DEREK PARFIT

POSTSCRIPT

The reasoning in this anthology shows how hard it is to form acceptable theories in cases that involve different numbers of people. That's highly important. And it gives us ground for worry about our appeal to particular theories in the other two kinds of case: those which involve the same numbers, in the different outcomes, though these are not all the same people, and those which do involve all and only the same people. But there is still a clear distinction between these three kinds of case. And there may be some hope of 'quarantining' the impossibility, and the resulting scepticism, to Different Number Choices.

Her's a partial analogy, which may be worth mentioning. It's very difficult to formulate acceptable welfarist theories that could apply to cases that involve infinite quantities of such things as suffering and happiness. That's a worry, but it doesn't undermine our confidence in the theories that can handle cases with only finite quantities.

J. Ryberg and T. Tännsjö (eds.), The Repugnant Conclusion, 257-258. © 2004 Kluwer Academic Publishers. Printed in the Netherlands.