

Population Ethics and the Non-Identity Problem (Schedule)

Monday, February 10th

8.45 – 9.00	Coffee/Breakfast	
9.00 – 9:30	Introduction	Intro and welcome from Gustaf Arrhenius, Krister Bykvist
9.30 – 10.30	Gustaf Arrhenius (Institute for Futures Studies)	<p>“Might an Appeal to Desert, Harm, or Rights solve the Non-Identity Problem and the Paradoxes in Population Ethics?”</p> <p>Abstract. Already in his seminal work on population ethics, Derek Parfit (Parfit 1984) dismissed an appeal to the rights of future people as a satisfactory solution to the Non-Identity Problem and the impossibility results in population ethics (see e.g., (Arrhenius 2000b; 2000a; 2011)) and most contributors to the debate have concurred (e.g., (Heyd 1992; 2009; Boonin 2014). Contrariwise, some philosophers (e.g., (Archard 2004; Woodward 1986; Magnusson 2018)) have suggested that an appeal to future people’s rights, and especially children’s rights, can help with these problems. Likewise, there has been appeals to so-called non-comparative harm (Harman 2004) and wronging (Kumar 2003). I shall suggest that these proposals are sufficiently structural similar to an earlier proposal in the literature on population ethics, namely Fred Feldman’s desert-adjusted utilitarianism, to share the same counterintuitive implications as this theory.</p> <p>References</p> <p>Archard, David. 2004. ‘Wrongful Life’. <i>Philosophy</i> 79 (309): 403–20.</p> <p>Arrhenius, Gustaf. 2000a. ‘An Impossibility Theorem for Welfarist Axiologies’. <i>Economics and Philosophy</i> 16 (02): 247–266.</p> <p>———. 2000b. <i>Future Generations: A Challenge for Moral Theory</i>. Uppsala: University Printers. http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:170236.</p> <p>———. 2011. ‘The Impossibility of a Satisfactory Population Ethics’. In <i>Descriptive and Normative Approaches to Human Behavior, Advanced Series on Mathematical Psychology</i>, edited by Hans Colonius and Ehtibar N. Dzhafarov, 1–26. World Scientific Publishing Company.</p> <p>Boonin, David. 2014. <i>The Non-Identity Problem and the Ethics of Future People</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Harman, Elizabeth. 2004. ‘Can We Harm and Benefit in Creating?’ <i>Philosophical Perspectives</i> 18 (1): 89–113.</p> <p>Heyd, David. 1992. <i>Genethics: Moral Issues in the Creation of People</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press.</p> <p>———. 2009. ‘The Intractability of the Non-Identity Problem’. In <i>Harming Future Persons</i>, by Melinda A. Roberts and David T. Wasserman. Dordrecht: Springer.</p>

		<p>Kumar, Rahul. 2003. 'Who Can Be Wronged?' <i>Philosophy & Public Affairs</i> 31 (2): 99–118.</p> <p>Magnusson, Erik. 2018. 'Children's Rights and the Non-Identity Problem'.</p> <p>Parfit, Derek. 1984. <i>Reasons and Persons</i>. 1991st ed. Oxford: Clarendon.</p> <p>Woodward, James. 1986. 'The Non-Identity Problem'. <i>Ethics</i> 96 (4): 804–831.</p>
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee Break	
11.00 – 12.00	Tim Campbell (Institute for Futures Studies)	<p>“Indeterminacy of Non-Identity”</p> <p>Abstract: Statements such as ‘If P, then person F would have been better off’ and ‘If P, then person F wouldn’t have existed’ can be indeterminate. When their indeterminacy is due to vagueness of transworld identity or of the counterpart relation, attributing axiological significance to these relations, as some person-affecting theorists do, can have implausible consequences. One such consequence is that whether there are significant differences in value between possible worlds can be explained by mere semantic indecision. Another is that significant differences in value between possible worlds can depend on arbitrarily small natural differences between those worlds. We should hope to avoid these consequences. I consider several different ways of avoiding them. Ultimately, I suggest a Parfitian gambit: claim that transworld identity itself is unimportant and what has axiological significance is a certain transworld similarity relation. However, adopting this strategy raises further problems, and seems unable to capture all the intuitions that motivate certain person-affecting views.</p>
12.00 – 13.30	Lunch	
13.30 – 14.30	Teruji Thomas (Global Priorities Institute, Oxford)	<p>“Non-Identity and Uncertainty”</p> <p>Abstract: How should one think about broadly person-affecting population ethics in the face of empirical uncertainty? I defend three general welfarist principles for choice under uncertainty, and show that they together reduce arbitrary choices to uncertainty-free choices. This argument has a wide variety of applications: while the principles are most friendly to utilitarianism and ex post prioritarianism in fixed-population cases, they are compatible with many different views about how to extend those theories to variable-population cases. But I'll focus on the implications for the non-identity problem, and in particular I'll take issue with the claim made by Roberts, Hare, Cohen, and perhaps others, that the non-identity problem is substantially defused by uncertainty.</p>

14.30 – 15.00	Coffee Break	
15.00 – 16.00	Melinda Roberts (The College of New Jersey)	<p>“What is the Right Way to Make a Wrong a Right? Probability and Nonidentity.”</p> <p>Abstract: It seems clear that the most challenging versions of the nonidentity problem involve, at least implicitly, claims about probability. Once we realize that, we are tempted to appeal to the concept of <i>expected utility</i> for purposes of understanding the problem and analyzing the underlying cases. But there are reasons to think that that approach is ultimately unsatisfactory. Thus the question remains open just how probabilities are to be brought to bear in connection with nonidentity. This paper explores some of our options and some of the challenges those options will face.</p>
16.00 – 16.30	Coffee Break	
16.30 – 17.30	Jasmina Nedevska (Mälardalen University)	<p>“The Non-Identity Problem in Climate Ethics: A Restatement”</p> <p>Abstract: This article justifies and restates the non-identity problem (NIP) in relation to climate change. First and briefly, I argue that while there is often good reason to set NIP aside in practical politics, there can be areas where a climate NIP will have practical implications. An instructive example concerns climate change litigation. Second, I argue that there are three particular circumstances of a climate NIP that may set it apart from the more established NIP in bioethics. These differences regard interaction, numbers, and agency respectively. Third, I discuss the premises and conclusion of a climate NIP, modifying an account in bioethics by David Boonin (2014). Following Tremmel (2018), I here refer to this problem as C-NIP.</p>
18.30	Dinner	

Tuesday, February 11th

9.30 – 10.00	Coffee/Breakfast	
10.00 – 11.00	Jeff McMahan (Corpus Christi College, Oxford)	“Harming, Saving, and Non-identity”
11.00 – 11.30	Coffee Break	
11.30 – 12.30	Tomi Francis (St. John’s College, Oxford)	“Trade-Offs, Non-Identity, and the Procreation Asymmetry”
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch	

14.00 – 15.00	Krister Bykvist (IF/Stockholm University)	<p>“Actual Beings vs. Possible Beings: What is at Stake?”</p> <p>Abstract. According to a popular version of the person-affecting idea of morality, what is better (worse) must be better (worse) for someone. However, there seems to be a clear tension between this idea and some of our considered judgements about so-called non-identity cases. For example, we want to say that creating a very unhappy person makes the world worse, other things being equal. In order to comply with a person-affecting morality in this case, we need to show that coming into existence can be worse for a person, but it does not seem plausible to say that it can be worse for a person to exist than not to exist. Various attempts to ease this tension give up on the idea that existence cannot be worse for someone than non-existence. Some claim that non-existence can be worse for someone, but only when they exist; some claim that non-existing persons can have wellbeing, and some claim that there are no non-identity cases, all individuals exist necessarily and have some wellbeing level or other. I shall argue that all of these attempts come with significant metaphysical and conceptual costs. To make this case stronger I shall consider some temporal and spatial versions of the non-identity problem. Finally, I shall argue that it is questionable whether the defenders of a person-affecting morality really need to make such controversial metaphysical and conceptual claims.</p>
15.00 – 15.30	Coffee Break	
15.30 – 16.30	Molly Gardner (Bowling Green State University)	<p>“Is There a Non-Identity Problem in Different-Species Cases?”</p> <p>Abstract: Mark Green and Steven Augello (2011) argue that if a couple faces a choice between breeding a goat and having a human child, there is no ethical objection to breeding the goat. This judgment stands in tension with the claim, often used to motivate the non-identity problem, that human parents who can conceive either a well-off child or a badly-off child should conceive the former. Why does the well-being disparity between the two potential children matter if what appears to be a well-being disparity between goat and child does not? In earlier work I attempted to answer this question by appealing to what I called the “Inevitable Harming Principle.” However, in this paper I argue that such a principle will not fully solve the problem. We also require a more relativistic account of well-being. I develop such an account, and I show how it undermines the view that goat lives typically contain less well-being than human lives. An action that causes a</p>

		nonhuman animal to exist can still harm that animal, but not by causing her to <i>not</i> have the well-being of a human.
16.30 – 17.00	Coffee Break	
17.00 – 18.00	Per Algander (Uppsala University)	<p>“Contractualism and the Non-Identity Problem”</p> <p>Abstract: In this talk I will present two versions of Scanlonian contractualism which have distinct consequences when applied to different-people choices: actualist contractualism and ratificationist contractualism. I will argue that the most plausible version of contractualism is ratificationist. However, this version of contractualism is problematic since it implies that different-people cases where we have to choose a lesser evil are moral dilemmas. Of the ways to avoid this conclusion, the most promising line is a version of contractualism where different people’s claims are weighed against each other. This view, however, faces the same problems as consequentialist views do in different number cases. Contractualism therefore faces the old problems in population ethics, such as the repugnant conclusion and the non-identity problem, and thus has no clear advantage over consequentialist views in this area.</p>