The Harmlessness of Existence
Per Algander (Uppsala University)

Can existence benefit or harm a person? According to an influential argument, it cannot. In order for existence to harm a person, existence has to be worse for the person than never having existed at all. However, if a person's existence is worse for her than never having existed, then it would have been better for this person that she never exists, had she not existed. But, nothing would have been better, or worse, for a person had she not existed. Hence, existence cannot harm, or benefit, a person because it cannot be better or worse for a person to exist than to never have existed.

In reply to this argument it has been suggested that existence can be extrinsically worse for a person, and that benefit and harm should be understood in terms of extrinsic better and worseness. Extrinsic value, it is claimed, does not entail any connection between what is extrinsically better (worse) for a person and what would have been extrinsically better (worse) for a person. Therefore, existence can be extrinsically better or worse for a person than non-existence without this implying that it would have been better for this person never to have existed than to exist, had she never existed.

I argue that this way of defending the view that existence can benefit or harm a person comes at the cost of depriving benefits and harms of their normative relevance. I show that required analysis of extrinsic value implies that an agent can face a situation where an outcome is extrinsically better for her but where the same outcome would be extrinsically worse for her were it to obtain. I argue that an agent who is guided by promoting extrinsic value will in such situations not be able to deliberate about what she should do, prudentially or morally. I conclude that extrinsic value is therefore not something we should be guided by when deliberating about what we should do, and that if benefit and harm is understood in terms of extrinsic value, then we should not be guided by these notions either.

Harms and Causes
Ben Bradley (Syracuse University)

Deontological principles such as the doctrine of double effect typically employ the notion of harm. I attempt to determine what notion of harm must be presupposed by such principles. I then raise a general problem for the project of employing a notion of harm in such principles, due to the fact that our ordinary notion of harm is moralized.

A New Argument against the Counterfactual Analysis of Harm
Erik Carlson (Uppsala University)

The Counterfactual Analysis of Harm (CAH) says, in its simplest form, that an event $e$ harms a person $P$ iff $P$ would have been better off had $e$ not occurred. There are two standard objections to CAH. The first standard objection is that CAH yields implausible results in cases of “preemptive” or “overdetermined” harm. The second standard objection is that CAH fails to distinguish harming from failing to benefit. I will present a new objection CAH, which is independent of these standard objections.

Let us say that an action $a$ indirectly harms $P$ iff either (i) $a$ causes event $e$, and $e$ harms $P$, or (ii) $a$ causes event $e$ to harm $P$. The following claims are, I think, very plausible:

1. If action $a$ indirectly harms $P$, then $a$ harms $P$.
2. If action $a$ indirectly harms $P$, then $a$ is pro tanto bad for $P$.
3. If action $a$ indirectly harms $P$, then there is a pro tanto reason against doing $a$.

However, there are rather simple cases which show that CAH is incompatible with these claims. This seems to tell strongly against CAH.

Harming by Failing to Benefit
Neil Feit (The State University of New York at Fredonia)

According to the counterfactual comparative account of harm (CCA), an event harms a person when it makes her worse off than she would have been had it not occurred. This paper defends a solution to the so-called problem of omission for CCA. The associated objection to CCA is that the account does not adequately distinguish genuine harm from mere failure to benefit. CCA seems to imply that when one person fails to benefit another, the first person thereby harms the second, since the second would have been better off if the first had benefited her. According to the objection, however, cases of failure to benefit are not cases of harm. I distinguish two sides of the problem. The first has to do with the counterintuitive nature of the result that certain failures to benefit can count as harms. The second has to do with the charge that this result is inconsistent with certain widely accepted facts about the moral importance of harm. I argue that
the instances of failure to benefit that CCA counts as harmful are, in fact, harmful, and I offer an array of other considerations that together alleviate the problem.

**The Problem of Justified Harm**  
Molly Gardner (Bowling Green State University)

Sometimes it is permissible to harm other people. For example, it is permissible for a lifeguard to break an unconscious stranger’s arm in order to save her from drowning. In other cases, inflicting harm on someone is impermissible, even if the harm leads to significant benefits. For example, it is wrong to rape someone, even if the rape leads to a pregnancy and then to a child for which the rape victim is ultimately grateful. Many philosophers have supposed that the actions performed in cases of both types cause harms and benefits. They have then offered hypotheses to explain why the benefits of the actions justify the harms in some of those cases but not in others. However, in this paper I argue that not all the cases under consideration are cases of benefiting. More precisely, the cases in which the action is permissible are cases in which we harm in order to benefit, but the cases in which the action is wrong are not cases of benefiting at all.

**The Subject of Harm in Non-Identity Cases**  
Jens Johansson (Uppsala University)

In a typical non-identity case, the agent performs an action that causes someone, A, to exist at a low but positive level of well-being, although an alternative was to create another, much happier person, B, instead. There seem to be strong moral reasons against what the agent does, but it is difficult to explain how this can be so. In particular, it seems that on a simple counterfactual account of harm, the action does not harm anyone: it does not make anyone worse off than he or she would have been had the action not been performed. I discuss responses according to which the action nevertheless harms person A, person B, or the fusion of A and B.

**Collective Suffering**  
Björn Petersson (Lund University)

In debates about repatriation or compensation for historical injustices, in discussions of discrimination and group rights, and in relation to hate speech or other allegedly group-directed crimes it is not uncommon for authors to stress explicitly that some harms are such that they hurt not only individual members of the oppressed group, but ‘the group as such’, and even that groups as such can suffer.

The first section of this paper discusses group suffering in relation to views according to which groups as such can be genuine subjects of intentional states. One example of such a view is Pettit’s claim that groups displaying sufficient rationality should be regarded as independent agents with their own desires, beliefs and intentions. Another is Gilbert’s theory of how two or more individuals through joint commitment come to form an independent “plural subject”. Gilbert argues that a plural subject can have feelings, and that such feelings are distinct from the feelings of its members. It is claimed that none of these views would help us understand what people mostly have in mind when they refer to the suffering of groups.

Section two suggests a “perspectival” understanding of collective suffering, in terms of individual but collectivistic attitudes of a specific kind, related to the “we-mode” approach to collective intentionality. Such a view is compatible with denying that a group as such can suffer if that is supposed to mean that a group’s being hurt can be separated from its members being hurt. It is argued that the perspectival analysis nevertheless captures some important intuitions that typically motivate claims about group suffering.

**Harm and the Wrongness of Discrimination**  
Katharina Berndt Rasmussen (Stockholm University)

According to a recent account of group discrimination, the disadvantageous treatment of individuals, qua members of socially salient groups, is (prima facie) wrong because it harms these individuals, making them worse off than they would have been had they not been such members. I argue that the underexamined reliance on such a comparative counterfactual account of harm invites many - yet not all - of the problems familiar from the harm debate into the analysis of the wrongness of discrimination. I then examine a revision of both the definition of group discrimination and the analysis of harm as its wrong-making feature. I argue that this revision not only serves to better integrate these two components with each other, but also to avoid a number of the remaining problems. A further upshot of these arguments is that the concept of harm, in its revised form, is both intuitively plausible and theoretically useful in certain contexts.