



# MIGHT WE BENEFIT ANIMALS BY EATING THEM?



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## Background:

Axiology is the study of which outcomes are better than others. When a choice will have two possible effects, we ask 'of these two effects, which one will be better?'

Animal Ethics is concerned with questions such as 'Do non-human animals have 'rights'? Our question is whether it might be permissible to eat animals-given certain welfare constraints- for *axiological reasons*.

**DISCLAIMER: THESE ARGUMENTS DO NOT APPLY TO THE CURRENT ANIMAL-AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY IN WHICH:**

99% of the 75 billion land animals killed annually (not to mention marine animals) are killed after a life of inhumane, and cruel treatment on factory farms.

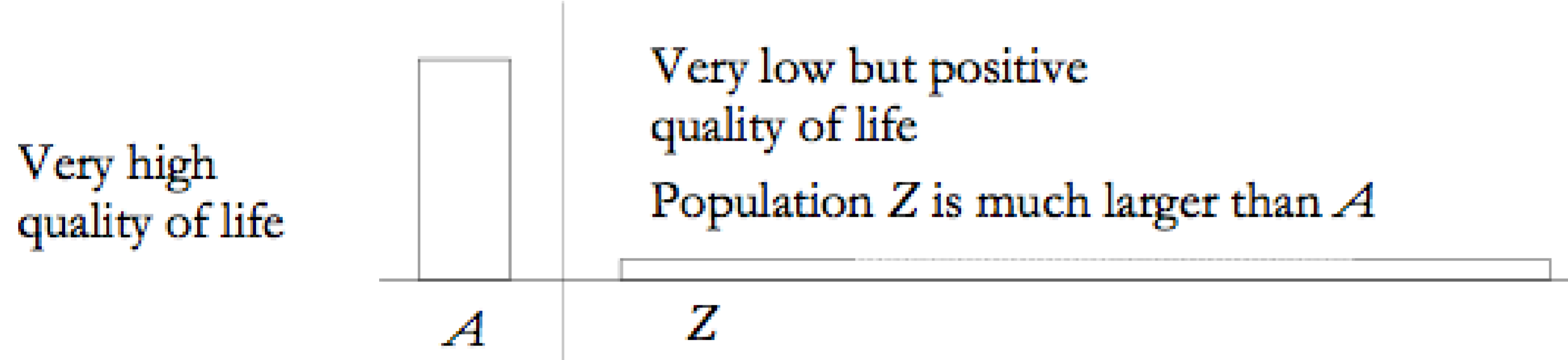
## One Argument for 'Humane Omnivorism':

- 1) A policy of humanely killing animals in order to eat them is impersonally best for animals.
  - 2) We should do what, on balance, is impersonally best for animals.
- Therefore,
- 3) we should have a policy of humanely killing animals in order to eat them.

## The Repugnant Conclusion:

Suppose we say that an outcome,  $W_i > W_{ii}$  since  $W_i$  contains more value. On this view, the more goods, happiness (and so forth), the better.

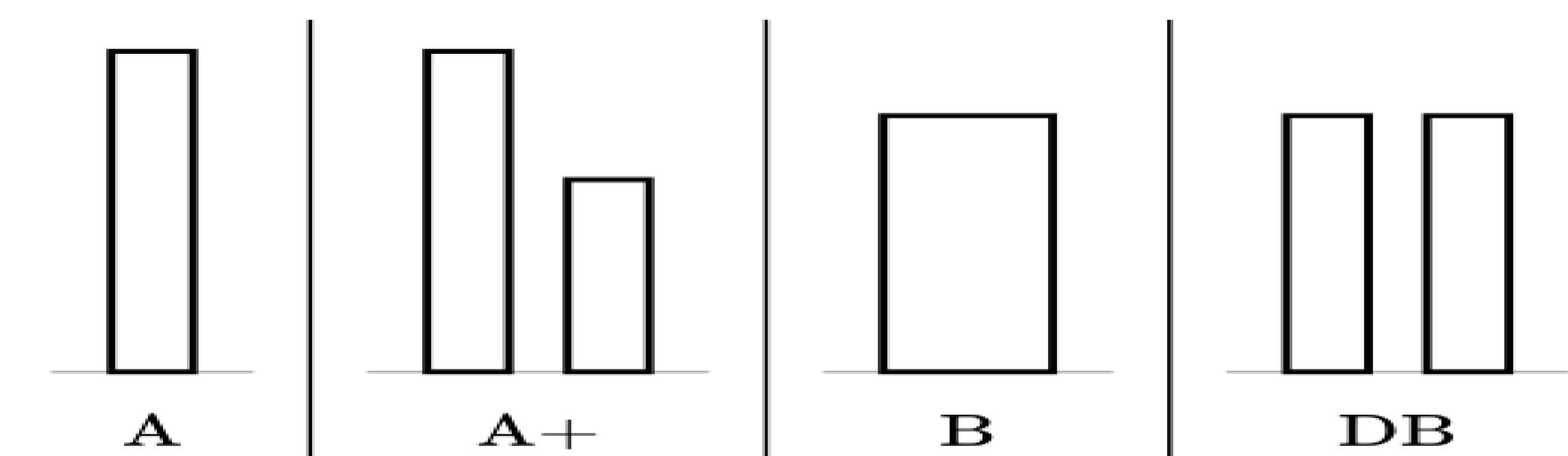
Consider the following, where  $A$  is population of 10 Billion very happy individuals, and  $Z$  is a vast population, each of whose denizens have lives barely worth living:



If betterness is just a matter of the total value of an outcome then we are committed to saying that  $A < Z$ . This has been called the *Repugnant Conclusion*. (Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 1984, Sec. IV).

The argument from population, in its current form, leads to a version of this *Repugnant Conclusion*.

## The Mere-Addition Paradox:



We might think that  $A > B$  since *all* of the lives in  $A$  are better than *all* of the lives in  $B$ . Though  $B$  has *double* the people than  $A$ , this does make it better since according to *lexical, critical-level* and other threshold views one might think that  $B$  is below such a threshold. According to such views, as detailed in [1.1] lives that fall below such a threshold have non-compounding value (*lexical view*) or diminishing value (CLU) such that the extra quantity of such lives doesn't outweigh the extra quality in the lives in the alternative. One might, as others have, appeal to a 'Capped' model. On such an approach, there is some quantity of goods in an outcome such that *any more of such goods* does not make that outcome better. Such an outcome would be, maximally good. Many have claimed that the claim that  $A > B$  is required in order to avoid Parfit's repugnant conclusion. However we justify the claim that  $A > B$ , we end up in the *mere-addition paradox*. Some increase in population is by *mere addition* when "...in one of two outcomes, there exist extra people (1) who have lives worth living, (2) who affect no one else, and (3) whose existence does not involve social injustice." (Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 1984)

Parfit appeals to the following principles to generate the *mere addition paradox*:

*Mere addition principle* <sub>weak</sub>: When a population is increased by *mere addition* this fact does not make an outcome *worse*.

*Existential beneficence*: If an individual is brought into existence and has a life worth living then that person is, to whatever extent their life is worth living, enjoyed a *non-comparative benefit*.

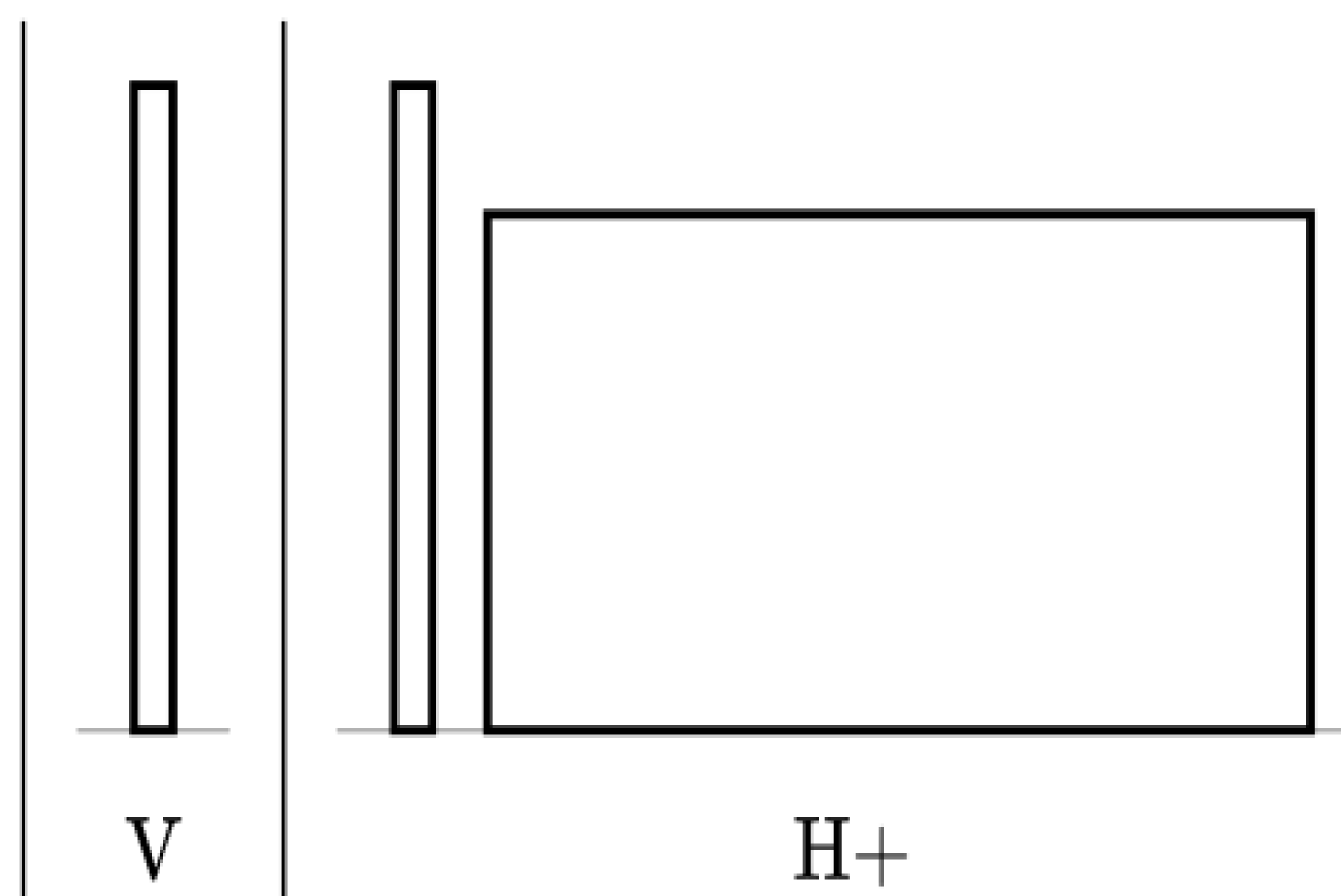
According to these principles  $A+$  is not worse than ( $\ll$ )  $A$ , since it is in *no* respect worse, and contains lives worth living. As above, we might claim that  $A > B$ . We might appeal to

*Non-elitism condition*: If  $W_1$  is *much* better for the worse-off, and only *slightly* worse for the best off than  $W_2$  then other things being equal,  $W_1 > W_2$ .

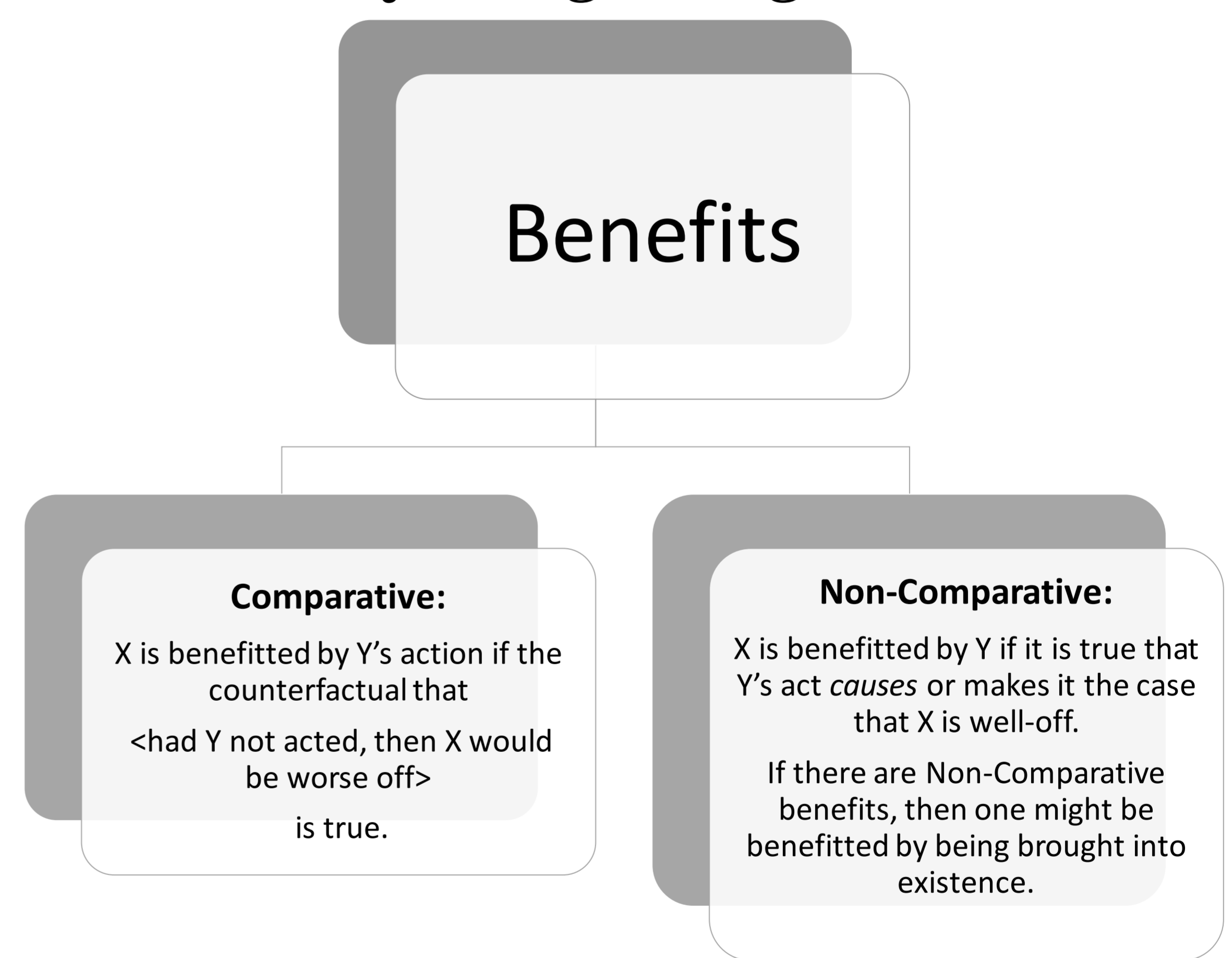
This condition would generate the result that  $B > A+$ . So, the following ordering has been established:  $A \ll A+ < B < A$ . This, as has been widely recognised, is a troubling result. Parfit (1984) p. 420

Might Humane Omnivorism be an instance of Mere-Addition? If so, we might generate a second 'argument from population axiology'.

## The Argument from Mere-Addition:



## Existential Beneficence: Might Animals be benefitted by being brought into existence?



## Possible Solutions:

The first argument:

Objections from welfare: According to several accounts of 'what makes life worth living', being killed at the end of one's life, other things equal, makes life go worse.

The Second Argument:

A denial of the claim that  $A \ll A+$ , such that,  $V > H+$ :  $A+$  might be bad, since less equal. It may also be bad that *each* denizen of  $A+$  is less well-off than *they* could have been.

Deontic Arguments:

The Objection from Existential Blackmail: A harm at  $T_{10}$  cannot be justified by appeal to a (non-comparative) benefit at  $T_1$ .

The Objection from a *We-each Dilemma* (a reverse-version of the tragedy of the commons): A We-Each Dilemma occurs when we all act in way  $X$ , this has a good collective effect, but it requires us *each* to act in unjustifiable ways.