Harming-by-Creating

(i) When is it the case that if __ had happened I would never have existed?

Flesh out in your mind some alternative history of the world, some way in which things might have gone differently.

**Genetic Essentialism**
I can say of a person in that alternative history, ‘if things had gone differently that would have been me’ only if he/she is genetically the same as me (or very similar to me).

**Essentialism about Origins**
I can say of a person in that alternative history, ‘if things had gone differently that would have been me’ only if he/she comes into being the same way I did (conceived by the same parents at the same time, in the same way).

**Psychological Essentialism**
I can say of a person in that alternative history, ‘if things had gone differently that would have been me’ only if he/she is psychologically the same as me (or very similar to me) (at some point in his or her life).

(ii) What does it mean to say ‘it would have been better for me never to have existed’?

One answer: if I had never existed I would have been better off than I actually am.

Better: I should prefer states of affairs in which I never exist to the actual state of affairs.

**The Non-Identity Problem**

This looks like a plausible principle.

*The Person-Affecting Principle*  
If you don’t harm anyone, then you don’t do anything wrong.

But we very rarely harm-by-creating, so this principle would appear to imply, implausibly, that we very rarely do wrong by creating.