to say that the value of quantity can never be above a certain upper limit or that the value of quantity has reached its upper limit in the world today. This would mean that there would be no value in doubling the quality of life of everyone now in existence. Parfit attempts to avoid this problem by suggesting that the view could be supplemented with a principle that places value on higher quality lives being lived regardless of whether the value of quantity has reached its limit. He cannot figure out how to formulate such a principle, however. Moreover, any such principle could not consistently be held in conjunction with a view that sets a limit on the value of quantity, as this amounts
to asserting that there is and is not a limit on the value of quantity. It does not help to interpret "quantity" as referring to the number of lives lived as opposed to the total quantity of happiness in the statement of View 6. If increasing the number of lives lived had no effect on the quality of life, then there would be no conceivable rationale for the claim that increasing the population has value up to a certain point but then ceases to or for the claim that there is no value in increasing the population in the world today (given the assumption that there is sometimes value in increasing the population). View 5, which seems to be one way of attempting to rectify some of the problematic aspects of View 6, is not discussed in any detail by Parfit. It is, however, quite similar to Yew-Kwang Ng's Theory X', the defects of which are discussed in the following section.

Section B Ng's Attempt to Formulate a Plausible Compromise View

Other authors have also explored theories that give quantity (in the sense of total utility) some value but not total value in an attempt to find some middle ground between the Total View and a quality-only view. Ng argues against taking a middle ground, but also proposes a theory for those who do. Both pieces of his essay help show that
no compromise between the Total View and a quality-only view makes sense.

To show that there is no middle ground, Ng has us consider the following alternative worlds:

A: 1 single utility monster with 100 billion utils.
B: 1 billion individuals each with 200 utils.
C: 1 billion billion individuals each with 0.001 utils.

Ng criticizes people who would prefer B to both C and A on the grounds that "if we prefer B to A, we must logically prefer C to B. Alternatively, if we prefer B to C, we must prefer A to B, i.e., preferring one single utility monster, even if total utility decreases." I agree with Ng on this point, but I do not agree with him in thinking that the latter is "a more repugnant result than the Repugnant Conclusion!" He points out that "if we consider a life of 0.001 util as barely worth living in comparison to a life of 200 utils, we ought also to admit that a life of 200 utils is barely worth living in comparison to a life of 100 billion utils." Perhaps a supporter of a compromise view would respond that a life of .001 util is barely worth

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34 Loc. cit.
35 Loc. cit.
36 Ibid., p. 243.
living in absolute terms because it contains (assuming .001 util is very little) just a tiny surplus of pleasure over displeasure. A life of 200 utils, however, may be well worth living in absolute terms - containing a significant surplus of happiness over unhappiness. So the fact that such a life could be described as "barely worth living in comparison to a life of 100 billion utils" might not shake such a theorist's faith in choosing B as the best of the alternative worlds. Nevertheless there seems to be no reason for preferring B to A that is not also a reason for preferring C to B, and no reason for preferring B to C that is not also a reason for preferring A to B. The reason Ng chooses C as opposed to A is that he thinks there is value in bringing happy people into existence. It does seem to me that if one believes this, one should go with Ng and accept the Total View rather than cooking up some arbitrary alternative, the precise formulation of which cannot be explained.

The unsatisfactoriness of compromise views is demonstrated by Ng's "Theory X'" which he proposes for those unable to accept the Total View (or a quality-only view). According to Theory X', one should maximize f(N)U where f(N) is a concave function of the number of individuals and U is average utility. He gives as "an example of a concave function suitable for our purpose here
... the following, where $1 > \alpha > 0, \ldots f = 1 + \alpha + \alpha^2 + \ldots + \alpha^{n-1}$.\textsuperscript{37}

Absolutely no guidance is given for either the choice of the function or of the value for $\alpha$. And it is not clear how anyone could argue over these things. What reasons could be given for setting $\alpha = 0.99$ rather than setting $\alpha = 0.9$? It seems that in order to choose the "correct" function and value for $\alpha$ that an $X'$ theorist would simply experiment with numerical examples until she found the function and value for $\alpha$ that suited her. But it seems unlikely that any theorist would have such a finely-tuned intuition that she would be able to feel any special confidence in a unique function and value for $\alpha$. It is also unlikely that several such theorists working alone would converge on the same function and value for $\alpha$. And the only reason they might be able to come to a consensus were they to get together and negotiate is because none of them would have a strong conviction that the function and value for $\alpha$ that they would settle on working alone are the uniquely correct ones. They might find some range of functions and values for $\alpha$ acceptable. But even this range would probably be vague, with some options clearly acceptable, some clearly unacceptable, but some neither clearly acceptable nor clearly unacceptable. And whatever choice is finally made, no justification will exist for why

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., p. 245.
this function and value were chosen instead of some other combination that gives slightly different results. It does not seem that such foundationless formulas could possibly correctly capture correct moral principles. If one holds that the value of quantity decreases with a decrease in quality and that the value of additional quantity decreases with an increase in total quantity, surely one's first task is to spell out why this is. Maybe if the reasoning supporting the view were made explicit it would also support one specific formulation of it rather than another. It seems doubtful, however, that any reasoning can be given that does either job.

According to Theory X', increases in the population are more desirable when the quality of life of the current population (as well, of course, of the additional people) is higher and when the current population is smaller. The person who advocates Theory X' would be someone who thinks that there is sometimes value in adding additional happy people to the world and that whether and how much value there is in doing this depends in part on how many people already exist and on what the quality of their lives is. This seems silly though. It is true that the more of us there are, the more we destroy the environment, but the reason this is objectionable is precisely because it lowers the quality of lives that are lived. The number of people
who exist does not seem to have any importance in and of itself.

Another problem with views such as Ng's Theory X' is that, as Ng acknowledges, they do not handle the "Mere Addition" problem discussed by Parfit in a way that is completely satisfactory. We have what Parfit calls a case of Mere Addition "when, in one of two outcomes, there exist extra people (1) who have lives worth living, (2) who affect no one else, and (3) whose existence does not involve social injustice." The cases of Mere Addition that Ng's theory disallows may be the "least compelling," but if Theory X' is correct, then it should be possible to give some reason for thinking it is correct to forbid these cases of Mere Addition. This seems unlikely however.

If we use the formula and value for $\alpha$ that Ng has chosen as his examples, it turns out that it would be obligatory to add one person at one unit to four people at five units. It would be impermissible, however, to add one person at one unit to four people at 100. This is bizarre. In both cases, we assume that the additional being will be at one when the utility of all is maximized. (In order to be a case of Mere Addition, it must be the case that no social injustice is involved. On the assumption that we accept utilitarianism for Same People Choices, no social injustice

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38 Parfit, op. cit., p. 420.
injustice is involved if and only if we distribute utility so as to maximize it.) There does not seem to be any reason for holding that it would be a good thing to bring this being into existence if other beings had an average quality of life of five but not if they had an average quality of life of 100. What does the one thing (how well other beings are living) have to do with the other (whether it is a good thing to create another being who does not affect the original group)? The supposed relevance of the quality of life of unaffected beings is completely enigmatic. It is also unclear why the number of unaffected beings should be relevant. If we use the formula and the value Ng gives for \( \alpha \) in his example, it turns out that whereas it would be obligatory to add one person at one to four people at five, it would be morally wrong to add one person at one to fifty people at five. But there is no reason why the rightness of adding a person who affects no one else should depend on how many beings already exist. In general, then, there is no rationale for holding that quantity ever gives us a reason to oppose Mere Addition.

Theory X' does not take into account whether the happy beings brought into existence would be brought into existence at the same time or over the course of several generations. On Theory X' there is just as much value in one generation of ten people at ten as there is in ten
generations of one person at ten. This seems sensible until one considers what the impact of this is on the problem of Mere Addition. If we use the function and the value for $\alpha$ given by Ng, we have seen that while it is obligatory to add one person at one to four people at five, it is impermissible to add one person at one to fifty people at five. I believe this is absurd as it stands. But it is even more clearly absurd when one realizes that this means that while it is obligatory to add one person at one to a lone generation of four people at five, it is impermissible to add one person at one to a generation of four people at five if someday in the future 46 other people at five will come to exist. Ng could not correct this problem by applying the formula separately to each generation because then the formula would not help us correctly answer questions about future generations. It would then fail to capture the effect of the quality of lives lived and the number of lives lived in one generation on the possibilities for the next. It might recommend three billion people at 25 over one billion people at 25 in the first generation even if the existence of three billion people at once would mean that no future generations could ever live as high as 25 (or at all) whereas a population of one billion people at 25 could be sustained for an indefinite number of generations.
In addition, the total arbitrariness of the moral advice given by Theory X' is clear when we consider that, using Ng's function and value for α, we get the result that whereas it is obligatory to add one person at one to 42 people at five, it is impermissible to add one person at one to 43 people at five. So even if you think it is sensible to disallow some cases of Mere Addition, regardless of what function and value of α you choose, you will be hard pressed to explain why it is morally correct to require a Mere Addition right below the cutoff point and to forbid a Mere Addition right above it. If one were to ask individuals whether they think there would be moral value in adding one person at one to a population of 42 people at five, and then were to ask the same individuals whether they think there would be moral value in adding one person at one to a population of 43 people at five, very few of them would give different answers to the two questions. In effect then, any version of Theory X' will be in perfect accordance with essentially no one's intuitions. One could say that the theory clarifies intuitions that are necessarily vague, but this is not enough. It does not do this in any way that gives one any confidence that whereas it really is right to add one person at one to 42 at five, it really is wrong to add one person at one to 43 at five. Since no rationale is given
for the function and value of \( \alpha \) chosen, no rationale is given for why 42 people is the cutoff point in this situation. Unless some argument can be given to support the counterintuitive results of a moral theory, there is no reason to conclude that the theory is right and the intuitions are wrong. In this case, not only is there no argument that can be given in support of the choice of one cutoff point as opposed to another, there is also no argument that can be given in support of the existence of any cutoff point whatsoever. That is, there is no reason to forbid any case of Mere Addition, so searching for the correct way of drawing the line between those cases that should be allowed and those that should be forbidden is obviously a waste of time.

What Ng's attempt to formulate a Theory \( X' \) shows is that a problem like Mere Addition is not going to be solved by some smooth theory that is just some compromise between the Total and the Average Views. Instead we need principles that reflect the fact that a lowering in average well-being that is actually caused by increasing population (in the sense that the greater number of people decreases the well-being of some) is different than a lowering in average well-being that is caused by adding people who are not as happy as others (when total utility is maximized) but who have no negative effect on the well-being of others
in the population. Ng thinks we must choose between accepting the Total View and the Repugnant Conclusion or accepting a Theory X' and forbidding at least some Mere Additions, but this simply is not true. There is no reason why a theory need put these two very different ways of lowering average utility in the same basket. The correct theory will be one that is complicated enough to make a distinction between cases of Mere Addition and increases in the population that are not cases of Mere Addition.

The fact that people are worse off cannot be morally outweighed by the fact that there are more people living if there is no moral value attaching to bringing people into existence. If you do attach value to bringing people into existence, then it seems that you must accept the Total View and the Repugnant Conclusion. No compromise between the view that there is value in bringing happy beings into existence and the view that there is not seems plausible.

Section C There Is No Reason to Seek a Compromise View

Before leaving the subject of compromise views, the reasons why people are attracted to them in the first place need to be addressed. In large part people seem to be motivated to search for an inbetween view because they feel that accepting a quality-only view has results just as
counterintuitive as accepting a quantity-only view (i.e., the Total View). For instance, if a quality-only view is accepted, we must accept the conclusion discussed by Parfit\(^{39}\) that a history in which only two people ever live is better than a history in which millions of people live and have lives that are well worth living if none of the people in the second history are quite as happy as the two people in the first history. Parfit asserts that "Most of us find this ... too extreme. Most of us believe that there is value in quantity, but that this value has, in any period, an upper limit."\(^{40}\) But as discussed earlier, a rationale for the belief that quantity has value, but only up to a certain point, seems hard to come by. The only way to make sense of this idea is to think in terms of a finite living environment, such as earth, and to think that there is a limit to how many people the environment can comfortably support. In other words, the only plausible reason for saying that quantity has value but only up to a certain point is that quantity either starts to negatively affect quality at that point or starts to reduce it below a certain level. If quantity has value, the limit on that value is set by considerations of quality and not of quantity itself. If quantity had no effect on quality, it

\(^{39}\)Ibid., pp. 401-402.

\(^{40}\)Ibid., p. 416.
would be senseless to take the position Parfit takes here and say that quantity has value, but only up to a certain point. If twenty million happy lives were better than ten million, then thirty million equally happy lives must be better than twenty million. It only makes sense to draw a line if there is some reason to, and any reason one can come up with - such as limited resources - will ultimately be a reason based on considerations of quality. Once it is admitted that the limit on the value of quantity (if it is thought to have any independent value) is determined by concerns about quality, it remains to consider how low quality has to get before additional quantity has no value. It should be evident that this number must be relative to what could obtain given different numbers of people. Surely if the highest quality of life that any being was capable of was the quality of life experienced by Parfit's Z-people, it would not be wrong to bring these people into existence. Their lives are worth living, so if they were the best lives possible for anyone, there would be no reason to prefer that these people never exist. So with the exception that lives that are not worth living should not be lived (at least when there are no compensating benefits), it would seem that the point at which quantity should be sacrificed for quality is relative to what qualities of life can be brought about. And to pick any
other cutoff point for attaching value to increased quantity besides the level at which quality begins to decline seems arbitrary, unjustifiable, and wrong. It is impossible to believe that anyone would really think that the value of quantity, in any period, has an upper limit that is not based on considerations of quality. A person who really believed this would cap the value of quantity at the same amount regardless of the size, number, and resources of the planets available for inhabitation. And surely this would be a crazy thing to do.

Perhaps one reason that people such as Parfit find the idea that only quality has value too extreme is that it is so contrary to common sense and experience to suppose that the existence of a third person on earth would lower the quality of life of the first two that we tend to believe that it has to be morally permissible to have more than two people - not because we think quantity has any independent value but in fact because we do not believe that when the numbers are so small an increased quantity could really lower the quality of life. If some of these hypothetical situations are fleshed out, it may be more apparent that quantity has no independent value. Suppose we have two people on an isolated island. The island can comfortably support several people, but this couple does not wish to have a child. It would negatively affect the quality of
their lives. It seems wrong to hold that because it would increase the total amount of utility experienced that the world would be better if they went ahead and had the child. And a view that made its answer to the question of whether the couple should have a child depend on what total quantity of happiness was being experienced on other parts of the globe would be absurd. There is no reason why these people should have a child that will lessen their happiness. Now consider an example in which human beings only exist on a single island, and the island can comfortably support two people. If there are more than two people, much more labor per capita will be required to produce food for everyone. If this were the situation, I would hope that people like Parfit would not still say that a view that holds that a two-person world might be the best is too extreme. Even if we suppose a third person would not dramatically reduce the quality of life, the results of a quality-only view are not unintuitive. Suppose that if there were three people the population could still live off of effortlessly produced fruits and vegetables except for once in a great while. They would either have to labor just a little to produce some extra food to store for the occasional time when only enough natural produce was available to feed two, or they would have to suffer a few hunger pangs every once in awhile if no extra food were
grown. Is it extreme to insist that it is bad to bring a third person into existence if this means the first two people will have to have an extra headache now and again or do a bit of unpleasant work now and again? I do not think so, but since some people probably think it is, it should also be remembered that there are degrees of badness and moral wrongness. If a third person would cause the first two one extra headache in each of their entire lives, a quality-only view says it would be wrong to bring this third person into existence. But it need not say it would be very wrong. It would be as blameworthy as pursuing any other course of action that would cause two people to each have a headache, and, of course, it would not be blameworthy at all if the being who chooses to bring the third person into existence gets enough utility from this to offset the disutility associated with the headaches the action will bring about. It is only when people have children who seriously negatively affect the lives of others (without a sufficient compensating benefit to themselves) that a quality-only view finds anything seriously wrong with their actions. It does not seem implausible to hold that it is a tiny moral wrong to have a child if it causes someone a headache and has zero net effect on anyone else (including the parents), and this is all that is insisted on by a quality-only view. The notion
that is extremely different from what we are used to is that of a world so constituted that increasing the population from two to three actually decreases the quality of life. We live on a planet that can support millions of beings at a time for generations without compromising the quality of life. I submit that it is because of this background knowledge that a view that says it might be best if only two people had ever lived seems extreme. In the actual history of the world, however, a quality-only view would not have this result.

The other way in which opponents of a quality-only view try to get us to feel that a quality-only view is too extreme is by relying on examples such as Ng's single utility monster in which the being whose happiness would have to be compromised if more beings were created is unimaginably happy by the standards of our experience to begin with. It is naive to think that people who want to attribute independent value to both quantity and quality are going to determine what trade-offs it is correct to make in a way that is not biased by what they are familiar with here on earth. Once this is admitted, then it would seem that a counterexample that is unrealistic (such as one in which a being can be brought into existence that can experience more happiness than we can fathom or in which the quality of life of human beings on earth declines when
the population is increased from two) cannot disprove the theory. Given that our judgements are biased by our experience, if a theory is to be shown false on the basis of having counterintuitive consequences, it must be shown that it can give counterintuitive results even when the types of beings and living environments in the example are types with which we are familiar.

If we consider how the number of people that exist actually affects the quality of life, it seems that a quality-only approach makes sense. The most realistic possibility is that increasing the number of people on earth (from one) improves the quality of life for awhile, then it has no effect on the quality of life, and then it begins to decrease it. Alternatively, it could be that the quality of life begins to decline immediately after the highest point is reached. In either case, a quality-only theory says that the population should be increased as long as this increases the quality of life and should not be increased past the point at which the quality of life begins to decline. It is hard to understand rejecting these judgements. Of course hypothetically, but hardly realistically, given the size and resources of the earth, the quality of life could constantly decrease with an increase in population starting immediately with the increase from one person to two. Or it could be that
increasing the population increases the quality of life for awhile, but that it begins to decrease the quality of life very soon - when the population is very small. I do not see why any of these possibilities should shake our faith that quality is all that matters. There is no reason why it should concern us if the earth's population were very small. If that were what the planet was best suited for, as reflected by the quality of life it could support, then it does not seem counterintuitive to hold that a very small population would be ideal.

Another consequence of a view that places no value on the existence of happy beings as opposed to the existence of no beings is that there would be nothing morally wrong with taking actions that would lead to the extinction of our (or any other) species if these actions did not negatively affect existing beings along the way (or members of other species who will exist in the future). It would clearly be morally permissible on such a view to destroy the whole world if this could be done painlessly and instantaneously. Obviously some people have intuitions that are in strong conflict with this position. Some people think that it would be a terrible thing if no happy creatures ever existed at all or if our species (or other species) became extinct. But, as argued in Chapter 1, the reasoning behind this point of view is completely obscure.
If no people or other animals existed, there would be no one to whom this would matter. Nobody would care if it happened, so we should not care about the prospect of it happening. The fact that some people care now that it not happen is only relevant to the question of whether it would be moral to threaten to end the world and not to the question of whether it would be moral to just do it. Those who disagree about the extinction of the species may also reject utilitarianism. But the only threat to the claim that taking a quality-only approach is the correct way of extending utilitarianism to cover the question of how many people should ever exist can come from people who have reasons consistent with utilitarianism for opposing the instantaneous and painless extinction of the species. I do not think a (classical) utilitarian can oppose extinction because it seems that what matters is only that beings that exist are happy and not that happy beings exist.
In Part I, it was argued that the Total View and views that place some independent but limited value on quantity should be rejected because there is no reason to place value on the creation of happy beings. The Total View was also rejected because it leads to the Repugnant Conclusion. Additional reasons were also given for rejecting compromise views. These views seem to be incoherent, vague or arbitrary, and either fail to avoid the Repugnant Conclusion or to allow all cases of Mere Addition. In Part II, views that place no value on the creation of happy beings will be discussed. One possibility would be to take an entirely person-affecting view that places no value on the creation of happy beings. On such a view, it is never permissible to bring a being into existence if it decreases the utility of beings who already exist (or who will exist regardless), and there is only reason to bring a happy being into existence if this would increase the utility of those who already exist (or who will exist regardless). In Chapter 4, I will argue that this view should be rejected because, among other things, it fails to endorse what Parfit calls "The Same Number Quality Claim" - i.e., the claim that "If in either of two outcomes the same number of people would ever live, it would be bad if those who live
are worse off, or have a lower quality of life, than those who would have lived."¹ In Chapter 5, I will present two versions of a quality-only approach that have been widely discussed, the Average View and Singer's 1976 principle, and the objections that have been raised to them. I will argue for a revised version of the Average View and, in Chapter 6, consider objections to it.

Chapter 4  Argument Against an Entirely Person-Affecting View

Section A  Parfit's Same Number Quality Claim

According to Jan Narveson, "the principle of utility requires that before we have a moral reason for doing something, it must be because of a change in the happiness of some of the affected persons."² On his view there is no value in the creation of happy people, but even so, this entirely person-affecting approach should not be accepted by those of us who share this intuition (as Narveson himself has realized). On such a view, if no individual is negatively affected by an action, then the action is permissible (as long as no alternative action that would positively affect an individual is possible). As a result, the Repugnant Conclusion is only considered repugnant if some of the individuals who exist in A also exist in Z. We have no grounds for choosing one world of happy people over another on an entirely person-affecting view (that places no value on the creation of happy beings) if none of the same beings exist in both. On this kind of view, we should be morally indifferent between a world of one million beings at +5 and a world of two million different beings at

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+100. Both quantity and quality have no independent value on such a view. The only thing that matters is whether particular beings are better or worse off in one state of affairs than in another (and a person is not considered better off if she exists (and is happy) in one state of affairs and does not exist in another). In particular, then, on an entirely person-affecting view of this type there is no reason we should accept Parfit's Same Number Quality Claim for Same Number Choices (i.e., choices that affect the identity but not the number of future persons). Surely Parfit is correct, however, in asserting that if the same number of people will live in each of two outcomes, we must prefer the outcome in which the people will be better off. To illustrate the issues involved, Parfit uses the example of a 14-year-old girl who decides to have a child.

Because she is so young, she gives her child a bad start in life. Though this will have bad effects throughout this child's life, his life will, predictably, be worth living. If this girl had waited for several years, she would have had a different child, to whom she would have given a better start in life.3

The child that could have been born later would have had more of what we care about people having than the child that is born now will. Since the expected amounts of happiness are different, it makes sense that the utilitarian must say that it would have been better if the

3Parfit, op. cit., p. 358.
14-year-old had waited to have a child. On an entirely person-affecting view that places no value on the creation of happy beings, however, it makes no difference whether the 14-year-old has a child now or later (if no existing individual is affected by her choice), since different individuals will be born depending on the time of conception.

Parfit presents many further examples that show that we should, or already do, accept the Same Number Quality Claim. In his "Depletion" case, for example, the quality of life will be slightly higher for the next three centuries if we deplete certain resources rather than conserving them. If depletion takes place, however, the quality of life for many centuries after this will be much lower than it would have been had we conserved the resources. Parfit thinks that because the different policies would affect people's lifestyles that, within a few generations, no one will live if we engage in depletion that would have lived if a policy of conservation had been followed instead. As a result, as long as people's lives continue to be worth living, no individual is made worse off by the depletion of these resources. The same is true, according to Parfit, if we pursue risky policies with regard to the storage of nuclear waste. But surely Parfit

is correct in thinking that this does not show that we have no moral reason to adopt policies that conserve natural resources and avoid saddling future generations with dangerous hazardous waste dumps.

M. McDermott has suggested\(^5\) that the Same Number Quality Claim should be rejected. He admits that it is counterintuitive to suggest that it is permissible for the 14-year-old to have a child now rather than later or that it is permissible to choose a social policy, such as Depletion or the Risky Policy, that costs future generations much more than it benefits existing people. But McDermott contends that the reason these results are counterintuitive is because they are based upon claims of non-identity that are counterintuitive. In a case such as that of the 14-year-old girl, McDermott asserts that "the natural view is that the same child will be born whenever conception takes place."\(^6\) This view is so obviously mistaken that it seems discouraging to take it to be the natural view, but, at least put certain ways, McDermott is probably correct on this point. As Parfit discusses, people will think the girl should wait to have a child because it would be better for her child if she did so.


\(^6\)Ibid., p. 166.
There is some murky acknowledgement of the fact that the identity of the child will be different, and yet a feeling that someone - viz. the girl's child - will be better off if the girl waits to have a child. So it is probably true that the reason people normally think it would be wrong for the 14-year-old to have a child is that they think it would be better for "her child" if she waited, and they do not really come to grips with what they obviously know: that it is not the case "that the same child will be born whenever conception takes place." Of course we must come to grips with this fact and decide what we think it is right for the 14-year-old to do in light of it.

McDermott also points out that our intuitions in these types of cases may be influenced by certain considerations that we are supposed to leave aside but are not able to. "For instance, a normal mother will be happier if she has a happier child, and our intuitions are bound to be influenced by what is normally the case." In addition, it is definitely the case that most of us believe that the 14-year-old girl will harm her own life prospects by having a child now. Teenage pregnancy is often condemned because of its effects on the teenagers themselves. To assert that it is generally a bad thing, it is not necessary to resort to claims about the child's life prospects. It is enough

7Loc. cit.
to consider the mother's life prospects, and some people do condemn it solely on these grounds. It is also true, however, that many people condemn teen pregnancy both because it is bad for the mother and because it is bad for her child. The latter reason may, of course, involve the mistake mentioned above, so the question becomes whether we would still think it wrong for the 14-year-old to have the child now if we believed two things that we do (or may) not believe: a) that it does not harm the mother's life prospects (or increase anyone's tax burden or otherwise inconvenience any existing people), and b) that the child would not have been better off if the mother had waited. McDermott's suggestion is that if we were truly freed of these two kinds of influences on our thinking, we would think it morally indifferent whether the 14-year-old has a child now or waits to have a child until she is a 20-year-old.

McDermott thinks that the same factors are at work in the case of a social policy that reduces the quality of life of remote generations. He thinks that when people consider such questions they assume that the same individuals will exist in the future regardless of which policy is chosen. This is, no doubt, the case. When people consider the morality of squandering natural resources, polluting the environment, or producing large
quantities of nuclear or other hazardous waste; they think that these actions will harm people who would have lived and had a higher quality of life if we had not done these things. The question again, though, is whether if we accept Parfit's claim that different people will exist depending on which policies are chosen, this means our intuition that these policies are wrong (which is founded upon the belief that specific people will be made worse off) is actually mistaken. It is possible, but it seems unlikely. McDermott also thinks our intuition in these cases may be influenced by the fact that "most people would prefer to have happier descendants, so the 'selfish' policy would probably not even yield greater happiness in the short run." In addition, every policy that harms or poses risks for future people probably also harms or poses risks for people living now that may not actually be outweighed by the supposed convenience or other advantages of such practices. It is hard to think of a policy that would really only reduce the quality of life of those who would never have existed had an alternative policy been chosen.

McDermott maintains that to get a clear example in support of the truth of the Same Number Quality Claim, "we need a case in which the alternatives involve the creation

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of obviously different people, and yet it is still intuitively obvious that it is better to create the happier person."\(^9\) The case that McDermott has us consider is as follows:

Suppose I have to choose which of two childless couples is to conceive (I'm allocating scarce medical resources, say). Both couples will be happy if they conceive, both will have a happy child. If one couple will get a greater increment of happiness from their child, I must take that into account; but do I have to weigh against this the difference in happiness of the two possible children? That is by no means intuitively obvious.\(^10\)

It may not be, but neither is it intuitively obvious that the happiness of the possible children is irrelevant. Suppose that the reason one of the children is expected to be happier than the other is that we know that one of the children will be born with a birth defect. She will have a handicap that will lower the quality of her life but not enough to make it not worth living and not enough to make her a financial burden to society. Surely a person allocating medical resources should consider it relevant that one of the children is expected to be born healthy and the other handicapped. Of course the person might have reason to believe that the potential parents of the handicapped child would be made so much happier by having a child than the other parents that the difference in the

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 166.

\(^{10}\)Loc. cit.
parents' happiness would outweigh the difference in the children's happiness. But barring this, I would think that the parents of the baby that is not expected to be handicapped should be the ones chosen to conceive. As McDermott would point out, it seems unlikely that the parents of a handicapped baby would be happier about having a baby than the parents of a healthy baby since the fact that a child is expected to be born handicapped would lessen its parents' happiness about having a child. Yet we can imagine instances in which this could be the case. In our society today, there are huge differences in how important it is to people to have a baby. And some of the very people who put the hugest significance on having children are just those people who would be least likely to think that a person's handicap is any reason for thinking that it would have been better if someone else, who is not handicapped, had existed instead. So we can imagine that there are people who would still more powerfully want to have a child than some other couple, even if they knew they would have a handicapped child. But surely the person allocating scarce medical resources should, to the extent possible, consider the happiness of both the parents and the potential children.

Derek Parfit uses the choice between two medical programs to show that we do accept the Same Number Quality
Claim. One program will result in 1,000 children a year being born without rather than with a handicap. This will happen because pregnant women who suffer from Condition J, which leads to their children being born with a particular handicap, will be treated for the condition. The other program will also result in 1,000 more children each year being born without rather than with this particular handicap, but this will not be because the children who would have been born handicapped will instead be born healthy. Instead this program detects Condition K, which leads to women conceiving children that will be handicapped, and advises women to postpone conception until the condition has disappeared. These women will have healthy children instead of handicapped ones, but their healthy children will be different children than their handicapped children would have been. Parfit maintains that if we add to his description of the alternatives the stipulation that, "though it is not deliberately concealed," the people who could have been born healthy had we chosen the Pregnancy (as opposed to the Pre-Conception) Testing will not know this fact, the two programs are equally worthwhile. This example seems completely convincing although Parfit says he knows of people who do not accept the claim that the programs are equally

11Parfit, op. cit., p. 367.
worthwhile. As far as I am concerned, the example shows that McDermott's position is absurd. His article can provoke one to be a bit less certain that there is anything wrong with the 14-year-old having a child now instead of waiting, but when one realizes that on his view Pregnancy Testing would be much more worthwhile than Pre-Conception Testing (which would be worthwhile only because of its effects on the parents and others besides the children), his view is shown to be lacking. In order for McDermott to favor Pre-Conception Testing, the improvements in the happiness of the parents and others should Pre-Conception Testing be instituted would have to outweigh the improvements in the happiness of parents and others plus the improvements in the happiness of the children themselves should Pregnancy Testing be instituted. So, in many cases, McDermott would end up favoring Pregnancy Testing even if Pre-Conception Testing would prevent many more or much more serious handicaps than Pregnancy Testing. It is hard to imagine how any view could be more decisively shown to be wrong.
Section B  One Can Consistently Accept the Same Number Quality Claim and Reject the Total View

McDermott argues that if one rejects the Total View and the belief that there is value in the creation of happy people, then one cannot embrace the Same Number Quality Claim. And he points out that the Total View, which he thinks we must accept if we place value on the creation of happy beings, is more counterintuitive than the rejection of the Same Number Quality Claim. He presents two arguments that are supposed to demonstrate that we cannot accept the Same Number Quality Claim if we do not place value on the creation of happy people.

In the first, he has us suppose that

A woman has four alternatives:

(A) She has no children, ever.
(B) She has a child now, Barry, and his life yields 5 units of happiness.
(C) She has a child some years later, Charles, and his life yields 10 units of happiness.
(D) She has both children, their utilities as before.\(^{12}\)

We can assume that these alternatives all leave the mother and others completely unaffected. McDermott claims that if one places no value on the creation of happy beings, then

(i) B is no worse than A.
(ii) A is no worse than C.

\(^{12}\)McDermott, op. cit., pp. 166-167.
So,

(iii) B is no worse than C.\(^{13}\)

This argument cannot show that it is wrong to accept the Same Number Quality Claim (in conjunction with rejecting the claim that there is value in the creation of happy beings) because if one does accept that claim, (i) will either be rejected (because Barry is not the happiest child that can be brought into existence) or (i) will be accepted only with the qualification that (A) and (B) are the only alternatives. It does not follow from

(i') B is no worse than A if A and B are the only alternatives, and
(ii) A is no worse than C, that
(iii) B is no worse than C.

McDermott gives a second argument that since

(iv) B is no worse than D, and
(v) D is no worse than C,\(^{14}\)
(iii) B is no worse than C.\(^{14}\)

But again, a person who accepts the Same Number Quality Claim will simply reject (iv). McDermott says that "If we reject (iv), we say that having Barry can be made right by having a happier child later!"\(^{15}\) But this does not seem to me to be wrong. It is not counterintuitive to hold that if a woman is going to have only one child she should, everything else being equal, have it at the time that she

\(^{13}\)Ibid., p. 167.

\(^{14}\)Loc. cit.

\(^{15}\)Loc. cit.
expects will allow her to have the happiest child possible. Likewise, if she is going to have two children, then everything else being equal, she should time their birth so as to have the two happiest children possible. If Charles is the happiest child she could have and Barry the second happiest, and everything else is equal, there is nothing strange about saying that she is only right in having Barry if she is also planning to have Charles.

Sikora gives the following "transitivity argument" to show that there is value in creating happy beings. The argument is at root the same argument as those given by McDermott and also demonstrates the apparent difficulty of accepting the Same Number Quality Claim while rejecting the Total View.

If one can improve the world by adding a happy rather than a 'neutral' person (i.e., a person, so to speak, with equal amounts of utility and disutility) and if (as a utilitarian must hold) adding a neutral person does not make the world better or worse than adding no person at all, then (given the normal transitivity relation) one can improve the world by adding a happy person.

A utilitarian should not accept the premises used in this argument. The more cautious premises that a utilitarian should accept are as follows:

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1) One can improve the world, if no one else is affected, by adding a happy rather than a neutral person if a person must be added.

2) One does not make the world better or worse by adding a neutral person instead of no person at all if no one else is affected and if the neutral person is the only kind of person that can be added.

It does not follow from these premises that one can improve the world by adding a happy person rather than no person at all. But obviously any view that places no value on the creation of happy beings but that does place value on the creation of happier beings instead of less happy beings is going to be intransitive in the way pointed out by Sikora and McDermott.

It is not clear that this is a sufficient reason to reject all such theories, however. The peculiar thing about McDermott’s use of these arguments against the Same Number Quality Claim (conjoined with the belief that there is no value in the creation of happy beings) is that he later admits that his own theory

is not an 'end state' theory. It does not yield categorical judgements about which is best of a number of states-of-affairs. Which is best of a number of alternatives depends on the choice in which they are alternatives: it depends on what other alternatives there are, and on the status
quo (the state-of-affairs in which the choice is made).\textsuperscript{17}

He gives the following example in which

A is a continuation of the status quo.
B is like A except for the creation of a new person, Jones, and his life yields 5 units of happiness.
C is like B except that Jones' life yields 6 units of happiness.

Here A and C are equally good, B worse. But if A and B were the only alternatives, B would be as good as A, not worse.\textsuperscript{18}

If this kind of result gives us no reason to reject his theory, it is hard to imagine why it is supposed to give us a reason to reject the theories of those who accept the Same Number Quality Claim and think there is no value in the creation of happy beings.

Nevertheless there is an apparent tension involved in accepting the Same Number Quality Claim while at the same time denying that there is value in bringing happy beings into existence. Consider a case of deciding who should die rather than of deciding who should be born. I think it is clear that we accept the Same Number Quality Claim in this context. If we must let either X or Y die, we would surely think it preferable to save the one with the better life (assuming they matter equally to others). This is the morally correct decision - even though it is not the case

\textsuperscript{17}McDermott, op. cit., p. 175.
\textsuperscript{18}Loc. cit.
that the same person experiences the future happiness that is preserved regardless of the choice that is made. Suppose X is happier than Y. If we save Y, X is not around to bemoan what she has lost and Y has not, of course, lost any happiness either. Nevertheless we are able to say that it would be better to save X than Y simply because X's life is the better life. It would not be correct to maintain that it is a matter of indifference. And if it is right to save the person with the better life, surely it is also right to bring the person that will have the better life into existence. The apparent problem is that the only thing that could explain why it is better to save X than Y is that the future happiness that each would experience if they continued to exist matters. It is preferable to save X because more future happiness is lost if Y is saved instead. But if happiness that would have been experienced by a being had it continued to exist or had it been brought into existence matters, then it might seem that we must say that there is value in the creation of happy beings and accept the Total View and the Repugnant Conclusion. This line of reasoning is too fast, however. The person who thinks it is better to save X than Y is not committed to claiming that the existence of a being that experiences a happy life is better than the existence of no being. All the decision need rest upon is the judgement that the
existence of a being that experiences a happy life is better than the existence of a being that experiences a less happy life.

What we need to be able to convince ourselves of is that we can sensibly reject Parfit's claim that "If causing someone to exist cannot be ... good ... for this person, the only people whose interests count, when we are comparing two outcomes, will be the people who exist in both."¹⁹ We have to be able to say that even if it is a matter of indifference to us whether happy people exist, we can still sensibly care about how happy they will be if they do exist. There are some people who take this kind of view with respect to human fetuses. That is, some people, who have no moral qualms about abortion, find that they do think it morally wrong for a woman to risk harming the fetus by smoking, drinking, or taking other drugs during pregnancy. While these people think it would be morally permissible for the woman to have the fetus killed, they do not think it is morally permissible for the woman to behave so as to significantly increase the risk that her baby is born prematurely or with a mental or physical handicap - even if the condition would not be so bad as to make the child's life not worth living. Moreover, almost everyone would agree that the woman would do nothing wrong if she

¹⁹Parfit, op. cit., note 33 on p. 526.
simply took steps so as not to become pregnant in the first place, and yet many of us would criticize her if she became pregnant and then jeopardized the fetus' health in these ways. This seems to be a coherent position to take. No one lives to be harmed by an abortion (or a non-conception). After the abortion, the fetus is not around to be or feel deprived (not that living fetuses can have any feelings about such issues anyway). But if a woman gives birth to a handicapped baby, that individual will suffer because of its mother's actions for its entire life. It may seem that this example is beside the point because the woman's decision to engage in risky behavior while pregnant is, of course, person-affecting. But what the example is meant to show is just that it does not follow from the fact that we do not care whether a being ever exists that we do not care how well off it is if it does exist. Just because it is held that causing someone to exist is not, in itself, morally good, it does not follow that one must also hold that bringing a person at +3 into existence is morally just as good as bringing a person at +8 into existence.

It matters to people whether they are at +3 or +8, but it does not matter to people if they never exist. So it makes sense not to care how many happy people ever exist (if the existence of more people would not increase or
decrease the happiness of those who already exist or who will exist regardless), and it makes sense to care that the 14-year-old wait to have her child. Although the +3 child could not have been a +8 child, this does not change the fact that the difference between existing at +8 or at +3 is one that matters and that we should care about.

Still it might be insisted that I cannot consistently argue that the reason that the number of beings that exist does not matter is that if something does not exist, it does not care, and that the 14-year-old girl should wait. The problem is, of course, that the child that would be born later does not care if she is not born, and if a child is born now she has not been deprived of anything she cares about since she has not been deprived of anything by being born now instead of not at all. But it is not necessary to take such an overly person-affecting view, and it would be a mistake to do so. The happiness of beings that exist matters because they care about it, but when the utilitarian concerns herself with this stuff that matters, she herself must be indifferent about who it matters to. It is just that it would not count as stuff that matters if it did not matter to anybody. It seems perfectly coherent to say that it is morally better for the 14-year-old to wait to have a child because that child would have more of what matters than the child that would be born now. And
this is simply not the same type of case as one in which the alternative to having the child now is for the mother to never bring any child into existence. In the case of the 14-year-old, it is a given that a child will come into existence, and if the level of happiness of beings that exist or will exist is what matters, then clearly there is something to choose between here. It does make a moral difference how happy the girl's child will be even though the level of happiness depends on the identity of the child. If a being is to be brought into existence, it should be the happiest being that can be brought into existence (leaving effects on others aside) not because if it were not, the diminution in happiness would be felt by any particular being (it would not be), but because the happiness of beings does matter and should be what we value.

The reason I claim we should be indifferent between a world in which no one exists and a world in which a happy person exists is not because I deny that, given that a person exists, it is valuable that she is happy. All I have claimed is that there is no value in a happy person's existence because a person's happiness can only exist and have value if the person exists. It was contended in Chapter 1 that we cannot move from the obvious fact that there is value in making existing people happy to the
conclusion that there is value in making happy people without more argument than can be provided. The partisan of an entirely person-affecting view might contend that likewise we cannot move from the obvious fact that there is value in making existing people happy to the conclusion that there is value in bringing the happiest beings we can into existence if we are going to bring beings into existence. This is an interesting point. If the implications of the two moves are compared, however, I think there is reason for believing it must be incorrect to move from the value in making existing people happy to the assertion that there is value in making happy people and for believing it must be correct to move from the value in making existing people happy to the assertion that there is value in bringing the happiest people we can into existence if people are to be brought into existence. If we accept the Total View, we are stuck with the Repugnant Conclusion. Oddly enough, if we accept an entirely person-affecting view that places no value on the creation of happy beings, we are stuck with the Almost As Repugnant Conclusion, which holds that Outcome Z (while not actually better) is no worse than Outcome A in cases in which none of the same individuals exist in the two populations. So whereas a consideration of the consequences increases the need for a supporter of the Total View to give an argument for why
there is value in the creation of happy people, consideration of the consequences provides a supporter of the Same Number Quality Claim with an argument for why there is value in bringing the happiest beings possible into existence if beings are to be brought into existence. If we take the in-between path and say there is value in bringing about the existence of the happiest people we can if people are to be brought into existence but no value in bringing happy people into existence if we need not bring any people into existence, we avoid both the Repugnant Conclusion and the Almost As Repugnant Conclusion, and no compelling argument has been given to show that we may only do this at the price of inconsistency.

Supporters of the Total View, who are concerned with maximizing total happiness, are concerned with something that is too abstract and detached to be what is morally important. We have no reason to care about the total quantity of happiness directly. On the other hand, supporters of an entirely person-affecting view, who are concerned only with how particular individuals are affected by different decisions, are not thinking abstractly and detachedly enough to deal with questions that affect future generations. As long as people exist they should be as happy as possible. It does not matter that, when one is confronted with a Same Number Choice, the identity of the
people is different depending on the choice one makes. Everything else being equal, it would be wrong to bring one person into existence if one could bring a happier person into existence instead. There does not seem to be any inconsistency in taking the stance that it does not matter whether beings exist, but that if they do, it matters very much what the quality of their lives is.
Chapter 5  Argument for a Quality-Only View

Part I sought to reject all approaches to questions regarding future generations that place value on the creation of happy beings. In the first chapter of Part II, it was argued that views that place no value on the creation of happy beings and are entirely person-affecting should be rejected because they cannot endorse the Same Number Quality Claim or escape the Almost As Repugnant Conclusion. It was also argued that one can consistently reject the Total View and accept the Same Number Quality Claim. This chapter begins with a discussion of objections that have been made to the most straightforward quality-only view - viz. the Average View. In essence this view fails because it does not allow all cases of Mere Addition. The rest of the chapter deals with two possible responses to this failure. First it is suggested that we might accept the principle proposed by Singer in "A Utilitarian Population Principle." Since this principle has problems of its own, however, the rest of the chapter is devoted to developing a modified version of the Average View that allows for all true cases of Mere Addition.
Section A Objections to the Average View

Some utilitarians who reject the idea of maximizing total happiness think instead that we should strive to maximize average happiness. This avoids the Repugnant Conclusion but is itself problematic. For instance, it does not make any sense to say it is morally wrong to have a child who would be happy just because she would not be as happy as, say, your neighbors' children and would lower the average happiness. There does not seem to be any reason why this should matter. That is, there does not seem to be any reason why we should care about the average happiness in and of itself. If the child would not change the level of happiness of any existing person, if she would lead a happy life herself, and if a happier child could not be brought into existence in her place, it cannot be morally wrong to bring her into existence. We only think it would be wrong to have her if she lowers the average happiness in a certain way - viz. not by simply being less happy than the others who exist, but by lowering the level of happiness of others who exist.

Sikora points out⁰ that not only does average utilitarianism forbid us to add an extra happy person who has no net effect on others if she is not as happy as the

average person, it also forbids us to add her even if she has a positive net effect on others as long as this effect is not as large as the difference between her happiness and the average happiness. In fact, Sikora goes on, it would be wrong to add a happy person or group of persons even if everyone they affected were affected for the better, and, in fact, even if they affected everyone already existing for the better - if doing so would lower the overall average. This is obviously absurd. It is bad enough to say it is wrong to add a happy person who has no net effect on those who already exist, but it is even worse to say that in some circumstances it is wrong to bring a happy person into existence who actually makes the people who already exist (or who will exist regardless) better off. No rationale can be given for taking such a position.

Sikora also notes\textsuperscript{21} that on the Average View it would be better if the only species that existed were the species with the highest average quality of life. So it would be bad if a variety of species existed, even if they all had lives that were quite worth living and even as worth living as lives of their species could possibly be, if there were one species whose average quality of life was higher than the others. While this idea is not completely wrongheaded

(why bring the happiest possible cat into existence if a member of another species that would have an even better life could be brought into existence instead?), it is obviously problematic as it stands. Applying Sikora's previous point to this example, we realize that the Average View would not even welcome the existence of other species that raised the quality of life of the best-off species so long as their existence lowered the overall average. It would also not allow for the coexistence of species with different qualities of life that do not compete for the same resources or otherwise affect each other.

Robin Attfield points out that "the Average View has pronounced difficulties, such as apparently requiring the discontinuation of the human species if future people would be even marginally less happy on average than current people."22 For example, on the Average View a state of affairs consisting of one generation of ten million at 10 is preferable to a state of affairs consisting of two generations with the first made up of ten million at 10 and the second made up of ten million at 9 because the average level of well-being is 10 in the first case and 9.5 in the second. But surely none of the absurd consequences of the

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Average View so far pointed out are what a proponent of the Average View would intend - i.e., these things would not be implications of the ideas that would probably lead someone to adopt the Average View in the first place. Such points do not show that the ideas motivating the choice of the Average View are mistaken but merely that the thought that the Average View correctly captures those ideas is mistaken. The person who is initially attracted to the Average View probably has the same motivating ideas as people who are initially attracted to views like Singer's (to be discussed in the next section) - viz. the ideas that the Total View is mistaken, that only quality has value, and that we should not compromise the quality of lives lived in order that more lives can be lived. Obviously these ideas do not imply that the species should be discontinued if future people will unavoidably be less happy than people are now. Likewise they do not imply that a happy child who does not affect those who already exist cannot be brought into existence if she is not expected to be as happy as people are on average. And they certainly do not imply that cats, say, cannot coexist with humans even if they are not as happy as humans as long as they do not lower the quality of human lives or take the place of humans who could live happier lives than the cats do without reducing the quality of human life.
Indeed, the Average View may tend to get a bad rap. It is not actually that difficult to see why it has been proposed. One would expect that as population increases (from one), average happiness increases for awhile, then perhaps stays the same for awhile, and then begins to decrease. The Average View handles this straightforward (and realistic) kind of case correctly. It says the population should be stable at the point where the quality of life peaks. According to Thomas Hurka,

> The average principle is unattractive primarily because of its consequences at low levels of population. These are the levels at which we think population increases have the most value, yet the average principle gives them no value if they are not accompanied by an increase in the average well-being per person and a negative value if they are accompanied by even the smallest decrease in the average well-being per person.

But, in fact, the average principle is most unlikely to oppose population growth when population is small. Moreover, it seems possible that the whole reason we favor population growth when the population is small, are relatively indifferent about it when the population is large, and oppose it when the population is really large is precisely because when it is small, the average quality of life improves with population growth; when it is large but not too large, increases have little impact on the average

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quality of life; and when it is too big, further increases lower the average quality of life. Hurka may be correct in thinking that people intuitively feel that the population should not be too small. But perhaps what this intuition is based on is the belief that population growth is good when it raises the quality of life and that it does this when the population is small.

Section B Parfit's Counterexample to Singer's Principle

All of the objections to the Average View discussed in the previous section rest upon the fact that the view does not allow all cases of Mere Addition. One possible response to this problem is to adopt a different quality-only approach such as that put forward by Peter Singer in "A Utilitarian Population Principle." Another response is to modify the Average View in some way so as to enable it to correctly handle Mere Addition. As it turns out, Singer's principle suffers from a flaw that serves to point out that the Average View (at least once it is modified) is not so bad after all.

The view we accept should differ from the unmodified Average View in allowing all cases of Mere Addition. For example, it should maintain that it is not wrong to have a child that lowers average utility (when the utility of all
who would then exist is maximized) so long as it does not cause net disutility to existing persons and so long as the parents could not have had a happier child (or increased existing people's happiness) instead. So suppose, to use Singer's example, it were an unalterable biological or psychological fact that children born to younger parents are happier, on average, than children born to older parents. And suppose the current population consists of ten million very happy people. If the population is increased by a million, these additional people will also be happy, but less so, as they will be the children of older parents. If the original population of ten million is in no way negatively affected by the addition of the extra million people, there would seem to be nothing wrong with older parents having the additional children in this case. The average happiness of the population will be lower than it would have been had we kept the population at ten million, but surely this is not a reason to forbid the population increase under these circumstances. In "A Utilitarian Population Principle," Peter Singer proposes a principle that handles this kind of case correctly. According to Singer's principle: "If a possible future

state of affairs is a world of \( P \) people at an average level of happiness \( A \), it is wrong to bring into existence any greater number of people, \( P + N \), such that no sub-group of \( P + N \) contains \( P \) people at an average level of happiness equal to or higher than \( A \)."\(^{25}\)

Derek Parfit argues against Singer's principle in "On Doing the Best for Our Children."\(^{26}\) He constructs an example (which is reproduced on the following page) in which in each state of affairs the well-being of the members of the society is considered in terms of the well-being of the more and less fortunate halves. \( B^* \) has twice as many people as \( A^* \) and the more fortunate half of \( B^* \) is better off than the average for the entire population in \( A^* \). Likewise the population in \( C^* \) is twice as large as that in \( B^* \) and the more fortunate half is better off than the average for the whole of \( B^* \). The more fortunate half of \( C^* \) is, however, worse off than the average for the whole of \( A^* \). He stipulates that the reason for some people having a higher quality of life than others in each of the outcomes is not social injustice but that some people's lives will simply go better than others.

\(^{25}\)Ibid., p. 89.

FIGURE 2 Parfit's $A^*$, $B^*$ Counterexample
Parfit shows that Singer's principle is problematic by assuming (following Singer) that the most restrictive population policy that is feasible is one in which the size of the population stays the same. On this assumption, Singer's principle would allow the society in A* to double the size of their population to achieve B*. Then since by hypothesis the size of the population could not be reduced, the society in B* would be allowed by the principle to double the size of their population to achieve C*. So, Parfit argues, Singer's principle would allow every generation to act so as to double the population in the next generation until it is no longer the case that doubling the population will result in the more fortunate half of the larger population being better off than the entire smaller population that could have been brought about instead would have been. Obviously this is not what Singer intends for his principle to do, since this kind of repugnant conclusion is part of what led him to reject the Total View in the first place.

There seem to be different ways of interpreting Parfit's example. It seems to me that the most realistic interpretation is the most important and also the one Parfit intends (although his comments are not all completely consistent with this interpretation). It is clear that this interpretation of the counterexample should
lead us to reject Singer's principle. On this interpretation, all that is going on in the society is that every time the population is doubled the quality of life declines. In other words, population growth lowers the quality of life in the standard ways. If we suppose that the average quality of life in B* is lower than in A* because the larger population causes things like overcrowding and pollution, Singer's principle gives what is clearly the wrong answer even if we only have one choice to make and that choice is only between A* and B*. On his view B* would be chosen, and it is clear that a quality-only view should choose A*.

Under this interpretation of the example, when the number of people is doubled, the quality of life of the more fortunate half declines. Likewise when the number of people is doubled, the quality of life of the less fortunate half declines. Singer's principle has us compare the average quality of life of the whole society in A* with the average quality of life of the more fortunate half of society in B*. The absurdity of making this comparison can be made clearer by considering what might actually be going on in the example. Parfit says he assumes "a society where there is no social injustice. Even here, people's lives will not be all equally worth living. Some people will be
luckier; their lives will simply go better." With this in mind, let us suppose that some of the members of the less fortunate halves are people who suffer brain damage as a result of surgery to remove a benign brain tumor in their thirties. Would these people be better off if the society they lived in were twice as large? Not on the realistic interpretation of Parfit's example. On this interpretation, they would be worse off. It would be absurd to claim that whereas people who suffer brain damage count as part of the less fortunate half of A*, they count as part of the more fortunate half of B*. There will be twice as many brain damaged and otherwise "unlucky" individuals in B* as in A*, and, on average, they will be worse off.

What a quality-only view asserts is that it is permissible to increase the size of the population when doing so increases (or at least does not decrease) the quality of the lives lived. Under this interpretation of the example, increasing the population does not even increase the quality of life of the subgroup P. To see this, let's assume that the entire population of A* is 20 million. Does increasing the population to 40 million increase the quality of life of 20 million people? The answer is clearly "no." There is no causal relationship

between increasing the population and increasing the quality of life under our current assumptions. In fact the causal relationship is the opposite. If the population is increased, the quality of life declines. In a society that is twice as large, there will be twice as many people who do not suffer brain damage. This is hardly tantamount to increasing the quality of life by increasing the population. The number of healthy people has not increased because a larger population makes people healthier. The number of healthy people has increased only because the number of people has increased. No one is more healthy. There are just more people to be healthy.

We can see how absurd it would be to follow Singer's principle by considering a variation of the example. Instead of taking Parfit's blocks to represent the population of people divided into more and less fortunate halves, let's take the first block in each outcome to represent the population of people and the second block in each outcome to represent the population of cats. We see right away that it does not behoove people to double their numbers. Likewise it does not behoove cats to double their numbers. Now suppose someone put people and cats together on a diagram like Parfit's and tried to argue that the diagram supported a doubling of the population. Their argument would be that although the move from A* to B*
would mean a decrease in the quality of life for both people and cats, we should make this move because the extra people in B* will be happier than the cats are in A*. This reasoning is ludicrous. The same reasoning can be seen to be evident in the all-people case. The argument would be that although the move from A* to B* would mean a decrease in the quality of life for both people who will suffer brain damage and people who will not, we should make this move because the extra people who don't have to undergo brain surgery in B* will be happier than the individuals in A* who do. This is hardly a reason for advocating population growth, and obviously Singer has not succeeded in correctly formulating a quality-only view.

It does not seem that anything justifies breaking the population into more and less fortunate halves in order to consider the desirability of population growth. The expected quality of life for each person who would exist in B* is the same. We cannot know in advance who will be lucky and who will not be. We do not have the option of selectively conceiving only those who will not need brain surgery when they are 32. Therefore the more and less fortunate should be seen as an indivisible package deal, and there is no justification for considering the average quality of life for these two half-groups rather than the average quality of life for the whole group. There are not
two groups we can consider bringing into existence. For all we can know about these future people, they all belong to the same group - i.e., each has the same expected utility. And this expected utility is, of course, lower for every member of \( B^* \) than it is for the members of \( A^* \).

We can contrast the package deal situation embodied in Parfit's example with the case of the children of older parents presented by Singer. In the latter case it is perfectly sensible to consider the two groups of children separately. We could bring the children of younger parents into existence without bringing the children of older parents into existence. Therefore it is relevant to consider the children of older parents as a separate group when we consider how increasing the population will affect the quality of life. In Singer's example, it is clear that the children of older parents constitute the group of additional people we are considering bringing into existence. Singer's principle misfires in Parfit's example because it treats the less fortunate half of \( B^* \) as the additional people we are considering bringing into existence. This is clearly inappropriate on the interpretation of the example under discussion, as the additional people we are considering bringing into existence are half of the more fortunate half of \( B^* \) and half of the less fortunate half of \( B^* \). Likewise Singer's
principle forces us to regard the more fortunate half of $B^*$ as the subgroup $P$ that exists in the larger population instead of the entire population of $A^*$. This is also inappropriate. Obviously it is half of the more fortunate half of $B^*$ and half of the less fortunate half of $B^*$ that exist instead of all of $A^*$ if the larger population is brought about. What is wrong with Singer's principle, then, is that it allows us to make what are, in effect, bogus claims about which members of a larger population should be seen as existing instead of the members of the smaller population and which members can be viewed as additional people. In general, where some members of a larger population cannot be brought into existence without bringing all of the members of that population into existence, it cannot be sensible to claim that it is the happiest $P$ people in the larger population who exist instead of all of the members of the smaller population and the least happy $N$ people who are the extra people we are considering adding to the population. This is the claim that Singer's principle in fact manifests and why it is problematic. Since we cannot bring the more fortunate half of the population into existence without also bringing the less fortunate half into existence, it makes sense to treat them as a package deal - from which it is not legitimate to handpick who shall count as members of the critical
subgroup P. Parfit artificially divides what is really one integral group. If part of a larger population cannot be brought into existence without bringing all of the larger population into existence, then in general it will be the case that it is actually the entire larger population that exists instead of the smaller population and not the most fortunate P members of the larger population.

Section C  The Average View Should Be Supplemented with a Person-Affecting Restriction

What this failure of Singer's principle shows is that the Average View is probably correct in more cases than one might first expect. The problem with the Average View is that it does not allow for all cases of Mere Addition. The problem with Singer's principle is that it treats some cases of population increase as cases of Mere Addition when, in fact, they are not. It is my contention that if the Average View is modified so as to make it person-affecting that it will correctly handle most true cases of Mere Addition. (To be made completely correct, the Average View must be modified in a slightly different way, which will be discussed in Chapter 6.) And as I have argued before, any view (even Singer's) would have to be made person-affecting in order to be made (even approximately) correct.
We can see why the Average View needs to be modified by considering a couple of examples. On a quality-only view, it should not always be considered permissible to have two children at 2 and 4 rather than one child at 3. It would seem right to have a second happy child if having a second child would increase the happiness of the first child and no one else would be affected. So it would seem better, everything else being equal, to have two children with the first at 4 and the second at 2 than to just have the same first child at 3. But it seems wrong to have a second child if this decreases the firstborn's level of happiness from 3 to 2 (and no one else is affected) - even if the second-born would be at 4 (thus leaving, let's say, the average happiness of the population unaffected at 3). In this matter, taking a person-affecting view (that places no value on the creation of happy beings) is more appropriate. On such a view it would be wrong to have a second child if this would lead to any decrease in the well-being of one's first child (that was not offset by an increase in the well-being of some other being that already does or will exist). The reason for taking this view should be obvious. There is clearly disvalue in reducing the utility of existing beings. Therefore if we believe that there is no value in bringing happy beings into existence, it would be wrong to bring a being into
existence (when one need not bring any additional being into existence) that would decrease the utility of those who already exist or who will exist regardless of whether the additional being is brought into existence.

Temporal priority is not meant to play any role here. The reason it is wrong to bring additional people into existence that decrease existing people's happiness is not that the latter already exist but rather that the latter exist regardless of whether the population is increased. On a correct view, unlike on the unmodified Average View, if we have a choice between a world being brought into existence three days from now in which Pam exists alone at 10 and a world being brought into existence three days from now in which Pam exists at 8 and Nancy exists at 14, we should choose the world in which Pam exists alone at 10. This is because there is no value in bringing Nancy into existence, and there is disvalue in Pam existing at 8 instead of at 10. If we have a choice between a world in which Pam exists alone at 10 and a world in which Pam exists at 11 and Nancy exists at 7, we should choose the second world. This is because there is value in Pam experiencing an extra unit of happiness, and no disvalue in bringing Nancy into existence.

It should be noted that Singer's principle is just as inadequate as the Average View with respect to Different
Number Choices that affect particular individuals. It would allow a couple to have a second child if this would decrease the happiness of the child they already have as long as the second child would be at least as happy as the first child would have been had it remained an only child (and no one else is affected). This is obviously a mistaken line to take if we believe there is no value in bringing a happy being into existence, disvalue in decreasing the happiness of the first child, and the second child (or any other additional being) need never have been brought into existence. Whereas one should bring additional people into existence if this will increase the happiness of those who already exist, one should not bring additional people into existence simply on the grounds that they will be happier than people who already exist or than the average person who already exists.

An example may help show that it cannot be correct to maintain that it is permissible to bring another person into existence as long as she raises the average happiness and regardless of whether an existing person is harmed by her existence. Consider a couple who could either devote their energies to raising a child who already exists and needs a home or to having and raising a child of their own. Pretend that only the children will be affected by their decision and that the average utility of the rest of the
society is +5. If they adopt the child who already exists, its utility will be +5. If they have a child of their own, its utility will be +12, and that of the child they could have adopted will be +1. Therefore it would raise the average utility of the society more if the couple had a child than if they adopted. Nevertheless I believe they should adopt because the child they could adopt will exist regardless of their decision and will experience more happiness if they care for it. The happiness their own child would experience is irrelevant, as that child need never come into existence.

There is nothing anti-utilitarian about refusing to sacrifice existing people for the sake of people who need never come into existence. It cannot be claimed that the view I advocate holds that it is never permissible to sacrifice an existing person for a possible person even if doing so would maximize utility because such a claim simply assumes that a non-person-affecting approach is the correct way of extending utilitarianism to handle Different Number Choices. My whole argument here is that it is not. My contention is that it is only the utility of beings who actually exist that a utilitarian should concern herself with maximizing and that there is no moral value in increasing (total or average) utility by bringing additional beings into existence. The +12 child the couple
could have will not exist if they do not have it. Therefore on a view not concerned with increasing utility by increasing the number of beings that exist adopting the child maximizes utility. My point here is to give an example that shows that the Average View and other views that are not sufficiently person-affecting have distasteful results. It would be begging the question to claim that a person-affecting view has anti-utilitarian results. The only thing that can uncontroversially be held to be anti-utilitarian is to refuse to maximize utility in a Same People Choice - i.e., only in a Same People Choice is it agreed what constitutes maximizing utility.

It seems morally abhorrent to favor the alleged interests of potential people who we can prevent from ever coming into existence over the interests of people who already exist. Having a child of one's own when so many children exist whose lives could be improved by one's help should be recognized as the selfish choice it is. Such a choice cannot be justified by the large amount of happiness one's own child might be expected to experience. The choice is only justified if the birth of the fortunate child will create more utility for the child's parents and others than could be created for an existing unfortunate child (and others) by helping it. Even this is somewhat suspect as it is not clear that it is morally legitimate to
receive more joy from raising one's own child than from raising or helping someone else's. That is, presumably one should try to get oneself to feel the most happiness when one does what maximizes utility when one's own happiness is excluded from the calculation.

One should aim to do this because it often makes a better outcome possible. In the present case, if the prospective parents accept the theory proposed here, then they realize that when they do not consider their own happiness, the outcome is better if they do not have their own child. As a result they realize they can make a better outcome possible by selling themselves on the idea that they can increase their own happiness as much by helping an existing child as by having one of their own. A utilitarian has to realize that she can affect the level of happiness that is possible for her by changing her desires, and sometimes this might be the most efficient way of increasing utility. If a person were unhappy because she could not have what she desired, for example, it would seem intelligent (and morally right, everything else being equal) for her to talk herself out of feeling a desire for what she can never have.

In the case of our example parents, suppose that initially the numbers are as follows. The parents would each be at 10 if they had a child, and they would each be
at 6 if they adopted. The child they could adopt will be at 1 if they have their own child and at 5 if they adopt her. But it could be that by reassessing and changing their own attitudes about having and raising children, the parents could change the situation so that they would each be at 10 if they have a child of their own and each be at 9 if they raise an adopted child. The potential adoptee will still be at 1 if they have their own child and at 5 if she is adopted instead. Ignoring the possible costs of the process of changing their outlook and other possible side-effects, the parents would maximize utility by changing their attitudes and raising a child who already exists and needs a family. Changing their attitudes makes possible the choice of an alternative yielding a total of 23 units of happiness (for the three affected individuals). Taking their own preferences as given would mean that the best possible alternative would yield a total utility of only 21 units (for the three affected individuals). Therefore the possibility of changing what makes one happy is one that a utilitarian must consider.

It could be argued that what really makes having a child instead of adopting one or otherwise helping people who already exist seem morally wrong is that in the world today the extra harm another child brings to all others combined (through things such as deterioration of the
environment) actually outweighs the happiness it can be expected to experience. On this view, the happiness the child can be expected to have counts, but it is outweighed. But it seems that it would be a sufficient reason for not having a child if this would enable one to make the life of one existing person better. It does not also have to be the case that the child's happiness would be outweighed by all the other forms of disutility its existence brings about.

It should be pointed out that special attention need only be given to those who exist in both outcomes when a Different Number Choice is being made. It need not be given in a Same Number Choice such as that between Parfit's Pre-Conception and Pregnancy Testing programs. In this situation, the children that could benefit from Pregnancy Testing (and their parents) will exist regardless of which program is instituted, and they will be worse off if Pre-Conception Testing is chosen instead of Pregnancy Testing. Instituting Pre-Conception Testing, on the other hand, will result in the birth of different children to women found to have the condition, so the only people who will be worse off if Pregnancy Testing is chosen instead are the parents who would benefit from having happier children if Pre-Conception Testing were instituted. If we were to apply a person-affecting restriction to Same Number Choices, then,
we would have to strongly prefer Pregnancy Testing in Parfit's example. I have already mentioned how wrongheaded I think this judgement is. The point of putting a person-affecting restriction on Different Number Choices is not that there is something morally special or more deserving about people who exist regardless of what choice is made. The purpose is a limited one. It is only to insist that we cannot compromise the well-being of existing individuals (or of individuals who will exist regardless) for the sake of increasing the population (or of creating a larger population). The restriction is appropriate because, on a quality-only view, there is no value in the creation of happy people, and therefore existing individuals (or individuals who will exist regardless of the choice made) should not be made worse off in order to create more people. In a Same Number Choice the issue of whether the quality of lives lived should ever be compromised to increase the number of lives lived does not even arise, and there is no reason to treat the individuals who will exist under both alternatives differently from those who will exist under only one.
Section D  A Principle Regarding When It is Permissible or Obligatory to Bring About a Larger Population of Happy Beings

What we need to do, then, is to formulate a version of the Average View that does not allow us to bring additional beings into existence if this decreases the utility of those who already exist (or who will exist regardless) even if the larger outcome makes possible a higher average utility and that does allow us to bring additional happy beings into existence if this does not affect (or increases) the utility of those who already exist (or who will exist regardless) even if the larger outcome results in a lower average utility. In other words, we should hold that it is always wrong to bring additional people into existence if this makes the people who already exist or who will exist regardless of our actions worse off and that it is always permissible to bring additional happy people into existence if this leaves the people who already exist or who will exist regardless unaffected (or makes them better off). But we should also hold that where two populations are compared that have no common members it is permissible to choose the larger population if and only if the average quality of life of the larger population is at least as high as that of the smaller population. If we conjoin a person-affecting restriction with the Average View in the
way given below, then we can hold that some actions (such as choosing Parfit's Z world instead of his A world) can be morally wrong even if no individual is harmed by the action, but at the same time, we can insist that the well-being of those individuals who already exist (or who will exist regardless) should not be sacrificed in order to bring additional beings into existence.

A theory about future generations must also consider whether it is ever obligatory to bring a larger population into existence. It might initially appear that on a quality-only view there could never be such an obligation. After all, adoption of such a view is based on the belief that there is no value in bringing happy beings into existence. This is not quite a sufficient characterization of the view, however. In fact, there are two ways in which bringing a greater number of happy beings into existence can have value on a quality-only view. For one thing, there is clearly value in bringing an additional happy being into existence if this increases the happiness of those who already exist or who will exist regardless of whether the additional being is brought into existence. The value is found, of course, only in the increase in happiness of those who would exist regardless and not in the happiness that will be experienced by the additional being.
There is a second way in which bringing a greater number of beings into existence can have value on a quality-only view. I have argued that we can accept the Same Number Quality Claim even while rejecting the claim that there is value in the creation of happy beings. In other words, my claim is that it is better to bring a being at 8 into existence than a being at 5 even though there is, of course, no value in bringing either being into existence as opposed to bringing no being into existence. There is no direct reason to bring a being into existence, but if one does, it should be the happiest being possible. This line of thinking for Same Number Choices has implications for how we should think about Different Number Choices. For example, suppose we must bring at least two beings into existence. Our only alternatives are to bring two people into existence who would each live at 5 or three different people into existence who would each live at 7. If we accept the Same Number Quality Claim for Same Number Choices, we must also hold that it is obligatory to bring the larger population into existence in this example. We are not driven to expand the population because an extra happy person exists in the larger world, but because all three of the people in the larger population are better off than the people in the smaller population. The unmodified Average View could (usually) be used to correctly tell us
when it is morally obligatory to choose a larger population over a smaller when no particular individual exists in both. But a more complicated principle is necessary, of course, because it is not obligatory to bring a larger population into existence rather than a smaller if the average happiness of the larger population is higher simply because there are extra people in the larger population who are happier than those who would exist in a smaller population. We should only value bringing happier people into existence instead of less happy people. We should not value bringing happier people into existence in addition to less happy people. If the less happy people in the larger population also exist in the smaller population, then obviously the happier people in the larger population are merely extra people rather than people who exist instead of less happy people. This judgement that it is not obligatory to increase the population if the only reason the average happiness of the larger population is higher is that the additional people are happier than those who exist in both the larger and the smaller population is analogous to the judgement made earlier that it is permissible to increase the population if the only reason the average happiness of the larger population is lower is that the additional people are not as happy as those who exist in both the larger and the smaller population. The point is
that Mere Addition is always permissible and never obligatory.

The following principle attempts to capture this belief. It will be modified slightly to handle the possibility of the existence of miserable beings in Part III. The rules given here should only be applied to cases in which only happy beings are involved.

If we have a Same Number Choice, we should choose the outcome with the highest average utility. If we have a Different Number Choice, we should make the following series of comparisons:

1) Choose the smallest possible outcome (containing at least one being) with the highest (average) utility.  

If there is a tie, go through the entire procedure first with one of the tied outcomes and then with the other. Then take the outcomes chosen in each case and compare them in the following manner. If both of the outcomes include individuals who existed in the tied outcomes, then pick the one which is the greatest improvement over the tied outcome in which some of the same individuals exist. If neither or only one of the outcomes include individuals who existed in the tied outcomes, then choose the better of the two outcomes following Procedure A.

For example, suppose we can choose A in which Spot is at 6, B in which Fluffy is at 6, or C in which Fluffy is at 7 and Sniffy is at 3. Since A and B are equally good, we must compare C with each of them. A is chosen when A and C are compared, and C is chosen when B and C are compared. Since A is zero units better than A, and C is one unit better than B, we should choose C. In other words, since Fluffy is better off in C than Spot is in A, we should choose C. Since we can choose between bringing Spot or Fluffy into existence at 6, it makes sense to bring the one into existence that we can actually make even better off by bringing an additional happy being into existence.
2) Following Procedure A (given below), determine which of the second smallest possible outcomes are permissible compared to the outcome chosen in step 1.

3) Of the outcomes found permissible in step 2, choose the one with the highest average utility.

4) Determine which of the outcomes chosen in steps 1 and 3 is better (according to Procedure A).

29 That it is not correct to compare the second smallest possible outcome to all of the smallest possible outcomes can be seen in the following example. Suppose I can bring about either A, B, or C. In A, Ann exists at 6. In B, Bruce exists at 9. In C, Ann exists at 2, and Bruce exists at 10. When Procedure A is followed to compare A and C, the result is negative. But it is clearly permissible to bring about C. C is better than the better one-person outcome, and how it fares in a pair-wise comparison with A (when B is also an option) is irrelevant.

30 If there is a tie, larger outcomes must be better (according to Procedure A) than both in order for it to be obligatory to bring about the larger outcome. The following example shows why this is the case. Consider three possible states of affairs:

A, in which Pam is at 10 and Kelly is at 5;
B, in which Pam is at 5 and Sally and Molly are each at 10; and
C, in which Pam is at 5, Sally and Molly are each at 10, and Laura is at 20.

If we have all three options, the principle given above holds that it is permissible to bring about any of the three. If B were not an option, and either A or C had to be brought about, then it would be obligatory to bring about C. This result makes sense because if C is the only alternative to A, then Sally, Molly, and Laura are a package deal. These three individuals exist instead of Kelly. Since they are happier than Kelly, on average, (and enough happier to more than offset the decrease in Pam's happiness), it is obligatory to bring about the larger population. Where all three choices are possible, the situation changes because in this case it is only Sally and Molly who exist instead of Kelly and Laura is simply a person who can be brought into existence in addition to the others. In this case, all three outcomes are equally good because the loss to Pam of increasing the population is exactly offset by the greater average happiness that
5) Following Procedure A, determine which of the third smallest possible outcomes are permissible compared to the outcome chosen in step 4.

N - 2) Following Procedure A, determine which of the largest possible outcomes are permissible compared to the outcome selected in step N - 3.

accrues to the two people who can be brought into existence instead of Kelly - viz. Sally and Molly - and there is no value in bringing an additional happy being (Laura) into existence.

An example of how we could be faced with the different sets of alternatives may help to determine whether these results seem plausible. All three alternatives would be possible in the following scenario. Pam is pregnant with Kelly and learns Kelly is seriously defective. If she does not choose to abort, Kelly will live at 5 and Pam (who will end up having a very fulfilling career working with disabled children) will live at 10. She will be too busy and satisfied with Kelly and her work to want any further children. If Pam aborts Kelly, she could choose to have the twins, Sally and Molly, or to have the twins and an additional child, Laura. Regardless of whether she has Laura, who will live at 20, Pam will have an unfulfilling life in her career as an accountant and live at 5 if she aborts Kelly and has the twins. In addition, regardless of whether they have a younger sister, the twins will live at 10. Only options A and C would be possible in the following alternative scenario (if we assume infanticide is not an option). Pam’s situation is the same as in the first scenario except that if she aborts the defective Kelly, she will have the triplets, Sally, Molly, and Laura, instead. It certainly seems appropriate to me to view only the twins, Sally and Molly, as the people who could be brought into existence instead of Kelly and to view Laura as an additional person who could be brought into existence in the first scenario. And it is obviously appropriate to view all of the triplets as the people who could be brought into existence instead of Kelly in the second scenario. So I do not think it is odd, everything else being equal, to view all of the alternatives as on a par in the first circumstance, and C as obligatory in the second circumstance.
N - 1) Of the outcomes found permissible in step N - 2, choose the one with the highest average utility.

N) Determine which of the outcomes chosen in steps N - 3 and N - 1 is better (according to Procedure A). If any beings are to be brought into existence, this is the outcome that should be brought about.

PROCEDURE A

i) Compute the total net gain or loss of increasing the population for the individuals who exist in both outcomes.

ii) Compute the total net gain or loss of increasing the population for the minimum number of beings that must exist in addition to those who exist in both outcomes (i.e., for the number of beings that only exist in the smaller outcome). To determine this, calculate the difference in the average utility of those who only exist in the smaller outcome and of those who only exist in the larger, and multiply this difference by the number of beings that only exist in the smaller outcome. Make this number negative if the average utility of those who only exist in the larger outcome is lower than the average utility of those who only exist in the smaller. Make this number positive if the average utility of those who only exist in the larger outcome is higher than the average utility of those who only exist in the smaller.

iii) Add the numbers obtained in i) and ii). If the sum is zero or positive, then it is permissible to choose the larger outcome. If the sum is positive, then the larger outcome is better than the smaller.

This procedure manifests the beliefs that:

a) If all of the beings in the smaller outcome exist in the larger, then it is obligatory to bring about the larger
outcome (if any beings are brought into existence) iff the average utility of these beings (that exist in both outcomes) is higher in the larger outcome and permissible iff it is at least as high.
b) If none of the beings in the smaller outcome exist in the larger, then it is obligatory to bring about the larger outcome (if any beings are brought into existence) iff the average utility of the beings in the larger outcome is higher than the average utility of the beings in the smaller and permissible iff it is at least as high.
c) If some of the beings in the smaller outcome also exist in the larger and some do not, then we must balance the gain (or loss) to those that exist in both against the gain (or loss) to the minimum number of beings that must exist in addition to those that exist in both.

It is important to point out that the principles given above must be applied to states of affairs in which the (total or average) utility of the people who exist (and will exist) in that state of affairs has been maximized. So it would not be permissible to bring about a larger population if the people who would exist regardless of whether the population is increased would only be unaffected if the utility of the people in the larger population were not maximized. For example, suppose that if a couple has one child and act so as to maximize utility
in all their Same People Choices, their child will be at 10. If they have a second child and act so as to maximize utility in all their Same People Choices, both of their children will be at 7. Suppose that they could, however, choose instead to act so as to give their first child a +10 life even if they had a second child. Suppose the only person who would be hurt by this (compared to what her utility would be if the couple were to act so as to maximize utility in all their Same People Choices) would be their second child. This child would have a +2 life instead of the +7 life it would have if the couple sought to maximize utility in their Same People Choices. It is important that the principle given above be interpreted so as to forbid this course of action. It is not legitimate for the couple to have a second child and then fail to maximize utility in their Same People Choices so as to artificially and unjustly keep their first child as happy as it would have been had it remained an only child. The correct principle for extending utilitarianism from Same People Choices to Different Number Choices cannot be one that endorses the violation of utilitarianism for Same People Choices. It cannot recommend an alternative in which the utility of the beings that exist in that alternative has not been maximized because this violates utilitarianism for Same People Choices. Therefore when we
are considering whether to bring additional beings into existence, we must always make our decision based on what the utility of the beings that would exist in each outcome would be when the (total or average) utility of the beings that exist in that outcome has been maximized (at least to the best of the chooser's ability). In this example, then, if the couple were to have two children they would have to act so as to give each of their children a +7 life. Therefore, the principle given above holds that, everything else being equal, it would be wrong for this couple to have a second child. It is irrelevant that if the couple behaved in a certain anti-utilitarian fashion after their second child was born, their first child's quality of life could be kept just as high as it would have been had a second child not been born.

Ng gives an argument to show that it is impossible to find a theory that would satisfy the requirements for a Theory X (Parfit's term for an acceptable theory of beneficence that can be used for making decisions regarding the size and identity of future generations). This argument can be rebutted on the basis of similar considerations. The three conditions that Ng asserts no theory can jointly satisfy are the Mere Addition Principle (that Mere Addition at least does not make an outcome worse), avoidance of the Repugnant Conclusion, and Non-
Antiegalitarianism. The first two requirements are imposed by Parfit. The third (may or may not be implicit in Parfit's work and) is made explicit by Ng. He defines Non-Antiegalitarianism as follows: "If alternative B has the same set of individuals as in alternative A, with all individuals in B enjoying the same level of utility as each other, and with a higher total utility than A, then, other things being equal, alternative B must be regarded as better than alternative A."31 Utilitarianism for Same People Choices implies Non-Antiegalitarianism. Ng's argument has us consider the following alternatives:

A: 1 billion individuals with an average utility of 1 billion utils.

A+: The same 1 billion individuals with exactly the same utility levels plus 1 billion trillion individuals each with 1 util (i.e., barely worth living).

E: The same individuals as in A+ with a somewhat higher total utility but equally shared by all (i.e., each with, say, 1.01 utils).32

Ng argues that the Mere Addition Principle and Non-Antiegalitarianism imply the Repugnant Conclusion because "the Mere Addition Principle implies that A+ is better than or at least no worse than A, and Non-Antiegalitarianism


32Ibid., p. 240.
implies that E is better than A+. So E is better than or at least not worse than A. But a defender of the possibility of a Theory X can simply point out that A+ is worse than A when E is also an alternative. If E is an alternative, A+ cannot be a case of Mere Addition as it clearly would involve injustice. To accept A+ when E could be brought about would be to reject utilitarianism for a Same People Choice. It does not seem plausible that the correct way of extending utilitarianism to Different Number Choices involves rejecting it in Same People Choices.

In sum, then, it is important that the above principle always be applied to states of affairs in which the utility of those who exist (or will come to exist) in that state of affairs has been maximized.

It might be wondered why we must make the trade-offs between those who exist in both outcomes and those who do not that are spelled out in Procedure A. This is the result of combining the beliefs that there is value in increasing the happiness of existing individuals (or in making the happiness of those who must exist as great as possible), that it is better to create a happy being than a different less happy being, and that there is no value in the existence of happy beings (as compared to their nonexistence). The following examples illustrate how the

\[33\text{Loc. cit.}\]
procedure works in cases in which it is not the case that all of the beings in the smaller outcome also exist in the larger.

If we have a choice between a world in which Pam exists at 10 and a world in which Patty exists at 8 and Nancy exists at 11, the principle tells us to bring Pam into existence (if we bring anyone into existence). Since Pam does not exist in the larger world, it would be impermissible to bring about the two-person world since the average level of well-being is lower in this world than in the one-person world. It might be thought, by supporters of an approach like Singer's, for example, that the larger world should be considered preferable to the smaller because the better-off person is better off in the larger world than in the smaller. The irrelevance of this point is made obvious by considering that it is also the case that the worse-off person is worse off in the larger world than in the smaller. It is just as plausible to say that there are two units of value in Pam existing at 10 instead of Patty existing at 8 as it is to say that there is one unit of disvalue in Pam existing at 10 instead of Nancy existing at 11. Since there is no reason to single out either Patty or Nancy as the individual who would exist in the two-person world instead of Pam, since, in fact, there is no single individual who would exist in the two-person
world instead of Pam, the only relevant comparison is that between the average quality of life in the larger world and the quality of life in the smaller world. If Pam were at 10 in the first world, and Patty at 8 and Nancy at 13 in the second, then it would be obligatory to bring about the larger world.

Another example will help to show how and why the trade-offs are made in cases in which some of the individuals in the smaller outcome exist in the larger and some do not. Let us suppose we have two options. In A, Jolene and Susie both exist at 10. In B, Jolene exists at 8, Diana exists at 20, and Ilana exists at 6. Obviously there is two units of disutility in moving from A to B in that Jolene is two units worse off. On an entirely person-affecting view, this is all that matters, and it would be wrong to choose B over A. As argued in Chapter 4, Section A, however, an entirely person-affecting view cannot be correct. It is better to bring a happy person into existence than a different less happy person. Therefore it is also relevant to our decision to compare the well-being of the individual who exists in A but not in B with the well-being of the individuals who exist in B but not in A. We know it is better if Jolene exists at 10 than at 8. But we must also decide whether it is better that Susie exist at 10 than that Diana exist at 20 and Ilana at 6. Since it
is both Diana and Ilana who would exist instead of Susie if B is chosen instead of A, we must compare the average utility of Diana and Ilana with Susie's utility. Since their average utility is higher than Susie's, B is the better option when the well-being of the individuals who do not exist in both outcomes is compared. Since we do not care how utility is distributed between Diana and Ilana (when it is maximized), since neither of them can be singled out as the individual who exists instead of Susie, and since we place no value on creating two happy people as opposed to one, it follows that there is 3 units of utility in choosing B over A in that Diana and Ilana are, on average, 3 units happier than Susie. Since only two units of disutility accrue to Jolene in choosing B over A, it is clear that we should prefer outcome B to outcome A. In this case the cost of increasing the population to Jolene is outweighed by the fact that people must be brought into existence along with Jolene and we can bring happier people into existence along with Jolene if she is at 8 than we can if she is at 10.

It might also be wondered whether a slightly simpler procedure would be preferable - i.e., we could simply find the outcome with the highest average utility for each possible outcome-size and compare these. The following example shows why the view that uses this procedure, which
can be called the Same Number First View, does not give us the result we want. Imagine our three options are A in which Paul is at 10, B in which Paul is at 2 and John is at 100, and C in which Ringo and George are both at 40. If we first choose the two-person world with the highest utility, we choose B. When we then compare A to B, we must choose A, as it is not permissible to sacrifice the quality of Paul's life in order to bring an additional being (John) into existence. If instead we follow the steps outlined above, the result we obtain is different. We compare both B and C with A, and find that C is permissible whereas B is not. We then choose C over A because average utility is higher in C.
Chapter 6  Objections to the Modified Average View

Section A  It Conflicts with the Same Number Quality Claim in Certain Cases

The example given at the end of the previous chapter shows that one of the implications of the view advocated here that may seem troubling is that it does not conform to the Same Number Quality Claim in certain cases in which a Same Number Choice is embedded in a Different Number Choice. Suppose we have a choice of bringing about either A, B, or C. In A, Jonelle exists and is at 20. In B, Karen and Barbara exist and, when their utility is maximized, Karen is at 18 and Barbara is at 15. In C, Jonelle and Kathryn exist and, when their utility is maximized, Jonelle is at 20 and Kathryn is at 10. If all the individuals involved were different, then we would be directed by the principle given in the previous chapter to choose A, as all we would need to do is choose the outcome with the highest average utility. Since, in fact, Jonelle exists in both A and C, it would be permissible to bring about either A or C (since C is simply a case of Mere Addition to the outcome with the highest average utility), but impermissible to bring about B. (This would, of course, also be true if Jonelle existed in all three outcomes.) It might seem more appropriate to say that B is
preferable to C even when A is an option. After all if there are going to be two people, it might seem that they should be the happiest two people (on average) possible. But taking this line has implications that are even more counterintuitive than preferring C to B (when A is an option). If we take the view that we must first determine whether the Same Number Quality Claim would be satisfied by choosing B or C, and then only hold it permissible to opt for a two-person world instead of a one-person world if this would preserve the average quality of life, we must conclude that we cannot increase the population from one to two. If we were to bring two people into existence, on the Same Number First View, we would be directed to bring about B. But since this would mean that average utility would be 16.5 instead of 20, the view would in fact direct us to choose the one-person world. We can see how counterintuitive this is by considering what we would say about the state of affairs if C had already been brought about. On the Same Number First View, we would have to say that the world would be better if the person at 10 did not exist. We would, in fact, be morally required to kill Kathryn (at least if this did not cause disutility to Jonelle) to get the world back to where it should be - despite the fact that Kathryn's existence harms no other person. The counterintuitiveness of this view only gets
worse upon further examination. Suppose that the numbers are the same as in the above example except that in C Jonelle is at 21. Still the Same Number Quality Claim tells us that if we are to have a world of two people, B is to be preferred. The Average View then tells us that we should not increase the population from one to two, as this decreases the average quality of life. But, again, suppose C has already been brought about. Jonelle is now at 21 and Kathryn at 10. On the Same Number First View, we would be morally required to kill Kathryn even though doing so would reduce Jonelle's level of utility to 20. This seems an even more absurd result than that obtained in the previous example - not only is Kathryn's life worth living and her existence completely harmless, it actually increases Jonelle's utility. A view cannot be correct that holds that it is better if the population stays at one than if it is increased by adding a happy person who increases the utility of the person who already exists (or who will exist regardless) when the total utility of the two individuals is maximized.

Another example may help to show that the Same Number First View is misguided. Suppose we may choose between a world containing 10 people at 100, a world containing 20 people at 90, or a world containing the original 10 people at 100 and 10 monkeys at 70. (In each case these are the
levels achieved when the total utility of the beings existing in the alternative is maximized.) The Same Number First View tells us to choose the world with 10 people at 100. But again it seems mistaken to say that the world would be a better place without the monkeys. If we ask the proponent of the Same Number First View why the world would be a better place if the monkeys did not exist, she must say the following: "If twenty beings are to be in existence, they should be the happiest twenty beings possible. These monkeys are not nearly as happy as the people who could replace them." So far so good, but then, since she takes a quality-only view and does not want to embrace the Repugnant Conclusion, she must go on to add that "of course it would be wrong to actually replace the monkeys with people (as this would lower the quality of human life that is possible). So it is bad that the monkeys exist because no extra beings should exist." The problem with this reasoning is that there is obviously nothing wrong with extra happy beings existing. What is wrong is replacing happy beings with less happy beings and whereas this happens if we choose 20 people at 90 instead of 10 people at 100, this does not happen if we add 10 monkeys at 70 to the 10 people at 100. It just does not seem plausible to hold that it would improve the world to kill the monkeys under these circumstances. And it does
It might be argued that the best counterexamples to the Same Number First View, which I am rejecting, are ones that employ the addition of other species besides human beings. And it could be argued that the only reason it
seems wrong to say that we cannot add cats at 10, say, to a population of human beings at 100 is that we think that this is as happy as cats can be. The reason there is nothing wrong with adding the cats, it could be claimed, is that the cats at 10 are actually better off than the human beings at 90 that we could add instead. A cat at 10 may be experiencing 100% of the utility it is capable of experiencing whereas a person at 90 may be experiencing only 90% of the utility she is capable of experiencing. But what is valued is that beings that exist have the best lives that are possible in absolute terms, and not that beings experience as much happiness as they are individually capable of. Individual human beings, no doubt, differ in their capacity to be happy. Some people may be so constituted that, even under the best of circumstances, they will just not be able to be as happy as others are capable of being. It should be obvious that a world of 10 people at 100 (who are capable of a maximum of 100) is preferable to a world of 10 people at 10 (who are capable of a maximum of 10). It is not the percentage of a being's capacity for utility that is fulfilled that matters but the absolute amount of utility experienced by the being. So this kind of consideration does not suffice to explain why it is legitimate to add happy cats when happier people (who would lower the quality of life from what could
be experienced by a smaller population of people) could be added instead.

Still it may be insisted that examples can be given that show my view has results more counterintuitive than that of saying that a world of two people at 20 and 10 is to be preferred to a world of two people at 18 and 15 when a world of just the one person at 20 is also an option. Suppose that if we wreak havoc on the environment and bring no future generations into existence, we could live at 100. If we conserve resources and otherwise treat the planet well, we could live at 90 and another generation could live at 90. We could also live piggishly at 100 and bring another generation into existence that would live at 50. On my view, it is charged, we would be permitted to live at 100 and yet bring others into existence who would live at 50. This does not follow from my view, however. Remember that we must always maximize the utility of those who exist or will come to exist in the outcome we choose, so we could not pollute the environment if that did not maximize the total utility of this group. Therefore the alternative of living at 100 and bringing another generation into existence that would live at 50 is ruled out. Regardless of the fact that the children born if we live extravagantly would not have been born if we had lived conservatively, the utility of all the people who exist (and who will
exist) if we live extravagantly and have children is not maximized by our adoption of this lifestyle. So it does not seem that, even on my view, it would actually be morally permissible to both have children and destroy the environment. This is why the only real cases of Mere Addition that lower average utility might involve different species that perhaps do not compete for the same resources. If the additional beings are essentially the same kind of being as exists in the smaller population and average utility is lower in the larger population, then it is unlikely that maximizing the utility of the larger population would result in the people who exist regardless of our choice being as well off, on average, in the larger population, as they would be if we did not bring the additional beings into existence.

On my view it is true that it would be morally good for the current members of society to agree to have no children and squander the earth's resources if this policy would maximize the happiness of those of us who exist now. I have no problem with this (although I doubt drowning in our own pollution is really the way to maximize our happiness). If there are no future generations, there is no point in preserving the earth for them. So the only real issue is whether there is any good in there being future generations and, on my view, this depends on whether
existing people are made better or worse off by living as they would morally have to live were there to be future generations. In the example given above, the current generation's quality of life would have to be reduced (in order to maximize utility in our Same People Choices) if the next generation were brought into existence. Therefore these people should not have children. But as argued above, if they do, my view does not allow them to continue to live as if they were the last people on earth once they have, in fact, decided that they will not be.

It should also be remembered that we only get ourselves into this bind when what we are making is actually a Different Number Choice. In Same Number Choices, the Same Number Quality Claim must be observed. The Same Number Quality Claim only gives unpalatable results when a Same Number Choice is embedded in a Different Number Choice. A world of 20 people at 90 is better than a world of 10 people at 100 and 10 monkeys at 70 if these are the only options. But the world with the monkeys is permissible and the world of 20 people at 90 is not if a world of just the 10 people at 100 is also a possibility. This is because in the first case the monkeys are not additional beings but beings who exist instead of happier beings. In the second case, the monkeys can be
seen as additional beings, as the ten people at 100 could be brought into existence without them.

The following argument has been raised against this view:

Suppose we have a real choice among A, B, and C. (A is the world of one person at 20, B the world of two people with one at 18 and one at 15, and C the world of two people with the one at 20 and one at 10.) We choose (permissibly) C. We get pregnant (irreversibly). Now A is no longer possible. So we must re-choose between B & C, and C is suddenly no longer permissible! But B was not permissible when A was still an option!

This could not happen. If B were possible when this child we are pregnant with is the additional being brought into existence, then it was not permissible to "choose C" and get pregnant with this child. The only alternatives ever compared are alternatives in which the total utility of the beings that exist in that alternative has been maximized. If the utility of all who would exist, if the child that has been conceived is brought into existence, is maximized in C, then B is not possible if this child is the additional being brought into existence. Therefore once we are irreversibly pregnant, not only is A no longer possible, but B is also no longer possible. A different being would have had to have been brought into existence in order for B to have been possible. It simply cannot be the case that both B and C maximize the total utility of those who exist in each alternative if the same individuals exist
in both. If we have a real choice between bringing about A, B, or C, this must mean that we have a choice of which of two additional beings to bring into existence. If we bring one of them into existence, then when the total utility of existing beings is maximized, B is brought about. If we bring the other of them into existence, then when the total utility of existing beings is maximized, C is brought about. It is simply not possible to bring the latter additional being into existence and then bring about B. With the latter additional being, utility is maximized by the distribution in C. The distribution in B is not a possible one for the individuals who exist in C.

Luce and Raiffa present as an axiom of decision theory that "Adding new acts to a [decision problem under uncertainty], each of which is weakly dominated by or is equivalent to some old act, has no effect on the optimality or non-optimality of an old act."34 They point out that the axiom does not hold true where the existence of the additional option changes the probable nature of the original alternatives. The example they give is of a carnivore who enters a "modest" restaurant in search of a piece of meat. The waiter tells him he can have salmon or steak. The carnivore chooses the salmon. Minutes later

the waiter scurries back from the kitchen to report that frogs' legs are also available. The carnivore changes his order to the steak. The fact that the restaurant serves frogs' legs changes his estimation of how good the steak will be. A very similar thing is going on in the population case. If I am asked to choose between B, in which Karen is at 18 and Barbara is at 15, and C, in which Jonelle is at 20 and Kathryn is at 10, then all I have to do is use the Same Number Quality Claim. It is on this basis that I choose B. If I am then told that A (in which only Jonelle exists) is also an option, this puts the original two alternatives in a completely different light. Now I am confronted with a Different Number Choice, and I have to decide so as to insure that the quality of lives lived is not compromised so that more lives can be lived. The fact that A is an alternative changes the nature of the original two choices in that it means that neither of them represent the minimum number of beings that can be brought into existence. Therefore they must be compared with a possible smaller population, and it is not adequate to rely on the Same Number Quality Claim in making my choice. In both the restaurant and population examples, the fact that there is a third alternative changes what attitude it is appropriate to take to the first two.
It might be argued that the kind of change in the (probable) nature of the original alternatives is importantly different in the restaurant and the population examples. In the restaurant case, the fact that the restaurant serves frogs' legs actually affects what the carnivore expects the steak to be like. In the population example, the existence of A does not affect our assessment of what C would actually be like. The population case may be more similar to the following example. Suppose I have a friend in the hospital. She's not doing very well, and her other friends are a bit skittish about going to visit her. This annoys me, and I want to try to get somebody (besides myself) to go visit her. In trying to figure out who I should ask, I go through a two-step thought process. First I decide whether there is anybody who would be willing to go alone to visit Cyndie. Second, if there is, then I invite that person plus whoever else can come with that person. If there is not, then I invite whatever possible combination of two people Cyndie likes best. When I first think about Cyndie's other friends I decide there is probably no one who would be willing to go alone. So I figure I could either invite Diana and Vivian (who know and are comfortable with each other) or Leigh and Paul (who know and are comfortable with each other). Cyndie prefers
Leigh and Paul to Diana and Vivian, so I decide I should invite Leigh and Paul. In fact it happens to be the case that Cyndie will get 20 units of utility from seeing Diana, 10 units from seeing Vivian, 18 from seeing Leigh, and 15 from seeing Paul. Then I realize that in fact I have not been thinking straight about Diana at all - of course she would be willing to go alone. Once I realize this it is clear that I should invite Diana and Vivian. Cyndie would rather see Leigh and Paul, but (for whatever reason) it is important to me to invite the person that cares enough that she would have been willing to go by herself. When I initially chose Leigh and Paul, I did not realize that this meant leaving out someone who feels this way. The fact that Diana would be willing to go alone does not, however, change the utilities involved (at least for Cyndie) in sending Diana and Vivian. The same is true in the population example. The fact that A is an alternative means that B involves a lower average quality of life than would be possible for a smaller population, but the utility levels in B and C are unaffected.

At this point the issue is probably whether it is rational to adopt a decision rule that violates Luce and Raiffa's axiom when the availability of a third alternative does not affect what we expect the original alternatives to be like in the way it does in the restaurant example.
Perhaps if Diana's willingness to go to the hospital alone does not affect how much utility Cyndie will get from her visit, for example, it is irrational to use willingness to go alone as a criterion for whom I should invite. If we consider the population case, however, reasons have already been given for why the decision rules used are not irrational. Our only alternatives are to adopt a decision rule that leads to the Repugnant Conclusion or a decision rule that sometimes forbids Mere Addition. Forbidding Mere Addition certainly seems irrational. Moreover, not only does the Same Number First View forbid Mere Addition in this type of case, it also has the same sort of difficulty as my view. On the Same Number First View, A is better than C only if B is also an option. If A and C are the only options, then there is nothing wrong with bringing about C on the Same Number First View. A view that leads to the Repugnant Conclusion may not seem irrational, but it does seem incorrect. It must be the case, then, that the existence of the third alternative is rationally relevant to our evaluation of the original two alternatives; that is, it is relevant to our assessment of the two-person worlds that they do not represent the minimum number of people that can be brought into existence - that, in fact, a world in which only Jonelle exists at 20 is also an option. It is, of course, also necessary for the choosing
of C over B that Jonelle is better off in A than Karen and Barbara are, on average, in B. If Jonelle were at 5 in A, for example, then of the three alternatives, B would be the best. In this case a one-person world in which the person is better off than the people in B is not a possibility. This is why, then, in making a Different Number Choice we must first determine which of the larger outcomes of a given size are permissible compared to the best smaller outcome that can be brought about and then determine which outcome - of the outcomes that pass this test - satisfies the Same Number Quality Claim. In our original example, only C passes the test for a larger outcome in a Different Number Choice. In the revised example, in which Jonelle is at 5 in A, both B and C pass the test for a larger outcome in a Different Number Choice. B is then chosen in this case, as average utility is higher in B than in C.

It is important to note, however, that although an additional happy being should be brought into existence if this increases the happiness of those who already exist or who will exist regardless of whether the additional being is brought into existence, it is not the case that we must bring into existence that additional being who most increases the happiness of those who exist or who will exist regardless. That this is the case can be seen by considering an objection to Singer's principle made by
Sikora. Sikora's objection is not to Singer's principle as it is formulated by Singer but instead to his own version of Singer's principle, which he argues is what Singer really intends. Singer's formulation only rules out population increases that decrease the quality of life for the subgroup P. Sikora thinks he also meant to require population increases that increase the quality of life for the subgroup P, and apparently he even thinks Singer wants to require us to add just those individuals (when the size of the increase is held constant) that make the subgroup P as happy as possible.

Sikora argues that on this interpretation of Singer's "minimum number theory" we get bad results in the following kinds of cases. Suppose that if a couple has a child at time $t^1$ it can be expected to be much less happy than the child they would have at time $t$. The prospective parents, however, "will benefit slightly more from having a child at time $t^1$ than from having a child at time $t$."\(^{35}\) On the assumption that in neither case will the child be happier than either parent, Singer's principle would require, according to Sikora's interpretation (or revision) of it, that the parents have the child at $t^1$ even though the difference between the happiness of the two possible

\(^{35}\)Sikora, "Is It Wrong to Prevent the Existence of Future Generations?," op. cit., p. 131.
children is greater than the total difference to the parents of having a child at \( t^1 \) rather than at \( t \). This is because the minimum number in the example is two; the two happiest people are the parents; and they are happier if they have the baby at \( t^1 \) than if they have it at \( t \). The example shows why we should not hold it morally obligatory to bring those beings into existence that would make the subgroup \( P \) (or the individuals who exist regardless of our choice) as happy as possible. The point of a quality-only view is only to rule out population increases that decrease the quality of life. The idea is that we should not sacrifice the quality of lives lived simply so that more lives can be lived. Obviously it does not follow from this thought that if a certain number of lives are to be lived - the three in Sikora's example, say - that we should choose an outcome in which two of the people are as happy as possible simply because it is feasible to have only these two people in existence. It is true that, as I have argued, we cannot always respect the Same Number Quality Claim when Same Number Choices are embedded in Different Number Choices. This is because in certain cases doing so would result in exactly what a quality-only approach seeks to avoid - viz. in order for an extra life to be lived, the quality of life that a smaller population could have experienced is compromised. But this is not what happens
in a case like Sikora's in which either addition to the current population increases the happiness of the original population. If the happier child is born, it is not the case that the quality of the parents' lives is sacrificed so that an additional being may be brought into existence. Instead what is happening here is that the quality of the parents' lives is sacrificed (only compared to what it would be if they had the less happy child) for the sake of increasing the quality of life of their child. Quality is not sacrificed for quantity in this case, but rather a small loss of quality for the parents (compared to what it could have been had they had the less happy child) is traded for a greater gain in quality for the child. So I think it would be contrary to the spirit behind a quality-only view to endorse bringing the less happy child into existence in this example. We cannot satisfy the Same Number Quality Claim (within a Different Number Choice) when this results in a decrease in the quality of life of the people who exist regardless of whether the population is increased. We should, however, satisfy the Same Number Quality Claim when this can be done without decreasing the quality of life of the individuals who exist in the smaller outcome.

On my view, it would, of course, be the case that if in Sikora's example it would actually decrease the parents'
happiness (below what it would be if they had no child) to have the happier child, then (if no one else is affected) they should not have it. It would be morally permissible for them to have the less happy child instead if this would be the being out of those who would not decrease the quality of life of the beings already in existence (or that will exist regardless) that would most increase the total utility for the number of beings that would then exist. And it would be morally obligatory to have the less happy child if it satisfied the above description and actually increased the net happiness of those beings who already exist or who will exist regardless of whether the child is born. I hope the earlier discussion - of why in Same Number Choices that are embedded in Different Number Choices one should not always be required to bring those beings that would satisfy the Same Number Quality Claim into existence - serves to make the idea that parents do not have to have the happiest child possible if this decreases their own well-being (below what it would be if they had no child) seem less counterintuitive. It is true that by saying this, one must endorse taking a smaller "gain" for the parents over a larger loss for the child. But if one endorses the having of the happier child, one endorses sacrificing the quality of lives lived for the sake of an extra life being lived. And if one forbids the
couple having any child under the circumstances, one claims that it is bad for a happy being who causes no net harm to other beings to live.

Section B It Seems to Disallow Some Cases of Mere Addition

In this section, I will discuss objections to the Average View that are based on its inability to handle cases of Mere Addition. I will argue that some of these objections are misguided because they do not actually involve cases of Mere Addition, that others are handled by the revision of the Average View that makes it somewhat person-affecting, and that others show that the principle given in the last chapter does need to be amended slightly. To start with a simple example, the Average View would favor a world of two people at 100 and 100 over a world of three different people at 105, 105, and 30. This may seem to be a case of Mere Addition, and a supporter of Singer's principle would argue that the three-person world is better. According to this line of thought, in the second world there are two people who are better off than the two people in the first world plus an extra person who has a life worth living. Looking at it this way does make the preference for the first world seem mistaken, but this is an incorrect way of characterizing the difference between
the two worlds. One may naturally tend to compare the people at 105 with the people at 100 and the person at 30 with nonexistence, but this cannot legitimately be done if all of the people involved in the alternatives are different. You do not have two people at 105 instead of two people at 100, and one extra person who exists at 30. Obviously if this were the case, then there would be value in choosing the second world. There would be value in two people existing at 105 instead of 100, and no disvalue in the existence of an additional happy person. But what is crucial is whether such an analysis is legitimate. If the person at 30 in the second world existed instead of one of the people at 100 in the first world, one of the people at 105 in the second world existed instead of the other person at 100 in the first world, and the other person at 105 in the second world were the extra being, then the nature of the move from the first world to the second would obviously be very different. In this case there would be 70 units of disvalue in a person existing at 30 instead of a different person existing at 100, five units of value in a person existing at 105 instead of a different person existing at 100, and, of course, no value or disvalue in an additional happy person being brought into existence. Which people in the second world are correctly viewed as replacing the people in the first world depends on what is going on in
the move from the first world to the second world. If neither of the people in the two-person world exist in the three-person world, then the three beings in the second world are a package deal, and we must view all three of these beings as existing instead of the two beings in the first world. We cannot then view only the people at 105 as replacements for the people at 100.

Where the value of people existing at 105 instead of (different) people existing at 100 cannot be obtained unless people also exist at 30 instead of (different) people existing at 100, it is obviously relevant that there is disvalue in the latter. Where the people at 105 can be brought into existence without the person at 30, as would be the case if the two people at 105 in the second world were the same two individuals who exist in the first world, we are clearly dealing with a case of Mere Addition (or actually Benevolent Addition). Where the three people in the second world are all different, we do not have a case of Mere Addition. In this case, it is not true that increasing the population has no effect on the quality of life. No particular person can be considered the additional being, and so the only appropriate comparison to make is between the two entire populations. Obviously on a quality-only view three people with a total utility of 240 between them is not as good as two people with a total
utility of 200. It might be insisted that one can always sensibly compare the people at 105 with the people at 100 and the person at 30 with nonexistence, but the interpretation of Parfit's A*, B* example discussed earlier shows that this cannot always legitimately be done. Suppose A* were a world of two people with one at 100 and the other at 50. Suppose B* were a world of four people with two at 80 and two at 40. Obviously it would not be correct to say that if B* were brought about instead of A* two people would exist at 80 instead of one person existing at 50 and one person existing at 100, and two additional people would exist at 40. (These are the comparisons Parfit suggests Singer's principle directs us to make.) On the realistic interpretation of Parfit's example the situation is quite clear. One of the people at 80 in B* exists instead of the person at 100 in A*, one of the people at 40 in B* exists instead of the person at 50 in A*, and two extra people exist in B* - one at 80 and one at 40. If we are indifferent about whether happy beings exist but not about the level at which they exist, obviously A* is preferable to B*. Since the more fortunate members of society cannot be brought into existence without the less fortunate members, it only makes sense to treat them as a package deal and compare the average utility of the two packages. The more fortunate in B* do not exist instead of
the entire population of A* but instead of the more fortunate in A*. It is the entire population of B* that exists instead of the entire population of A*. And the average utility of the entire population of B* is lower than the average utility of the entire population of A*.

Suppose we have three choices. We could spray Pesticide X which would allow us to increase the population by 50% and which would cause every child that is born to be born with a birth defect that means that when total utility is maximized in the society everyone lives at 80. Alternatively we could spray Pesticide Y. This would also allow us to increase the population by 50% but result in one-third of the population being born with a much more severe birth defect (than results from the use of Pesticide X) and allow the rest to escape unscathed, so that when total utility is maximized two-thirds of the population live at 105 and one-third live at 30. If we spray neither pesticide, we cannot increase the population (because we lose so much of our crops to pests), no one will be born with a birth defect, and everyone will live at 100. (There are some advantages of a larger population that would make a higher quality of life possible for those who are not born defective if Pesticide Y is sprayed.) It seems clear that in this case it is not possible to increase the population without lowering the quality of life. It also
seems clear that it would be wrong to say that the use of Pesticide Y is permissible but the use of Pesticide X is impermissible. The use of Pesticide Y makes one-third of the population 70 units worse off than the (different) people who would exist if no pesticide were sprayed and two-thirds of the population 5 units better off than the (different) people who would exist if no pesticide were sprayed. The use of Pesticide X makes everyone 20 units worse off than the (different) people who would exist if no pesticide were sprayed. It is not sensible to maintain that the same cost is acceptable when it is spread in the one way but not when it is spread in the other way.

A person who believes that the quality of life should not be sacrificed in order to increase the number of lives lived simply cannot prefer a package deal of three people at 105, 105, and 30 to a world of two people each at 100. Singer thought that the presence of a subgroup of the larger population that is as numerous as and at least as happy as the entire smaller population was sufficient to guarantee that the quality of life was not being sacrificed so that an additional life could be lived, but this is simply not the case. In the pesticide example, if any individual born in the larger world had come into existence in the smaller world, she would have existed at 100. It cannot be assumed that the burden of increasing the
population will fall evenly on all the members of a population when we act as utilitarians in our Same People Choices (i.e., in the distributive choices society makes with respect to existing individuals). And it is not consistent with the motivation behind a quality-only view to support an increase in a population that imposes more costs than benefits on the members of that population regardless of how the net cost is distributed. It is clear that a supporter of a quality-only view would not favor a world of three people each at 80 over a world of two people each at 100. So why, when the people are a package deal, would a supporter of a quality-only view favor a world of three people at 105, 105, and 30 over a world of two people each at 100? The net burden of increasing the population is the same in both cases. It is distributed differently, but there is no reason why this should make a difference in our judgement. I think when people hear that the total utility of 240 is distributed in the 105, 105, 30 manner, they somehow think this shows that increasing the population does not impose net hardship on the members of the population. This is because they decide that the two people at 105 exist instead of the two people at 100 and that an additional person exists at 30. That this is completely fallacious is, I hope, by now apparent. In truth all we can say is that three people with a total
utility of 240 exist instead of two people with a total utility of 200. In the case of a package deal, no one of the three individuals can be fastened upon as the one that is the extra being who exists because the population has been increased.

The number of people negatively affected if Pesticide Y is sprayed in the pesticide case is equal to the number of extra people who will be brought into existence if a pesticide is sprayed. This may make us think that the people affected negatively if Pesticide Y is sprayed are the extra people. But there are no grounds for saying this. This would be like saying that the extra people in B* are the people in the less fortunate half of B*, but clearly this need not be the case and is not the case under the most plausible interpretation of the example. It is not the people who do not happen to get brain tumors in B* who exist instead of the people who do happen to get brain tumors in A*. In the case of Pesticide Y, just as in B*, the individuals who exist in the larger populations are all part of a package deal. They must be viewed as an integral group - all of whom can be brought into existence or none of whom - and all of whom exist instead of the members of the smaller population.

The following example shows why it is obligatory to increase the population even if there is a subgroup P of
the larger population that is the size of the smaller population and no happier (on average) than the smaller population, as long as that subgroup could not be brought into existence without bringing the entire larger population into existence and the average happiness is higher in the larger population. Just as we should hold it equally impermissible to spray Pesticides X and Y, it seems to me that it is just as obligatory to spray Pesticide Z in Society A as it is in Society B. In both societies, different people will be born if the pesticide is sprayed than would be if it were not. In Society A, if Pesticide Z is sprayed, the future population can and will be 50% greater than it could and would be if it were not sprayed, and everyone will live at 105 instead of 100 because everyone will enjoy the advantages that come with increasing the society's population. In Society B, if Pesticide Z is sprayed, the future population can and will be 50% greater than it could and would be if it were not sprayed, and two-thirds of the population will live at 95 instead of 100 and one-third of the population will live at 125 instead of 100. This is because for two-thirds of the people the disadvantages of an increased population outweigh the advantages of an increased population by 5 units and for one-third of the people the advantages of an increased population outweigh the disadvantages of an
increased population by 25 units. Assuming that in Society B it is impossible to bring the people who prefer the smaller population into existence without bringing the people who prefer the larger population into existence, on my view it is obligatory to spray the pesticide in both societies. In both cases, spraying the pesticide leads to a population that is 50% larger and in which the average level of happiness is five units higher. There are no grounds for holding that if the population in Society B is increased, it is the people at 95 who exist instead of the people at 100, and the people at 125 who are the extras. Since the people at 95 could not be brought into existence without bringing the people at 125 into existence, it is appropriate to compare the average level of utility in the larger population with the average level of utility in the smaller population. Following this procedure, of course, leads to the conclusion that using the pesticide and increasing the population is equally worthwhile in both societies.

What the rules given attempt to do and what the rules specified by a correct Theory X need to do is place value on people with higher quality lives existing instead of people with lower quality lives but place no value on people (or additional people) with high quality lives existing as opposed to no one (or no additional people)
existing. The rules, then, must differentiate between people in a larger population who exist instead of people in a smaller population and people in a larger population who exist instead of no one or in addition to the people who could exist in a smaller population. Where the same individual exists in both a larger and a smaller population, it is usually clear that this individual is not one of the extra or additional people that could exist if the larger population were brought about. The person who "replaces" or exists "instead of" Pam, say, is Pam herself if she exists in both the larger and smaller outcomes. Where all of the members of a smaller population exist in a larger population, obviously (at least in any sort of plausible case) it is the people who only exist in the larger population who are the additional people who can be brought into existence if the larger population is chosen.

There are certain problems with the principle given in the last chapter in this regard, however. The rules given assume that the only case in which a particular member of a larger population can be claimed to be the individual who exists instead of a particular member of a smaller population is the case in which the individual in the larger population is, in fact, the same individual that exists in the smaller population. But it could be that this is only one kind of case in which an individual in the
larger outcome can be pinpointed as the individual who exists instead of a particular individual in the smaller outcome. To explore this possibility, consider the following example. Suppose Bill Clinton has to decide whether to sign a bill that grants a certain subsidy to dairy farmers. Further suppose (quite absurdly, of course) that he knows that the only lives affected by his decision are those of Betty Zot and her husband, Earl. If Clinton grants the subsidy by signing the bill, Betty and Earl will end up with a cow named Bertha who will live at 5 and a daughter named Jo who will live at 9. If Clinton does not sign the bill and the subsidy is not granted, the Zots will end up with a different daughter named Natasha who will live at 8 (and no cow). Betty, Earl, and every other being in existence live at 8. According to the rules given in the last chapter, Clinton should not sign the bill. This is probably the wrong result because Jo is happier than Natasha, and if everything else is equal, there would seem to be no harm in bringing Bertha into existence. It is natural to view Jo as existing instead of Natasha and to view Bertha as the additional being that is brought into existence if the subsidy is granted. It is true that both Bertha and Jo would not exist if Natasha existed, but it seems wrong to insist that we can pinpoint neither Bertha nor Jo as the individual that exists instead of Natasha if
the subsidy is granted. The additional being is Bertha, and it just so happens that the same circumstances that lead to her existence also change the identity of the Zots' child. But it is Jo that exists instead of Natasha, and in order for the rules given above to be made correct, they would have to take this into account.

There is another interpretation of Parfit's counterexample to Singer's Principle that may also be raised against the principles given here if identity is used to determine whether a case of increasing the population is a case of Mere Addition. According to this interpretation of Parfit's counterexample, all of the people in A* go into the more fortunate half of B*, and all of the people in the less fortunate half of B* are new. All of the people in B* go into the more fortunate half of C*, etc. This interpretation does not fit well with Parfit's description of the example. Parfit asserts that the example "does not essentially involve any assumption which is at all far-fetched," and it obviously would if all of the people in possible future A* would also happen to exist in possible future B* and happen to all be in the more fortunate half of B*. Some far-fetched story would have to be given to explain why all the people who would

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have brain tumors if A* were brought about would exist and be tumor-free if B* were brought about. Parfit also construes the example at one point as illustrating the quality of life enjoyed by successive generations. Obviously this interpretation of the example is incompatible with the suggestion that all of the individuals in A* also exist in all of the other outcomes.

Nevertheless this version of Parfit's example should be considered, as it seems to present a problem for the principle advocated here. We can make the individuals who exist in A* better off (on average) if we move to B*, and we can make the individuals who exist in B* better off (on average) if we move to C*. However, those who exist in A* are worse off (on average) in C*. What this version of Parfit's example shows is again that in some cases some other criterion besides identity needs to be used to determine who should be seen as constituting the subgroup of the larger population that exists instead of the smaller population. In Parfit's example, the more fortunate half of the population is composed in each case of those whose lives just happen to go better than others. On this interpretation of the example if an individual would exist in A*, then regardless of whether she would be lucky or unlucky if A* is brought about, she will be lucky if B* is brought about. It is hard to imagine how this could be
explained, but it seems clear that on these bizarre assumptions, our principle errors by using the criterion of identity to assert that it is the more fortunate half of B* that should be viewed as existing instead of those in A* and the less fortunate half of B* that should be viewed as the additional beings that could be brought into existence. Parfit's example is not a case of Mere Addition, and (under the current interpretation) the rules given above make the error of treating it as one. What is obvious in the example is that (regardless of whether the individuals in A* also exist in the more fortunate half of B*) we should consider half of the people whose lives happen to go well in B* as existing instead of those whose lives happen to go well in A*, half of the people whose lives happen to go less well in B* as existing instead of those whose lives happen to go less well in A*, and half of the people whose lives happen to go well in B* and half of the people whose lives happen to go less well in B* as the additional people we could bring into existence by bringing about B* instead of A*. Once we correctly construe who exists instead of whom and who counts as additional beings, we get the correct answer that A* is unequivocally the correct choice.

Our rules can be written in a more general way to account for these types of cases. The same series of comparisons given in the last chapter should be made, but
the procedure for making each comparison should be as follows:

PROCEDURE A'

i) Compute the total net gain or loss of increasing the population for any particular individuals in the larger outcome who exist instead of (the same number of) particular individuals in the smaller outcome.

ii) Compute the total net gain or loss of increasing the population for the minimum number of beings that must exist in addition to those picked out in i). To determine this, calculate the difference in the average utility of those in the smaller outcome not picked out in i) and the average utility of those in the larger outcome not picked out in i), and multiply this difference by the number of beings in the smaller outcome not picked out in i). Make this number negative if the average utility of those in the larger outcome that were not picked out in i) is lower than the average utility of those in the smaller outcome that were not picked out in i). Make this number positive if the average utility of those in the larger outcome that were not picked out in i) is higher than the average utility of those in the smaller outcome that were not picked out in i).

iii) Add the numbers obtained in i) and ii). If the sum is at least zero, then it is permissible to choose the larger outcome. If the sum is positive, then the larger outcome is better than the smaller.

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37To be entirely correct, the procedure would have to be formulated slightly differently to handle cases such as that described in footnote 30 when all three alternatives exist. In this case when A and C are compared, i) should pick out Pam, but ii) should only compare Sally and Molly to Kelly because (unlike Sally and Molly) Laura does not exist instead of Kelly but is rather just an additional being that may be brought into existence.
This procedure manifests the beliefs that:

a) If the members of a subgroup of the larger population that is the same size as the smaller population exist instead of the members of the smaller population, then it is permissible to bring about the larger population iff the average utility of this subgroup is at least as high as the average utility of the smaller population and obligatory to bring it about (if any beings are brought into existence) iff the average utility of the subgroup is higher.

b) If all of the members of the larger population can be seen as replacing all of the members of the smaller population, then it is permissible to bring about the larger population iff average utility is at least as high in the larger outcome as in the smaller and obligatory to bring it about (if any beings are brought into existence) iff the average utility in the larger outcome is higher.

c) If some of the individuals in the smaller outcome are replaced by particular individuals in the larger and some are not, then we must balance the gain (or loss) to those in the larger outcome who exist instead of some of those in the smaller (as compared to those they replace) against the gain (or loss) to the minimum number of beings that must exist in addition to these individuals.

It should be clear how revising the Average View in
this way avoids the problems with the unmodified Average View discussed in Section A of Chapter 5. When bringing a happy child into existence is a case of Mere Addition, the modified principle allows for this regardless of the effect of bringing this child into existence on the average happiness. And the revised view also meets Sikora's objection by requiring us to add happy beings who increase the utility of those who already exist even if, due to their own lower level of happiness, their existence lowers average happiness. In addition the view favored here allows for the existence of more than one species as long as the existence of a species with a lower average happiness does not negatively affect the members of a species with a higher average happiness. And obviously the revised view is not vulnerable to Robin Attfield's objection if the continuation of the human species at a lower level of average happiness does not negatively affect current people. All of these objections to the average view are based on the fact that it does not allow all cases of Mere Addition, and all that the modification of the Average View is designed to do is to insure that it does.
PART III  A VIEW THAT PLACES NO VALUE ON THE CREATION OF HAPPY BEINGS CONJOINED WITH THE BELIEF THAT THERE IS DISVALUE IN THE CREATION OF UNHAPPY BEINGS

In Parts I and II, it was argued that a quality-only approach is correct when it comes to extending utilitarianism to cover questions about future generations. The discussion to this point has been incomplete, however, because questions concerning bringing into existence miserable beings, or beings whose lives contain more disutility than utility, have not yet been addressed. In particular, we must investigate whether the following three claims are consistent:

a) There is no value in bringing happy beings into existence.

b) There is disvalue in bringing miserable beings into existence.

c) The happiness in happy lives may offset the unhappiness in unhappy lives.

I will argue that a) and b) are consistent and that neither can be rejected. We cannot reject a) because that would entail accepting the Total View and the Repugnant Conclusion. It would be unacceptably counterintuitive to reject b). It cannot be morally correct to be indifferent between the existence of no one and the existence of a miserable person. If c) is believed to be inconsistent
with a) and b), then it is c) which should be rejected. It is not clear, however, that c) actually is inconsistent with a) and b).

In Chapter 7 the asymmetry between the creation of happy and of miserable people is considered. In Section A, I will argue for the acceptance of the Total View when states of affairs containing a balance of unhappiness are compared. It is maintained that whereas quality is all that matters in the creation of happy people, the total sum of suffering is all that matters in the creation of miserable people. To counter Parfit's suggestion that it is better if a given quantity of suffering is spread thinner, the issue of distribution in utilitarianism is briefly discussed. In Section B the alleged difficulty of maintaining that while it is generally wrong to bring a miserable being into existence, it is generally merely permissible to bring a happy being into existence is addressed. I will argue that a) and b) above can be consistently held and that therefore the alleged inconsistency of holding them both does not give us a reason to reject a) and with it a quality-only approach. Section C discusses the circumstances under which it should be held to be permissible, or even obligatory, to bring miserable beings into existence. In Chapter 8 I argue for the compatibility of c) with a) and b).
Chapter 7 Argument for Accepting the Asymmetry

Section A The Total View Is Correct with Respect to Miserable Beings

Just as it is wrong not to kill the Wretched Child described by Parfit (whose life contains more suffering than pleasure), Parfit's Hell One (in which ten innocent people each suffer great agony for fifty years) is better than his Hell Two (in which ten million innocent people each suffer agony just as great for fifty years minus a day). When people's lives are not worth living, the greater the sum of suffering, the worse the outcome. So whereas one person at +11 is to be preferred to two people at +10, two people at -10 are to be preferred to three people at -9. The fact that the two people at -10 would be made better off if a third person were brought into existence does not justify bringing the third person into existence if doing so would add to the total net sum of suffering. It would be morally good to bring a third person into existence even if her life would net a -9 if she would also increase the happiness of or decrease the misery of already existing people by more than 9. Allowing

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the creation of miserable beings in such circumstances is consistent with utilitarianism's general willingness to sacrifice some for the greater good of others.

When considering suffering, it seems that only quantity matters. Parfit thinks that most of us do not believe this. He says, "We would think it better if the same quantity of suffering was more thinly spread, over more different lives." This does not seem correct. There is no reason to prefer a world in which six people are at -1 to a world in which one person is at -6. In both cases exactly the same amount of suffering is experienced. So it is morally indifferent whether one brings about a world in which one person exists at -6 or a world in which six people exist at -1. But it would be morally better to bring about a world consisting of one person at +6 than to bring about a world consisting of six people at +1. This is because in the positive case the one seat of consciousness that exists in both worlds (not necessarily the same individual) would be missing out on five units of happiness in the more populous world. Since there is no value lost through not bringing the five additional people into existence, it is not the case that the happiness these additional five would experience would make up for the loss of five units of happiness to the seat of consciousness.

\[2 \text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 406.}\]
that exists in either world. The one person will be aware of her +6 level of happiness and the six (or five) people who never exist will not be aware of the +1 they are missing out on. Again, what we should care about is how happy those who exist are and not simply what the total happiness of the population is. The situation is different when it comes to considering the choice between one very unhappy person or six slightly unhappy people. Of course we still care in this case about the one seat of consciousness that exists whichever choice we make. It is definitely a good thing that this seat of consciousness would be 5 units better off if we chose the more populous world. This matters to us as it does in the positive case. Unlike in the positive case, however, in the negative case, this improvement in the lot of the one seat of consciousness comes at a price. Obviously the fact that each of the five additional people would suffer at a level of -1 matters to us too. This suffering would be better avoided. So in the negative case there is no moral difference between the two worlds. The amount of suffering being experienced in the two worlds is exactly the same. One seat's gain of five is five seat's loss of one. This is not true in the positive case because although the additional five do not experience +1 if they do not exist, this is no loss for them and is no cost of securing a +6
life for the one seat, since they do not exist at all in the first world. So in the negative case, it would be better if no one were brought into existence, but if people must be brought into existence, it makes no difference whether we bring one person at -6 into existence or six people at -1. In the positive case, we need not bring anyone into existence, but if we do (or must) bring people into existence, we should bring one person at +6 into existence rather than six people at +1.

I cannot see any reason for preferring a certain quantity of suffering spread thinner. In the negative case discussed above, for instance, every ounce of suffering that is spared the one person is felt every bit as exquisitely by someone else. Perhaps the reason some people have this preference is because they somehow think a person in less pain suffers less per unit than a person in more pain, but obviously this is incoherent. The units utilitarians use cannot serve their proper function in the theory unless each unit matters the same amount to people no matter how many units they already have. For utilitarianism to work, a unit of utility must mean as much to the person a +1,000 as it means to the person at +1. And an additional unit of disutility must be no better or worse for the person at -50 than for the person at 0. This is why distribution does not matter for utilitarians, and
it is incorrect to reply "but a unit does matter more to the person at +1 than to the person at +1,000" because it just does not - by definition or stipulation. Whatever utility is, it is something that is measured in units that matter just as much no matter how many of them a person already has. It has to be this way for the theory to be plausible, and it seems correct to think that happiness and pleasure work this way. Being a unit happier is just as important to someone who is already very happy as it is to someone who is not very happy. If it is not, then one has simply failed to individuate correctly what counts as a unit of happiness. The only reason this may not seem to be true is that it may take a lot more to make someone who is already very happy even happier. But this is beside the point. Utilitarians do not care how happiness is distributed. They care very much how the means to happiness are distributed because they know that the means to happiness usually produce greater happiness when they are evenly spread. But it makes no sense to maintain that happiness itself becomes greater when it is more evenly spread. It does not, and that is why how it is spread (among existing people) is a matter of moral indifference. If it did become greater when it is more evenly spread, then obviously a theory that seeks to maximize happiness in Same People Choices would care about distribution.
Utilitarianism is right to maintain that it is biased and wrong to prefer one person to another in the distribution of happiness on the grounds that the one person has less than the other to begin with. If an agent could make a very happy person 1.01 units happier or an unhappy person 1 unit less unhappy, it would be wrong, everything else being equal, to make the unhappy person less unhappy. The very happy person cares more about the 1.01 units than the unhappy person cares about the 1 unit. It makes more of a difference to the very happy person to get the 1.01 units than it does to the unhappy person to get the 1 unit, so it would only be some misguided and counterproductive moral theory that would actually say that an agent should do the act that matters less to the people she can affect. If we think that we do care less about getting a certain amount of extra happiness if we are already very happy, then it must be the case that getting this amount does not actually increase our happiness as much as it would if we were not as happy to begin with. What this means is that what we began by calling a certain amount of extra happiness was really a lesser amount when added to a happier life and a greater amount when added to a less happy life; therefore it was never really the same amount to begin with. It can only be the means to utility
that have diminishing marginal utility, not units of
utility itself.

Section B There Is Nothing Inconsistent About Accepting
the Asymmetry

There is really no troubling asymmetry involved in the
claim that in general it is wrong to bring a miserable
being into existence but merely permissible to bring a
happy being into existence. It is not literally the
bringing into existence of a miserable being that is wrong.
It is wrong to allow a being to suffer if the suffering can
be alleviated without causing more suffering to other
beings. So it is morally neutral in and of itself to
conceive a child that, say, one knows will be seriously
defective. The conception causes the egg and sperm no pain
or pleasure, so with respect to these entities it is a
morally neutral event. It is when the fetus or newborn
(expected to have a miserable life) first begins to suffer
that allowing it to continue to live (if there is no other
way to end the suffering besides killing it) is morally
wrong. There would be nothing wrong with conceiving the
child if it were killed before it experienced any pain. If
it were known that it would be impossible to kill the child
before it began to suffer, only then would it be wrong to
conceive the child. In this case, the conception itself
can be held to be wrong as it initiates a chain of events which of necessity leads to suffering. What the person does wrong in conceiving the child is not causing it to exist but rather causing it to suffer (at the later point in time).

Just as the existence of a sentient being is a precondition for the existence of happiness and its value, it is a precondition for the existence of unhappiness and its disvalue. The difference is that once the precondition is met, the happiness in a happy life is good, so nothing needs to be done (although it would not be directly wrong to eliminate the happiness along with the precondition for it and its value by killing the happy being). But once the precondition is met, unhappiness is bad, so it needs to be eliminated if it can be. If it cannot be eliminated without eliminating the precondition for its existence, then the precondition must be eliminated. More accurately, once beings exist, we must maximize their happiness and if suffering that is not compensated for and cannot be relieved exists, we must undo the precondition that makes this suffering possible.

Of course it will be pointed out that when suffering is reduced by killing, there is no one remaining to appreciate the fact that the suffering has been reduced. And to make matters worse, when someone's life is saved,
they are around to appreciate the fact that they are living a happy life. We can say we only care about things that are experienced, but of course, if we do not kill the happy person, the happiness will be experienced. The reply is that all that matters is that a being has what is good for it while it is alive. It does not make sense to care if it has what is good for it while it is nonexistent since nothing can be good (or bad) for it while it is nonexistent. If I have a miserable child, it will matter to that child that it is miserable while it is alive. By hypothesis, if it were rational, it would rather it had never been born. So it is wrong to cause the child to suffer by keeping it in existence. If I do not have a happy child, it will not matter to that child that (because it does not exist at all) it is not happy. It cannot wish it had been born, and it does not matter to it that it was not born. I have not done anything wrong because I have not caused a being to suffer or want something it does not have. I have also not failed to make a being happy. All I have failed to do is make a happy being, and, as argued in Chapter 1, there is no reason to believe making a happy being has value. A miserable child is worse off because it was born and allowed to continue to exist, and it matters to it that it was born and hence is miserable. A happy child is not worse off because it was not born, and it does
not matter to it that it was not born and hence is not happy. Whereas unhappiness matters to an unhappy child, the happiness it might have had does not matter to a happy child that might have existed but does not. If a life is worse than nothing, there is someone around experiencing what is worse than nothing. If a life would have been better than nothing but the person does not exist, no one is around to miss what is better than nothing.

Whereas no argument can be given to show that there is value in bringing happy beings into existence (or keeping them in existence), an argument can be given to show that there is disvalue in bringing miserable beings into existence (or keeping them in existence). This argument runs as follows. If unhappy beings exist, their unhappiness is bad. Of course their unhappiness only matters because they exist. But if they do exist, it does matter, so it is wrong, everything else being equal, to leave them in existence as long as they must remain unhappy. The analogous argument with regard to happy people does not give the conclusion needed by my opponent. This argument runs as follows. If happy beings exist, their happiness is good. Of course their happiness only matters because they exist. But if they do exist, it does matter. All that follows from this is that it would be wrong, everything else being equal, to leave them in
existence while depriving them of or reducing their happiness. Since how a being fares only matters if it exists, we have two morally permissible choices with respect to every being (effects on ourselves and others aside): we can kill it so that how it fares does not matter, or we can make it as happy as possible. In the case of a being that cannot be made happy, these two choices are really only one, as we can either kill it or alleviate as much of its suffering as we can possibly alleviate - which means we must kill it (if we can).

Section C It Is Sometimes Permissible or Even Obligatory to Bring Miserable Beings Into Existence

In Section A, it was argued that we should take the Total View when comparing states of affairs in which there is a net balance of unhappiness. The idea that the Total View is incorrect with respect to happy beings but correct with respect to unhappy beings follows from accepting the asymmetry. In this section, I will discuss how decisions that involve both happy and unhappy beings should be made. It seems to me that whether bringing a miserable being into existence is right or wrong depends on how it affects the happiness of others. I will argue that it can be right to bring a miserable being into existence if this increases the happiness of those who already exist (or who will exist
regardless) by more than the miserable being suffers. It also seems legitimate to choose a world in which there are some miserable people instead of a world of the same size in which there are no miserable people (even if none of the same individuals would exist in both worlds) if the happy people in the world containing miserable people have more additional happiness (than the people in the world without miserable people) than the miserable people have misery. In addition, when a Different Number Choice is made, it seems acceptable to bring miserable beings into existence if the average quality of life in the alternative that includes them is higher than the average quality of life in the alternative that includes only happy beings - if both of the alternatives compared are package deals. When an alternative includes miserable beings that are not part of a package deal that is happy on balance, it is not correct, however, to simply consider the average utility of the package deal. This is because of the asymmetry. If we think there is no value in the creation of happy beings, then when we compare packages of happy beings, we only care which package has the highest average quality of life. If we think there is disvalue in the creation of unhappy beings, then when we consider (either by itself or as part of some alternative) a package of beings that are unhappy on balance, we must not consider the average quality of
life of this group but rather its total net disutility. An alternative involving a package of three people at -3 is obviously better, everything else being equal, than an alternative involving a package of four people at -3. The rules given in Part II for determining whether it is permissible or obligatory to bring about a larger population have to be modified to accommodate the asymmetry. The view put forward here rests on the acceptance of the asymmetry and of the belief that the happiness in happy lives can compensate for the unhappiness in unhappy lives. In the next chapter, I will argue that one can consistently hold these beliefs - i.e., the beliefs that there is no value in the creation of happy people, that there is disvalue in the creation of unhappy people, and that the happiness in happy lives can compensate for the unhappiness in unhappy lives.

We should prefer a world of three individuals at 10, 10, and -2 to a world containing just the first two individuals at 6 and 6 because these two people are aware of their six level of happiness and would be aware of an extra eight units and this would offset the -2 that the third individual would experience. Obviously the gain of eight units has eight units of value, and it is hard to see how more than two units of disvalue could attach to bringing the person at -2 into existence. If none of the
individuals in the two worlds are the same, either choice is permissible. In this case, we must compare the average level of well-being in the two worlds. Since these are the same, there is no advantage in bringing about the larger population (or in bringing about the smaller population). If these principles are accepted, we cannot simply say that it is bad if a miserable person exists. We have to know how the existence of this being affects the utility of others and what the alternatives were.

Narveson discusses cases in which the existence of a miserable person may increase the happiness of those who already exist by more than enough to offset the miserable person's misery, and comments that "this is exactly the same kind of problem as the 'innocent man' problem in general utilitarian theory." Since utilitarians do not object to the sacrifice of one person for the greater good of others, there is no special reason for them to do so in this kind of case. For example, we can imagine the case of a defective infant that is expected to live a very short and somewhat miserable life. The infant's suffering is slight enough that it is outweighed by the anguish that would be experienced by its parents if it were killed rather than allowed to live out its short unhappy life.

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(Perhaps the parents would be bothered for the rest of their lives by the thought that the doctors could have been mistaken, and their infant might have recovered and been able to live a happy life.) For their peace of mind, everything else being equal, a correct principle should allow us to keep this infant in existence until its life ends in a way the parents can accept. There is no reason to regard the infant’s suffering as more important than its parents’ just because it takes place in the context of a life that is unhappy whereas theirs (presumably) takes place in the context of lives that are happy on balance.

Section D Final Statement of View

The complete view advocated here, then, is the following:

If we have a Same Number Choice, we should choose the outcome with the highest average utility. If we have a Different Number Choice and all of the alternatives contain a balance of disutility, then if beings must be brought into existence, we should bring about that outcome with the smallest total net disutility. If we have a Different Number Choice and some of the outcomes contain a balance of happiness, then we should make the following series of comparisons of these outcomes:

1) Choose the smallest possible outcome (containing at least one being) with the highest (average) utility."

"If there is a tie, go through the entire procedure first with one of the tied outcomes and then with the other. Then take the outcomes chosen in each case and
2) Following Procedure A'' (given below), determine which of the second smallest possible outcomes are permissible compared to the outcome chosen in step 1.

3) Of the outcomes found permissible in step 2, choose the one with the highest average utility.

4) Determine which of the outcomes chosen in steps 1 and 3 is better (according to Procedure A'').

5) Following Procedure A'', determine which of the third smallest possible outcomes are permissible compared to the outcome chosen in step 4.

N - 2) Following Procedure A'', determine which of the largest possible outcomes are permissible compared to the outcome selected in step N - 3.

N - 1) Of the outcomes found permissible in step N - 2, choose the one with the highest average utility.

N) Determine which of the outcomes chosen in steps N - 3 and N - 1 is better (according to Procedure A''). If any beings are to be brought into existence, this is the outcome that should be brought about.

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compare them in the following manner. If both of the outcomes include individuals who existed in the tied outcomes, then pick the one which is the greatest improvement over the tied outcome in which some of the same individuals exist. If neither or only one of the outcomes include individuals who existed in the tied outcomes, then choose the better of the two outcomes following Procedure A''.

If there is a tie, larger outcomes must be better (according to Procedure A'') than both in order for it to be obligatory to bring about the larger outcome.
PROCEDURE A''

i) Compute the total net gain or loss of increasing the population for any particular individuals in the larger outcome who exist instead of (the same number of) particular individuals in the smaller outcome.

ii) Compute the total net gain or loss of increasing the population for the minimum number of beings that must exist in addition to those picked out in i). To determine this, calculate the difference in the average utility of those in the smaller outcome not picked out in i) and the average utility of those in the larger outcome not picked out in i), and multiply this difference by the number of beings in the smaller outcome not picked out in i). (If all of the beings in the smaller outcome are picked out in i) and the beings in the larger outcome that are not picked out in i) are unhappy on balance, then compute the total net disutility accruing to these beings and proceed to step iii).) Make this number negative if the average utility of those in the larger outcome that were not picked out in i) is lower than the average utility of those in the smaller outcome that were not picked out in i). Make this number positive if the average utility of those in the larger outcome that were not picked out in i) is higher than the average utility of those in the smaller outcome that were not picked out in i).

iii) Add the numbers obtained in i) and ii). If the sum is at least zero, then it is permissible to choose the larger outcome. If the sum is positive, then the larger outcome is better than the smaller.
Chapter 8 The Value of Happiness to a Happy Person Can Offset the Disvalue of Unhappiness to an Unhappy Person

It remains to consider whether one can consistently maintain that a) there is no value in the creation of happy beings, b) there is disvalue in the creation of miserable beings, and c) the value of happiness to a happy being can offset the disvalue of unhappiness to an unhappy being. If we think these views are inconsistent, we must give up (at least) one of them. The costs of giving up a) were discussed in Part I. The only plausible view that is compatible with the rejection of a) is the Total View, and the implications of the Total View are unpalatable. Giving up b) is not a plausible option. We cannot be indifferent between a world in which no one exists and one in which a miserable person exists. In this chapter, then, the relative merits of two different views will be considered - viz. the view that accepts a) and b) but rejects c) (which I will call the "Zero Population View") and the view that accepts a), b), and c) (which I will call the "Correct View").
It might be thought that the Zero Population View is inconsistent with the endorsement of utilitarianism for Same People Choices. This argument would run as follows. Utilitarianism holds that distribution does not matter. Therefore a utilitarian cannot say that it is better to bring about A than B on the grounds that the happiness is distributed in A such that no individual is miserable on balance but is distributed in B such that some individual is, if the two states of affairs contain the same people and the same total net happiness. For example, a utilitarian must be indifferent between a two-person world in which one person is at +13 and one person is at -1 and a two-person world in which each is at +6. But a person who sees no value in the creation of happy beings is indifferent between a world in which no one exists and a world in which two people exist at +6. And a person who does not believe that the creation of happy people can compensate for the creation of miserable people prefers a world of no one to a two-person world in which one person is at +13 and one person is at -1. But if the 6 and 6 world and the existence of no one are indifferent, and the existence of no one is better than the 13 and -1 world, then the 6 and 6 world is better than the 13 and -1 world.
But a utilitarian cannot hold the 6 and 6 world to be better than the 13 and -1 world.

There is, however, an obvious rejoinder to this argument. Perhaps the only conclusion that can be drawn is that 6 and 6 is better than 13 and -1 if a world in which no one exists is also an option. In this way the equality of the 6 and 6 world and the 13 and -1 world could be retained for Same People Choices. The move made here by the defender of the Zero Population View is similar to the one made by me to avoid Sikora's transitivity argument that sought to establish that there is value in the creation of happy people.

It might be claimed that what this move commits the supporter of the Zero Population View to is very anti-utilitarian. It might be thought that on this view, as long as the two people involved could be killed without negatively affecting survivors, it would be wrong to maximize the utility of the two people if this resulted in one of them having a negative utility. So in the case where the people could be killed, one would have to do what maximized their utility under the constraint that neither party be made unhappy on balance. So it would be held to be better to put two people at 6 and 4 rather than at 100 and -1 if they could be killed instead. This is not what the supporter of the Zero Population View should or needs
to say however. The person who takes this view can maintain that as long as people exist their utility must be maximized. Therefore in this case, the Zero Population View would say that the two people should be killed (assuming we cannot kill only one of them) since it would be wrong to fail to maximize their utility and it would be wrong to leave one of the two with a life that is not worth living. This is much the same as what is said on my view when, in order to maximize utility, two people would have to be put at 18 and 15, but if one of the people is killed the survivor would be at 20. On my view one of the people should be killed even if utility could also be distributed (but not maximized) by putting the two people at 20 and 10.

Section B  It Is Not Inconsistent with My View to Accept the Belief Under Consideration

It seems, then, that there is no inconsistency in a utilitarian adopting the Zero Population View. In fact, the only arguments against this view rest simply on the implausibility of rejecting c). In an attempt to determine the truth of c), there are three questions to consider:  i) Can the happiness in the happy portions of an individual's life compensate for the unhappiness in the unhappy portions of that same life?  ii) Can the happiness in happy people's lives compensate for the unhappiness in unhappy people's
lives? iii) Can the chance of a happy life being lived compensate for the chance of an unhappy life being lived? We might also ask whether it is consistent to answer "yes" to i) but "no" to ii) and iii), and whether it is consistent to answer "yes" to i) and ii) but "no" to iii).

I will suggest that we should answer "yes" to all three questions. In this section I will argue that it is not inconsistent for a person to accept a) and b) and answer ii) in the affirmative. In Section C, I will argue that we should answer ii) in the affirmative because if we do not we cannot answer i) in the affirmative. In Section D, I will argue that, although answering ii) in the affirmative does not necessitate an affirmative answer on iii), we should answer iii) in the affirmative as well.

Consider a case in which an individual has only two choices. She can bring no children into existence, or she can have triplets. Two of the triplets will be very happy and one of them will have a miserable life. It might seem, on the basis of what has been said in earlier parts of this paper (i.e., on the basis of the acceptance of a) and b)), that it would be morally wrong to have the triplets. After all, in and of itself, it is obviously wrong to bring a miserable being into existence (or at least keep it in existence), and it is not a valuable thing to bring happy beings into existence. If she has no duty to bring happy
children into existence, and she does have a duty not to bring miserable children into existence, then she would seem to have a duty not to bring these triplets into existence. It seems as though it must be wrong to bring the triplets into existence because the two happy ones do not care if they never exist and are not worse off if they never exist, and the one unhappy triplet will be better off if none of them exists. But this is arguably not correct. By hypothesis, her choice is not between bringing something miserable into existence and bringing nothing into existence. On the contrary, her choice is between bringing something (the triplets) into existence that is (on balance) happy and bringing nothing into existence, so there is nothing objectionable in her proceeding to have the triplets (provided the combined happiness of the two is greater than the unhappiness of the third).

Sikora mentions the Correct View as an approach a philosopher could conceivably take but dismisses it as strange.

He could hold that we never have an obligation to bring happy people into the world, but that when we are confronted with a package that contains happy people and unhappy ones, it is morally acceptable to take the whole package as long as the happy lives sufficiently outweigh the unhappy ones. This principle strikes me as very strange. According to it, you could justify bringing about the existence of people who would wish that they had never been born in order to bring about the existence of happy people, but you wouldn't have an obligation to bring about the existence of
happy people, no matter how happy they would be, even if you could do so with no cost to anyone including yourself.\footnote{R.I. Sikora, "Utilitarianism: The Classical Principle and the Average Principle," \textit{Canadian Journal of Philosophy} 5 (Nov. 1975), p. 415.}

Nothing in Sikora's statement convinces me that the principle is strange. It would be strange if you were morally obliged to bring packages of happy and miserable people into existence but not obliged to bring happy people into existence, but this is, of course, not what the Correct View maintains. I guess what Sikora finds strange about the Correct View is the thought that you can make it permissible to do what you have an obligation not to do by doing something else that you have no obligation to do. But this is not strange - at least once it is acknowledged that one only has a prima facie obligation not to bring miserable beings into existence. The view says it is morally permissible to bring people into existence if their happiness outweighs their unhappiness - even if the happiness and unhappiness is distributed in such a way that some of the people will have unhappy lives. The principle also says we are morally required not to bring unhappy people into existence unless their existence makes possible the existence of enough extra happiness in the lives of other people or of enough other people with happy lives to outweigh these people's unhappiness.
The situation is no different from that in the following example. I have no obligation to add candy to my mother's candy drawer. I do have an obligation not to remove candy from her candy drawer. If I really want to remove candy from her candy drawer, however, this is permissible if I also add candy to the drawer. So here it becomes permissible to do what I have an obligation not to do by my doing something that I have no obligation to do. It might be objected that I am not really removing candy from the drawer if I am adding to it also. But likewise, the person who brings a group of people into existence who are, on balance, happy has not really brought (a balance of) miserable people into existence. Perhaps the Correct View sounds strange because its advocates always say it is wrong to bring miserable people into existence. What we should, in the first place, say, is that it is wrong to bring miserable people into existence whose misery is not compensated for. Then it would be clear that we have not done what we have an obligation not to do when we bring miserable people into existence as part of a group of people who are, on balance, happy. I do fine by my mom and her candy drawer so long as my additions to it equal or outnumber my subtractions from it. Similarly we do right by future generations so long as, on balance, the quality of their lives is as high as possible. It might be claimed
that there is a disanalogy in that we might think it is positively good to add (net) to my mom's candy supply whereas on the Correct View it is not positively good to create happy people. But we can imagine that my mom keeps the level of her stash at just that amount at which she does not care if more is added but does care if some is taken away. Then it is permissible to subtract if one adds enough to counterbalance the subtractions but not positively good to add if nothing has been subtracted.

Sikora argues that "unless adding happy people is to count positively, no matter by how much the happy outnumber the wretched and no matter how happy they are, it would be as wrong to add the whole group, happy members included, as it would be if it contained only its most wretched members." He argues that "Other things being equal, if it is expected that the total happiness and unhappiness of a given group of people will be equal, it is not wrong to add them." But this "would not hold unless there is at least as much positive value in increasing the happiness total of mankind by adding happy people as there is negative value in adding unhappy ones." Another analogy


8 Ibid., p. 140.
may show exactly how shaky this reasoning is. Suppose I make a terrible tasting cake for a party and serve it with delicious ice cream. The ice cream masks the taste of the cake well enough that my guests can eat them together without displeasure. But it is still a poor excuse for a dessert, and they get no pleasure out of eating it either. Thanks to the ice cream, it is not wrong to serve the cake (with the ice cream) at the party. Does this mean that there would be positive value in serving the guests the ice cream by itself? Not necessarily. Just because the guests would be unhappy if they had to eat my cake without the ice cream, it does not follow that they would rather have a bowl of ice cream for dessert than no dessert at all. And the fact that I am morally obligated not to serve the terrible tasting cake without ice cream certainly does not show that I am morally obligated or have a moral reason to serve the ice cream by itself. There is nothing wrong with the ice cream (in fact it is quite good), but perhaps my guests are indifferent about having it unless it is needed to make up for the unfortunate cake. So if I serve the cake, I am morally required to serve the ice cream with it. But since no one at the party cares about having ice cream by itself, I have no obligation to serve ice cream by itself. If everyone is indifferent about having dessert, then the fact that the ice cream is good does not give me a
reason to serve it. Likewise the fact that a person would
be happy is not a reason for bringing her into existence
since she must be indifferent about being brought into
existence.

"Why should the bringing-into-existence of happy
people be of great moral importance when they are part of a
package along with some unhappy people but of no moral
importance whatever when they are all by themselves?,"
Sikora asks.⁹ One might just as well ask "Why should the
serving of ice cream be of great moral importance when the
cake alone tastes terrible but of no moral importance
whatever when one would otherwise not serve dessert?" It
might be claimed that the analogy fails because surely the
guests would rather have a good tasting dessert than no
dessert. But there is no reason why this need be the case.
The fact that they care about the edibility of the dessert
if one is served in no way commits us to supposing that
they care whether any dessert is served at all.

Section C Happy Periods Can Offset Unhappy Periods in an
Individual's Life

The idea that it can be permissible to bring a
miserable person into existence if this makes possible the

⁹Ibid., note 18 on p. 163.
existence of people whose happiness outweighs the miserable person's misery is consistent with the idea (that most everyone probably accepts) that (even if there were no side effects) it is not a moral requirement to kill a person if she is going through a miserable period. This is just like the triplet case. I can refuse to take a person's life now, even though she is miserable now, on the grounds that I expect her future happiness to outweigh her current misery. Here again my alternatives do not include ending only the miserable part of her existence, and I must choose between a package (the rest of her life) which is, on balance, happy and the end of her existence. Therefore, there is no reason to kill her (unless it would make the rest of us better off).

It might be argued, however, that all this shows is that a person who accepts a) and b), in addition to being required by consistency to answer "no" on ii) and to accept something like what Parfit calls the Absurd Conclusion, must also answer "no" on i) and accept a version of his Ridiculous Conclusion. That is, not only must she prefer the existence of no one to the existence of ten billion happy people and one unhappy person, she must also prefer the existence of no one to the existence of one person who for every ten million moments of happiness suffers one moment of unhappiness. After all, if the person does not
exist, she will not be aware of all the happy moments she missed out on. But if she does exist, she will be aware of the unhappy moments she must endure. If happiness cannot compensate for unhappiness, rationality requires each of us to commit suicide. And admittedly once one accepts a) and b) this makes a degree of sense. After all, being dead is no skin off my nose, but the occasional suffering that living includes definitely is. Nevertheless it is hard to believe we are all irrational because we do not commit suicide - much less that the very occasionally unhappy individual in Parfit's example is. The suffering in one life can be sensibly endured for the sake of the happiness in that same life that could not be experienced unless the suffering is. (There would, of course, also be nothing irrational in deciding not to endure the suffering and committing suicide.) It is true that if a person exists, she will be aware of the unhappy moments she must endure (whereas if she does not exist, she will not be aware of the happy moments she has missed), but it is also true that if a person exists, she will also be aware of the happy moments she experiences. What we should in fact conclude is that the fact that we do not think it preferable to kill an individual on the grounds that she is sometimes miserable (even though we admit nonexistence at these moments would be preferable to existence) gives us some
reason to also believe that it is not preferable to have a world in which no one exists on the grounds that some of the people will have miserable lives (even though we admit the nonexistence of these particular individuals would be preferable to their existence).

More likely it might be argued that the many-person case cannot be compared with the one-person case in this way. The single person who endures those unhappy moments if she exists, also experiences the happy moments and knows she does. She does not want to die because she has a good life containing many times more pleasure than pain. Unlike the unhappy person, she does not wish she did not exist and would not be better off if she did not exist. It is not appropriate, however, to contrast the unhappy individuals in a package deal with the single person who is happy, on balance, despite her moments of unhappiness. Obviously the relevant comparison is between both the happy and unhappy individuals in the package deal and the single individual. The unhappy person who is part of a package deal might wish she did not exist and be better off if she did not, but, as a whole, the members of a package deal that is happy on balance do not wish they did not exist and arguably would not be better off if they did not. The person who makes this argument against the Correct View claims that this view makes the mistake utilitarians are so often accused of
making - viz. it does not take seriously the separateness of persons. Whereas the happy moments within a life can make up for the unhappy moments in that same life, it will be urged that the happy lives of some cannot make up for the unhappy lives of others. The trouble with making this objection here though is that this entire dissertation assumes the truth of utilitarianism. So if one thing utilitarianism does is refuse to take seriously the separateness of persons, then we should certainly agree that it will give the same answer to question ii) as it gives to question i). Any objection to the contention that we must answer these two questions in the same way would seem to be directed at utilitarianism itself rather than to my way of applying the theory to questions about future generations. So it would not seem that this line of argument could be used to support the Zero Population View over the Correct View since the Zero Population View also assumes the truth of utilitarianism.

Section D The Chance of a Happy Life Can Offset the Chance of an Unhappy Life

Of course the usual situation of individuals in real life is not one of package deals in which one can decide to bring a group of people into existence knowing that the happiness in the happy lives is greater than the
unhappiness in the unhappy lives. Each time a child is conceived, it is possible that the child's life will end up being miserable on balance, and the issue is whether taking this chance can be justified. The chance taken can be looked at in two ways. We could say that what is at risk is that an individual who will have a miserable life will be conceived instead of an individual who will have a life worth living. Alternatively we could say that what is at risk is whether the individual who is actually conceived will end up having a life that is worth living. In fact, both ways of looking at it seem correct. Not only do parents ordinarily not know what individual will be conceived, they also do not know how well the life of the individual that is conceived will go. Hermann Vetter argues \(^{10}\) that it would follow from Narveson's view that nobody should ever have any children. This is supposed to result from the combination of the view that there is nothing morally good about having happy children with the view that there is something morally bad about having unhappy children. It would not seem legitimate to risk giving birth to an unhappy child since there is no good in having a happy child that would make it worth taking this risk. This argument misfires, however, because the

relevant risk concerns the child's happiness and not the (or a) child's existence. While my view places no value on a happy child's existence, it does place value on a child being happy if it exists.

Holly Smith has suggested that the situation is parallel to a situation in which one can place a bet with a 95% chance of maintaining the status quo, and a 5% chance of losing $100. It would obviously be irrational to make such a bet, but the situation is not actually analogous to placing a bet with a 95% chance of breaking even and a 5% chance of losing money. Suppose if one decides to bring a child into existence, there is a 95% chance it will be happy and a 5% chance it will be unhappy. This cannot be the same as a situation in which there is a 95% chance the child's life will be neutral on balance and a 5% chance it will be unhappy. It is not my contention that if a child is brought into existence, its happiness has no value. The analogy fails because there is no value in winning the bet even if one is placed whereas there is value in a child being happy if it is brought into existence.

Like Vetter's argument, the bet comparison misrepresents what chances we are taking when we have a child. We are not dealing with a 95% chance of bringing a happy being into existence (something that is neither good nor bad) and a 5% chance of bringing an unhappy being into
existence. The bringing-into-existence (of some child) is taken as a given. It (i.e., the chance of a child being conceived) is not the risk that is at issue. The relevant probabilities apply to whether the individual who will come into existence (should a child be conceived) will or will not be happy. They have nothing to do with whether an individual will exist. Obviously a 95% chance that the being will be happy is something that is good. Perhaps the point is made clearer by considering the case of a woman who is already pregnant. The woman, who got pregnant accidentally, must consider whether it would be morally permissible to have the child (instead of having an abortion). She knows the child's life has a 95% chance of going well and a 5% chance of going badly. Surely the chance of happiness can offset the chance of unhappiness, as it would be a good, not a neutral, thing if the child's life went well. Moreover, the child's expected happiness does not give her a reason to regard having the child as morally obligatory because in making the decision whether it is good to have the child she compares its expected happy existence with nonexistence, and this is indifferent. How a being is expected to fare can make it permissible to bring it into existence because if its life will be good, its existence is not a bad thing for it. But how a being is expected to fare cannot make it obligatory to bring it
into existence because how it fares only matters if it is brought into existence.

It seems to me that it would be odd to hold that whereas it is unobjectionable for the woman to have the triplets, it would be objectionable for a woman to have a child whose expected utility is positive but who runs the risk of having an unhappy life. Admittedly in the first case the happy children exist so that their happiness can compensate for the miserable child's suffering whereas if the unhappy child is born in the second case, no happy children exist whose happiness can compensate for its suffering. But I think we should reason as follows. In the case of the package deal, the happiness in the happy lives compensates for the unhappiness in the unhappy lives. In the case of taking a chance, it is the chance of having a happy child that compensates for the chance of having an unhappy child. It is absolutely correct to point out that if the child born ends up being unhappy, then nothing exists to compensate for this. I believe this is true but irrelevant. In this case it is not the actual unhappy life that has to be compensated for but only the risk of there being an unhappy life. Obviously it would be wrong, everything else being equal, to bring a child one knows will be unhappy into existence. The relevant question is whether anything can justify taking the risk not whether
anything can justify knowingly bringing an unhappy child into existence. If someone takes the chance and loses, obviously they have done something objectively wrong. The only issue is whether they have done something wrong in taking the chance.

In addition, to answer ii) and iii) differently would seem odd since if lots of people have children (i.e., if they each take the risk of having an unhappy child), there will be happy children with happiness to compensate for the unhappiness of unhappy children. It would be a bit strange to say that it is permissible to bring packages of happy and unhappy people into existence but not permissible for groups of people to take the risks that will result in these packages coming into existence. If the risk of having an unhappy child is small - say 5% - and there are about a million people who want to have children, the odds that there would be any uncompensated suffering (if the happy people are as happy as the unhappy people are unhappy) are very small. Still it will be insisted that no matter how great the chance of doing something merely permissible, it cannot outweigh the chance of doing something wrong. For instance, whereas it is morally permissible for me to subtract from my mother's candy supply so long as my additions outnumber my subtractions, it would not be permissible for me to act in a way that,
although expected to augment her supply, could diminish it (since she places no value on increasing her stash). Of course there is a disanalogy between the candy supply and bringing happy people into existence. If a person exists, her happiness does have value. There is no such conditional value in the candy example. If my mother's supply experiences a net increase, this increase does not suddenly become valuable because the supply has been increased. The lack of any conditional value in the candy example is probably part of the explanation of why it might be permissible to have a child whose life may go badly whereas it is not permissible to risk making a net subtraction from the candy supply.

Nevertheless it does not seem that answering ii) in the affirmative forces us to answer iii) in the affirmative, and the response given to Holly Smith's bet analogy may not seem very satisfactory. There is a compelling reason for answering iii) in the affirmative however. If iii) is answered in the negative, it is contrary to the self-interest of each of us to continue to live. This is because there is a chance that the remainder of each of our lives will be miserable on balance. Our own prospects must be evaluated in the same way as the prospects of a being we are considering bringing into existence. If the chance of an unhappy life cannot be
outweighed by the chance of a happy life, then it is obviously unwise to continue living. This seems highly counterintuitive.

Jefferson McMahan asserts that "if a child's positive utility can count as a counterbalance to his negative utility, then it should also count as a reason in favor of conceiving him."\textsuperscript{11} He similarly asserts that "if the probability that one's child's life would be worth living can count against the possibility that it would not, then it should also count as a reason in favor of conceiving him."\textsuperscript{12} McMahan offers no explanation as to why he takes these things to be so, but I suppose they are natural things to believe unless one cannot accept the implications of making these connections. I cannot believe that it is morally good to bring happy people into existence, and I at least find it hard to believe it is morally wrong to bring anyone into existence under essentially any circumstances, so I tend to believe that McMahan's reasoning here must be too simplistic. I am not really sure why we cannot say both that there is no good in bringing happy people into existence and that it is morally permissible to bring a person into existence (or allow a person to stay in


\textsuperscript{12}Loc. cit.
existence) as long as she is, on balance, happy. Why can't her happiness compensate for her suffering and yet not give us a reason for bringing her into existence? The point is just that the happiness has value for the person if she exists and this value offsets the disvalue her suffering has for her. But if she does not exist, there is no one that her happiness has value for. As soon as a person exists her happiness has some value for her, but this does not give us a reason to bring a happy person into existence. It does, however, offset the suffering she will have if she does exist. Likewise since it would be good for a child to be happy, the chance that it will be happy can offset the chance that it will be unhappy. But, again, recognizing that it would be good for a child to be happy does not compel us to recognize that it would be good to bring a happy child (as opposed to no child) into existence.

It can also be pointed out that children who seem likely to be unhappy due to medical problems can often be aborted or killed before they have suffered. Therefore in some cases where it might seem we are risking causing suffering to a being by risking causing a being to exist who suffers, this is not really the case. But this point alone is admittedly not enough, as in many cases the fact that a person's life will turn out to have not been worth
living is completely unpredictable and may not become evident for years. Worse still, when it does, it is not the case that the person can be killed before their life has become, on balance, a miserable one. Many people do not want to die regardless of how irrational this is and how tragic their lives are, and many people will believe their lives will get better when, in fact, they won't. So the possibility of suicide does not solve the problem, as a miserable person may not realize her life will continue to be miserable, or she may simply lack the courage to kill herself. Third parties will also err in their judgements, and even if they would not, there would obviously be huge disutility in killing people whose lives have gone wrong. So it cannot be denied that all parents risk doing a pretty terrible thing when they have a child - viz. bringing someone into existence who will have to bear a life that contains more pain than pleasure. Of course, it is probably true that the happiness having children brings to parents is often enough to outweigh the chance that their child will suffer. But I do not want to rest the case on this consideration either. Even if a child is expected to have a net neutral effect on people who already exist, it seems permissible to have the child as long as it is expected to be happy.
Since it is not denied by a believer in a) that if a being exists, there is value in its being happy, there is no inconsistency in holding that the happiness in a happy life has a value that can offset the disvalue of the unhappiness in an unhappy life. Likewise there is no inconsistency in holding that the chance of happiness can compensate for the chance of unhappiness. In addition, there seems to be no reason for supposing that happiness (or the chance of it) can offset unhappiness (or the chance of it) within a life but not between lives.

Furthermore, it is important to remember what the alternatives are. If one thinks that the happiness in one person's life cannot both compensate for the unhappiness in another person's life and yet fail to be a reason for bringing happy beings into existence, there are two alternative ways in which to go. If one says that the happiness in happy lives can compensate for the unhappiness in unhappy lives and that there is a moral reason for bringing happy people into existence, then one must accept the Total View and the Repugnant Conclusion. If one says that the happiness in happy lives cannot compensate for the unhappiness in unhappy lives and that there is no value in bringing happy people into existence, then one must say that it is morally wrong to bring anyone into existence. Both views may well fail to provide any moral justification
for any individual living a life that is well worth living. On the first view, if total happiness is maximized by bringing about the existence of a huge population consisting entirely of persons (or rats) whose lives are only barely worth living, then this is what should be brought about. On the second view, it would, of course, have been better if none of us (no matter how happy our lives are) had been brought into existence because all of our parents took the chance of bringing a being whose life would turn out to be miserable on balance into existence. On this view it would also be morally good to kill as many beings as possible (no matter how greatly their happiness exceeds their unhappiness) if the unhappiness spared these (on balance happy) beings were greater than the unhappiness the killing would impose on survivors. It is also prudent for each of us to commit suicide on this view since a) we all have unhappy moments which, on this view, cannot be compensated for by happy moments and b) we each run the risk that our lives will turn out to have been unhappy on balance and, on this view, a chance of a happy life cannot compensate for the chance of an unhappy life. I can accept that it is wrong that I exist because the world has too many people in it to maximize the quality of lives lived, but I cannot believe it is wrong that I exist because there is a chance I will have a miserable life. A person's happy
life is not a reason for bringing her into existence, but it is a reason for permitting bringing her into existence if that is the kind of life she is expected to have.
CONCLUSION

I have argued that a quality-only approach should be taken to questions regarding future generations. There does not seem to be any rationale available for taking an approach that gives both quality and quantity some independent weight. In addition such approaches invariably either endorse some version of the Repugnant Conclusion or fail to allow all cases of Mere Addition. It may seem sensible to accept a quantity-only approach - i.e., the Total View - but this view has unpalatable consequences and is grounded in the extremely suspect and unsupported contention that there is value in bringing happy beings into existence. Another approach one could take would be to accept an entirely person-affecting view that places no value on bringing happy beings into existence. This kind of view is problematic, however, because in any situation in which no particular individual exists in both of our alternatives, it tells us that it is a matter of moral indifference which choice we make. On such a view there is no reason to prefer a world of ten billion people each at 100 units of happiness to a world of ten billion different people each at 1 unit of happiness. This is unacceptably
counterintuitive. The Average View is not acceptable without modification because it ignores relevant considerations about why the average of one state of affairs is different than the average of another. If a larger population has a lower average only because of a Mere Addition to a smaller population, there is no reason to hold it morally wrong to move from the smaller population to the larger. Singer's principle was found wanting because it is insufficiently person-affecting and because, as formulated by Singer, it does not succeed in being a quality-only view or in avoiding the Repugnant Conclusion. It was further argued that even though there is no value in the creation of happy beings and there is disvalue in the creation of unhappy beings, we should hold that the happiness in happy lives can offset the unhappiness in unhappy lives and that the chance of a happy life being lived can offset the chance of an unhappy life being lived. If these contentions are rejected, we must say that we are acting against our self-interest by not killing ourselves. The happiest person alive has moments of unhappiness. If happy experiences cannot compensate for unhappy ones, even this person would be better off dead. Likewise the person with the greatest chance of having a life that is happy on balance runs some risk of having a life that is unhappy on balance. If her chance of
happiness cannot offset her chance of unhappiness, even she acts irrationally in refraining from suicide. The only way of avoiding these highly counterintuitive results besides accepting the view put forward here is to accept the Total View. It is my position that the argument that it is implausible to suppose that happiness can offset unhappiness even though there is no value in the creation of happy lives and disvalue in the creation of unhappy lives is weaker than the arguments against the acceptance of the view that there is value in the creation of happy beings.
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