Abstract: According to the Person-Affecting Principle (PAP) an outcome can be better only if it is better for someone, and existence cannot be better for someone than non-existence. Most people believe that PAP avoids one of the main problems in population ethics, the Repugnant Conclusion (RC). It says that, as long as it is only large enough, a population with very low (positive) wellbeing can be better than one with very high wellbeing. I argue that even PAP implies RC-similar conclusions.

The first argument relies on a thought experiment that stipulates that further population growth in a highly populated world will have both negative and positive effects, and the former outweigh the latter not before a time period of one generation has passed. I show that in this situation it is better for each generation to choose population growth rather than a population policy if these are the only possibilities. Due to conditions of non-identity, the choosing generation contains the only affected people. Furthermore, if each generation chooses population growth, this results in an outcome with very many people with low wellbeing. It follows that doing what according to PAP ought to be done leads to an outcome with very many people with low wellbeing. This is the Normative Person-Affecting Repugnant Conclusion.

The second argument proves the corresponding Evaluative Person-Affecting Repugnant Conclusion. On PAP, a population A is better than another population B if it is better for the affected people. If the affected people are better off in A than in B, for any number of additional lives with low positive wellbeing in A, A is better than B, even though B contains additional lives with high wellbeing. Thus, according to PAP a population containing very many people with low wellbeing is better than a population with high wellbeing, as long as it is better for the affected people.

Even though both conclusions differ from RC, I argue that people who reject RC as repugnant must reject these conclusions for the same reasons. Thus, PAP has implications similar to RC.