

The Mere Addition Paradox, Parity and Vagueness: the Parity View Reconsidered

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Abstract

Suppose that people are ‘merely’ added to the world, so that the extra people have lives worth living, leave existing people unaffected and that there is no additional social injustice. If the well-being level of the added people is within a ‘neutral’ range or zone where the outcome is incommensurate with the initial state, the parity view claims that the two states are on a par. It allows for a range or zone with imprecise borders. This paper argues that a version of this view which takes its lead from Derek Parfit’s work can, with revision, address a set of objections raised by John Broome. In cases of parity, this view is consistent with Jan Narveson’s intuition that whether or not to have a child is normally a matter of moral indifference. Wlodek Rabinowicz’s alternative version of the parity view involves a distinct view of value relations and can also respond convincingly to Broome’s objections.