Univerzita Karlova

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Diplomová práce

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Climate Change and the Non-Identity Problem in Derek Parfit's work

Klimatická změna a problém neidentity v díle Dereka Parfita

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Praha 2022

Poděkování

Na tomto místě bych rád poděkoval doc. Jakubu Jirsovi, Ph.D. za věcné poznámky, rady a ochotu při vedení práce. V neposlední řadě rodině, přítelkyni a přátelům za podporu a inspiraci.

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně, že jsem řádně citoval všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze, dne 1. prosince 2022

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Abstract: The aim of my project is to reconstruct Derek Parfit's examination of the Non-Identity Problem (NIP) with special emphasis on the example of climate change understood as a version of NIP. In the first part, I establish the connection between climate change and NIP. Then, I show how and why Parfit fails to find a solution to NIP in his book *Reasons and Persons* (RP). Furthermore, I describe the rejected suggestion from RP that is developed in Parfit's unfinished article *Future People, the Non-Identity Problem, and Person-Affecting Principles* (FP). In the third section, I argue that Parfit's indicated answer to NIP from FP, so-called Wide Dual Person-Affecting Principle (WDP), can avoid paradoxes and implausible conclusions that the impersonal approach and other versions of the person-affecting view could not if explicated and supported by other related concepts, such as the Imprecise Lexical View (ILW) or existential non-comparative benefits. Moreover, specified WDP provides innovative tools to justify moral intuition, threatened by NIP, that structural decisions that significantly contribute to climate change are wrong because they lower the collective and individual benefits of future people. In addition, they create a lexically worse world.

Key words: Derek Parfit, Non-Identity Problem, climate change, global warming, Repugnant Conclusion, harm, benefit, climate change ethics, environmental ethics, population ethics

Abstrakt: Cílem projektu je popsat, jak Derek Parfit přistupuje k problému neidentity, přičemž se primárně soustředím na příklad klimatické změny, který definuji jako specifickou instanci tohoto problému. První část nastiňuje spojitost mezi klimatickou změnou a problémem neidentity. Následně ukazuji, proč se Parfitovi nedaří najít východisko z problému neidentity v knize *Reasons and Persons* (RP) a dále představuji náznak řešení z této knihy, které zde sice zamítá, ale následně na něj navazuje v nedokončeném článku *Future People, the Non-Identity Problem, and Person-Affecting Principles* (FP). Ve třetí sekci pak obhajuji tezi, že Parfitem naznačená odpověď z FP, takzvaný Wide Dual Person-Affecting Principle (WDP), se dokáže vyhnout paradoxům a neplausibilním závěrům, ke kterým vedou neosobní teorie a jiné verze tohoto principu, pokud WDP interpretujeme pomocí příbuzných pojmů, jako je takzvaný Imprecise Lexical View (ILW) či koncept existenčního benefitu, který není založen na srovnání. Především tvrdím, že takto upřesněný WDP zajišťuje nástroje, jak obhájit intuici, ohroženou problémem neidentity, že strukturální rozhodnutí, která se významně podílejí na způsobování klimatické změny, jsou špatná v morálním slova smyslu. A to z toho důvodu, že důsledkem těchto rozhodnutí se snižují kolektivní a individuální benefity pro budoucí osoby; mimo to tyto rozhodnutí utváří podstatně horší svět.

Klíčová slova: Derek Parfit, problém neidentity, klimatická změna, globální oteplování, odpudivý závěr, újma, benefit, etika klimatické změny, environmentální etika, populační etika

1 Introduction

Imagine a future world one hundred years from now. Temperature long ago exceeded 2 degrees Celsius warming above pre-industrial levels, so-called climate tipping points are crossed. Natural destructive events, such as floods, hurricanes, fires, droughts, and deadly heat waves threaten mostly every corner of planet Earth. Some places are even uninhabitable for people, because of weather conditions or rising sea levels. Social conflicts, hunger, and deprivation of basic resources are ubiquitous. Nobody could escape the negative impacts of climate change that changed the way humans lived from the ground and decreased the wellbeing of literally everyone. Moreover, the least responsible for the problem are affected the most.

Imagine another future world. This time global warming stopped at 1,5 degrees Celsius and gradually went down. The wealthiest people cannot own expensive cars, boats, or private jets. We, people in Global North, cannot eat meat every day, buy new clothes every week or fly on holiday every year. The food is more seasonal and local, energy consumption decreases, and industrial production aims only to provide essential goods and useful technologies. However, the climate is stable. People do not have to migrate because of unbearable conditions. Natural destructive events are rare, and resources are distributed so that basic human needs are satisfied. Generally, people have an opportunity to live fulfilled lives.

The aim of my project is not to ask which of these two outcomes is better. I suppose that the answer is obvious from the very description. However, the crucial question is how to plausibly express and justify our intuition that society would make and arguably is making an unprecedented mistake when choosing the first scenario.

There is no better start in this task than to look into the work of British moral philosopher Derek Parfit. He was the one who turned the attention of ethics to current threats, such as the climate crisis, because he broadened the field of inquiry so that it could address problems that are caused by collective action and that affect people who have not been born yet. Parfit found out that we are not conceptually equipped to think in this broad perspective. The Non-Identity Problem illustrates this inadequacy.

Our intuitive response is that future people will be made worse off by climate change. The Non-Identity Problem questions this intuition. Sure, the population will live in worse conditions because of climate change. However, the fact is that these two populations in described scenarios are non-identical. Stopping global warming brings about such wide shifts in the socio-economical structure that completely different people hundred years from now will exist in comparison to people who will be born if we don't stop climate change. Thus, the paradoxical but plausible conclusion is that people who suffer from the consequences of climate change could exist only if they suffer. The question is: are they really harmed? Or should we find a different way how to explain that causing climate change and consequently giving rise to the population that has to suffer is wrong?

Parfit was convinced that we must find new conceptual tools to approach population ethics questions and also to justify our intuition in non-identity cases. In my project, I will describe his suggestions and the challenges he faces when developing these tools. Furthermore, I will extract from his unfinished ideas a unified attitude that could help us to answer raised questions. Hopefully, I will find in Parfit's work solid ground on which we could base condemning current decisions that make future people suffer due to climate change.

2 The Non-Identity Problem and Climate Change

2.1 Setting the Non-Identity Problem

2.1.1 Introduction

The goal of the first section is to introduce the Non-Identity Problem (NIP) and establish its relation to the example of climate change. Let me start with a few introductory remarks. Derek Parfit discovered NIP in the 1970s, and his article from 1976 *On Doing the Best for Our Children* is said to be one of the first reports of it.[1] Parfit was not the only one who came up with this problem, but he most fully developed it in his 1984 book *Reasons and Persons* (RP).[2] Then Parfit more or less ignores NIP in the three-volume book *On What Matters* (OWM).[3] However, it has after all special importance for him because he tried to find once again solution in his last article from 2017 *Future People, the Non-Identity Problem, and Person-Affecting Principles (FP)*. Parfit submitted a manuscript of this article to the editor and philosopher Jeff McMahan just a few hours before he passed away, and it stays unfinished. I will focus on this article and try to find Parfit's solution of NIP in the second part of my project. The first part sets the conditions and related notions of NIP and applies the NIP to the precisely defined example of climate change (C-NIP).

NIP involves a particular type of moral decision. The most common ethical interactions, such as giving promises, helping a friend in need, and similar, have seemingly nothing to do with it. However, a fraction of NIP cases may have significant implications for our common moral intuitions. The NIP is typically represented by practical examples in which our current decision influences a situation in the future and has unwanted consequences for people who have not been born yet. Furthermore, it depends on those decisions who and how many people will exist. The problem basically is that when considering NIP cases, we

[1] Derek Parfit. "On doing the best for our children", in: Michael D. Bayles (ed.) *Ethics and population* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Pub. Co., 1976), p. 100-115.
Parfit introduces NIP (although it is not yet called NIP) and other questions of population ethics even in his 1973 lecture at Case Western Reserve University, later published as an article. See: Derek Parfit. *"*Rights, interests, and possible people*"*, in: Samuel Gorovitz, Andrew L. Jameton, Ruth Macklin, John M. O'Connor, Eugene V. Perrin, Beverly Page St. Clair & Susan Sherwin (eds.) *Moral problems in medicine*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976, p. 369-375. (Lecture)
[2] Boonin, David. *The Non-Identity Problem and the Ethics of Future People*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) p. 1: "The problem appears to have been discovered independently in the late 1970s by Derek Parfit, Thomas Schwartz, and Robert M. Adams."
[3] The NIP and related issues are mentioned only a few times in OWM, and there is not a comprehensive account of it, so I will mostly ignore OWM in my project.

have an intuitive tendency to claim that our current decisions harm future people but, in fact, they are not because without these decisions, they would have never existed, so there is no alternative scenario in which they would have been better off. To put it another way, their identity and number depend on the same decisions that we consider morally wrong.

Parfit's thesis is not that we must change what we most commonly take to be right or wrong because of NIP. Moreover, he was convinced that moral reasons to prevent undesirable consequences must have the same strength if they involve current or future people. This thesis is called No Difference View, and it will be described in the second part. According to Parfit, the major challenge of NIP is broadening a principle of harm that could accommodate those special NIP cases. This is also the overall goal of my project with regard to the example of climate change. Nevertheless, at first, it is necessary to specify NIP in general and with its background in Parfit's thinking.

Parfit first mentioned NIP in the fourth section of RP, but I believe it emerged from his earlier findings. Firstly, I want to focus on this observation briefly. Parfit spent a long time arguing and writing about personal identity.[4] To summarize his central thesis, he states that personal identity is not based on any material or spiritual stable substance; there is no specific "fact" because of which person is identical in time. He thinks that in some cases, we cannot decide whether a person remains identical. The question about personal identity is empty and, after all, does not matter. The only important thing is "the relation R" made of psychological continuity and connectedness of mental events with any cause.[5] In other words, we as persons are only a series of interrelated experiences, goals, passions, feelings, etc. He calls this view non-reductivism. Parfit uses many examples and thought experiments to demonstrate his thesis.[6] I do not intend to describe or defend it here. Instead, I want to point out that the topic concerning NIP and our relation to future generations are suggested in Parfit's thesis about personal identity.

[4] See: Parfit, Derek. "Personal Identity." *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 80, no. 1, (1971), p. 3–27.; Parfit, Derek, "Later selves and moral principles" In: A. Montefiore (ed.). *Philosophy and Personal Relations*. (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973); Parfit, Derek. *Reasons and Persons*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984) part. 3. (RP: "ch" refers to chapters, "s" to sections)

[5] RP, s. 96: "Personal identity is not what matters. What fundamentally matters is Relation R, with any cause."

[6] The most famous example is teletransportation, developed throughout part 3 of RP.

Parfit addresses a relationship between current and future self before turning to population ethics.[7] That is not coincidental. His non-reductivist thesis implies that if we lose enough psychological connection with our past selves, we will become, in a way, a different person. Then the immediate question is if there is no connection to our future self, why should we care about this "self"? In other words, how can we explain that imprudent behavior, such as ruining our own health, is bad if the person for whom it should be bad is a different person from us now? Parfit wants to avoid the implication that non-reductivism leads to the impossibility of defending reasons to care about our future. He calls this view an "extreme claim".[8] On the other hand, he admits that it is not irrational to care less about later self, especially in the distant future.[9] However, it is possible to create special relations with our future selves that generate moral reasons to act in favor of this person. Parfit does not solve how these relations and moral reasons are created but he draws an important analogy:

> "If we now care little about ourselves in the further future, our future selves are like *future generations*. We can affect them for the worse, and, because they do not now exist, they cannot defend themselves. Like future generations, future selves have no vote, so their interests need to be specially protected."[10] [11]

In this passage lies a key for transitioning from personal identity to population ethics and NIP. Future generations, like ourselves in the distant future, are different from us now; they exist and suffer due to our decisions. Therefore, if we want to explain why we should care about future selves and future generations, we must develop a principle that would be able to explain this specific relation. This is also a major challenge when dealing with NIP. It will be specified in the next section.

[7] RP, ch. 15.
[8] RP, s. 102.
[9] RP, s. 103: "My concern for my future may correspond to the degree of connectedness between me now and myself in the future. Connectedness is one of the two relations that give me reasons to be specially concerned about my own future. It can be rational to care less, when one of the grounds for caring will hold to a lesser degree. Since connectedness is nearly always weaker over longer period, I can rationally care less about my further future."
[10] RP, s. 106. (Italics mine.)
[11] Parfit mentions here for the first time an important feature of relation between current and future people – the asymmetry of power relation. See: Meyer, Lukas, "Intergenerational Justice", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.) 1.

On top of that, there is a revealing opening line at the beginning of the fourth part of RP that tells us how important this task for Parfit is:[12]

"This is the part that covers how we affect future generations. This is the most important part of our moral theory, since the next few centuries will be the most important in human history."

Parfit probably has many things in mind when he talks about the importance of the next few centuries. Although he does not specify it in this paragraph, he could think about overpopulation, depletion, or other events that he regarded as a threat to human civilization at that time. As we will see, global warming is one of them. Therefore, I suppose that Parfit counted climate change as a topic for moral philosophy with the highest priority. One further citation supports this claim. In *On What Matters* where Parfit mostly does not deal with the questions of population ethics, he mentions global warming as something that "matters most now" after his famous reconciliation of Kantian, Contractualist, and Consequentialist positions.

"What now matters most is that we rich people give up some of our luxuries, ceasing to overheat the Earth's atmosphere, and taking care of this planet in other ways, so that it continues to support intelligent life."[13]

To conclude, I have made some introductory remarks to contextualize Parfit's account of the Non-Identity Problem. I will continue by presenting the NIP and its relation to climate change. I will describe Parfit's concepts that are needed for understanding NIP, namely the Time-Dependence Claim, a term life worth living, and a common-sense account of harm. The meaning of these notions leads to five conditions that are necessary to accept when dealing with NIP. These conditions will be systematically developed. Moreover, I will partly introduce NIP with some practical examples before making it fully clear by presenting C-NIP.

[12] RP, ch. 16.
[13] Parfit, Derek. *On What Matters, Volume One.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 419.

2.1.2 Time-Dependence Claim

Explication of the NIP must start with Parfit's so-called Time-Dependence Claim because it leads to one of the necessary conditions for NIP cases. It's definition says:[14]

"If any particular person had not been conceived when he was in fact conceived, it is *in fact* true that he would never have existed."

Parfit argues that the identity of every person depends on unique circumstances that cannot be repeated. Every person grows from an ovum and the spermatozoon by which it is fertilized. The exact moment of intercourse determines by which spermatozoon the ovum is fertilized. Different children are born from different combinations of ovum and spermatozoon because they have different genetic predispositions. Therefore, Parfit claims that no matter how we define personal identity, any plausible account of it must accept the basic fact that people resulting from different genetic combinations are non-identical. We must agree on it, even if we are reductionists or non-reductionists. People often imagine alternative scenarios in which they are born in a different time, place, and historical context and then wonder what person they will become. Parfit has a simple answer for them. This kind of thought experiment makes no sense because it would not be them in those imagined scenarios. "Me being born in a different situation" is according to the Time-Dependence Claim *contradictio in adjecto*. Parfit thinks that this thesis is, in most cases, uncontroversial. First, let me eliminate possibly problematic implications.

The most controversial one is the implication that any time or space difference between two possible intercourses leads to the existence of different persons. For example, if I was conceived just one second later, it would not be me who exists now but a different person. This thesis may seem objectionable because the person would have an almost identical genetical code, be raised in the same family, and live in the same spatio-temporal conditions. In conclusion, the Time-dependence Claim needs further justification why any temporal or spatial difference establishes a difference in personal identity. Parfit is aware of this difficulty and has

[14] RP, s. 119.

conceptual apparatus for the solution. He does not develop it in RP, but he indicates how it could go.[15] He could claim, in line with his non-reductionist position, that in these controversial cases (such as a few-second difference between conceptions) the question about personal identity is empty and cannot be answered just as in other examples that he developed in RP. He could say that the Time-Dependence Claim works in other cases where the question about personal identity makes sense, because if there are enough distinguishing conditions to construct personal identity, it must be based on unique features resulting from these specific conditions. However, Parfit does not establish this argument here because it is not necessary for the Non-Identity Problem as far as it is applied to scenarios in which the difference between conditions of procreation is not marginal such as a few seconds. Therefore, Parfit develops a weaker version of The Time-Dependence Claim that is on the one hand uncontroversial, on the other hand, sufficient for the foundation of the first condition of NIP. The Time Dependence Claim 2 (TDC 2):[16]

"If any particular person had not been conceived within a month of the time when he was in fact conceived, he would in fact never have existed."

TDC 2 applies to any plausible account of personal identity. For illustration, let's consider one of the most common views. It declares that a person is defined by some "distinctive necessary properties".[17] These properties may be psychological or physical features developed via a complicated process. We do not have to claim that genetic predispositions play an essential role or fully determine the final features of personal identity. However, how the unique features are developed undoubtedly somehow derives from the specific predispositions determined by the moment of fertilization. One month difference between intercourses, even of the same parents, means a different combination of ovum and spermatozoon, different genetic predispositions; in addition, the born person would exist in a different time, interact in different circumstances, and develop different features. It implies that, for example, I would have never existed if I had been

[15] RP, s. 119. "We are inclined to believe that any question about our identity must have an answer, which must be either Yes or No. As before, I reject this view. There are cases in which our identity is indeterminate. What I have just described may be such a case. If it is, my question has no answer."
[16] RP, s. 119.
[17] RP, s. 119.

conceived a month later than my actual birth. I believe that this thesis is plausible. As it is uncontroversial, clearly less controversial than the claim that even if someone is conceived a month from his actual birth, she could be the same person, *onus probandi* rests upon someone who wants to hold the opposite view to TDC 2.

The Time-Dependence Claim has special importance because the first condition that we must accept if we want to take any example of NIP seriously is based on it. Now we understand what it means that different people with different identities are born and that it depends on the moment of fertilization. It is easy to see that many circumstances can change this moment and that identity and number of future people depend on many apparently unrelated decisions. Therefore, the first Parfit's condition of NIP can be summarized as follows:[18]

"Future people's existence, number, specific identity depend (are contingent) upon currently living people's decisions and actions."

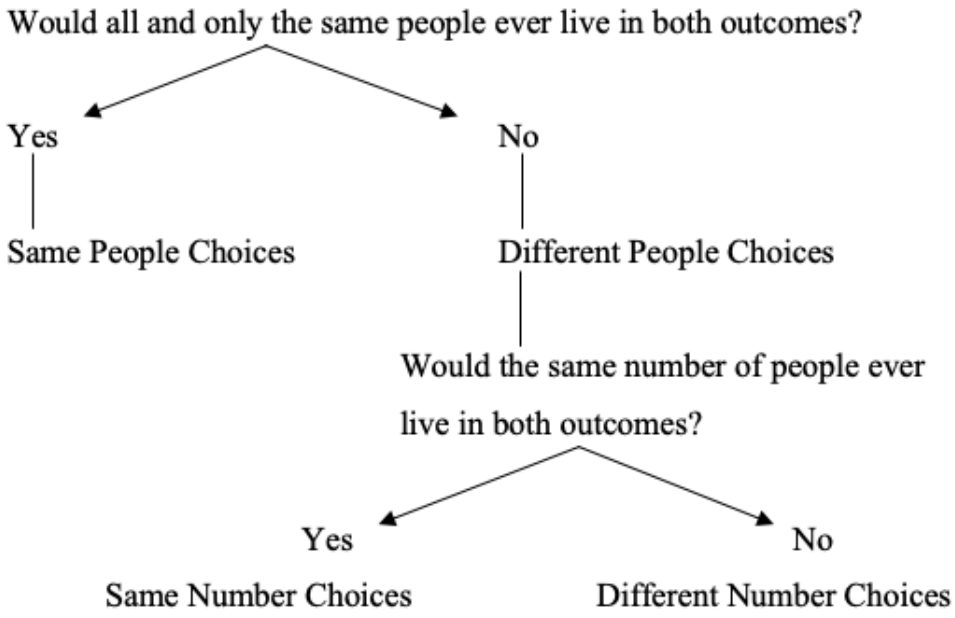
This claim applies to "very many"[19] of both our individual and structural decisions. The difference between individual and structural decisions will become clear after considering some examples in the following paragraphs. For now, it is necessary to make a further methodological distinction that is crucial for sorting NIP cases and that explicates the first condition.

2.1.3 Types of choices

When deciding whether to perform any possible action, there are two scenarios – first, if the task was performed, and second, if not. Considering these scenarios, we can ask: Would all and only the same people ever live in both outcomes? We are dealing with so-called Same People Choices if the answer is yes. The second option is if our answer to the proposed question is no, then we are dealing with Different People Choices which means that our decision would affect identity (who would be born), or number (how many people would be born), or both identity and number. This leads to further distinction. Considering this action, we can ask the following question: Would the same number of people ever live in both outcomes? If the answer is yes, it is an example of the Same Number Choice. If not,

[18] Meyer, Lukas, "Intergenerational Justice", s. 1.
[19] RP, s. 120.

it is a Different Number Choice. Both of these types of choices are instances of NIP cases. The graph below clearly represents this categories:



Graph 1: RP, 120.

Let's illustrate these distinctions with some examples. As I said in the beginning, most of our moral thinking happens in the category of Same People Choices. For example, deciding whether to fulfill a promise would not influence how many and which people will live in the future. It could have some effects but not in any predictable way, so Parfit claims that we treat these choices as if they have none. On the other hand, a lot of individual choices could change the identity and number of future people. The most straightforward example is the decision to have a baby. Many circumstances could influence this step; for instance, a decision to study at university could mean that someone would postpone having children. As a result of this choice, a different baby is born. This argument applies similarly to political or structural decisions. For example, the idea of the EU to set up the Erasmus program sets new conditions in which different people interact. In a few decades, we can see that a lot of future parents have met, and many children have been born because of studying abroad. European Commission estimates that one million babies may have been produced because of this program from 1987 to

2014.[20] Again, these children would have never existed if there had been no Erasmus program because of TDC 2. Furthermore, Parfit claims that these political or social changes may have such vast consequences that they can change the whole structure of the future population in a few centuries. For an illustration of this thesis, he invites us to ask a question: "How many of us could truly claim, 'Even if railways and motor cars had never been invented, I would still have been born?"[21] The answer is, according to him, maybe none of us would have been born; instead, there would be different people.

The NIP cases involve scenarios in which effects on future people can be reasonably predicted, most often decisions that affect some people or groups for the worse. The NIP cases are instances of the Same or Different Number Choices, so the number or identity of future people differs in both scenarios according to an eventual decision. As we shall see, the problem for Parfit is how to explain that people are harmed in one of the scenarios if they owe their existence to the same decisions.

Let's imagine in the example mentioned above that parents decided not to study and instead had a baby. After some time, they realized that it would have been better if they had waited because they were unsatisfied with their career, considered it a missed opportunity, and thought that having the baby later would have been better even for *the child*. As a result of that, the family's environment for raising kids could have been better. Their child one day makes a complaint and says that they should have waited because she could have had a better start in her life. Nevertheless, there is a problem: if the parents went to college and had children later, the born child would have never existed because there would be a different person instead of her. Therefore, the question is how to explain that they should have waited if their decision harmed no one. This example works here as a first indication of the Non-Identity Problem. However, it will be fully comprehensible only if we explain a few more related notions and describe NIP in detail. This is the task for the next paragraphs.

[20] European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Brandenburg, U., Berghoff, S., Taboadela, O., The Erasmus impact study: effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions, Publications Office, 2017, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/75468.
[21] RP, s. 123.

2.1.4 Common-sense notion of harm

The NIP cases attack our intuitive notion of harm. We commonly tend to use the so-called counterfactual or common-sense account of harm when dealing with NIP.[22] It says that a necessary condition for an action to harm someone is that it has unwanted consequences for some existing or future person – it makes her worse off than she otherwise would have been. Whether the harm is caused depends on comparing what actually happened in a given situation with the "counterfacts" – what would have occurred had the putatively harmful conduct not taken place. If a person's interests are worse off than they otherwise would have been, then a person will be harmed. David Boonin gives an illustrative example of theft.[23] If someone steals your phone and you are asked why you think that you were harmed, the likely reply would be that the act of the thief made you worse off than you would have been had the thief not stolen your phone. Boonin says that this account "seems to provide the clearest and most natural way to make sense of our common-sense beliefs about harm."[24] This notion is a part of the broader thesis that follows from that. Parfit calls it The Person-Affecting View:[25] [26]

"It will be worse if people are affected for the worse."

It says that if some act is morally wrong, it has to harm someone. In other words, a necessary condition of proclaiming some act to be morally wrong is harming someone in a sense defined above, by making her situation worse than it would otherwise have been. Maybe, we can think of some counterexamples of this principle, such as lies that never come to light, or use a moral theory that does not work with this principle of harm. Nevertheless, Parfit was convinced that most of the theories presuppose this account.[27] I would not point out to weaknesses of this principle here because they will be seen in the next sections when considering the

[22] One of the most famous elaborations of this view is in Joel Feinberg's work. See: Joel Feinberg. *Harm to Others*. The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law Volume I. (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1984)
Another famous proponent of the thesis that all reasons and values are individual-affecting and comparative is David Heyd. See: Heyd, David. *Genethics: Moral issues in the creation of people*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992)
[23] Boonin, *The NIP and the Ethics of Future People*, p. 52.
[24] Boonin, *The NIP and the Ethics of Future People*, p. 53.
[25] RP, s.125.
[26] It is in Parfit's later work developed in this form: "One of two outcomes cannot be worse if this outcome would be worse for no one." and called "Strong Narrow Person-Affecting Principle". See: Parfit, Derek. "Future People, the Non-Identity Problem, and Person-Affecting Principles". *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 45 (2017), p. 118-157, p. 118. (FP)
[27] RP, note 18.

example of climate change, nor would I develop the relation of this principle to distinct moral theories because it does not belong to my topic. It just needs to be accepted as a second preliminary condition that this principle is present in ordinary moral thinking even though it does not unproblematically explain every moral case; arguably, it is the most common procedure when we take some action to be morally wrong. To sum up, causing harm intentionally makes the action wrong. It works in most situations, but, as we shall see, Parfit argues that even though the common-sense harm principle is an intuitive response to NIP cases, it fails when considering them and The Person-Affecting View must be partially replaced.

2.1.5 Life worth living

The last introductory term is a "life worth living". I will use it a lot; it plays an important role in the example of climate change, so it is necessary to describe it briefly. A life worth living refers to someone's level of happiness, or more narrowly, to the quality of life or standard of living that are at least better than not being at all. Parfit argues that there is some level below which life becomes unbearable and is worse than death. It is not defined by exact measure, but it can be vaguely described as a situation when the sum of suffering exceeds the sum of "the amount of whatever makes life worth living"[28]. Parfit does not give us the exact definition of what these factors are. For instance, the unbearable state could be some rare genetic disorder that keeps you in constant pain. Moreover, this state could be caused by external conditions that make it impossible to satisfy basic human needs as a result of which a person would be in constant pain and suffering. Parfit would claim that being born in these situations is worse than not existing at all. For the sake of introducing C-NIP, it is not necessary to agree completely with this thesis, but it brings us to further conditions.

We need to accept that there could be such a thing as a life that is worth living simply in the sense that it is better than not existing at all. The fourth condition consists of a claim that we do not harm someone or make things worse for her if we confer on a person by an act an existence that is worth having even if it is in some way flawed.[29] Melinda Roberts refers to this thesis as one of the

[28] RP, s. 130.
[29] These conditions do not imply that we benefit someone by causing her or his existence, and neither they imply that we have some moral reasons to do that. For these topics in Parfit's work see: 4.1.2

intuitions that are at stake when we are considering NIP cases.[30] There are not many people, including Parfit, who would say that this intuition is not plausible. For example, rejecting this condition leads to the thesis that people should not have children and that the extinction of humankind is the morally right choice because it presupposes that causing person means harming this person or making her situation worse.[31] This approach is, at first glance, unintuitive and problematic, I would not develop it further and take the validity of the opposite thesis for granted. To sum up, conferring an existence worth having on a person does not harm her or worsen things.

The final condition is that we could compare individual lives in terms of how worth living they are. Although the comparison would never be accurate, Parfit assumes that we can say, according to quality of living or level of happiness, that some person is better off than others. Of course, there are many cases for which it would be required to specify these very general measures of "good life". Even so, I am not interested in these cases. As we shall see, it should not be problematic to claim that one person or group is worse off in the main example considered in this paper because it involves a substantial gap between basic standards of living. Therefore, I feel no need to further justify these conditions. Moreover, all of these terms will be further explicated in sections where Parfit's solution to NIP is developed.

To conclude, I adopted some methodological distinctions, presented necessary notions for understanding the Non-Identity Problem, and partly revealed the NIP on some practical examples. I will specify it by the climate change case in the next section.

Another important question is whether it is wrong to cause people to exist if it makes the situation worse *overall.* It will be considered in the section concerning the Repugnant Conclusion. See: 3.1.4.3. and 4.1.5.5.

[30] Roberts, M. A. "The nonidentity problem". In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. First published July 21, 2009; substantive revision September 25, 2015.

[31] This view is called antinatalism, most fully developed by David Benatar. See: Benatar David, *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming into Existence*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)

2.2 The Climate – Non-Identity Problem

2.2.1 Introduction

The plan for the next chapter is to introduce the indirect version of NIP by the case of climate change and global warming with its relation to Parfit's examples. I do not intend here to present the phenomenon of climate change in detail, I will use it in a very limited and general form. Before that, I want to start with an introduction to the topic of climate change ethics.

There is long-term scientific agreement that specific human activities since the 1800s lead to global warming.[32] Rising temperature has serious consequences – it causes expansion of deserts, heat waves, wildfires, melting of permafrost and glaciers, sea-level rise, more intense weather extremes, and a lot of other factors that together gradually change Earth's environment to become unsuitable for many living ecosystems and organisms including humans. These events are caused by the increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere over the last 150 years, which is a result of human activities, mainly burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas for electricity, heat, transportation, and industrial processes, furthermore by unsustainable agriculture, forestry and land use, and many others. Suppose industrial countries continue to do these activities at the present rate. In that case, they will cause changes in climate conditions for hundreds, even thousands of years that will greatly increase the number and severity of many natural destructive events. These events will cause billions of people and animals living at the time to suffer malnutrition, dehydration, disease, injury, and violent, premature death. As environmental ethicist James Gravey puts it: "We can expect a future with hundreds of millions, even billions of displaced, hungry, thirsty people in it, escaping not just sea-level rises but on the move away from scorched croplands and empty wells ... There is going to be a lot of death in the future, a lot of death which wouldn't have happened had we and those before us acted otherwise."[33] This is not any kind of sci-fi vision but a description of highly probable scenario if the global system of industrial production remains the same. We can see some of the mentioned

[32] The most comprehensive overview presents Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in their Assessment Reports. See: IPCC, 2014: Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland.
To understand the climate change denial, see: Oreskes, Naomi, and Erik M. Conway. *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*. (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2010)

[33] James Garvey, *The Ethics of Climate Change: Right and Wrong in a Warming World* (New York: Continuum, 2008), p. 28.

consequences of climate change at present. I think that we can agree that described prospect is unwelcomed, even to say disastrous. To cite Jeff McMahan: "No sane person doubts that we have moral reasons not to cause these conditions, as well as reasons to prevent them if we can."[34] This is the core moral intuition that I want to specify and find an explanation for.

The field of climate change ethics examines the nature of moral reasons not to cause global warming and their strength; moreover, it describes the unequal responsibilities for the problem itself, it tries to explain and overcome current lack of action to avert the worst consequences of climate change and covers many other similar topics. It is considered a branch of moral philosophy, namely environmental ethics, that comes out of these straightforward facts about possible future collapse.[35] I believe that nobody from this field (including me) doubts the claim that we have some moral reasons to prevent climate change. However, there are many substantial disagreements about the nature of these reasons, how we should explain or uphold them, and to which acts or people they apply. My project belongs to the field of climate change ethics. Nevertheless, it covers only a small fraction of it – I will show how the Non-Identity Problem specified by the example of climate change challenges our common-sense view of harm and whether it is possible to find a plausible solution to this challenge in Parfit's work. The next step is to define climate change in terms of the Non-Identity problem.

2.2.2 Definition of C-NIP

Without further delay, let me present the example of climate change in the form used in the rest of the paper. That is, applied to the Non-Identity Problem (C-NIP). Its form draws from the article by Jeff McMahan, who was a colleague of Parfit, and discussed with him most of the topics from population ethics.[36] As we shall see, the defined example of climate change works analogically to the examples that Parfit mentions himself.

[34] McMahan, Jeff. "Climate Change, War, and the Non-Identity Problem". *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 18 (2021), p. 211-238, p. 211.
[35] Williston, Byron. *The Ethics of Climate Change: An Introduction*. (New York: Routledge, 2019) p. 27.
[36] However, there are some differences between his and my example. Firstly, I specify the limit of warming by the claim "well below 2 degrees Celsius" as defined in Paris agreement. I also later specify this example by applying it to long-term structural political decisions. Furthermore, I use different markings.

C-NIP: We are deciding whether to immediately and significantly reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses so that global warming keeps well below 2 degrees Celsius. I will refer to us as Generation 1 (G1). Suppose we do not make this happen, and we cause all those earlier mentioned events that are expected to manifest drastically in the next century. Hundred years from now, there will be people who will suffer serious consequences of climate change, their life will be, on average, qualitatively worse than ours now but suppose that it will be still worth living. Let's call these people climate change people (CCP). In contrast, the second option is that we will duly stop the growing temperature, and people a hundred years from now will live in better conditions because of a relatively stable environment. I will call them stable climate people (SCP). Suppose next that there is roughly the same number of people in both scenarios whose lives will be worth living.

First, it is necessary to note that I believe that it is plausible to claim that even though people would suffer from the effects of climate change their lives would be, on average, worth living because, as I said in the previous chapter, the conditions that make life completely unbearable consist of a state in which people live in nearly constant pain and suffering. I suppose that situation for CCP would not be this case. The average living standards and quality of life would be substantially worse for CCP than for SCP, but it would still be more welcomed than not to exist at all; therefore, the lives of CCP would be generally worth living.

The Non-Identity Problem results from the fact that these two groups of people are not identical, and their existence depends on the decision of G1 – it is an instance of Same Number Choice. In other words, without the decision of G1 to cause climate change, there will be no CCP. This claim may seem counter-intuitive, but I am convinced that it is a plausible observation if we accept TDC 2. Let's see why.

Stopping global warming means fundamental shifts in worldwide policies. Indeed, almost in all economic and social sectors. These changes would affect in different ways everyday life of every human being on planet Earth – different companies and businesses would be developed, people would work in different jobs, different infrastructure would be built and used, different food would be produced and eaten, etc. Simply, we would participate in completely different

socio-economical structure. As a result of these changes, different romantic partnerships would be formed, and different children would be born. Additionally, even the same couples in both scenarios would interact in different situations, and, once again, different children would be born. As Jeff McMahan puts it:[37]

> "In short, the shifts in large-scale energy and social policies would result in the existence in the future of different people from those who would have existed if the shifts in policy had not occurred. It is reasonable to suppose that, after 100 years, the vast majority of people who would exist would be different people from those who would have existed in the absence of the changes in policy. For simplicity, and not altogether unrealistically, let us assume that the entire population of the world who would exist 100 years from now would be different, apart from those who already exist now."

The basic intuition that I want to hold is that if G1 decides to cause climate change because of which CCP would suffer rather than stop it and leave stable climate conditions for SCP, they did something *morally wrong*. In other words, the intuition is that leaving future generations with an unstable climate is morally objectionable. I think that McMahan's claim that "no sane person would doubt that" may be exaggerative, but it is true that there is at least some empirical evidence that most people from different societies would agree with this thesis.[38]

If we accept this intuition, the next step is to justify why we should hold it. The explanation would use the common-sense principle of harm as introduced in the previous section. It says that an action can be wrong only if it makes the situation worse for someone. Therefore, the moral objection would be this: Causing climate

[37] A similar line of thought can also be found in Parfit's RP example of Depletion. See: RP, s. 123:
"Suppose that we are choosing between two social or economic policies. And suppose that, on one of the two policies, the standard of living would be slightly higher over the next century. This effect implies another. It is not true that, whichever policy we choose, the same particular people will exist in the further future. Given the effects of two such policies on the details of our lives, it would increasingly over time be true that, on the different policies, people married different people. And, even in the same marriages, the children would increasingly over time be conceived at different times. As I have argued, children conceived more than a month earlier or later would in fact be different children. Since the choice between our two policies would affect the timing of later conceptions, some of the people who are later born would owe their existence to our choice of one of the two policies. If we had chosen the other policy, these particular people would never have existed. And the proportion of those later born who owe their existence to our choice would, like ripples in a pool, steadily grow. We can plausibly assume that, after one or two centuries, there would be no one living in our community who would have been born whichever policy we chose."

[38] For example, last year, the world's largest survey of public opinion on climate change conducted by the United Nations Development Programme was published, it reflects over half the world's population and sixty-four percent of people believe climate change is a global emergency and there is large support for wide-ranging climate action. See: The Peoples' Climate Vote. UNDP.org. United Nations Development Programme (26 January 2021).

change is wrong because it makes future people worse off; that is to say, it harms them. It is summarized similarly, for example, by philosopher Onora O'Neil:[39]

"By burning fossil fuels prodigally we accelerate the green-house effect and may dramatically harm successors, who can do nothing to us."

Now we finally face the Climate – Non-Identity Problem: If G1 chooses to stop global warming, there will be SCP instead of CCP, and CCP will never exist. So it is implausible to claim that by causing climate change, G1 harmed or made CCP worse off because this decision is the precondition of their life which is still worth living and as we said earlier, we cannot harm or make someone worse by bringing him to conditions that make life worth living. The conclusion is that causing climate change is not morally objectionable. That is in opposition to our former intuition.

For clarification, I will summarize four premises that together create C-NIP. They are derived from the article of Sweden scholar Jasmina Nedevska who used and modified David Boonin's expression.[40]

P1: Generation 1 (G1) act of causing climate change rather than prevent it from happening does not make climate change people (CCP) worse off than they would otherwise have been. (Because of Time-Dependence Claim 2)

P2: A's act harms B only if A's act makes B worse off than B would otherwise have been. (Common-sense notion of harm)

P3: Generation 1 (G1) act of causing climate change rather than prevent it from happening does not harm anyone.
(Because life for CCP is still worth living)

P4: If an act does not harm anyone, then the act is not morally wrong.
(The Person-Affecting View)

[39] O'Neill, Onora. *Towards Justice and Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 216
[40] Nedevska, Jasmina. "The non-identity problem in climate ethics: A restatement". *Intergenerational Justice Review* 2 (2019), p. 63-68.

The counter-intuitive conclusion: Generation 1 (G1) act of causing climate change rather than prevent it from happening is not morally wrong.

This is the clearest expression of the C-NIP. It is possible in other NIP cases to substitute premises 1 and 3 according to discussed example, and it works analogically. To summarize what was said: Identity and number of future people result from decisions made by present people. We are inclined to claim that we can make the situation worse for them or harm them, but it is not a plausible thesis because their number and identity depend on the same choices. If we did not act that way, they would have never existed or lived lives that are still worth living. We cannot harm them by an act that confers on them an existence that is worth having. Therefore, these acts cannot be wrong according to our common-sense notion of harm. The example of climate change uses this general line of argument.

We must reject one of the six mentioned premises if we want to find a solution to the C-NIP or any other NIP case. Some authors argued that there is no plausible way to reject them; we have to "bite the bullet" and accept that we cannot consider these actions morally wrong.[41] Other thinkers claim that although the premises could be plausible, the NIP has no practical significance on how we act because it is only a theoretical problem.[42] I suppose that we should reject both of these views, at least in the case of climate change. The example of climate change shows that the consequences of ignoring or biting the bullet could be, on the one hand, theoretical – we are unable to justify moral reasons to care about future people; and, more importantly, practical – incapacity to justify our intuitions can be seen for example in some current lawsuits that will be introduced in the Appendix 2. For now, it is necessary to adopt some closer specifications of defined example.

[41] Boonin, David. *The Non-Identity Problem and the Ethics of Future People*, ch. 7.

[42] Interestingly, there is a recent article from German scholar Jörg Tremmel who, in opposition to the mainstream view in population ethics, reject the Time-Dependence Claim in relation to C-NIP and takes C-NIP to be, in short, a practically irrelevant or even potentially harmful thought experiment. There is no space here to argue against his view because my purpose is to reconstruct Parfit's possible solution of C-NIP. See: Jörg Tremmel, "Fact-insensitive thought experiments in climate ethics: exemplified by Parfit's non-identity problem". In Jafry, Tahseen, Karin Helwig, and Michael Mikulewicz. *Routledge handbook of climate justice* (London: Routledge, 2018) p. 42-67.

2.2.3 C-NIP and Parfit

I expect that definition of C-NIP could immediately give raise to a question: What are those decisions of G1 that we refer to when we say "causing climate change"? This question should be answered. As the setting of the example indicated, I will restrict the considered choices only to structural political decisions. There are two connected reasons why. In the first place, it agrees with Parfit's intentions. Secondly, the structural political decisions have the biggest impact, so they are the clearest expression of proposed intuition.

Parfit gives in *Reasons and Persons* at least five examples of NIP; a few of them have become paradigmatic and are still repeated in different forms in population ethics' literature. David Boonin divides NIP cases into two groups – direct and indirect versions. In the direct version, "a choice directly determines which particular person will exist after the choice is made".[43] The example of direct choice would be the earlier mentioned case of the child who complains to the parents that they should have given her a better start in life. It is, in fact, a variation on one of Parfit's examples called "a young girl's child"[44] – 14 years old girl is having a baby, and Parfit wants to uphold the intuition that it would have been better if she waited. However, her child was not harmed by the choice because this person would have never existed without it, so there is no direct objection to her decision according to the common-sense principle of harm.

The second category of NIP cases is the indirect version of NIP defined by choice with "[…] consequences that initiate a complex chain of events that eventually have an equally decisive effect on which particular people exist after the choice is made."[45] C-NIP suits this definition. The two most often mentioned cases of this sort by Parfit are Depletion and Risky Policy.[46] The first one involves a decision to systematically exhaust limited resources by the current generation, because of which there would be future generations with shortages that would significantly lower the quality of life. The second one deals with the case of a risky energy policy that involves the burial of nuclear waste that would kill many people in further future because of the release caused by an earthquake. I will not consider

[43] Boonin, *The NIP and the Ethics of Future People*, p. 2
[44] RP, s. 122.
[45] Boonin, *The NIP and the Ethics of Future People*, p. 5.
[46] RP, s. 123 and 126. Furthermore, Parfit, Derek. "Energy Policy and the Further Future", in: Gardiner, Stephen M., Caney, Simon, Jamieson Dale and Shue, Henry. *Climate Ethics: Essential Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 112-122.

the details of these cases. For my purpose, it just needs to be said that both are the indirect version of NIP, use the same reasoning as C-NIP, and create the structurally same problem. As a matter of fact, any other expression of indirect NIP has the same structure.[47] Namely, that there is the current generation whose decision influences the structure and situation of the future population. The current generation is deciding between some scenarios. We tend to claim that one of the decisions is wrong because it makes future people worse off, but this thesis is implausible because, without these "wrong" decisions, there would be no "harmed" people whose lives are still worth living. To see the analogy more clearly, let me cite Parfit's expression of the "Risky Policy" case in the last article from 2017, where he mentions global warming, so it gets closest to C-NIP:

> "Suppose again that, by choosing the cheaper energy policy that would increase global warming, we would greatly lower the quality of life of very many future people, and would indirectly cause many of these people to be killed. Our choice of this policy would not be worse for these future people, since it would not have been better for them if they had never existed."[48]

The evidence that C-NIP works analogically to Parfit's indirect version of NIP is clear.[49] The point is that in all these indirect cases, Parfit mentions not individual decisions but structural political choices. The reason for that is simple. Only these choices have the potential to, on the one hand, change the structure of society and cause different people to exist on a large scale, on the other hand, they significantly worsen the conditions for future people. These facts are also key reasons why I limit the example of climate change to those substantial decisions.[50]

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[47] Patrick Tomlin claims, contrary to the general agreement, that some Non-Identity cases could create a structurally different problem. See: Tomlin, Patrick. "The Impure Non-Identity Problem", in: McMahan, Jeff, Campbell Tim, Goodrich, James and Ramakrishnan Ketan. *Ethics and Existence, The Legacy of Derek Parfit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 93-112.

[48] FP, p. 130.

[49] As for example Jörg Tremmel puts it: "It does not really matter if a resource or a sink (such as the atmosphere with its capacity to absorb greenhouse gases) is used in this example: to transfer Parfit's 'depletion problem' in the context of climate ethics, replace 'depletion' by 'high emissions' and 'conservation' by 'low emissions'. In 2010, Parfit did this himself […]." Jörg Tremmel, "Fact-insensitive thought experiments in climate ethics*",* p. 44.

[50] A lot of scholars follow Parfit here and limit C-NIP to structural, political decisions. See for example: Page, Edward. *Climate Change, Justice and Future Generations*. (Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2006) p. 132-161; or Broome, John. *Climate Matters: Ethics in a Warming World*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012) p. 58-60.
On the other hand, Axel Gosseries applies C-NIP to individual decisions. For this view see: Gosseries, A. "On future generations' future rights". *Journal for Political Philosophy*, 16(4), (2008), p. 446–474.

On the contrary, it must be said that there is one important difference between C-NIP and Parfit's examples. I settled the C-NIP so that whether G1 stops climate change or not, roughly the same number of future people would exist – the population of CCP and SCP is expected to be more or less equal. This makes C-NIP the Same Number Choice by the terms defined in Graph 1. Parfit considers the option that there would be a different number of future people in his examples of Depletion or Risky Policy. He usually defines the indirect version of NIP as the Different Number Choice. I believe, in line with Jeff McMahan, that it is plausible to define C-NIP as the Same Number Choice when considering the population a hundred years from now, but we will see in the next sections that it is the Different Number Choices that lead to major problems when solving NIP. To introduce these problems that Parfit faces, I will also operate with C-NIP as a Different Number Choice. However, my overall goal remains the same – to apply Parfit's explanation of NIP on the C-NIP in the terms defined above.

2.2.4 Decisions that make a difference

There is a second reason for limiting the example of climate change to structural political choices. They are arguably the clearest expression of the mentioned intuition. As I said in the introduction, climate change is a complicated process caused by various human activities. It is true that those activities have a collective form. This means that one individual act that leads to reducing environmental impact has negligible consequences for the process itself. For example, my decision to change the energy supplier to one that uses renewable resources makes no difference, even for the carbon footprint of the Czech energy sector. On the other hand, if every person changed the supplier – if it became a collective decision, it would have a serious impact (yet, not being a political decision). The same line of thinking works for any other act that has negative effects on the environment, so we can argue that many individual decisions cause climate change. I am convinced that this claim is plausible only partly. A more critical factor in causing climate change than a large number of individual decisions is, in my opinion, the structural political setting. Firstly, it sets boundaries and rules for any agency. In an imagined example, if there was no other option in some society than using renewables, no one could contribute to climate change in this way. The point is that even if individuals can choose between different suppliers, it is currently the

state in most countries that has the power to set the plans, conditions and create an environment for preferred energetical conceptions. The same could be said about agricultural production, ways of transportation, industrial sector, and other most important contributors to climate change. Therefore, structural political changes have the most significant long-term impact. For example, the consequences of one political decision, such as a binding plan for the complete termination of coal power plants, are incomparable with individual choice of energy supplier. It is the state represented by politicians that could make a difference by a single choice. Not to mention that individual choices may largely depend on socioeconomic status, accessible opportunities, level of awareness, and other factors that vary between different individuals, and thus it becomes very problematic to justify a universal moral obligation not to cause climate change that bounds every individual.[51]

In conclusion, as the substantial structural decisions have the greatest possible impact, I consider them to be the most direct application of the mentioned intuition, which says that leaving future generations with an unstable climate is morally wrong.

2.3 Conclusion

I set the overall goal of my project in the first part. It is to find a new principle of explaining wrongness in NIP cases that do not use the common-sense notion of harm, and that could justify simple intuition that leaving future generations with an unstable climate is morally wrong. I am not convinced that this intuition should play a role in every individual choice and bind every person with a moral obligation not to cause climate change. However, I do not want to solve this problem here because it is not the topic of indirect version of NIP. I will apply the mentioned intuition only to the political structural decision with the biggest long-term consequences that are also mentioned in Parfit's own examples. In the first part, I explained the necessary notions and conditions for understanding C-NIP, applied Parfit's line of thought concerning NIP to the example of climate change, and showed how it problematizes the common-sense principle of harm. The plan

[51] For this topic, see, for example: Lippold, Anna Luisa. *Climate Change and Individual Moral Duties: A Plea for the Promotion of a Collective Solution*. (Brill, 2020); or Gardiner, Stephen M., Caney, Simon, Jamieson Dale and Shue, Henry (ed.). *Climate Ethics: Essential Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), part 4: Individual Responsibility. Moreover, I do not address here the topic of the relation between citizens and politicians and the question whether the citizens are also partly responsible for the nature of structural social setting because these questions exceed theme of my project.

for the second part of my project is to find Parfit's solution to this introduced problem.

2.4 Appendix 1: some limitations

I will finish this part with a few closing remarks. My example of climate change has a lot of deficiencies that need to be mentioned. An objection to the defined example of climate change in this form could be that it is fully anthropocentric.[52] That is, it takes into consideration only negative effects on future people, but climate change threatens not only humans but also many other living organisms and ecosystems. If we accept that non-human nature has value in itself, there could be strong moral reasons that would justify the thesis that we must immediately stop global warming. These reasons would not be threatened by C-NIP. This objection is plausible; I do not have the capacity here to examine the topic of the moral status of animals, plants, and ecosystems, although I take it to be an interesting branch of environmental ethics that contains important debates. As I said, my example is limited in the way that it only covers the NIP. On the other hand, pursuing a new principle of harm, which is the challenge of the NIP for Parfit, could lead to a wider principle that would include all living creatures. I will briefly return to this point in the last part of my project.

The second deficiency of C-NIP is that it appraises the effects of climate change only on future persons. However, the bad effects fall on some people even in the present, unfortunately to the greatest extent on societies that historically contributed least to the problem.[53] This brings us to the other possible objection, namely, that the example does not mention differences between impacts on distinct societies and individuals because of economic inequalities, different geographical location, etc. Furthermore, I do not deal with the consequences of possible restrictions and costs of transition to post-growth economy that opens questions such as how to make the transition socially just, if the current generations, especially from Global North, are obliged to make some "sacrifices" in their living

[52] This objection is mentioned, for example, by Edward Page. See: Page, Edward. *Climate Change, Justice and Future Generations,* s. 6.2.3.

[53] Scientifical evidence for this claim can be found in IPCC Sixth Assessment Report: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. IPCC, 2022: Climate Change 2022: *Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022)

standards, how to divide responsibilities for this transition, and many others.[54] In conclusion, I am aware of these deficiencies and limitations; nevertheless, I showed that the presented definition of C-NIP is reasonable in the context of my project.

The last limitation is avoiding the normative sphere. I used the terms "common-sense" and "intuition" a few times in connection to the principle of harm and the moral obligation not to harm future people. I admit that referring to these notions without further explicating their validity may be problematic. On the other hand, the considered thinkers, including Parfit, use these notions in the same way, and there is at least some evidence that they have an empirical basis. I do not develop it more because it would require asking questions, such as why we have this specific intuition, and why we tend to use this principle of harm. These questions would lead to the inquiry into the sources of normativity which is a large topic that I do not have the capacity here to reasonably comprehend. Therefore, my project is descriptive – I want to find a general principle of harm that can explain intuition not to make future people worse off than they otherwise could have been, but I do not explain the origin of this intuition.

[54] For these topics, see for example: Morena, Edouard, et al., editors. *Just Transitions: Social Justice in the Shift Towards a Low-Carbon World*. Pluto Press, 2020; or Brand, Ulrich; Wissen, Markus. *Imperiale Lebensweise*. (Oekom, 2017)

3 The Climate – Non-Identity Problem solution part I

3.1 Reasons and Persons

3.1.1 Introduction

The first section of the second part of my project deals with Parfit‘s solution to the Non-Identity Problem from *Reasons and Person*. I will start with a description of his position called the No Difference View and an argument for its validity; then, I will recount two important principles – Total and Average Principles – that led to failure when solving NIP in RP. Finally, I will introduce concepts from RP that are used and developed in Parfit’s last article.

3.1.2 No Difference View

As soon as Parfit introduces NIP in direct and indirect forms, he tries to find a solution. First, he asks whether NIP makes any difference to our moral thinking, more precisely, if it cancels our moral reasons or makes them weaker. In the C-NIP example, the question is whether the fact that the decision of G1 causes no harm to CCP has some moral implications, namely that we cannot consider the act of G1 as morally wrong or that our moral reasons to cause CCP rather than SCP are weaker. Parfit’s simple answer would be that NIP makes absolutely no difference in these cases. Furthermore, he says that the No Difference View is plausible not only because it is our intuitive response to NIP cases, but he introduces a specific example that should prove the validity of his position. As I said earlier, I do not want here to argue for the normative claim that act of G1 to cause climate change considered a structural political decision is morally wrong; I presuppose that people would agree on this intuition and on the claim that we have some moral reasons to solve climate change. On the other hand, the No Difference View is a crucial feature of Parfit’s position by which he maintains the strength of moral reasons in NIP cases, so it is necessary to specify it. The normative dimension of moral reasons not to cause climate change will be touched upon in Appendix 3. Anyway, Parfit’s No Difference View implies that the decision of G1 must be wrong in the same way as if it has identical effects on currently living people. Let’s see why.

3.1.2.1 The Medical Programmes

Parfit introduces the example called "The Medical Programmes"[55]. It says that two rare conditions – J and K – cause exactly the same disability to born children. Condition K cannot be treated but disappears after two months. There are two medical programmes from which we have to choose because of a limited budget. The first one involves testing millions of women during pregnancy; those with condition J would be treated. In the second programme, millions of women will be tested before they try to become pregnant; if condition K was found, they would be warned to wait two months so the condition would disappear. As a result of the first programme, 1 000 children of millions would be born every year without disability. The outcome of the second programme is that there would be every year 1 000 healthy rather than 1 000 different disabled children (because two months difference means that different children are born according to the TDC 2). The question is whether there are stronger moral reasons to prefer one of these solutions.

Applying the Non-Identity Problem with its premises leads to the conclusion that the first scenario is better than the second one. If we choose the second programme, the decision would be worse for those 1 000 children born with a disability because they would exist in both scenarios; the difference is that in the second one, they will suffer from disability, so they would be worse off according to the Person-Affecting View. On the other hand, choosing the first programme does not harm anyone because the second group of 1 000 children with a disability would exist only if the first programme was chosen; the second programme leads to the existence of 1 000 different non-identical people, so 1 000 disabled children cannot be harmed by choosing the first programme because there is no alternative for them. [56]

The NIP leads here to an implausible conclusion as far as these medical programmes are equally worthwhile. There would be the same number of people with the same health problem in both outcomes. The only difference is that the first programme leads to the existence of a different group of disabled people. However, these people would not be worse off than the first group of disabled people, so the

[55] RP, s. 125. The earliest version of this example is presented in Parfit's lecture from 1973. See: Lecture, p. 373.
[56] Parfit claims that we do not have to make any assumption about the status of a fetus in this example. Furthermore, the comparison of programmes is limited to counting effects on born children and it is supposed that disabled children born as a result of canceling the first programme would not know that they could be cured by the pill (because otherwise, it could "make their handicap harder to hear").

difference cannot be morally relevant. This example tells us, according to Parfit, that our intuitions in NIP cases are plausible, and NIP cannot change the strength of moral reasons. The implication for my case – C-NIP is that decision of G1 to cause climate change is morally wrong in the same way as if the effects of climate change on CCP were transferred to currently living people. The strength of moral reasons to avert these effects would be the same in both scenarios. Obviously, some people disagree with Parfit'sNo DifferenceView; I will address some counterpoints concerning C-NIP in Appendix 3. For now, the major question persists: how to justify the claim that causing climate change is wrong after the failure of the Person-Affecting View or more generally, how we can explain wrongness without the common-sense notion of harm.

Parfit stuck to the No Difference View his entire life.[57] He said in 2016, three decades after *Reasons and Persons* was published, that he hoped that everyone would have accepted the No Difference View when he established NIP.[58] It is not so. Some people claim that moral reasons concerning effects on future people are weaker because of NIP. In opposition, Parfit thinks that NIP challenges us to rethink our common-sense principle of harm and explanation of moral wrongness. His strategy for achieving this aim differs through his work. Firstly, he thought that an impersonal view of morality could achieve it, then he reconsidered this claim and tried to find a wider principle that would be able to accommodate effects on future people. I will describe the second strategy in more detail because it is Parfit's final word concerning NIP. However, let's start here with the first attempt to solve NIP from RP.

3.1.3 Same Number Choices

The solution of NIP is developed systematically. It starts with cases in which both outcomes involve the same number of different people – Same Number Choices and then extend the principle used in these cases to the more complicated examples with a different number of people in both outcomes – Different Number Choices. The case of C-NIP is defined as the Same Number Choice, but I will consider the second option as well in order to take into account more problematic

[57] There is a passage even in OWM in which Parfit claims that "we ought to accept the No Difference View". See: Parfit, Derek. *On What Matters*, Volume Two. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 78.
[58] "The non-identity problem | Derek Parfit | EAGxOxford 2016" YouTube. 2017. Retrieved, May 30, 2022. From: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtU0pah4R8Q&t=19s&ab_channel=CentreforEffectiveAltruism.

dimension of NIP and to understand established principles satisfactorily. I will limit the details of Parfit's discussion in the fourth part of RP only to aspects relevant to his proposed solution from the 2017 article FP and C-NIP. The first suggested principle that should explain the wrongness in the Same Number Choices is called The Same Number Quality Claim (Q): [59]

"If in either of two possible outcomes the same number of people would ever live, it would be worse if those who live are worse off, or have a lower quality of life, than those who would have lived."

Q indicates a new way to explain wrongness in NIP cases. Parfit claims that an outcome can be worse even if it does not directly harm anyone. It means that the common-sense principle of harm no longer serves as a condition for proclaiming some action morally wrong. Common-sense or counterfactual principle of harm which led to Parfit's so-called Person-Affecting View can be used when considering Same People Choices. However, Parfit is convinced that we have to replace it when considering Different People Choices because it contradicts the plausible No Difference View.[60] In NIP cases, wrongness does not depend on a comparison between states of the same people, but is derived from possible outcomes in which different people or groups exist. To conclude, Q suggests that the solution of NIP is based on a refusal of the fourth premise – an act could be morally wrong even if it does not harm anyone. Parfit sticks to this general thesis even in his final solution.

Application of Q to the C-NIP shows that it can explain why causing CCP rather than SCP is morally wrong. However, this explanation is incomplete. The first scenario is worse, according to Q, simply because we are choosing between two groups with the same number of members (CCP and SCP); the difference is that the quality of life is lower for one of the groups, and people are worse off, so it is better to choose the second scenario. The justification of the claim that causing climate change (in defined terms) is morally wrong points to the failure to take seriously the significant decrease in wellbeing when comparing these two different groups of people. This claim is plausible even though CCP would not be directly

[59] RP, s. 122.
[60] RP, s. 125.

harmed by choosing the second option. The problem is that Q does not specify the nature of this comparison and leaves open the question of what it means that people in the first scenario are better off or have a higher quality of life. There are two ways in which it could be so. They could be better off collectively, meaning that the sum of benefits is higher; or they could be better off individually, meaning that each member of the first group is benefited more than members of the second group. As we shall see, this distinction will be crucial because Parfit in RP emphasizes the collective aspect and ends up with implasuible conclusions. Furthermore, the solution of NIP in FP will be based on a compromise between these two aspects. For now, let's move to the subsequent development in Parfit's solution of NIP in RP.

3.1.4 Different Number Choices

Q is limited because it covers only the Same Number Choices. To find a complete solution to NIP, Parfit has to come up with a principle that would be able to decide cases in which a different number of people live – so-called Theory X.[61] This theory should also explain Q in detail and justify the No Difference View. Moreover, Different Number Choices lead to further questions of population ethics, for example, whether there can be such a thing as overpopulation, how many people ought to exist, how to value quantity of happiness, quality of human life, and many others. Parfit claims that no moral theory is justified to call itself complete unless it can answer these questions. As we shall see, he failed to find such a theory in RP. He was not even fully satisfied with his solution from 2017. Whether this solution succeeded is still debated, I will partly touch on the topic of completeness of Theory X, but I have no ambition to resolve this question here fully; my only aim is to reconstruct part of Parfit's solution to apply it on C-NIP. In the next section, I will identify the general direction of the NIP solution from RP and the most important features of it that are further developed in Parfit's last article.

[61] RP, s. 122: "Because Q is restricted, it could be justified in several different ways. There are several principles that imply Q, but conflict when applied to Different Number Choices. We shall need to decide which of these principles, or which set of principles, we ought to accept. Call what we ought to accept Theory X. X will solve the Non-Identity Problem in Different Number Choices. And X will tell us how Q should be justified, or more fully explained."

3.1.4.1 Overpopulation

The failure of Parfit's solution to NIP in RP occurs when he considers the effects of population growth and then its variations. Population growth has twofold nature, so-called "transitory good effects" and "cumulative bad effects".[62] On the one hand, having more children leads to a better quality of life for the current generation; for instance, it increases GDP, so the society is becoming richer and has more resources to secure material conditions for human wellbeing. On the other hand, its consequence is a gradual exhaustion of natural resources, so after some time, it necessarily lowers the quality of life. Therefore, population growth is good for current people, but has unwanted consequences in the long-term.

The important aspect for me is that this case is a variation of NIP, not very different from C-NIP. The current generation can decide to procreate less and stop population growth. As a result of that, their quality of life will be slightly lower. However, after a few centuries, there would be different people, and the quality of their life would be significantly higher in comparison to people who would exist if the current generation decided not to stop population growth.[63] The problem is that the decision of current generation to keep the population growing does not harm anyone because if they stopped the growth, same future people would not exist. Consequently, an explanation of why the growth is wrong must be based on a different principle than the Person-Affecting View – it has to explain that one of the choices is worse without using common-sense notion of harm. Q cannot help either because there would be a different number of people in both scenarios. In other words, we need a Theory X.

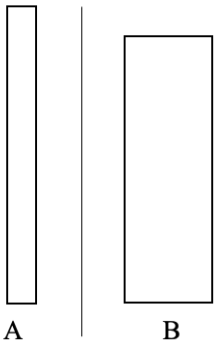
3.1.4.2 Impersonal Total Principle

Parfit then shifts the example to this form: let's say that in scenario B, there are twice as many people living as in A. The lives of those in A are more than half

[62] RP, s. 129.

[63] The resemblance of these examples also lies in the fact that the current generation has to sacrifice a bit of their life quality in order to secure a stable environment for future people. On the one hand, this sacrifice is reasonable on a collective level but does not fit some of their individual short-term interests. This issue is tackled in Stephen Gardiner's book, especially in part C. See: Stephen M. Gardiner. *Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)
On the other hand, there would be a lot of differences, such as we could expect that number of living people would decrease according to the advancing consequences of climate change. Stephen M. Gardiner considers these differences too in his book in Appendix 2.

as much worth living compared with lives in B.[64] The width of blocks in the graph represents the number of living people, and height the quality of their life.



Graph 3: RP, 130.

The question is, which outcome is better? Both outcomes are worse for no one according to the common-sense principle of harm and Person-Affecting View. The term "better" cannot operate here relatively with counter facts; one of the choices is not better because the group in this scenario is better off than would otherwise have been, but it must be based on different reasoning. Parfit suggests here what he later said to be a mistake, an impersonal principle as a solution for Different Number Cases. It means that an action could be morally wrong without any reference to the benefits or harms caused by this action to people. He states it first in hedonistic terms. Then it is formulated in terms of life quality as an Impersonal Total Principle (ITP):

"If other things are equal, the best outcome is the one in which there would be the greatest quantity of happiness—the greatest net sum of happiness minus misery."

"If other things are equal, the best outcome is the one in which there would be the greatest quantity of whatever makes life worth living."

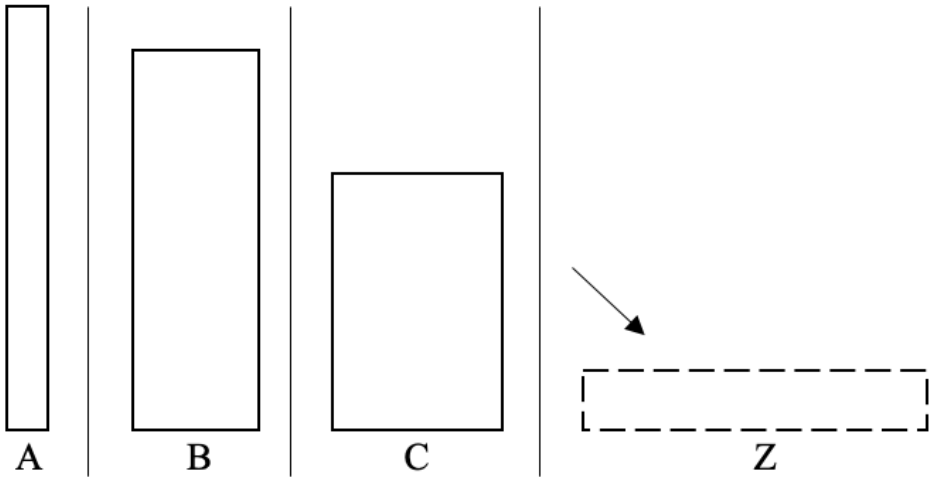
The ITP could solve the mentioned cases. The preferable scenario is the one where the net sum of benefits is the greatest. Even though the average quality of

[64] As Parfit says, these examples presuppose for simplicity that quality of life is stable during the lifetime of members of each group and that the quality of life is equal for all members of each group. These assumptions are unrealistic, but they enable us to work with the scenarios more easily and clearly. On the other hand, the same problems would arise even if we do not make these assumptions, but the comparison between scenarios would be more complicated. For the discussion of the nature of the examples, see the distinction between deep and technical impossibility in RP, s. 131. This claim holds for any other Parfit's hypothetical examples that would be introduced.

life is higher in A, the sum of benefits, happiness or whatever makes life worth living is greater in scenario B.[65] Therefore, B is better, and choosing A could be considered a morally wrong decision. Besides that, this principle successfully avoids the NIP because it explains wrongness in impersonal terms (without reference to harm).

3.1.4.3 Repugnant Conclusion

Despite the success in solving NIP, ITP encounters a serious problem. The problem is that it implies so-called the Repugnant Conclusion (RC), which is very hard to accept. Parfit moves the example further by adding other scenarios that little by little approaches outcome Z.[66]



Graph 4: RP, 131 (RC example)

The reasoning here works followingly: We could gradually decrease the life quality of each group member, but proportionately increase the number of members (mechanism of population growth). We can see that in scenario B in Graph 4, life of people would still be nearly as worth living as in A, the quality of life is almost equal, and there exists a greater number of happy people; furthermore, the sum of whatever makes life worth living exceeds the number in A so B is preferable to A according to ITP. We could argue that scenario C is better than B by the same logic. The notion "better than" is, according to Parfit, transitive, so we are required to

[65] I will use these terms analogically in the rest of the paper. For an explication, see 2.1.5
[66] RP, s. 131.

claim that C is better than A too.[67] The problem is that by the same reasoning, we could get to scenario Z, in which life for those people is just slightly below the limit of worthiness; in other words, it is almost unbearable. Parfit illustrates scenario Z in his later article by the image of people for whom the only joy in life would be potatoes and background music which is played in elevators and shopping malls (muzak).[68] However, their number is so great that the pleasure of muzak and potatoes in sum exceeds the pleasure in A. As Parfit says: "The greatest mass of milk might be in a vast heap of bottles each containing only one drop."[69] In other words, the net sum of happiness is higher than in any other scenario, and IPT must claim that outcome Z is the best one and we have moral reasons to prefer it to any other of these outcomes. This line of though leads to an unintuitive conclusion: No matter how many people there are and how happy they are, there will always be some larger group whose life is almost unbearable, but the sum of happiness, wellbeing, or whatever makes life worth living outweighs the sum in the first scenario, and existence of this group is preferable from a moral standpoint. This conclusion is called the Repugnant Conclusion, summarized by Parfit in this way:

> "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."

Now, I will illustrate this puzzle on C-NIP. To do that, it is necessary to change its form, which I will do only to show the failure of Q when specified by ITP in Different Number Choices. Application of ITP means defining "better off" collectively, as mentioned above. According to ITP, we have to ask in which scenario is the greater net sum of the quantity of whatever makes life worth living. It is not hard to see that it is in the first scenario of C-NIP because overrunning the upper limit of warming in the second scenario means a significant decrease of

[67] This is one of the controversial points. Some philosophers doubt the claim that "better than" works transitively and base their solution of RC on it. Parfit seems to change his view throughout his life on this problem. In the last section, I will show that he, in a way, refuses this transitivity too. For the most detailed discussion of transitivity and refusal of Parfit's point here, see: Temkin, Larry S. *Rethinking the Good: Moral Ideas and the Nature of Practical Reasoning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015)

[68] Parfit, Derek. "Overpopulation and the quality of life". In Peter Singer (ed.), *Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 145-164.

[69] Parfit, Derek. "Overpopulation and the quality of life", p. 149.

people's life quality, and the number of people is in both scenarios same. ITP makes sense in the Same Number Choices. Let's imagine a new form of our example – C-NIP Total:

S1: G1 decides to keep the warming level stable, but the necessary condition is that they have to keep the population under 8 billion. Then the average quality of life would remain at the same level over time.

S2: G1 does not stop climate change, and the quality of life gradually decreases. In proportion to the decrease in quality, people would have more and more kids, so the number of people would rise rapidly. [70]

Contra intuitive conclusion: The next development is that after a few centuries number of CCP would be so high that the net sum of their happiness would overweight the net sum of happiness of SCP despite the fact that the life of CCP would be barely worth living as climate disaster falls on them. Therefore, ITP must claim that S2 is the better option.

Parfit takes this conclusion to be, as its name suggests, unacceptable. C-NIP Total shows that the Total Principle leads us to clearly implausible conclusion, and its repugnance is hard to overcome because accepting it leads to a thesis that climate change, accompanied by population growth is morally preferable option. However, some thinkers say that it is not as repugnant as it may seem and our intuition that scenario Z is worse than A is simply wrong.[71] Parfit strategy, which I follow in this project, is different. He concludes that ITP itself cannot be a new principle that would replace the Person-Affecting View when considering NIP cases because it leads to RC.[72] His goal for the rest of the RP from this point is to find a principle that could, on the one hand, solve the NIP, and on the other hand, avoid the RC. He considers a lot of principles that are candidates for this aim. I will describe one of

[70] This point is made only for the sake of argument. As it was said in note 63, it is not probable that with advancing climate change population will grow.
[71] See, for example: Torbjörn, Tännsjö. "Why We Ought to Accept the Repugnant Conclusion". *Utilitas* 14 (2002), p. 339-359.
[72] RP, s. 131.

the most important ones – the Average Principle, which is developed and repeatedly considered in RP.

3.1.4.4 Impersonal Average Principle

Parfit recognizes that the major problem of ITP is that it prefers quantity before quality. No matter how great life for people is, there could always be a scenario with a larger group in which the net sum of happiness is greater. The second option that Parfit considers is to solve NIP and avoid RC by principles that emphasize the average quality of individual life. One of them is the so-called Impersonal Average Principle (IAP). It says in its most straightforward form:[73]

"It is worse if there is lower average quality of life, per person lived."

This principle can solve the NIP; moreover, it avoids RC. The IAP does its job in the Same Number Choices such as C-NIP. In short, the explanation of the wrongness of choosing CCP by G1 rather than SCP is that the latter group of people has a lower average quality of life because they suffer from the effects of climate change. Furthermore, in the RC example, the best outcome is the one in which the average quality of life is the greatest, so scenario A wins, and there is no need to prefer Z even though the sum of happiness is lower in A. The same reasoning could be used for my example C-NIP Total, and we would get to the conclusion that causing climate change is worse outcome even if there will be a greater sum of happiness in the second scenario. The IAP managed to escape from RC without reference to harm. Despite this success, it has some even more implausible implications. Let's see one of them. I will use Parfit's example in which he imagines two possible ends of human history:[74]

"In Hell One, the last generation consists of ten innocent people, who each suffer great agony for fifty years. The lives of these people are much worse than nothing. They would all kill themselves if they could. In Hell Two, the last generation

[73] RP, s. 143.
[74] RP, s. 133.There are a few variations of this example in RP, which emphasize different aspects. I have no space to consider them all here. See: Eva and Adam in s. 134, Hell Tree in s. 143.

consists not of ten but of ten million innocent people, who each suffer agony just as great for fifty years minus a day."

The scenario called Hell One is undoubtedly preferable because it saves many people from a lot of suffering. The problem is that according to IAP the conclusion is the opposite. Hell Two is a better outcome because the average quality of life is higher, so it would be better if ten million innocent people were suffering instead of ten people with nearly the same agony. This line of thought is absurd. We can see that emphasis on quality itself does not work, and the IAP cannot be wanted Theory X. Again, I will show this point for illustration on the imaginary modified example of climate change. Let's call it C-NIP Average:

S1: Suppose that G1 decides not to stop climate change. Instead, hundreds of the richest and most powerful humans (CCP) manage to live on a different planet with a very high quality of life, even higher than today's average. The rest of the people on planet Earth will gradually die out because of aggravating consequences of climate change.[75]

S2: G1 will tackle climate change. But still, it would have some consequences in the future that will lead to lowering the average quality of life for future people (SCP).

Contra intuitive conclusion: As the average quality of life is higher in S1, it is a better outcome according to IAP.

3.1.5 Conclusion

After discussing Average and Total Principles, Parfit realizes that they are two "extremes", and Theory X would lay somewhere between them.[76] He concludes that it must reasonably integrate the importance of as well quality and quantity. Moreover, Theory X cannot overemphasize one of them. Parfit tries to do this synthesis in RP; he systematically develops different forms of these principles, and he limits the value of quality and quantity to avoid unwelcome conclusions.

[75] This figure is presented, for example, in the recent popular movie Don't Look Up. See: Netflix. 2021, Don't Look Up.
[76] RP, s. 137.

Furthermore, he tries to identify a "threshold" for both quality of life and quantity of happiness above which this factor loses value in the counting mechanism. Anyway, he failed in all of his attempts. I will clarify the major reason for failure when finding this threshold in the last section, where the concept of "imprecision" will be introduced. However, in RP, with every proposed principle, some paradoxical implications emerge, and Parfit ends up with this conclusion:[77]

"When was asked about his book, Sidgwick said that its first word was Ethics, and its last failure. This could have been the last word of my Part Four. As I argued, we need a new theory about beneficence. This must solve the Non-Identity Problem, avoid the Repugnant and Absurd Conclusions, and solve the Mere Addition Paradox. I failed to find a theory that can meet these four requirements. Though I failed to find such a theory, I believe that, if they tried, others could succeed."

I did not mention all the proposed solutions and problems from RP in this part of my paper. However, I described the two most important ones – Impersonal Average and Total Principles and the reasons for their failure that could work here as the first indication of Parfit's final solution. I will show in the next section another way that could, on the one hand, help to solve NIP and escape from RC; on the other hand, is further developed in Parfit's last article.

[77] RP, s. 150. Parfit mentions "Mere Addition Paradox", which is derived from Repugnant Conclusion and represents another challenge for Theory X that must be solved. I tackle here Repugnant Conclusion only in its simple form. See: 4.1.5.5

3.2 Bridge from Reasons and Persons to the final solution

3.2.1 Introduction

Parfit considers in paragraphs 134 and 136 of RP another option, namely that principle that could solve NIP, avoid RC, and other implausible implications would not have impersonal but person-affecting form. This means that the principle would not be based on an impersonal net sum of some quality, for example, happiness and misery, nor would it operate with the average of defined quality or with some threshold that limits the value of either quantity of happiness or quality of life. In comparison, it would stem from the effects of acts on particular people, that is to say, with caused benefits and harms. I showed that the basic Person-Affecting View is not successful, so the notions of benefits and harms must be restated but at the same time kept in a person-affecting manner because the impersonal approach failed too. Parfit starts this redefinition in RP, but he develops it only partly because he again emphasizes the collective level of benefits but overlooks the individual level. Later, he refers to this step as one of the crucial mistakes. I believe that ideas from paragraphs 134 and 136 could be viewed as a bridge between RP and Parfit's final solution, so I will describe them in detail.

3.2.2 Being born is a benefit – preliminary remark

The most important step for the next development is that Parfit partly reveals in RP the possible shape of a new person-affecting principle. It would be based on the thesis that by causing someone to exist, this person is somehow benefited (if her life is worth living). Then the benefits imposed by being born have a different scale, and a new principle would prescribe how to compare them in different scenarios. As we shall see, Parfit maintains this exact strategy in his last article. Let's elaborate first on the thesis that being born is itself beneficial and why it is a necessary standpoint for developing a new person-affecting view.

Parfit claims a few times in RP that the only way how to solve NIP cases, escape RC and other implausible conclusions and at the same time preserve the person-affecting approach is to prove that bringing a person into worthy existence

is itself benefit for the born person. [78] This thesis needs an explanation. As it was shown, in NIP cases, no one is actually harmed in person-affecting terms because no one is worse off than otherwise would have been. If we want to preserve the reference to inflicted harm – say that one of the scenarios is worse because people are harmed – it is necessary to claim that they are harmed only by being born in these conditions because there is no alternative existence or state of affairs for them which we could point to. However, it was said that in NIP cases, the life of people is in both scenarios still worth living, and it is clearly unintuitive to claim that someone is harmed just by conferring an existence on her that is worth having.[79] Therefore, the only way how we can explain wrongness with reference to effects on people is to redefine the notion of benefit. We can say, in Parfit's later terms, that benefits could be non-comparative and existential – that means based just on the fact that the person is born in some specific conditions and not derived from comparison of benefits for her from an alternative scenario (counter facts). [80] Then comparing scenarios in NIP cases means comparing benefits that are conferred on different people in different outcomes. However, the precondition is that being born itself is some benefit because if it is not so, we cannot claim that someone is less or more benefited by finding herself in some conditions. In other words, we cannot compare these outcomes. Therefore, the first step is to prove that being born is itself beneficial.

The problem is that Parfit was not in RP sure about that. He says in Appendix G that there are good reasons for both claiming that bringing a person into existence benefits her, but there are sound reasons for refusing this view as well. I believe that the hesitation about this thesis is one of the reasons why Parfit did not pay that much attention to different versions of person-affecting principles in RP, contrary to the last article where he says, with reference to his college Jeff McMahan who did a lot of work in this field, that linking the principle to the claim "existence is a benefit" provides the best solution to NIP. On the other hand, Parfit presupposes the validity of the thesis "existence is a benefit" for a while even in RP

[78] RP, s. 134: "We may believe that, in causing someone to exist who will have a life worth living, we are thereby benefiting this person. Appendix G defends this belief. If we accept this belief, we can explain, in person-affecting terms, why we have a moral reason not to produce certain effects, even though these effects will be bad for no one."
[79] For this point, see: 2.1.4
[80] These concepts will be explained in detail in section 4.1.2

to see where it can get him. I will follow this development because it becomes useful for the analysis of the last article.

3.2.3 Narrow and Wide Person-Affecting Principles

Firstly, Parfit introduces so-called The Person-affecting Restriction. It limits the scale of proposed principles to the part of morality that applies only to the goodness of outcomes in terms of effects on people. As Parfit says:[81]

"This part of morality, the part concerned with human well-being, should be explained entirely in terms of what would be good or bad for those people whom our acts affect."

Then Parfit formally defines three preconditions of any person-affecting principle with an ambition to solve the NIP cases. I described above why the first precondition is necessary. The second and third preconditions seem not very problematic and does not need further explanation, so I will just cite them. All of the preconditions apply to the final principle in Parfit's last article. The preconditions are:[82]

1) If someone is caused to exist, and has a life worth living, this person is thereby benefited. This benefit is greater if this person's life is more worth living.

2) If other things are equal, it is wrong knowingly to make some choice that would make the outcome worse.

3) If other things are equal, one of two outcomes would be worse if it would be worse for people.

The Person-affecting Principles differ when it comes to the specification of the third precondition – an explanation of what makes an outcome worse for people. Parfit here makes a crucial distinction. We can divide person-affecting principles into two specific categories – Narrow and Wide Principles. Narrow Principles

[81] RP, s. 134.
[82] RP, s. 134.

define "worse for people" by counterfactual or common-sense notion of harm, meaning that they compare counterfactual states in which one person or group could be. These principles cannot work here because, as repeatedly explained, they cannot solve NIP cases in which persons are non-identical. However, there is the second option – Wide Principles. They define "worse for people" differently. Suppose that we are comparing outcomes X and Y. Wide Principles hold that outcome X is:[83]

> "[…] worse for people in the wide sense if the occurrence of X would be less good for the X-people than the occurrence of Y would be for the Y-people."

This changes the trajectory. The wrongness of the outcome could be explained without reference to harms and impersonal features but by comparison of benefits for two different people or different groups of people in possible scenarios. This point is crucial because Parfit's final solution will be based exactly on this observation.

Afterall, we can clearly see which of the four premises that together create NIP, is finally rejected and how. Parfit does not doubt P1. In NIP cases, different people exist because the TDC 2 is plausible. It is not even necessary to fully reject P2 and P3, the common-sense notion of harm is plausible in some situations, namely in Same People Choices, but it cannot explain the whole range of morality. An action could be wrong without reference to harm and scenario worse because it brings less benefit to one group of people. Therefore, Parfit's strategy in solving NIP is to reject P4 – it is possible to explain the wrongness of an act even if it does not harm anyone. At the same time, the explanation preserves person-affecting terms because it is based on benefits caused to the subjects. Parfit develops this strategy in his last article, which I will follow. I showed that traces of this method are mentioned in RP. Next, I will describe why it firstly failed.

3.2.4 Another failure

The problem in RP is that Parfit once again formulates the person-affecting principles either as a version of Total or Average Principles; the only difference is that they operate with the notion "benefit for people", but they face exactly the same

[83] RP, s. 136.

problems as their impersonal versions because they focus only on the collective element. I will briefly describe Parfit's proposals here.

Parfit says that "less good" could be defined in two ways when it comes to solving Different Number Choices:

1) "[…] in the wide total sense if the total net benefit given to the X-people by the occurrence of X would be less than the total net benefit given to the Y-people by the occurrence of Y."

2) "[…] in the wide average sense if the average net benefit per person given to the X-people by the occurrence of X would be less."

Both versions fail for the reasons described in the section concerning Impersonal Principles. Firstly, the total version leads to the Repugnant Conclusion because it pays attention only to the quantity of individual benefits – for every scenario, there is an alternative larger group of people whose life is barely worth living, but the net sum of benefits is greater. The average version fails too, because it emphasizes, on the other hand, as its impersonal version, the only value of quality and leads to absurd conclusions such as in Hell One and Two cases because average benefits for individuals in the first scenarios are higher.[84] [85]

3.3 Conclusion

I showed how Parfit fails to develop the wanted principle in RP. I maintained the general thesis that the most serious candidates for this principle – Total and Average Principles, either in their person-affecting or impersonal forms – are extreme views because they overemphasize the value of average quality or overall quantity. Besides, I introduced them because the final solution will be, in a way, a compromise between them and would have a person-affecting nature, as indicated in RP too. In the next section, I will finally get to the crucial mistake that Parfit identified in his solution from RP, and I will attempt to describe how the

[84] RP, s. 141.

[85] Interestingly, Parfit shows that the Wide Average Principle could even lead to the Repugnant Conclusion and has contradictory implications. There is no space to discuss it here as far as I am focused on Parfit's final solution. For this thesis, see: RP, s. 136, and endnote 34.

person-affecting account could help to find the solution to NIP. In the end, I will apply Parfit's solution to C-NIP.

4 The Climate – Non-Identity Problem solution part II

4.1 Final Solution

This section aims to reconstruct Parfit's solution to the Non-Identity Problem from his posthumously published article *Future People, the Non-Identity Problem, and Person-Affecting Principles (FP)* in order to apply it to the example of climate change (C-NIP). It needs to be emphasized that FP is unfinished, and many aspects of Parfit's solution are still debated, so this section will be, in a way, speculative. On the other hand, I intend to stick with Parfit's development in the text, and I will clearly notify my interpretative attempts that will be supported by Parfit's last published article *Can We Avoid the Repugnant Conclusion?* from 2016. In the second part of the last section, I will apply Parfit's solution to the example of climate change, and then, I will summarize the development and conclusions of my project; furthermore, I will mention some important themes that are left open.

4.1.1 Introduction: general strategy

Let's start where I left off in the last section. Parfit gives us a relatively straightforward lead on how the solution of NIP should look. He identifies two crucial mistakes from RP. I will mention the first one here; the second mistake will be introduced later. The first mistake is that he thought that the solution must be based on an impersonal principle – it would explain the badness of the outcomes without reference to harms and benefits to people.[86] As we saw, although he did not find this principle, he believed that it is possible in RP. On the other hand, he considered in paragraphs 134 and 136 the option that person-affecting principles could be a potential solution to NIP, but he rejected this option too soon. His strategy in FP, almost three decades after RP was published, is faithful to his original yet mistakenly rejected proposal. He is convinced that the solution to the NIP must lie in the so-called Wide Person-Affecting Principle (WP), and notably, its meaning is

[86] FP, p. 123.

identical to the earlier cited definition of the Wide Principle from RP; [87] he just uses a different expression: [88]

"One of two outcomes would be in one way worse if this outcome would be less good for people, by benefiting people less than the other outcome would have benefited people."

Therefore, the solution to NIP must be based on a principle that would "explain how certain acts can be made to be wrong by such facts about some merely possible people, even if these acts would not be worse for any actual people".[89] This means that some action could be made wrong simply by the fact that it benefits someone less than another possible outcome would benefit different person. As we shall see, this will be the exact logic of the final solution.

4.1.2 Being born is a benefit

Parfit makes in the beginning of FP, in my opinion, the most important step in his development, which he did not fully make in RP. Namely, he finally leans to the thesis that existence itself could be viewed as a benefit and then uses this concept (being born is a benefit) as a precondition and guideline for the solution of NIP. In other words, "benefiting people less" in the definition of WP would be based on benefits that are internal – not derived from a comparison with some other benefits; and existential – established only by the fact that the person is born and has a life that is worth living. As Parfit concludes: [90]

"We can claim that there are existential benefits, and appeal to the Wide Principle, thereby solving the Non-Identity Problem."

Therefore, the first step in solving NIP is to define what are these existential, non-comparative benefits and then establish the principle that would be able to compare them in possible scenarios. I will follow this path in the next paragraphs.

[87] See section 3.2.3
[88] FP, p. 129.
[89] FP, p. 126.
[90] FP, p. 130.

Let's start with an outlook of existential benefits. Parfit explicitly follows Jeff McMahan's proposal when adopting this concept. McMahan defines existential benefits like this: [91]

"If someone is caused to exist and to have a life that is worth living, that is good for this person, giving him or her an existential benefit. There are similar existential harms."

Firstly, it is necessary to briefly introduce McMahan's view and further discussion about existential benefits, which Parfit mentions in FP only briefly but is crucial to his solution to NIP. McMahan examines in detail this view in articles where he discusses so-called the Asymmetry that expresses the central problem with the notion of existential benefits. The Asymmetry consists of two opposite claims about existence and is said to be for most people intuitively acceptable. However, it contradicts the idea of existential benefit. It says:[92]

1) That a person would have a life that is "worth not living" – a life in which the intrinsically bad states outweigh the good – provides a moral reason not to cause that person to exist, and indeed a reason to prevent that person from existing.
2) That a person would have a life worth living does not, on its own, provide a moral reason to cause that person to exist, though there is no general moral reason not to cause such a person to exist.

The Asymmetry is crucial because it led McMahan to favor (not fully accept) the thesis that "being born is a benefit". Let's see why. McMahan says that some philosophers (most famously Jan Narveson) presuppose the Asymmetry because it seems to be a clear expression of our intuitions.[93] Basically, we are hesitant to claim that people do something wrong if they decide not to have children. At the same time, we feel that there are some reasons not to have a child whose life would be full of suffering.[94] As we shall see in Appendix 3, we are not obliged to ignore this

[91] Jeff McMahan, "Causing People to Exist and Saving People's Lives," *Journal of Ethics* 17 (2013), p. 6-7.
[92] McMahan, Jeff. "Asymmetries in the Morality of Causing People to Exist" In: Melinda A. Roberts, David T. Wasserman (ed.), *Harming Future Persons: Ethics, Genetics and the Nonidentity Problem* (New York: Springer, 2009), p. 49-71, p. 49.
[93] McMahan, Jeff. "Problems of population theory." *Ethics* 92: 96–127 (1981), p. 100.
[94] I cannot discuss here the problem of abortion. Let's reduce the example here to reasons before the child is conceived. I believe that most people would agree that there are some reasons against conceiving a child, for example, with some

intuition if we reject the Asymmetry because the line could be drawn between goodness of outcome and rightness of act so let me ignore so-called reason-giving and canceling force of these claims.[95] Anyway, McMahan elaborates on presuppositions of the Asymmetry and repeatedly ends up with the same conclusion: Though the Asymmetry seems intuitive, it is very hard to justify.[96] One of the most striking problems is brought by the second thesis of the Asymmetry.

The second thesis, according to McMahan, must presuppose the claim that life itself is not a benefit – something good for a born person. He thinks about it followingly: If something gives us a reason to do, favor or pursue it, this thing must be somehow good either for us or for the person involved or from an impersonal point of view. Let me ignore the impersonal aspect as far as I am interested in the effects on people (person-affecting principles).[97] In case of causing a person to exist, it is not enough that it is good for me (the parent). If we want to claim that we have some moral reasons to have children, it must be somehow good or beneficial for the person that would be born. Since the Asymmetry involves the thesis that we have no moral reason to cause new life worth living, it presupposes that being born is not good for the born person. This thesis seems, at first glance, reasonable because it is derived from the common-sensical use of the term benefit (which uses the same logic as common-sense notion of harm) – something is good or beneficial for some person if it is "better for" him or her than some alternative scenario. If we wanted to claim that existence is beneficial for a born person, we would have to show that some alternative state is worse for him or her. The problem is that there is no alternative state in which this person could be worse off because otherwise, she would have never existed. Therefore, existence cannot be a benefit as far as there is, once again, no comparandum. As McMahan says: "People who never exist cannot be victims of misfortune or the beneficiaries of good fortune."[98]

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genetic disorder that would cause him or her constant pain and that this thesis is not controversial. For the problem of procreation in relation to the Non-Identity problem, see this volume: Roberts, M. A., Wasserman, D T.(ed.), *Harming Future Persons: Ethics, Genetics and the Nonidentity Problem*. (New York: Springer, 2009)

[95] McMahan makes a distinction between "reason giving weight" – a force to cause some action, and "canceling weight" – a force to prevent or count against some action. I will not develop this distinction here because it is not necessary in order to understand the basics of McMahan's position that Parfit follows. For this distinction, see: McMahan, Jeff. "Asymmetries in the Morality of Causing People to Exist", s. 6.

[96] See the conclusions in texts from 1981: McMahan, Jeff. "Problems of population theory" and 2013: Jeff McMahan, "Causing People to Exist and Saving People's Lives".

[97] McMahan divides reasons into impersonal and person-affecting. For this distinction, see: McMahan, Jeff. "Asymmetries in the Morality of Causing People to Exist", s. 3.2.

[98] Jeff McMahan, "Causing People to Exist and Saving People's Lives", p. 6.

However, something is missing. The use of the terms "benefit" and "better for" is comparative – something could be good for someone only by comparison with some other alternative state in which this specific person could be. Although this is one of the possible meanings of these terms, we could reasonably use them in a non-comparative sense. Furthermore, McMahan believes that when it comes to cases of being born or dying, it is necessary to use the concept of benefit in a non-comparative way. This leads us to the notion of existential benefits.

The existential benefit comes from intrinsic states or personal welfare, not from comparison with some alternative scenario. Someone is a holder of existential benefit if "intrinsically good elements of the person's life more than compensate for the intrinsically bad elements".[99] In other words, if his or her life is worth living as defined in paragraph 2.1.5 McMahan's strategy is to show that claiming the opposite, namely denying the relevance of existential benefits, leads to conclusions that are very hard to accept. Therefore, the Asymmetry itself is problematic. His argumentation is complex and has many forms. I will keep it simple and mention only one example which clearly expresses his point. It is the example of an amputation that is also cited in Parfit's FP.[100]

Let's have a patient whose only survival option is to have her leg amputated. Then intuitive response would be that the amputation is good or beneficial for her. The problem is that we cannot explain why this act is good if we stick to the comparative use of benefit. If her leg was not amputated, she would not be alive – she would not be in any state because, as was shown, non-existence is not a state that could be compared. We cannot say that amputation is good because there is no worse alternative scenario, so we need the notion of non-comparative, existential benefit. Even if the amputation caused some harm to the person, it would be outweighed by the existential benefit, namely, by continuing in life that is still worth living. This type of benefit does not come from any comparison but is derived only from so-called intrinsically good elements of the person's life. Therefore, the existence of non-comparative, existential benefits is the precondition of claiming that amputation is good for someone. Denying their relevance leads to the conclusion that amputation is not good for this person, which seems very hard to accept. This is only one of the

[99] Jeff McMahan, "Causing People to Exist and Saving People's Lives", p. 6.
[100] Jeff McMahan, "Causing People to Exist and Saving People's Lives", p. 8-9.

examples, but it plainly shows that existence is a benefit in a strictly non-comparative sense, and the presupposition of the Asymmetry is weakened.

Now let's get back to Parfit. Because of these mentioned complications, Parfit is aware that the thesis "being born is a benefit" is not obvious at all (that is why he is hesitant about it in RP). However, he accepts this approach in FP surprisingly quickly; he rejects described Asymmetry and claims that being born is "essentially non-comparative benefit".[101] His reasoning is very similar to McMahan's. Firstly, he introduces a seemingly plausible claim that existence cannot be a benefit because there is no alternative state to compare. Then he says that even though there are good things only by comparison, such as sports teams, morally speaking, most of the good things are not "essentially comparative", but their goodness is based on intrinsical properties – what are they like in themselves. He gives an example of friendship – having friends is obviously better than having no friends, but this comparison of states is not what makes friendship good; according to Parfit, it is good in itself. This example should show us that there are some non-comparative goods and then he states that being born is one of them: [102]

"We can be benefited by being caused to exist and to have a good and happy life, even though the alternative, in which we never existed, would not have been worse for us. These are the benefits that I am calling existential."

Parfit argues that we should reject the Asymmetry because he supposes, as McMahan, that the Asymmetry uses the notion of benefits only in the comparative sense and overlooks its existential nature. This adoption of existential benefit is crucial for his final solution to NIP because, in the next step, he tries to find a person-affecting principle that would prescribe how to compare the existential benefits in different scenarios, a principle capable of deciding which outcome is better in NIP cases. In the next section, I will describe Parfit's development to arrive at his firm conclusion.

[101] FP, p. 135.
[102] FP, p. 132.

4.1.3 Weak Narrow Principle

Firstly, Parfit wants to show that the so-called Weak Narrow Principle generates unacceptable conclusions and should be rejected. There is no need to go through this discussion in detail because the Weak Narrow Principle is defined equally as what I called The Person-Affecting View in the first part, and we saw why this approach fails (because of NIP cases). I will just mention one of Parfit's examples to illustrate that rejecting this principle is nothing new for us. Let's see the definition of the Weak Narrow Principle: [103]

"One of two outcomes would be in one way worse if this outcome would be worse for people."

We can see, once again, that the principle uses the criticized notion of harm, based on the same logic as comparative notion of benefits. Moreover, the principle claims that an act could be wrong only if it makes things worse for a specific person by comparison of the states she could experience. Parift's "Case Four" from FP illustrates the incompetence of the Weak Narrow Principle for NIP cases:[104]

A:	Tom will have 50 years of pain	x	Harry will have 1 day of pain
B:	x	Dick will have 1 day of pain	Harry will have 2 days of pain

The Weak Narrow Principle generates here an absurd conclusion. If we ask which of these two outcomes is better, the proposed principle must claim that outcome A. In outcome A, no one is worse off as far as Tom exists only in outcome A; on the other hand, outcome B is worse for Harry because he exists in both outcomes and in the second one experiences one more day of pain, at the same time B is not better for anyone because Dick exists only in outcome B. Therefore, people are worse off in B, so it is a worse outcome. Parfit sees the weakness of the Weak Narrow Principle in discounting existential benefits and using only a comparative account of harms. As he says, it "ignores the intrinsic badness of these outcomes".[105]

[103] FP, p. 129.
[104] FP, p. 144.
[105] FP, p. 144.

Final solution must be the opposite – based on a comparison of existential benefits. The following phase is to define this new person-affecting principle.

4.1.4 Final solution: Wide Dual Person-Affecting Principle

After rejecting the Weak Narrow Principle, Parfit's discussion turns to the Different Number Cases, and the final solution is found after a few examples. I will not copy Parfit's development; instead, I will continue where I left off when discussing the connection between RP and FP.

At the beginning of this section, I said that Parfit starts the solution of NIP by developing his rejected line of thinking from RP and learns from his mistakes. I described the first mistake (the solution should be impersonal), and now is the time to recount the second mistake. In the bridging section, I showed that both of his most intensively discussed solutions in RP – Average and Total Principles – failed because they overemphasized quality or quantity of happiness; they either took into consideration only the collective aspect or work only with effects on individuals and average life quality. Now we will see that this is precisely the second mistake loudly expressed by Parfit in FP. As far as the solution should have a person-affecting, not impersonal form, it could integrate both aspects – a collective sum of benefits and harms, at the same time, effects on individuals. That is exactly what was missing from the solution in RP and why it failed. As Parfit says: "[…] rather than rejecting this Collective Principle, I should have combined this principle with the Individual Principle."[106] At first, Parfit introduces two separate Collective and Individual Wide Principles:[107]

Wide Collective Principle: One of two outcomes would be in one way better if this outcome would together benefit people more, by giving people a greater total sum of benefits.

The Wide Individual Principle: One of two outcomes would be in one way better if this outcome would benefit each person more.

The question is: which of these two principles should be the one that would decide NIP cases? Parfit's answer is tricky because his final solution is a combination

[106] FP, p. 154.
[107] FP, p. 153.

of these two principles – it integrates both collective and individual aspects to avoid the problematic implications that he discussed in RP. He calls the final solution the Wide Dual Person-Affecting Principle (WDP):[108]

"One of two outcomes would be in one way better if this outcome would together benefit people more, and in another way better if this outcome would benefit each person more."

Finally, we can see that it is the fusion of individual and collective approaches. This combination is possible only because of the person-affecting form – "benefit each person more" in its definition means to give each person greater existential, non-comparative benefit, so the final principle could have been found only after the thesis "being born is a benefit" was justified and explained. Hence, there is, in this seemingly simple principle, a learned lesson from the criticism of impersonal principles that explain wrongness without reference to effects on individuals and from limited Person-Affecting View that cannot explain wrongness in NIP cases. These discussed aspects are reflected in the final WDP. It should be able to explain all the problematic scenarios. Not only that, if it wants to keep the promise of Theory X, it must be able to solve any NIP case and, at the same time, escape from Repugnant and Absurd Conclusions. I will discuss these obstacles only partly; first, I will clarify how to understand this principle in the next section.

4.1.5 WDP in detail

4.1.5.1 Contractualism and individual aspect

The new final principle uses the concept of benefiting someone differently from its impersonal predecessors. WDP considers the practice of benefiting as an act of giving someone personal existential goods. Moreover, it preserves the collective aspect and counts the overall sum of benefits. On the other hand, it mixes the collective aspect with individual benefits, which was missed in RP and is emphasized in WDP. I believe that the major reason why Parfit added an individual aspect to the final solution is that the collective approach taken solely led to the Repugnant and other implausible conclusions. However, Parfit, before finding WDP, mentions T.M. Scanlon in FP, whose contractualism plays a vital role in his

[108] FP, p. 154.

thinking. Scanlon's position could be read as an inspiration for Parfit's incorporation of the individual aspect into WDP. I will start the specification of WDP with this observation.

Scanlon's thesis that Parfit takes to be plausible says that an act is wrong if it is disallowed by some principle that no one could reasonably reject. In the first volume of *On What Matters* Parfit discusses what these principles are.[109] The important aspect that Parfit carry forward from this discussion here and helps him develop WDP is Scanlon's emphasis on the role of the individual. When Scanlon is designing the structure of contractualism, he says that the foundational idea of his theory is that action can be good only if it could be justified to others.[110] Importantly, this justification could be done by principle based on any possible perspective or "standpoint". As Scanlon says:[111]

> "[…] when we are considering the acceptability or rejectability of a principle, we must take into account not only the consequences of particular actions, but also the consequences of general performance or nonperformance of such actions and of the other implications (for both agents and others) of having agents be licensed and directed to think in the way that that principle requires."

In other words, if we want to have a plausible ethical theory, we must consider any voice that could raise an objection to a given action, and Scanlon is very attentive not to discount any individual. I believe that Parfit's WDP works similarly. It tries to capture the collective aspect, which is important when judging outcomes with wide consequences. On the other hand, he ensures that WDP includes effects on individuals and does not exclude the interest of anyone. Therefore, Parfit's words "benefit each person" in the final principle could be viewed in line with Scanlon's idea that objections from every standpoint counts. There is an evident inspiration in Parfit's account as far as he emphasizes the individual aspect of Scanlon's contractualism just before he develops WDP.

However, one further point must be mentioned. Parfit still rejects the Scanlonian approach, and he has a simple reason for that – contractualism cannot

[109] Parfit, Derek. *On What Matters, Volume One*, p. 343-366, 404-411.
[110] Scanlon, T.M. *What We Owe to Each Other*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 189.
[111] Scanlon, T.M. *What We Owe to Each Other*, p. 202-203.

explain wrongness in NIP cases, so it is the example of theories that uses the common-sense notion of harm and must be redefined to be able to address problems of population ethics. Parfit repeatedly says that an action can be wrong according to contractualism only if there is someone who can object to this action – someone for whom this action is worse; someone wronged or harmed by a given action.[112] As we saw, in NIP cases, no one is worse off, so no one could raise reasonable objections against these decisions. Therefore, contractualism cannot uphold our intuition that acts are morally wrong in NIP cases. Furthermore, Parfit believes that contractualism works with purely negative moral concepts (harms) but cannot consider outcomes with different positive moral values (such as existential benefits) and base moral reasons on promoting better outcomes. Contrary, I will show that WDP succeeds in counting positive moral values and solving some NIP cases. At the same time, WDP emphasizes the role of each individual, as contractualism does. I will not discuss whether Parfit's objection to Scanlon's theory is justified because it exceeds the topic of my project.[113]

To conclude, I considered the significance of an individual aspect in WDP and suggested its probable inspiration from contractualism. In the next step, I will discuss further details and blank spots of WDP. More will be said also about the role of both individual and collective aspects of WDP in the next sections.

4.1.5.2 Openness

One visible problem with WDP endures. It is impossible to decide all the cases from the very definition of this principle because it does not distinctly prescribe whether we should prioritize individual or collective aspects. This is the main reason why some philosophers are convinced that this cannot be the wanted Theory X that promises to decide any NIP case; some of them even claim that it still necessarily leads to the Repugnant Conclusion.[114] Parfit was aware of these complications, he explicitly states some of them in FP. Furthermore, the article is an unfinished draft,

[112] FP, p. 136 and Parfit, Derek. *On What Matters, Volume One*, p. 217 – Interestingly, it is one of the very few mentions of NIP in OWM.

[113] Contrary to Parfit, some theoretics claim that contractualism can solve NIP; furthermore, incorporate future people and promotion of good outcomes. See for example: Finneron-Burns, Elizabeth. "Contractualism and the Non-Identity Problem." 2016, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 19, 1151–1163.

[114] For example, Jonathan Dancy, Parfit's close college, says about WDP's ability to avoid the Repugnant Conclusion: "My own view, however, is that this resolution is not successful. Yet again, the paradox is stronger than we are." See: Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy, XIX, 37–57. British Academy, 2020, p. 51.

and nobody knows what would happen with this principle if Parfit had a chance to finish it.

As much as the final principle is unclear and incomplete, Parfit still says that it is "the best version of the Wide Principle that (he) has been discussing".[115] And I believe that there are some good reasons for declaring this. I partly agree with Melinda Roberts' interpretation that Parfit's final proposal is pluralistic, even vague to some degree and that it leaves open space for using it according to the specific cases.[116] Although this aspect could be viewed as a serious weakness, for those who are skeptical that some rigid Theory X that would prescribe a specific structure of reasoning for any possible case can ever be found, the vagueness is an advantage. I tend to support this approach. On the other hand, I argue that WDP is not necessarily as vague as it may seem. My interpretation can be summarized as follows:

The final principle is indeed pluralistic in the sense that it leaves a lot of open space for the concrete application. However, Parfit still gives us traces that the greater sum of benefits cannot outweigh some existential benefits and that the individual aspect has, in some cases, priority. It is evident from Parfit's urge to escape from the Repugnant Conclusion that is expressed both in FP and in more detail in the last article published when Parfit was alive – *Can We Avoid the Repugnant conclusion?* from 2016.[117] On the other hand, this tendency does not exclude the option that in some examples collective aspect has greater importance. Furthermore, I read Parfit's final solution in line with his expectation from Theory X expressed already in RP, namely that it should "reasonably integrate an importance of as well quality and quantity"[118] of wellbeing. I will show on concrete examples that WDP accomplishes this exact goal. And finally, I believe that the openness of the WDP is justified by his concept of "evaluative imprecision". I will develop this interpretation in more detail throughout the next sections.

[115] FP, p. 154.
[116] Roberts, M. A. "The nonidentity problem". In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. First published July 21, 2009; substantive revision September 25, 2015, s. 3.2.2
[117] There are others who connect these two texts. For example, Beard and Kaczmarek say in their article, with reference to currently unpublished manuscripts, that principles that Parfit introduced at the end of his life together create complete Theory X. See: Beard, S.f. and Kaczmarek, P. "On Theory X and What Matters Most", In: McMahan, J., Campbell, T., Goodrich, J., Ramakrishnan, K., (ed.), *Ethics and existence: the legacy of Derek Parfit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 358-389.
[118] See: 3.1.5

4.1.5.3 Three types of cases

In the beginning, let's sort the potential NIP cases to see which type could be hard to solve for WDP. I believe it is useful to divide them into three categories according to the ratio of benefits: The first are the outcomes in which both collective and individual benefits play in favor of one of the scenarios. It is not very hard to decide which outcome is better in these cases – it is the one where both types of benefits are greater. Outcomes in which one type of benefit is equal and the second type is not fall under the second category that could be possibly problematic. This means either that the overall sum of benefits is the same in all outcomes or that all people are benefited equally in considered outcomes. I will mention one example of this situation to show how WDP can cope with it. The third category, the most problematic one, involves cases in which collective benefits and individual benefits are in opposition. I will finish the section with the example from this category which will support my thesis that for Parfit, individual benefits are, in some cases, more important. I will ground this interpretation on the thesis from FP, support and develop it with the claims from the 2016 article. On the other hand, I will also mention the case in which collective benefits win. Let's start with FP's "Case Seven"[119], the example of the second category.

A:	Tom will live to 40	Dick will live to 40
B:	Tom will live to 80	x

The question here is which outcome is better and how we can decide it. We can claim that B gives Tom a comparative benefit of 40 years of life, whereas A gives Dick a non-comparative benefit of 40 years. Parfit says that this approach is mistaken. As we saw, all the existential benefits are essentially non-comparative, so there are not two types of benefits; in this case, they are the same. Instead, there is the same amount of existential non-comparative benefit – 80 years of life; the difference is in its distribution. The real question here is: "Would it be in itself better if the same sum of benefits came to fewer people?"[120] We can apply WDP here. Both outcomes benefit people equally in the collective sense. On the other hand, outcome

[119] FP, p. 150-152.
[120] FP, p. 151.

B benefits people more individually because, according to Parfit, one fulfilled individual life of 80 years is greater benefit for an individual than two lives suddenly ended in 40 years of age, so the answer is that outcome B is better.[121] Therefore, we can see how WDP deals with the second category of different number of cases.

Let's continue with cases in which benefits to people, and individual benefits conflict – the third category. Consider "Case Ten" from FP:[122]

A:	One million people will exist at level 1 000.
Z:	One hundred billion people will exist at level 1.

The notion "level" represents the amount of wellbeing one experiences during a lifetime, and I would for simplicity suppose, as Parfit does, that this level is roughly stable. We can multiply the number of people by the number of benefits to approximate how people are benefited in each scenario. In outcome A, the benefit is one billion; in outcome Z, the benefit is a hundred million. Therefore, according to the collective principle, outcome Z is better. This conclusion is unintuitive, and as we saw in section 3.1.4.3, this process could lead to the Repugnant Conclusion, so Parfit wants to avoid it. WDP gives him the tools to do it.

As far as WDP consists not only of collective principle, there is more to say. Nevertheless, collective benefits are greater in Z, people's life in A is at level 1 000, which means that it is very much worth living and full of happiness, whereas life for Z people is barely worth living. They are mostly miserable and existential benefits for each person are very small. Thus, individual benefits are much greater in A. Although WDP in its unclearly defined form does not per se decide which outcome is better (whether individual benefits matter more). This example illustrates that sometimes loss of individual benefits is too serious to be outweighed by the greater sum of benefits. Parfit is convinced that WDP could escape from claiming that Z is better because of a radical decrease in individual wellbeing – smaller existential non-comparative benefits to each individual in Z. He admits that it is not entirely clear where the line lays how great loss in wellbeing is acceptable in order to be

[121] This claim depends on Parfit's principle: "When two outcomes would give people the same total sum of benefits, it would be in one way better if these benefits were shared equally between fewer people." FP, p. 151. Once again, there is a presupposition for simplicity that quality of life is stable during the lifetime and equal for all the people involved. See: note 64.
[122] FP, p. 155-157.

outweighed by the greater gain in the sum of wellbeing. We will see that this line cannot be clearly drawn in principle and is decided in each case differently according to the specific details. As we saw in Hell One and Two cases, some examples make it obvious that sometimes one of the outcomes is better despite it is decreasing individual benefits to people, and Parfit knows that.[123] However, his final word in the last article is that decrease cannot be justified in many cases. As his unfinished paper ends:[124]

> "We might also justifiably believe that great losses in the quality of people's lives could not be outweighed by any increase in the sum of benefits, if these benefits came in the lives of people whose quality of life would be much lower. I have started to defend this belief elsewhere."

The word "elsewhere" here probably points to his 2016 article.[125] I will summarize what he proposes in this article to defend my thesis that his pluralistic principle (WDP) could be viewed as a form that is specified by further claims about the priority of individual benefits which are developed as a strategy to avoid the Repugnant Conclusion. I will try to show that described tendency from FP to prioritize individual benefits is also present in the 2016 article. Furthermore, it is more clearly explicated there. However, it needs to be pointed out the last citation is the only place in FP where explicit connection can be seen, so my interpretation is, in a way, speculative. Moreover, the extension of WDP could be viewed as an attempt to make sense of Parfit's unfinished solution from FP.

4.1.5.4 Imprecise Lexical View

The purpose of Parfit's 2016 article is clear. It is neither to define a new kind of person-affecting principles in opposition to impersonal theory, nor Parfit deals here with so-called Theory X that would solve all the NIP cases as he does in FP. He just wants to find a mechanism that could escape from the most serious arguments for accepting the Repugnant Conclusion. He describes three arguments for the thesis

[123] See section 3.1.4.3
[124] FP, p. 157.
[125] It could also reasonably point to unpublished manuscripts that Parfit was working on at the time, especially texts known as "Towards Theory X: Part One and Two"; "The Non-Identity Problem" and others that should have been part of *On What Matters* vol. 4 that should have dealt with here discussed problems and should have been, as Beard and Kaczmarek put it in their article, "rewrite of Part 4 of his groundbreaking 1984 book Reasons and Persons". However, even Beard and Kaczmarek admit that this final citation "was almost certainly alluding to his 2016 paper". Beard, S.f. and Kaczmarek, P. "On Theory X and What Matters Most", p. 358 and 374.

that there is no other option than accepting the RC and then opposes each of them by showing that refusal of one of its premises is more plausible than RC itself. I don't have space to discuss each of these arguments in detail, but I will try to grasp the key feature of Parfit's argumentation that could help to explicate WDP. His general position is based on the so-called Imprecise Lexical View (ILV). It is made of two parts – lexical view and imprecision. I will describe each of these parts and subsequently apply it to the simple version of the RC case to illustrate how it could deal with the most often discussed problem, and then I will summarize how it helps to explicate WDP.

The first part of ILV could be characterized by following Thomas Teruji's paraphrase of Parfit's definition. It consists of two claims:[126]

1) The more good lives the better, and the value contributed by each additional life of a given kind does not diminish as the number of them grows.
2) Certain very good lives are lexically better than certain drab lives of low but still positive value.

The first thesis says that adding good lives makes the outcome generally always better which is compatible with the first part of WDP – adding more people with lives that are worth living creates a greater sum of existential benefits, hence makes the outcome better. This thesis is plausible thanks to the concept of existential benefits introduced in the previous section. The second thesis states that some values make life better, and some number of these high-quality lives cannot be outweighed by the greater number of lives below this level – this is what "lexically better" means. We can see now that the essential part of ILV is in line with the unfinished indication of the last citation from FP. Moreover, the suggested path is here further developed. Parfit seems to believe that there are some things of higher value – he repeatedly calls them "best things in life", but unfortunately, he does not give us justification or a clear list of these things. The closest he gets to revealing it is when he compares

[126] Teruji, T. "On Evaluative Imprecision", In: McMahan, J., Campbell, T., Goodrich, J., Ramakrishnan, K., (ed.) *Ethics and existence: the legacy of Derek Parfit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 478-498, p. 478-479.

two outcomes with a significant decrease in quality of life (from level 200 to level 2). He describes the difference between these outcomes followingly:[127]

> "There would be no art, or science, no deep loves or friendships, no other achievements, such as that of bringing up our children well, and no morally good people."

The quote suggests that there are things of a higher value that, in some cases, cannot be outweighed by the greater number of things with a lower value. By the lower value, Parfit probably means, for example, simple sensory pleasures as far as he identifies life in level 2 with "lives of never-developing one-year-old and two-year-old children".[128] This distinction gives us a better understanding of what Parfit could have in mind when he spoke about "great losses in the quality of people's lives". Moreover, we will see that it could help to solve some problematic cases for WDP. However, the important question remains: How great loss of the best things is acceptable to be outweighed by the greater sum of goods with lower value? The solution lies in Parfit's novum called "evaluative imprecision".

The lexical view itself is not something new for Parfit, he has considered its forms already in RP, but he refused this approach because it either implied some kind of an elitist view that prioritizes wellbeing of the people that are better off[129] or it still led him to RC[130]. The mistake was that he did not use back than the notion of imprecision that makes the principle operate completely differently. The difference lies in Parfit's thesis that some outcomes can be compared only imprecisely – it means that general measures for comparing outcomes cannot be defined. Values cannot be expressed by an exact number. In some cases, it remains unsolvable which outcome is better. The reason for this conclusion is, already mentioned and here developed, pluralism of values.[131] Parfit maintains that goodness of outcome depends not on one measurable value (such as one type of pleasure) that could be represented on a unified scale, but it is composed of different things with different values. The

[127] Parfit, Derek. "Can We Avoid the Repugnant Conclusion?", p. 123.
[128] Parfit, Derek. "Can We Avoid the Repugnant Conclusion?", p. 123.
[129] RP, s. 148
[130] RP, s. 141, especially endnote 40.
[131] My reading here is inspired by Gustaf Arrhenius, Parfit's close college. Parfit presented the 2016 article in the public talk at the Symposium in Logic and Philosophy in honor of Derek Parfit, and later, it was published in *Theoria*. Arrhenius claims that the final version of the talk is a response to his critique, and it seems to me that he has the best view of how Parfit thought about this concept at that time. See: Arrhenius, G. "Population Ethics and Conflict-of-Value Imprecision", In: McMahan, J., Campbell, T., Goodrich, J., Ramakrishnan, K., (ed.), *Ethics and existence: the legacy of Derek Parfit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 461-468.

presence of these values itself makes outcomes good, but it cannot be precisely said how many valuable things of one kind are enough to make the outcome better than some smaller number of different values. For example, if we ask whether Bach or Einstein is a greater genius, our comparison cannot be precise because we are comparing the composer and physicist. The same logic applies to some outcomes – we cannot ultimately decide whether a world with only a thousand people with life on level 2 is better than world with hundred people on level 200 because these two worlds consist of lives with completely different qualities which cannot be precisely compared. This point can be seen especially in those cases in which there is a conflict between the sum of benefits and quality of individual life ("Different-number-based imprecision") – in my terminology the third category. As Parfit says:[132]

> "If we compare different ways in which our life might go, when choosing between different careers, for example, or deciding whether to have children, there are only imprecise truths about which of these possible lives would be better or worse. And there are only imprecise truths about the relative goodness of many different acts or outcomes, such as ones that would greatly benefit a few people, or give lesser benefits to many others. Such imprecision is not the result of vagueness in our concepts, or our lack of knowledge, but is part of what we would know if we knew the full facts. When two things are qualitatively very different, these differences would often make it impossible either that one of these things is better than the other by some precise amount, or that both things are precisely equally good."

4.1.5.5 Avoiding the Repugnant Conclusion

Let's see how this general approach works in practice and consider the most famous case, already mentioned RC in its simplest form: In short, we could get from scenario A – a relatively small group of people with a very high quality of life, through B, C by adding less happy people whose life is worth living to scenario Z and because "better than" is transitive relation we have to claim that A is worse than Z. I promised that I will get back to the point with transitivity and now is time to tackle it.

[132] Parfit, Derek. "Can We Avoid the Repugnant Conclusion?", p. 113.

Parfit here seems to partly follow Larry Temkin's proposal because he says that if we accept the Imprecise Lexical View, we could say that A is worse than B or any other intermediate stage between A and Z, but we do not have to claim then that A is worse than Z.[133] Simply it is possible to refuse the transitivity. Why? Because ILV says that a substantial decrease could bring about qualitative change – to put it simply, people would have such a different life in Z that there is some qualitative change in conditions between scenario A and Z, and the comparison on the same scale becomes impossible. Parfit here once again specifies what life for people in Z means. He says that his original description was not entirely accurate. I cited in section 3.1.4.3 his approximation of Z, where he claimed that we could imagine that the only pleasures for Z people would be potatoes and Muzak. This is evidently only a vague and partial view of Z. Parfit here emphasizes a different aspect of Z – the importance not only of those things that Z people possess but of valuable things they lost. People in Z are deprived of, for instance, art, intellectual activity, friendship, etc. These valuable objects, called the best things in life, cannot be replaced, thus outweighed by the greater number of different pleasures just because they are qualitatively different. We cannot precisely compare the value of a great sum of pleasure from eating potatoes with the value of a smaller number of true friendships. That is why outcome Z is not necessarily better than outcome A, although it collectively includes the greater sum of pleasure. And at the same time, outcome B can be better than A as far as the substantial quality decrease does not happen here, and the sum of benefits is greater than the benefits to individuals. Parfit does not necessarily claim that A is better than Z. He does not need to claim that to avoid RC. He just blocks the mechanism of RC by the concept of evaluative imprecision – A and Z are comparable only imprecisely because they involve qualitatively different values. Therefore, he concludes: [134]

> "It would not be better if there existed many more people whose quality of life would all be lower, since two such worlds would *at most be imprecisely equally good*. Though the larger of these worlds would not be worse, this relation *is not transitive*. So we could claim that it would be worse if, in other, larger worlds, everyone's quality of life would be much lower."

[133] See: note 67
[134] Parfit, Derek. "Can We Avoid the Repugnant Conclusion?", p. 120.

4.1.5.6 ILV as a specification of WDP

I have developed a better understanding of ILV, it is time to show how this approach could help us to understand WDP.

ILV could be viewed as a specification of WDP because it tackles the question of comparing individual and collective benefits in more detail. Parfit asks the same question in the considered 2016 article as in FP. Here, he does not use the terms collective and individual benefits, but still, he wonders how much life quality could be sacrificed to increase the net sum of wellbeing. ILV answers it by the imprecision of comparisons which could be used by WDP too. It cannot be precisely said in some cases how many individual benefits can be sacrificed to increase general wellbeing because the existential non-comparative benefits that count can be made of different values – there is a difference between being born in a society in which art, science, and other valuable things exist in comparison with a society where only pleasures are Muzak and potatoes. These examples are instances of different kinds of existential benefits with different values that could be only imprecisely comparable. On the other hand, we saw that there are some "lexically better" things of higher value – the best things in life, that is to say, things that bring about greater existential non-comparative benefits to individuals. ILV implies, despite its imprecision, that some number of things with a higher value cannot be outweighed by any number of things with a lower value. This could be used by WDP to solve the third category of cases. Some individual benefits cannot be sacrificed to increase the collective sum of benefits despite the fact that this line cannot be precisely defined. The indication of this thesis could be found, as I showed, in FP where Parfit says that WDP can avoid RC; furthermore, in the 2016 article in his specified strategy to escape RC by ILV and it could even be supported by a citation from his unpublished text:[135]

> "If in [one world] there would be no art or science, no deep loves or friendships, no other achievements, such as that of bringing up our children well, and no morally good people, [that world] would be much worse than [some other worlds] in what we can call qualitative or perfectionist terms...This great qualitative loss would, I

[135] Beard, S.f. and Kaczmarek, P. "On Theory X and What Matters Most", p. 368.

believe, make [this world] in itself a worse world, even [if it] would give, to the same number of people, a greater and more equally distributed sum of well-being."

4.1.6 Conclusion

To conclude, in this section, I gradually developed an understanding of Parfit's final solution – WDP. The general definition was taken from FP, it was based on the concept of existential benefits and interpreted as a compromise between the individual and collective dimensions of benefits. The so-called vagueness of WDP remains even after its specification by ILV in the second part of this section. Still, there is no definite prescription for evaluation and quantification of individual and collective benefits. For example, in "Case Ten" it is not clear whether we could say that scenario Z is worse, and it is not even clear whether it is an instance of only imprecisely comparable outcomes. To solve this question, the outcomes must be more clearly specified. However, I offered a justification for this vagueness – some cases cannot be decided because of "evaluative imprecision" which labels the incomparability of substantial qualitative differences in combination with different numbers of people in the considered outcomes. On the other hand, I developed further tools, namely, the concept of "best things in life" by which the Repugnant Conclusion can be blocked. Then, for example outcome Z cannot be better than outcome A just because of the greater sum of benefits in Z. These developed tools can be similarly applied to many other cases.[136] Furthermore, some authors believe that combination of ILV and WDP can be seen as a final Theory X; others point to serious problems of this approach.[137] I will not go into further details about the plausibility of Parfit's solution concerning the question of completeness of Theory X because it is not the major subject of my project. For the purpose of my paper, the key section is the next one – the application of final solution (WDP with the explication of ILV) to the example of climate change in considered forms. The next section could be viewed as an examination and practical test of the final principle.

[136] This application could be found in cited article from S.J. Beard and Patrick Kaczmarek who not only apply Parfit's "Theory X" but also specify it by indications from Parfit's unpublished texts.
[137] For example, Thomas Teruji claims in his article that "evaluative imprecision" cannot work. Teruji, T. "On Evaluative Imprecision". Moreover, Jeff McMahan claims that Parfit "[…] never succeeded in identifying the extended principle – which he dubbed Theory X." See: McMahan, "Climate Change, War, and the Non-Identity Problem", p. 226.

4.2 Application of WDP to C-NIP: Why is causing climate change wrong?

Let's consider once again C-NIP as defined in sections 2.2 and 3.1.4. Firstly, I will show how WDP can deal with C-NIP in different forms, namely defined as the Same and Different Number Choices already introduced by C-NIP Total and Average. Moreover, I will demonstrate the general advantages of WDP by its application to these concrete examples. In the end, I will present some weaknesses of WDP and questions that could be further developed.

4.2.1 C-NIP as Same Number Choice

To briefly remind C-NIP, it is defined by two possible outcomes; in the first one, there are so-called climate change people (CCP) – citizens a hundred years from now who live in significantly worse conditions due to our unwillingness to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; in the second scenario, there are so-called stable climate people (SCP) who live in comparable conditions to ours now because we decided to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These populations have roughly same size. The problem is that CCP and SCP are different people, and their existence fully depends on our decisions (G1) – if we decided to tackle climate change, CCP would never exist. Therefore, we must explain how an act could be wrong despite the fact that it is a precondition of the existence of a person whose life is still worth living. Let's see once again the premises and conclusion of this argument:

P1: Generation 1 (G1) act of causing climate change rather than prevent it from happening does not make climate change people (CCP) worse off than they would otherwise have been. (Because of Time-Dependence Claim 2)

P2: A's act harms B only if A's act makes B worse off than B would otherwise have been. (Common-sense notion of harm)

P3: Generation 1 (G1) act of causing climate change rather than prevent it from happening does not harm anyone.

(Because life for CCP is still worth living)

P4: If an act does not harm anyone, then the act is not morally wrong.

(The Person-Affecting View)

The counter-intuitive conclusion: Generation 1 (G1) act of causing climate change rather than prevent it from happening is not morally wrong.

Now, after developing new principle and needed tools, I can finally show which of its premises doesn't work. There is one premise that must be rejected, and it is, as already indicated in previous sections, P4 – The Person-Affecting View. This version of the person-affecting approach takes the common-sense notion of harm as a necessary condition of making some act morally wrong. The weakness is that P4 is too narrow, the common-sense notion of harm is not enough, acts can be wrong for different reasons, not only because they make someone worse than she could otherwise have been, as our intuitions in NIP cases tell us.

The intuitive response is that causing climate change must be wrong somehow, but because of NIP and our common-sense notion of harm, it is hard to explain why. WDP can do that by rejecting P4 and modifying person-affecting principle to the form that it can tackle NIP cases such as C-NIP. At the same time, it explains wrongness by effects on particular people, so it eliminates the impersonal solution's implausibility.

So why is causing climate change wrong? Causing climate change cannot be wrong because it harms climate change people. WDP accepts P1, P2, and P3 which say that climate change people can exist only in one scenario, namely in the outcome in which global warming exceeds 2 degrees Celsius; hence, they cannot be directly harmed. WDP gives us a different understanding of this case – it approaches C-NIP by analysis of existential benefits. Let's see its reasoning:

We are choosing between two possible outcomes, and we must choose one. If we chose climate change, we would give climate change people some existential benefit because, as we saw, being born is a benefit if life for a born person is worth living. Life for CCP still is worth living, so we have to accept that by causing their existence, we give them very small and limited existential benefits, although we make them suffer because of terrible conditions caused by climate change. On the other hand, there is the second option – to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and cause the existence of stable climate people. Conditions for SCP are significantly better so we can suppose that their life would be, on average, much more worth living; according to WDP it would be better on both defined levels – individual and collective.

Firstly, SCP would have much greater individual benefits. It means that the average person living in a stable environment would have more good things in life. Not only that, they could experience so-called best things in life, such as art, science, friendship, free time (maybe healthy and diverse nature could count as one of these things).[138] On the other hand, climate change people would probably lose a lot of these valuable things because their major concern would be fulfilling basic needs and securing their livelihood.[139] Moreover, they would experience a lot fewer pleasures because of the worsening conditions caused by weather extremes, droughts, rising sea levels, floods, following social conflicts, political instability, and other negative consequences of climate change introduced in section 2.2.1. To sum up, individual existential benefits would be significantly greater for SCP, it is even possible to claim that there is a qualitative decrease in the second outcome.

Secondly, SCP would have much greater collective benefits; if we sum up all the pleasures and good things experienced by SCP and CCP, the difference would be significant on behalf of SCP because they would live in much better conditions. Most people would have unproblematic access to basic needs, and the population would be spared of the unpleasant natural and social consequences of climate change. To sum up, in both scenarios, there is a similar number of people; in one of the outcomes, conditions are significantly worse. Therefore, SCP would have gained greater collective benefits.

Both levels show advantages of the first scenario, so we can see that C-NIP is an instance of the first defined category – cases that are no problem to solve for WDP because both individual and collective benefits are greater in one of the outcomes. Furthermore, as far as there is roughly same number of people in both outcomes, it cannot be said that these two scenarios are comparable only "imprecisely". Contrarily, these two outcomes can be compared very clearly. It involves two groups with the roughly same number of people, one of them lives in good conditions, and the second one is miserable; moreover, the first one has greater existential benefits in both senses of this term. WDP shows why causing climate change and choosing CCP instead of SCP is morally wrong despite the fact that it

[138] This is the point I mentioned in Appendix 1. There may be a space in Parfit's theory of value to consider non-human nature as a part of what makes the list of the best things in life that should be preserved and protected for themselves, such as art or friendship. However, Parfit does not make this claim anywhere, so I offer it here as a possible extension of his theory.

[139] The word "probably" is important because of the objection by Gustaf Arrhenius introduced in section 4.2.3.

does not harm anyone according to the common-sense notion of harm. On top of that, the justification of the thesis that causing climate change is wrong is not based on an impersonal standpoint; it is defended by the comparison of existential benefits, in other words, by effects on people. We can see that WDP gives us a new perspective on this specific NIP case that is straightforward and innovative because it approaches the explanation differently from all those considered principles that have so far failed.

4.2.2 C-NIP Average and Total

Now let's make things more complicated and see how WDP can deal with variations of C-NIP that transform it to the versions of the Different Number Cases – C-NIP Average and Total. First, I will remind each of these examples originally defined in section 3.1.4 and then show how WDP solves them. I will start with C-NIP Average.

There are two possible outcomes; in the first one, the hundred wealthiest people escape from Earth to a different planet and live a high-quality life here; the rest die out because of progressing climate change. In the second scenario, climate change is tackled, and the number of people is stable (around 8 billion), but the average life quality is lower than in the first scenario. How does WDP approach this case? On the one hand, people are indeed benefited more in the first scenario; the individual benefits are clearly greater because all the people in the first outcome have a life of higher quality compared to any member of the second group. But, on the other hand, the sum of benefits is greater in the second scenario because the second group contains significantly more people with relatively happy lives. Therefore, we have a conflict here, and it is the example from the third defined category of problematic cases for WDP. I believe that WDP leads us here to the conclusion that the second scenario is better, and collective benefits win here. In the next step, I will show why.

I said that in some cases, WDP prioritizes individual wellbeing, but this cannot be the case. Though individual wellbeing is greater in the first scenario, the decrease is not that significant. Stable climate people would have the same pleasures and pains as climate change people. On top of that, they would have opportunities to experience the best things in life. The difference in wellbeing is very small, even negligible; surely, it is not a qualitative leap. In Parfit's terms, life for the first group,

climate change people, is not "lexically better" than for stable climate people. On the other hand, the decrease in population is very significant – from 8 billion to a hundred. I suppose that it is so significant that it must be more important in this specific case than the increase in individual benefits. The slight increase in life quality cannot justify the major decrease in the number of people with life quality comparable to the first group. Therefore, WDP would prioritize the collective aspect and say that choosing the first scenario is the worse option.

C-NIP Average is the example from the third defined category of problematic cases in which WDP must be further interpreted to decide whether to prioritize collective or individual gain in benefits. WDP allows us to prioritize the collective level here because the gain in individual benefits is insignificant. I believe it is even in line with Parfit's own example from RP introduced in section 3.1.4.4 which led us to reject the Impersonal Average Principle and proved that in some cases, Parfit agrees that collective benefit must be more important than the increase of individual life quality.

WDP works differently when deciding C-NIP Total. C-NIP Total is specified version of the Repugnant Conclusion cases represented for example by overpopulation in section 3.1.4.1 or "Case Ten" in section 4.1.5. On the other hand, I believe that C-NIP Total does not share the characteristic of these cases that the outcomes are comparable only imprecisely. Let's see C-NIP Total.

C-NIP Total is defined by the imaginary scenario in which providing a stable climate is conditioned by limiting the number of living people to about 8 billion. In the second outcome in which climate change was not stopped, there would be a gradual increase in the number of people, and at one point, despite life for CCP would be barely worth living because of worsening conditions, the sum of their pleasure exceeds the collective pleasure experienced by SCP in the first scenario. So, once again, we have an instance of the third problematic category here – individual benefits are greater for stable climate people. Conversely, collective benefits are greater for climate change people. However improbable this scenario is in the real world, WDP must be able to solve it.

As we saw, we could reject the Repugnant Conclusion by pointing to the significant decrease in individual wellbeing. The same reasoning applies here, but I believe that in this specific case, it is not possible to talk about "incomparability" because I take it to be an example that Parfit has in mind when he talks about a

qualitative decrease that cannot be outweighed by the greater number of different pleasures. Life for SCP is, in defined terminology, lexically better. Let's see why.

According to the described example, the number of SCP is still great (8 billion), and there is no sudden population decrease due to cutting emissions – the number stays roughly stable; the only limitation is the prohibition of notable increase. Majority of stable climate people have access to basic needs and live in a relatively stable environment. Not only that, they have the opportunity to experience pleasures and valuable things in life that are called the best things in life. On the other hand, CCP live in very poor conditions, which are gradually getting worse as climate change is progressing. After a few centuries, they would fight for basic resources and be tortured by extreme weather conditions. Even though their number would be much greater and the sum of pleasure from simple things would exceed the sum in the first scenario, I believe that WDP leads us here to prioritize individual wellbeing and cannot let the quantity overweight the qualitative decrease. WDP itself does not decide this case, but I think that my interpretative step here is faithful to Parfit's notion of lexical priority. C-NIP Total is specific instance of Parfit cited thesis that "[…] great qualitative loss would make [this world] in itself a worse world."

There are no exact means to justify suggested thesis other than pointing to the significant difference in life quality and persuade the reader by stating the facts that should prove this gap. To sum up, there is, on the one hand, a huge number of people struggling for their life in worsening conditions. On the other hand, there is relatively stable and numerous population with good lives in average. WDP lets us choose whether we should prioritize individual or collective benefit. I argue that the outcome for CCP is so unpleasant that the number of these people cannot compensate for their poor living conditions and make this outcome better. The loss in life quality is so significant that any greater number cannot outweigh it because it is a lexically worse outcome in Parfit's terms. Therefore, causing stable climate people and fighting climate change is, once again, the better option.

4.2.3 Arrhenius objection

Gustaf Arrhenius articulated one of the possible weaknesses of ILV.[140] He says that Parfit's approach works only in some cases where the notion of the qualitative gap is justifiable, but it ignores other kinds of examples. In other words, Parfit uses his notion of the best things in life only partly – in Parfit's cases, especially his version of RC case, those best things in life are present in one of the outcomes – for example, in A in the Case Ten, or they are missed – as in Z in the Case Ten. However, Arrhenius claims that there is another option. The best things could be present in both outcomes, just on a smaller scale and with different intensity so that a substantial qualitative gap does not happen. He says that even if the quality of life decreases due to suffering, it does not mean that it cannot contain the best things in life. These values could be present both in scenarios A and Z. Arrhenius concludes that the notion of imprecise comparability can block only some versions of RC and ILV must be further explicated and modified. He tries to do that in his article. I said that I would not discuss the question of the plausibility of Parfit's final solution concerning RC and other requirements for the completeness of Theory X. However, I will respond to this objection because it could endanger the solution of C-NIP.

I believe that Arrhenius' objection cannot threaten the solution of C-NIP defined as Same Number Choice. Even if climate change people could have experienced the same best things in life as stable climate people (with smaller intensity), CCP would still have significantly less existential individual benefit, average life quality would be lower, and the collective sum of benefits would be greater for SCP too. Therefore, WDP could easily solve this version of C-NIP no matter if the best things in life are present in both or only in one of the outcomes.

On the other hand, Arrhenius's objection could be a problem for Different Number Choices, especially C-NIP Total because I based the solution on the concept of the substantial decrease in life quality. Although, I admit that there are different cases where the notion of the qualitative gap can be hard to justify, I believe that in C-NIP Total, it is easy to see why this concept works. I will put forward just a few thoughts to support this claim.[141]

[140] Arrhenius, G. "Population Ethics and Conflict-of-Value Imprecision", s. 16.3-5.
[141] Arrhenius mentions Parfit's example "Roller-Coaster Z" which is said to be the version of RC where the quality gap cannot be justified. Arrhenius, G. "Population Ethics and Conflict-of-Value Imprecision", p. 473.

Let's ask ourselves how one could enjoy pleasure from art, free contemplation, and other best things in life if she lives in conditions where she has to fight for her survival and basic needs. Furthermore, how could we not talk about the qualitative gap if, in one scenario, there are relatively stable weather conditions enabling regular human activities, food production, housing, etc. In contrast, in the second scenario, extreme weather is ubiquitous, people experience many times more intense droughts, heatwaves, floods, and hurricanes that threaten to some degree every corner of the Planet, the conditions are worsening over time, and most of these changes are even irreversible? Only these few rhetorical questions suggest the difference between the situation for CCP and SCP. I believe that it is not enough to say that these two groups of people experience comparable pleasures and one of them has greater suffering, CCP are actually in such different conditions that it justifies the notion of the qualitative gap, therefore use of Parfit's concept "lexically better" is accurate here, and Arrhenius objection does not attack considered examples.

4.2.4 Conclusion

To sum up, I showed that WDP could successfully solve some Same and Different Number Cases; furthermore, it can deal with the instances of all three defined categories of cases, even those in which exists a conflict between individual and collective benefits. Additionally, I considered one serious objection that could threaten the ability of WDP to solve some NIP cases. However, I ruled out the option that it endangers the solution of C-NIP and its variations.

The openness of WDP could be viewed at first glance as a weakness, but it proves here that this principle could work creatively according to a specific example and examine every case in detail analysis. I admit that WDP needs to be "actualized" whenever it is used, and it needs further interpretation to decide practical examples. Nevertheless, I showed on three versions of C-NIP that it could reasonably work. Moreover, the ability of WDP to approach every case flexibly can be seen as its major advantage. On the other hand, I do not rule out the option that further problems with WDP could emerge. I will summarize some of them in the appendices.

5 Conclusion

In the concluding section, I will mention all the important points and summarize the development of my project. In the end, I will recap the general thesis that is defended and extended throughout the paper. Finally, questions for further research will be introduced in Appendices 2 and 3.

My project had a straightforward goal – to reconstruct Derek Parfit's comprehension of the Non-Identity Problem from his finished and unfinished texts, apply it to the example of climate change, and then decide if it provides satisfactory means to justify basic moral intuition that causing climate change is wrong (in the specially defined example). The project is divided into two segments. The first segment involves the description of the Non-Identity Problem and its connection to the topic of climate change ethics. Firstly, I introduced NIP by developing crucial concepts necessary to make sense of the NIP itself. Then, I presented the complicated issue of climate change and defined my example – C-NIP – in the way that it could serve through the whole project as a practical instance of NIP and Parfit's theses could be explicated and tested on it. The second segment has two parts, and both are concerned with the solution to this defined problem. The first part of the second segment examined Parfit's solution to NIP from his earlier work *Reasons and Persons*. In the first section, I showed how his proposed impersonal solution failed because of Repugnant and other implausible conclusions. In the second section, I showed another possible way to solve NIP that was indicated but rejected in RP. In the second part of the second segment, I connected suggested idea from RP with Parfit's solution from his last articles. Afterward, I interpreted and reconstructed the fragmented theses from these articles into a singular theory and applied this synthesis to the example of climate change.

I briefly summarized the goal and the process of the project. Now, I will describe the conclusions in a few sentences. Parfit introduced, specified, and developed the Non-Identity Problem, which is the crucial challenge for moral theory and our ordinary ethical thinking. Although his attempts to solve this problem may seem unfinished, fragmented, and maybe even unsuccessful, I showed that clear development of his position could be found in his work, and he finally offered a solution. The development begins with the failure of impersonal solution from *Reasons and Persons*. And it continues in his late articles before his death, where he

establishes indicated path from RP, namely a new kind of person-affecting principle that builds a solution of NIP on the concept of existential benefits. I defended the thesis that this final solution – the Wide Dual Person-Affecting Principle with the explication of the Imprecise Lexical View – works when applied to different versions of climate change example. I argued that this final solution gives us new, innovative tools that can coherently address problems that impersonal theories or other versions of person-affecting views were unable to solve. In that sense, WDP opens new options for incorporating future people with unknown identities into our moral theories and ethical thinking. Most importantly, I showed that WDP successfully justifies our basic moral intuition, threatened by the Non-Identity Problem and specified by C-NIP, that causing climate change is wrong.

5.1 Appendix 2: Parfit v. fossil fuel companies

I promised to present one further practical application of the final principle. An application on the real example of a current lawsuit. I will do it in the Appendix because it opens themes that exceed the focus of my project. On the other hand, the lawsuit case will show us questions that are left open by WDP, so Appendix 2 indicates some areas that could be developed in the next projects. On top of that, it indicates the importance of solving NIP for practical purposes and shows how WDP works in practice. I will follow the case introduced by Jasmina Nedevska and develop it further by WDP. Let's present the example:[142]

"In the case *Califonia v. BT*, the cities of Oakland and San Francisco ("the Cities") turned to the United States District Court for the Northern District of California, filing a lawsuit against BP and four other energy companies: Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Exxon and Royal Dutch Shell. Collectively, these companies are responsible for over 11% of the accumulated pollution of carbon dioxide and methane since the Industrial Revolution; they are also deemed the world's five largest fossil fuel producers at present. According to the plaintiffs, the energy companies should be held liable for a continued marketing of fossil fuels long after learning that such fuels contribute to climate change. The Cities required, in this vein, that the companies be directed to fund a programme to build sea walls and other infrastructure to protect persons and property from global warming-induced harm."

The important aspect of this case in the context of my project is that the judge was unable to convict the companies because of very similar reasons that make us unable to justify our intuitions in NIP cases. The judge sees the problem in an inability to connect harm caused to future residents of the Cities with the specific activities done by the fossil fuel companies. In the end, the judge rules out that the actions of the companies cannot make the future residents worse off, in other words, she arrives at the same conclusion as I did in NIP cases. WDP can cope with this problem and justify why the companies' acts could be considered morally wrong even though they do not make anyone worse off. Let's see how it handles this court case.

[142] Nedevska, Jasmina. "The non-identity problem in climate ethics: A restatement", p. 63.

WDP admits that the judge's claim is, in fact, true – the acts of companies do not make any citizen of the Cities worse off because we cannot predict their identity. If these companies acted differently, different people could exist in this region. On the other hand, WDP gives us other conceptual tools that show why companies' acts are wrong. According to WDP, the companies (if we take them to be a significant cause of climate change) are facing a simple choice. They know the implications of pumping greenhouse gases into the air for a long time, and they know that they contribute to the climate crisis by mining and selling fossil fuels. It could be said that by each structural decision, for example, by each business plan for next decade, they are choosing between two possible future scenarios. The first is an outcome in which they change business strategy, reduce investments in fossil fuels, and focus on a different product, and by these activities they significantly help to avert terrible consequences of climate change and help to bring about stable climate people – residents who would live in conditions far better than the conditions for residents hit by climate change. We can see that identity of future people does not matter here. The only thing that matters is that by continuing in polluting activities, fossil fuel companies are actively choosing to be a notable cause that brings about a future in which there would be people in way worse conditions than other people could have been. In other words, they cause harm to climate change people that stable climate people would not experience. Furthermore, they are stealing from people both collective and individual benefits that they could have; importantly, they are decreasing the number of benefits substantially because the conditions would be worse for any other succeeding generations as far as some consequences of climate change are irreversible. Simply they are choosing lexically worse outcome. This is why their actions – structural decisions to continue with their activities that contribute to climate change – are morally wrong. And this logic could make them responsible for irreversible impacts they decided to co-cause, such as sea level rise. Then it is possible to apply the presented reasoning to the cited court case. Of course, we cannot show how specific emissions caused by the product of one of these companies made the sea level rise and how it will threaten concrete future residents from one of the Cities. On the other hand, we can simply state the facts, and WDP helps to connect them and support our intuition with arguments. In other words, it could help to explain responsibilities and obligations of these companies towards future people. To sum up, the companies are one of the significant causes of climate

change. There are future residents with unclear identities that will suffer from the consequences of climate change. If we agree that the decisions of these companies are so serious that they should be made responsible for causing climate change people instead of stable climate people, then WDP offers decent justification for why their action is morally wrong. This justification could serve as a basis for the explanation of their duty to help residents with lesser existential benefits, even future people from California who can live in this area only if there is a wall protecting them from rising sea level co-caused by the imprudence of the fossil fuel companies.

We can see that WDP obtained by this project gives us a good explanation why causing climate change is morally wrong in many practical cases. On the other hand, it does not help us with a similarly important problem of responsibility and collective action. This topic is touched upon in *Califonia v. BT* case. The judge justifies her verdict – no one is harmed – not by mentioning NIP itself, although she ends up with the same conclusion. Judge claims that plaintiffs could not explain how future people will be harmed because climate change would happen even without the companies as far as their contribution is "only" 11 %. In other words, she says that plaintiffs failed to show that the companies are a clear cause of climate change and an especially cause of the suffering of future people living in the Cities. This objection leads us to difficulties that have been so far taken for granted: Is 11 % enough to make the companies responsible for the problem itself? Can some collective subject, for instance, fossil fuel companies, be said to cause future suffering intentionally? Can the companies' strategic decision be one of decisions to which I limited the considered acts in C-NIP cases – structural changes that seriously shape society? And how do these decisions relate to individual actions of either people involved in the companies or ordinary people who buy products from the companies? All these important puzzles concern the difference between individual and collective action and the question of responsibility for global problems. More precisely, the attribution of responsibilities for actions in such wide cases as climate change, in which individual contribution is only partial, and it seems to be necessary to talk about collective subjects whose contributions are far greater but, at the same time, still partial. To fully resolve it, I would have to explain what the collective agency is, how to think about collective responsibility compared to individual responsibility, and then decide who can be made responsible for causing climate

change. All these questions are not touched upon by WDP, and I take them to be a challenge for the next projects.

5.2 Appendix 3: Goodness of outcomes and rightness of acts

I will finish with one last critique of Parfit's approach that Jeff McMahan introduces. It extends the topic of my paper as it tackles the normative sphere. However, I want to recount it here briefly because it shows important Parfit's distinction that was mentioned a few times in the project and should not be omitted.

McMahan opposes Parfit's fundamental thesis that NIP does not matter for moral wrongness. In some cases, he says that the so-called No Difference View must be rejected.[143] I showed how Parfit defends this position by the example of Two Medical Programmes in the section 3.1.2.1. McMahan attacks Parfit's argument with different examples in which it seems that it really matters if we are talking about presently living or possible people. Let's take one of the examples similar to McMahan's that is mentioned by Parfit too:

We are considering whether we should give existential benefit to our ill child by paying for a cure that made it possible for her to lead another 60 years of a happy life. The second option is to let our child die and give the money to a program that could bring about the existence of ten other children who would have life even with greater existential benefits than our child. It is not hard to see that identity actually matters in this case and everyone would probably prefer to help their own child even though it brings lesser benefits. However, Parfit does not necessarily oppose that. He introduces in his last article an important distinction between the goodness of outcomes and rightness of acts that allows him to make a seemingly paradoxical claim that, on the one hand, moral reasons could be in some cases stronger when considering actual people. On the other hand, they are not. Let's see his reasoning.[144]

It seems that Parfit thinks that the goodness of outcome should be determined by the principle that tackles the NIP cases – WDP. As we saw, WDP identifies which outcome is better by comparing existential individual and collective benefits, and temporal aspects or identity of people do not matter for the result. On the other hand,

[143] He says that this holds even for the example C-NIP. Unfortunately, I do not have space to discuss it here because McMahan builds his argumentation on a distinction between individual and collective contributions to climate change – the topic that was only mentioned in Appendix 2 but cannot be resolved here. See: McMahan, Jeff. "Climate Change, War, and the Non-Identity Problem", p. 8.
[144] FP, s. V.

the rightness of acts is a completely different issue. Parfit says that even though some outcome is better, the act to achieve it could be wrong. Parfit knows that when determining the right action, numerous factors enter. It could be our personal bounds, social context, and many others derived from the so-called "temporal point of view".[145] Parfit suggests that the force of these other factors could sometimes outweigh the goodness of outcome; they could even make it morally impermissible to choose a better outcome. The mentioned case of deciding between the cure for our child and the existence of different children is an instance of choice in which there is a difference between the right action and the better outcome. Moreover, we can say the same holds for the Asymmetry from section 4.1.2, so we do not have to claim that people do something wrong if they decide not to have a child even though it would make the outcome worse. As Parfit concludes:[146]

> "We might defensibly believe that we ought to give such lesser benefits to presently existing people even though these acts would make things go worse. These beliefs would be like the view that we ought to save our children's lives rather than saving the lives of more children who are strangers to us. This view does not imply that it would be better if it would be our children's lives that were saved. We can believe that we ought to save our children's lives, though it would be worse if more children die. We are sometimes morally required to act in ways that would not make things go best."

However, the fact that an act is in the specific context right could not change which outcome is better. If the benefits are greater in one of them, a person's identity – whether it is our child or future stranger – does not matter. According to Parfit temporal aspect that changes an agent's identity cannot be relevant to determining the goodness of outcome. Therefore, on the one hand, an outcome could be better by bringing greater individual and collective benefits; on the other hand, choosing this outcome could be morally wrong because of contextual factors in play. There is no contradiction between these two theses, and Parfit introduced concepts that can cope with this difference.

The problem is that Parfit has never developed the topic of the relation between the goodness of outcome and rightness of acts, regardless he intended to do

[145] FP, p. 147.
[146] FP, p. 149.

it. When this question occurred in FP, his note only says: "some material to be added here".[147] It is a shame that Parfit never had a chance to finish his idea. However, I believe it can be seen as starting point for reconciling Parfit's normative theory with WDP and other principles that deal with NIP, in other words, as a bridge from problems in population ethics to Parfit's normative theory. I clearly cannot develop this suggestion here, but I offer it as an interesting area for further research.

To sum up, I mentioned the distinction between the goodness of outcomes and the rightness of acts for two reasons. Firstly, it could explain some problematic cases in which No Difference View seems to be absurd. Secondly, it could be understood as one of the steps for integrating future people into our ethical thinking, namely, by admitting that the goodness of outcomes does not depend on time or identity and could be viewed as a separate field from our ordinary day-to-day ethical decisions.

This distinction and mentioned integration of the effects of our agency to future outcomes in our ethical considerations have crucial importance. Parfit believed that if we do not take the long-term impacts of both individual and collective actions seriously and stick to the old-fashioned principle of harm and if we deal only with the question of which act is right in a specific temporal context; we could literally destroy entire humanity. Climate change is one of the global problems that can lead to this catastrophe. Parfit urged us to do something that was missed in the last decades and now has tragic consequences – he wants us to take the interests of future people seriously. He has never failed to do it in his philosophy, and I believe that he found an important path for broadening the scope of ethics so that it reckons with current threats such as the climate crisis. I will finish with a quote that just underlines it.

> "Though we can plausibly believe that we ought to give such lesser benefits to presently existing people, rather than giving greater benefits to other people, we should remember that, if we and many others often act in such ways, we and others may together make things go much worse. We might save some present people from harm rather than saving future people from some greater harms. Our successors might do the same, and their successors might do the same, thereby

[147] FP, mark 19.

making the quality of future people's lives lower, and lower, and lower. With such acts, we and our successors might together wreck the Earth."[148]

[148] FP, p. 149.

List of abbreviations:

C-NIP = Climate – Non-Identity Problem

CCP = climate change people

FP = Future People, the Non-Identity Problem, and Person-Affecting Principles

G1 = generation 1

IAP = Impersonal Average Principle

ILV = Imprecise Lexical View

ITP = Impersonal Total Principle

NIP = Non-Identity Problem

OWM = On What Matters

Q = The Same Number Quality Claim

RC = Repugnant Conclusion

RP = Reasons and Persons

SCP = stable climate people

TDC 2 = The Time Dependence Claim 2

WDP = Wide Dual Person-Affecting Principle

WP = Wide Person-Affecting Principle

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