

## **Sorites arguments, a myth of genius, and overpopulation**

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*Abstract.* This paper responds to Theron Pummer's distinction between Sorites arguments and repugnant conclusion arguments by presenting a Sorites overpopulation argument. Also I present a Sorites argument in favour of myths of genius.

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*I cut the onions and I fried*

*And then I learnt the queen died*

In his book contribution "Sorites on What Matters," Theron Pummer distinguishes between Sorites arguments and repugnant conclusion arguments. Below I present two arguments in response to Pummer.

*Home and Away.* The most well-known commentator on repugnant conclusion arguments is Derek Parfit. After acknowledging 27 named people and some audiences at certain institutions, Pummer writes:

Derek passed away before I could talk with him about the main ideas presented in this chapter. (2022: 498)

I imagine the ghost of Parfit replying, "If you give this long list of names and say that about me, then readers will think that I would have made some worthwhile comment on the main ideas which none of these people would make." You might think that if the number is large enough then that is much less likely, but note: there is a Sorites argument for a myth of genius, which is

that adding one more to the list would not prevent that unique comment.

*Neighbours.* If Sortes arguments are different from repugnant conclusion arguments, then there is a question of how close one can get to these by means of a Sorites argument: can a member of the Sorites family move right next door? Consider those cultures or subcultures which put a strong pressure on individuals to have children: “If the earth is not overpopulated, one must have a child; the addition of one person does not change the earth from not being overpopulated to being overpopulated; so the earth will never be overpopulated.” But after conceiving this argument, I worried about some objections involving twins and more. Anyway, is one to say that there is a precise cut off point – below this number the earth is not overpopulated and above it overpopulated?

## **Reference**

Pummer, T. 2022. Sorites on What Matters. In J. McMahan, T. Campbell, J. Goodrich, and K. Ramakrishnan (eds.), *Ethics and Existence: The Legacy of Derek Parfit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.