

The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast #65 - Matti Häyry

Hello everyone, and welcome to the Sixty-Fifth episode of The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast, a podcast all about the subject of Antinatalism, created by Antinatalists. My name is Amanda 'Oldphan' Sukenick, formally known as ForeverWolfFilms on Youtube, and today, I'm speaking with Professor of Philosophy at Aalto University School of Business in Helsinki, Finland, & author of several papers on the subject of Antinatalism including, *A rational cure for prereproductive stress syndrome*, *The rational cure for prereproductive stress syndrome revisited* & *If you must make babies, then at least make the best babies you can?* Matti Häyry!

Amanda:

Welcome to The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast, Matti!

Matti:

Thank you, Amanda! It's an honor and a pleasure. And well done digging deep enough to find me! I've never thought of myself as "someone" in this field.

Amanda:

Matti the pleasure and the honor are all mine, and you should be far, far more well known in this field than you are, and I'm quite confident that our episode today can go a long way towards changing that. Matti, you are of course perhaps best known in the Anti-Natal world, for having been the first to advance the Risk argument, an argument that I've always believed to be one of the very strongest in support of Antinatalism, though perhaps, slightly overlooked at times next to the Benatarian Axiological Asymmetry & Shiffrin's consent. Through your recent excavations of your own work in preparation for this episode, it's been revealed that you've been contributing to the subject of Antinatalism as far back as 1992, and your 2004 paper, *A rational cure for prereproductive stress syndrome*, predates the release of David Benatar's *Better Never to have Been* by two years, and of course, predates the word, Antinatalism, as a philosophical term. Much has changed since 1992, and Antinatalism has grown tremendously since that time - SO excited to get into it all this with you today but first, a few questions I ask some version of to all my guests, so lets start with -

Who is, Matti Häyry?

Matti:

Good question. He's a philosopher and bioethicists, I think. But it's more complicated than that. He used to be a soldier first.

When he graduated from high school, his marks were so low that no university or college would've touched him with a ten-foot pole. So he opted for the military and spent the next seven years first becoming and then being an officer in the Finnish army.

He never forgot his anarchism and pacifism, though. He listened to raging punk and on his office wall hung a huge poster screaming "No to Pershing 20!" – that was the US intercontinental nuclear missile of the time.

He wanted to study at the university. Anything, really, and his then-partner came up with a solution, saying, "Matti, you're good at writing bullshit, and I think that could buy you a ticket studying aesthetics at the University of Helsinki." She was right and he – Matti – secured his place. For a couple of years, he then crawled in the mud by day and gorged theories of beauty by night.

He then decided to take the leap of faith from his solid army career into the unknown of the academia. It was mid-term when he retired, and all the aesthetics courses were already running, so he had to pick something else for the spring. He chose introductions to philosophy – and by summer he knew that this was what he would do for the rest of his life. And he's well on the way of doing just that.

Amanda:

Matti, why are you an Antinatalist?

Matti:

Mmm, the question is, am I, and if I am, in what sense. I'm not an activist like you and I'm not as confident in my views as David Benatar, for instance, seems to be. My antinatalism, if any, has come in increments.

I was eight years old when I first thought about anything related. It was

winter, very cold, lots of snow, and hankikanto. You don't know what hankikanto is but let me explain it to you – I think that it is somehow connected to my revelation. It's when there are several feet of snow, but since the top layer is frozen, you can walk on it without falling through. Most of the time. But the minute you start to trust it too much and walk too briskly, whoom, in you go.

Anyway, it was hankikanto and late at night and I lay on my back in the middle of a field, above me a glorious starry sky, when the thought struck me. "I'll never grow up to be adult, because nuclear war is going to wipe out humankind long before that." There was nothing frightening in the thought – maybe a touch of melancholy but mostly just calm certainty.

I didn't think about it then, but that was the first step on my journey toward antinatalism. If the world is coming to an end, there's no reason for anyone to have children. For strict pronatalists, this is enough for the "anti" label – thou shalt not question the urgency of multiplying and replenishing the world.

The second step might have been when my partner – still the same aesthetics counselor – and I considered having children. We wanted it to be perfect – they would be twins, a girl and a boy, and we'd carry them around in lecture halls at the university. How romantic. How cutting-edge. How just-after-the-first-test-tube-baby-was-born.

But this was not to be. She asked her gynecologist who informed her that science had not advanced far enough for such a choice. End of story, and we decided never to reproduce. Again, our thinking was something that the strict pronatalist would not condone. You are not allowed to look for perfection, however you define it. Just close your eyes and think of England.

So, those were a couple of glimpses into my personal development toward antinatalism. I moved much further later on and started thinking about justifications – but I guess we'll come back to those as we continue.

Amanda:

May I ask, how did you originally become interested in Bioethics?

Matti:

I was in the last year of my studies and it was time to choose the topic of the master's thesis. What would it be? Would it be something dusty from the book shelves of the philosophy library? Or was there something else? My supervisor suggested that I read the book Practical Ethics by Peter Singer and select one of his themes.

I chose the ethics of abortion and defended the view that it should always be legally allowed. A couple of years later, the thesis was published as a book, and for the next decade or so I had some small celebrity – or notoriety – in Finland. Newspapers oscillated between hailing me as a genius and calling me a Nazi. Women's magazines wanted to know what I had for breakfast. One caller into a national TV show suggested that I should be killed with an axe. Gotta admire the specificity, naming the instrument and all. I was having the time of my life.

I quickly moved on to the other hot topics of the day – euthanasia, AIDS, and the fair allocation of scarce health care resources. Looking back, bioethics (the ethics of life) should have been called thanato-ethics (the ethics of death) instead. I dealt with all those issues in my doctoral dissertation, and then proceeded to create my own theory of ethics, which I called liberal utilitarianism.

I was floating in and out of bioethics for a while but then realized that the future was in the ethics of biomedical research. Just in time, too. When Dolly the lamb trotted into the limelight, the human genome was sequenced, and stem cell research began, I was ready to jump to the challenge. For quite some time, I rode that wave.

For the development of my antinatalism, the earlier topics had given me all the building blocks. Abortion – there's no obligation to procreate. Euthanasia – life can be too bad for living. AIDS – disaster can strike anyone at any time. Scarce resources and their allocation – you cannot trust the system to help you when calamity strikes.

It's all there, I just didn't see it at the time. Or maybe I did. On hindsight, my normative theory seems to indicate that I did.

Amanda:

I fully admit that the world of normative theory is all a bit new to me, but I'm curious if you identify as or with any one normative position? Are you a Negative Utilitarian?

Matti:

Am I a negative utilitarian? Depends on the day you're asking. Should I give some background? ... Right.

Classical utilitarianism says that we should always maximize the balance of pleasure over pain. The same rule applies to private and public matters. You should buy your friend ice cream if it maximizes everybody's pleasure over pain. And the government should go to a war with another government if it maximizes everybody's pleasure over pain. You get the picture.

Negative utilitarianism drops pleasure (the "positive" value) out of the equation and focuses on pain and suffering (the "negative" value). We should always try to minimize suffering in the world. This is quite compatible with antinatalism, but it was noted early on that abiding by it consistently would lead to a world without human beings. And that was seen as a clear and simple refutation of the view.

In my early theory, I gave a description of negative utilitarianism but I then shunned away from it. The consensus in the field was that the extinction argument kills it. Over the years, I've returned to the question many times and always given a different answer. It's a slippery bastard.

Amanda:

How long had you been thinking about the concepts of procreation being risky, irrational, and immoral before you began writing about it?

Matti:

I actually think by writing, so unless you want to go back to my childhood revelations, ideas are always on paper first and the realization of their meaning comes much later. As I look back to my early bioethics writings now, I see that the papers on abortion, euthanasia, AIDS, and resource allocation give early warnings of my less than favorable attitudes on

procreation. I remember thinking at some point that, if nothing else, having children should be licensed.

But if you studied philosophy and kept your ears open, at least back in my day, you knew what John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor had said about the issue in the nineteenth century. They considered it a moral crime to have children if you cannot take proper care of them. That's one way of putting the entire antinatalist case, really. In the world as it is, we cannot take care of our offspring. Therefore, let's not have any!

Amanda:

Interestingly enough, I've never seen that John Stuart Mill quote mentioned in Antinatalist circles before, and it really is fantastic, thank you for bringing it to my attention, I'm going to quote it now -

“It still remains unrecognized, that to bring a child into existence without a fair prospect of being able, not only to provide food for its body, but instruction and training for its mind, is a moral crime, both against the unfortunate offspring and against society; and that if the parent does not fulfill this obligation, the State ought to see it fulfilled, at the charge, as far as possible, of the parent.” - John Stuart Mill

As someone who has been writing and thinking about this subject academically for such a long time, you've been a witness to the timeline of Antinatalistic thinking within academia in a way that few others have - Do you see a growing acceptance (or a growing non-acceptance) of the idea of Antinatalism in academia? Is it a subject that more people are simply having to deal with on a more regular bases? And also, what do you think about what Antinatalism has become since 1992? Does it surprise you in the ways that it's grown?

Matti:

The movement and its reception in the academia are two different things. Your work testifies that antinatalism is out there in the open and some potential parents are thinking about their reproductive choices more carefully than before. In the academic world, the tide is going the other way. You are not allowed to mention not having children because not having children means population control and population control policies always

target the oppressed groups in the Global South first.

The way those policies work is illogical and unjust, but it's a symptom of what I call eugenic pronatalism, nothing to do with antinatalism as we know and love it. Governments in the Global North want to keep their ethnic integrity intact by producing lots of their own children and by discouraging others. This is how the discrimination emerges.

But this doesn't compute in the heads of pronatalist academics. Their default position is that they themselves are allowed to have children, so we must mean the others. No, we don't. We mean you.

Amanda:

Hum, I can't say that surprises me too much to hear, to begin with there aren't many Academic Antinatalists at all, I think you're one of what, 5? There's Benatar, you, Gerald Harrison, my beloved ex-professor Raja Halwani? Julio Cabrera, but he's retired now, Masahiro Morioka but he's not an Antinatalist, he's just delightfully obsessed with it.

Aside from Benatar, whose work on the subject of Antinatalism have you thought highly of over the years, and are new thinkers on the subject something that you actively seek out?

Matti:

Pass. I seldom read other people's work, and I think highly of no one.

Amanda:

Good, good, nor should you.

Is Antinatalism a subject that you have actively taught about, and is it a subject that your students ask you about with any frequency?

Matti:

Good point. No, I haven't mentioned it and students haven't asked. But now that you bring it up, I'll make my Aalto University Business School doctoral candidates listen to this podcast and then discuss it. That should put the cat among the pigeons.

Amanda:

Wow, well I'll be very excited to hear about what they thought of it!

Matti as you know, some Antinatalists are what is sometimes called, Sentiocentric, which can mean that they consider Antinatalism to include all sentient creatures, and some Antinatalists are considered Anthropocentric, which means they feel it applies only to humans - are you a Sentiocentric or Anthropocentric Antinatalist?

Matti:

I'm not sure. It depends on the axiological hat that I happen to be wearing. Axiologies are theories of value, and they come in different packages. Utilitarianism traditionally rooted for hedonism – pleasure and pain – but we could also talk about preference or need satisfaction. And many other things. David Benatar covers them comprehensively.

If I go with my own back-then doctrine of liberal utilitarianism, my theory of value was based on need satisfaction. Before a new individual emerges, there's no one there, which means that there's no need to come into existence. There's no one to have that need. From this I know that there's no obligation to have children for their own sakes. But if they are born, they will have a need to avoid pain. And then it becomes a question of hedonism.

If I want to eliminate all suffering on Earth, I'd have to go for the sentiocentric model and include nonhuman animals. But then the problem of consent comes to the fore. If humankind decides not to continue existence, that's all right – we have a consensual solution. But we cannot ask nonhuman animals. So do we have an entitlement to wipe them out without their permission? I don't know. I'd have to think about it.

Or, if I go with my earlier message – that I write stuff first and only then think – I could go back to what I've published and see what I can find there. I seem to recall a few potentially useful threads.

The first is that I've often used a more layered theory of sentience, or consciousness. Most adult human beings and great apes and whales and dolphins and possibly other nonhumans are what they call in the literature

psychological persons. That means that they are aware of their own existence over time and normally hope and expect to continue it. That's supposed to give them a right to life, apart from any hedonistic concerns. If that's anything to go by, we'd be murdering some of our fellow persons in our sentiocentric zeal.

Another concerns the methods. How do we propose to kill all sentient nonhuman animals? It could involve a lot of extra suffering for them. I know that if ends justify means this is not serious. A couple of centuries of awfulness would be a small price to pay for the ensuing millennia of blissful silence. But do ends justify means? I don't know.

Yet another consideration is that our definition of sentience may be too stringent. The nonhuman animals that we call non-sentient, not to mention plants and other life forms, seem to have aversions much like our avoidance of pain. Should we include them, too, and go beyond sentiocentrism, just to be on the safe side? Logically, we probably should.

Well, that was a long way of saying that I have no clue. Ask me something simpler, please.

Amanda:

Ha, sorry. We'll talk about it more some other time maybe.

Some Antinatalists are not particularly interested in the idea of extinction, some are even anti-extinction, and some are quite pro-extinction - where do you fall in the extinction side of this conversation?

Matti:

Thank you, Amanda! To that I have a shorter and more confident answer. I think that I was a voluntary extinctionist long before the idea of antinatalism sank in. If only people could see that life is, or at least can always become, suffering, the conclusion would be clear. Exit as soon as we can. Let's not prolong this needless suffering.

Ceasing to reproduce is one way of exiting. Slowly, but whatever it takes. The idea of consent would be observed. And yes, I know all the counterarguments. Not needless, also good things in life, God ordered it,

family expects it. I'm not impressed by any one of those.

But to your question, yes, I'd vote for the voluntary self-extinction of humankind any day.

Amanda:

How do you feel Antinatalism intersects, if at all, with other social and ethical issues, such as Atheism, The Right to Die and Veganism?

Matti:

It does, obviously. One of the main theoretical objections to antinatalism stems from the religious doctrine of the sanctity of life, particularly popular among the worshippers of the three Middle-Eastern gods. Or are they one? Anyway, I seem to think that it would be easier to advocate antinatalism if you're an atheist (in the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic senses at least) and accept that we have no obligation to create more and more sanctified lives.

I'm not so sure about veganism. On the surface, yes, avoiding harm to sentient beings is on both agendas. But how about, say, waste not, want not? On our road to extinction, we could – and perhaps should – eat all human and nonhuman animals who die of natural causes. I mean, there's no harm, ethically speaking, and it could help us to feed the falling population. Or am I leaving orbit now? Perhaps I am.

But now that I forced myself outside the box, maybe something like that applies to religion, too. I can imagine a benevolent, omniscient, but not omnipotent god, who realizes that creating sentient life was a bad mistake. She could then try to whisper the antinatalist message in the ears of her creation, in an attempt to make amends. I usually save this kind of material to my rock operas, and maybe I should now.

Amanda:

Interestingly enough there's actually a shocking amount of Christian Antinatalism out there, truly one of the most surprising facts about Antinatalism that I think exists. As for Veganism... I mean of course waste is anathema, eat the roadkill, eat the extinct-ing animals, consensually SoyLent-Green thy neighbor, no harm in eating expired tuna already in the can, or from the trash... But we know this is not how most people are

consuming their animal products, they are taking it by force or most likely paying someone else to do it. I think if the possibility of violating the consent of the animals during extinction is going to be so important that it makes us think twice about not acting for them in that final circumstance, then it ought to stop us dead in our tracks daily before imposing torture and consumption on them all for the benefit of our addictions... The least we can do is not torture and eat them... More than that, it takes birth, and often rape to put them on our plates. Carnism is Natalism, and you are NOT a Natalist, Matti. We should not be Antinatalists who eat children, if we can help it.

Matti in your recent excavations of your older work, you found a fascinating document that you shared with me called The Cowbridge Diaries - and in those diaries, you debate a rather controversial subject, which I would love to ask you a bit about now - if you were presented with a button, that if pressed eliminated all life, and therefore, all suffering forever, would you press it? And even if you would not, do you think that pressing it would be the right thing to do?

Matti:

Yes, I would absolutely definitely maybe push the button. The back story is that I and my then partner – a different one this time, not the aesthetics and twins collaborator– we were attending a conference in Cowbridge, Wales, and one evening we had this conversation. If I could end the world at a push of the button in front of me right now, would I? She said yes, of course, and I said so, too – the relationship was young and we wanted to show each other how daring we were together, I guess.

But then, for reason or reasons unknown, I started to retract, mumbling stuff about consent. It could have been because we were already used to a specific method of dialogue – disagree technically to see how the argument develops.

Anyway, as a historical detail, this was in fall 1998, and the next year Seana Shiffrin published her famous paper on the need of consent. Which for me just goes to show that these things float around in the universe of ideas at any given moment in time for all to see, and then someone writes one of them down and the rest is history. I had my own moment five years

later with the risk argument.

Amanda:

The word, 'Antinatalism' had some of its earliest usages as far back it seems as the 1950's, however it was not a philosophical term until 2006 with the release of *Better Never to Have Been, & The Art of Guillotining Procreators*, and it was not a philosophical word when you wrote your first three major works on the subject. - When was the first time you heard the word, Antinatalism?

Matti:

I had clean forgotten extinction and all that when in 2016 I was preparing a presentation on posthumanism at my university. A quick google search revealed a WikiQuotes page on antinatalism that not only informed me of the dawn of the concept – ten years after the fact – but also, lo and behold, that I was a Famous Antinatalist myself. A funny moment, that. I've lived on the exhilaration ever since.

Amanda:

Outside of Wikipedia, the word, Antinatalism, is still not included in, or defined by any Dictionary in the world, in any language - I have twice now campaigned to have the word added into the Oxford English Dictionary, to no avail - and In addition to this, even the Wikipedia definition keeps changing! So in your opinion, how do you feel that Antinatalism should be defined?

Matti:

First of all, Amanda, kudos for trying to get it included! Keep trying! And don't worry about the Wikipedia definition. We can always change that, as you well know.

As to your question, defining concepts is my bread and butter, and I only do that if proper remuneration is forthcoming. I have a bid in at the Academy of Finland to forge a definition – or definitions – of pronatalism and antinatalism, so I have only tentative answers for now.

The first dividing line is this. Does antinatalism center on (one, milder) a permission not to reproduce or (two, stronger) an obligation not to

reproduce? Pronatalists can see antinatalism even in the permission, while proper antinatalists (if I'm one) go for the obligation, I guess.

In the planned project I distinguish between six types of pro- and antinatalism. The polar opposites are eugenic pronatalism and extinctionist antinatalism. Between these, I find four categories, in two pairs. The first two are cultural, often distinctly religious, pronatalism and techno-optimistic pronatalism. The other two are ectogenetic egalitarianism and abolitionist vitalism.

I'm not sure about the antinatalism of the latter two. Ectogenetic egalitarianism advocates the end of women giving birth but offers artificial wombs as a solution. A strict pronatalist would probably call that antinatalism but to me it smacks of covert pronatalism.

The same applies to abolitionist vitalism. It hails the end of humanity as we know it but seems to replace it with some kind of trans-species future existence. So, the same verdict. For a devoted traditional breeder, antinatalism, for me, breederism in disguise.

Which seems to indicate that I have, in the end, very little definitional room to maneuver. It's extinctionist or nothing. Maybe that is my view.

Amanda:

I think so!

I collect recordings of people saying the word Antinatalism in different languages, how do you pronounce the Finnish spelling of the term?

Matti:

Antinatalismi. With a clear but not exaggerated emphasis on the first syllable. Antinatalismi.

Amanda:

Thank you so much! As I suspected, it seems like the Finnish pronunciation is unique to anywhere else in the world, amazing!

Antinatalism is in addition to being a philosophical position, in addition to

being a new social movement, is also this growing art movement as well - because after all Anti-procreating is this incredible, almost totally unexplored area for artists to be inspired by, and that's led to some really exciting Antinatalist art works being made - Do you have any thoughts on the importance of art in making philosophical arguments? And let me just say that one of the reasons I ask is because - I wanted to mention how much I've enjoyed listening to your musical project Orkid as I've done my research for this interview, its sensational, particularly the song, 15 Identities, which I love! Would love it if you could tell our audience a little about Orkid as well.

Matti:

Oh, thank you! Yes, I think artistic activities have a place in any movement like this. But as to the role of art in making philosophical arguments? I have tried that once. Before Orkid, my latest, I wrote and produced a rock opera on reproductive medicine called Playing God (of course). It was a collaborative effort with my partner number two – the Cowbridge Diaries one – and her current partner. Its characters were loosely based on the chapters of my 2010 book Rationality and the Genetic Challenge. There were artificially inseminated children, savior siblings, clones, and what have you. In the stage version, I played the role of Mr. C – Mr. Cunningham – a science peddler who uses his own sperm in his insemination business (like you do). I don't know. It became funny and sad and entertaining but I'm not sure that it had any educational impact on anyone. We performed it a couple of times in New York at Kaye Playhouse – an Off-Off Broadway theatre – and had a panel discussion organized by Cornell University after the show, but ... yeah, well, not educational.

And there's the question of art. What is art? In my studies, I learned to think about this rather funnily. My aesthetics master's thesis was on the neoidealist art theory of Robin George Collingwood. He said – this was before and during the second world war – that genuine art is pure expression of emotion. The artist labors her pre-conscious intuitions and in a successful work of art expresses those intuitions honestly to herself. The audience, when they are confronted with the piece, can make their own interpretation by expressing their own dormant emotions to themselves. These can be different emotions, because people are different.

Using that criterion, *Playing God* was not even close to being a work of art. Collingwood would have called it pseudo-art. He named two types of that: entertainment and magic. In entertainment, the performer aims at arousing feelings and then resolving them for a cathartic conclusion. *Playing God* had that written all over it. In magic, feelings are harnessed to produce action. Collingwood's examples of magic were religious and patriotic "art". Most activist "art" would, by definition, fall into that category. Your wonderful film *The EFIList* might be an example of that, depending on your motivation and true emotions, of course. It could also be art in Collingwood's sense. But then, according to his view, it would cease to be activism. Mmm...

But you mentioned *Orkid*, my second rock opera, which is supposed to grow up to be a trilogy one of these days. It has an antinatalist undertone. Four intergalactic explorers from the star Bellatrix, or Gamma Orionis, have arrived on Earth to complete a 40 000-year research project on human reproduction. *Orkid* retells the history of the *Lord of the Rings* (that's the second act) and *Silmarillion* (that's the first act) with the difference that orcs (the all-female *Orkid* people) are the bravest and most beautiful creatures ever seen in this world and elves are lascivious breeders who want to make babies with everything that moves. *Orkid*, the queen of her people, feels an urge to procreate, as well (that's what Earth's atmosphere does to you) but stops herself by producing a new, improved copy of herself every time the need hits her, by destructive teleportation.

In the beginning, the people are celebrating the rumor that the queen is going to have a daughter – someone has misheard something. Philotheos the high priest confronts the queen who is in the middle of the transformation so there are two of her visible. Philotheos convinces *Orkid* to destroy the copy, but unbeknownst to Philotheos, *Orkid* destroys herself, or the old copy.

Identities, the song you liked – thank you again, Amanda! – is the penultimate piece of the opera, and in a way its real conclusion. The queen and the high priest meet again after thousands of years of separation. The high priest questions the queen's identity but after explanations accepts the situation. Although this is the daughter, it is also her queen and creator. "Thy will be done."

So, now I've gone and ruined the song for you, have I? Well, anyway, it's a contender to the category of genuine art in Collingwood's sense. I expressed to myself, honestly I hope, my preconscious thoughts about my two separations from my two life partners, and you expressed your own emotion to yourself. Or something.

Amanda:

Well, let me listen to it again to see if you've ruined it. Here it comes!

Identities 2017 – from Orkid by Visitors from Bellatrix – You can listen to the song [here](#)

Nope, all good, still love it!

You recently uncovered that as far back as 1992, you had in fact written a version of the moral asymmetry argument, which included, as you say, 'a conceptual solution to the problems of its hedonistic version' in your book *Liberal Utilitarianism and Applied Ethics*, and a paper called *Rationality and The Genetic Challenge* - that was an extraordinary discovery, can you tell us more about this piece?

Matti:

Well, as I said before, these ideas float around and someone writes them down and publishes them. This was nothing new. Philosophers had discussed different future population scenarios for a couple of decades and some of them had concluded that we have no duty to reproduce but we do have an obligation not to bring miserable lives into existence. The moral asymmetry, initially, is that you don't harm anyone by not bringing them into existence but you harm those who you bring into existence and who suffer.

Now, one of the problems with this is that if we use the hedonistic theory of value, or anything resembling it too closely, the distinction does not make sense, from the viewpoint of traditional utilitarianism. If our duty is to maximize net pleasure over pain, good over bad, then we should assess the probable outcome of all the choices that are available to us and choose the one that has the fattest bottom line. So, if there's a good likelihood that our child will be relatively happy and only a slight chance that it will be miserable, our choice should be to have the child. Existence doesn't come

into it. We are maximizing future value without assigning it to anyone yet.

This is a minefield whichever way you look at it. First of all, it lays the foundation of an extreme pronatalist view. Everyone who can have children should have them as long as the balance is positive. Derek Parfit in his 1984 book *Reasons and Persons* had already spilt a lot of ink analyzing this on population level. Should we have a huge population with barely livable lives or a small population with fantastically happy lives? People are still quarreling about this under the headings of a “repugnant conclusion” and the “mere addition argument”. On individual level, Julian Savulescu came perilously close to defending extreme pronatalism in his famed principle of procreative beneficence, on which the jury is still out, too.

Now, antinatalists had their own conceptual solutions. David Benatar in 1997 decided to boldly go where no one had gone before – well, give or take Schopenhauer and a few other historical figures – and claimed that all life is suffering. This is the idea that has been brewing ever since and now forms the cornerstone of new developments in antinatalism – EFILism and what have you. People in the street are not convinced. My life is good, and so are my children’s lives. End of story. That’s why I, later, chose the risk view. Any life can turn out to be bad, and that’s enough.

But I’m getting ahead of myself. Back in 1992, I had already gone beyond all this with my need-based theory of value. I only realized this now, preparing for this podcast, but the problem has always been visible. The question is, does our theory of value have a limit, an “enough” clause. Hedonistic utilitarianism doesn’t. There’s no limit to accumulating pleasure over pain, good over bad, when you don’t have to attach it to particular individuals. My liberal utilitarianism did have a limit. When there are no needs to be satisfied, that’s enough. This is why talking about the non-existing needs of non-existing beings makes no sense. There is no duty to have children, happy or otherwise, ever. There is a duty not to have children who then suffer.

I may be gloriously wrong here. This is the kind of brain gymnastics that philosophers should engage in only once in their lifetime, and probably before they turn thirty. Or that’s what one of my teachers, Professor Georg Henrik von Wright, used to say. He invented a new model of logic early on

in his career and then retreated back to the trenches in an orderly manner. Perhaps I should take this advice and stay out of the debate. Perhaps I've done enough damage already.

Amanda:

You also shared with me another early Anti-Natal epiphany that you had had, this one dating back to 1995, during a presentation at an AIDS project meeting, and a bad hangover - this was another incredible find - could you tell us all about what happened way back in 1995?

Matti:

Yes, thanks for bringing that up – that really was a revelation. It's about the scale of goodness and badness in human lives. The default value was, and still mostly is, that our existence can be happy, so-so, or barely livable. The emphasis, however, is that it can never be really, positively bad. The scale goes from zero to full value, with a suggestion that even zero may be unreachable. Life always has some positive value.

I was in an international project meeting in fall 1995, and the project was about HIV and AIDS. The presenters were all lamenting the birth of children infected with HIV, who had but a short and miserable lifespan ahead of them. Instead of talking about contraception or abortion, everybody was concentrating on the delivery. There was apparently a fifty-fifty chance (or something) that the child can be rescued from the womb without getting infected. They debated that.

I was fuming. Why do you want to have these children in this world? Their mothers – this was a time before effective medication – will die in a few years, anyway, and what kind of a life would that be even for those who survive? And fifty-fifty, come on!

Luckily, no one apparently heard me. I had such a splitting headache – those were good project meetings with long dinners – that I spoke in the softest of whispers, afraid that if I raise my voice, my brain will explode.

The two things – the babies and my head – combined, it seems, to give me the revelation. Life can be positively negative – bad. I drew a line at the bottom of the meeting's agenda and marked it: full negative value – zero –

full positive value. There! The truth! Now let's do something about it!

One person had, however, heard what I said. Charles Erin from Manchester sent me, a few months later, a manuscript by someone called David Benatar, arguing that life is always bad. Charles may have been the reviewer of the paper or something, I don't know, but it was "*Why it is better never to come into existence*" which was published in 1997. That settled it. Someone had beaten me to it. I turned away and started foam-mouthing about genetic manipulation, instead. But, as you know, the thought lingered on...

A rational cure for prereproductive stress syndrome (2004):

Amanda:

So now Matti I would now love to discuss your articles in much more detail, starting of course with your 2004 article by the name of *A rational cure for prereproductive stress syndrome* - The abstract is really short and sweet so I would love to read that out real quick -

Abstract

Since human reproduction is arguably both irrational and immoral, those who seek help before conceiving could be advised it is all right not to have children.

What led you to decide to write about this subject for the first time?

Matti:

The moment of brutal honesty. I had my ideas about having children, but it was not really kosher to say anything, everyone around me doing it, being proud of it, and all that.

But I had heard that academics were now ranked by the citations that their publications get, and I wanted my own citation magnet. So, I wrote this short piece and submitted it to the New England Journal of Medicine. If I could make it there, I'd make it anywhere, I thought.

The paper was promptly returned from the desk. “We don’t feel that this fine contribution would serve our readership. Thank you and blah-blah-blah.” I knew people from the Journal of Medical Ethics in England, though, so I immediately resubmitted there. And success! Published, featured, and commented as a target article. Job well done. Everyone disagreed, of course, but who cares? Publicity is publicity.

Amanda:

By this time had you seen Benatars 1997 paper, Why it is better never to come into existence? Did it influence you in any way?

Matti:

It must have done. Everything you read and understand leaves a trace. But it was David’s thing. I think we had met by now, in the International Association of Bioethics conferences. His father was the President at the time and I followed in his footsteps a few years later. But no, I didn’t engage with David’s argument. In fact, I have come to fully appreciate it only during our little process here.

Amanda:

So Matti, what is this strange illness that seems to befall so many people, what is, as you call it, ‘Prereproductive Stress Syndrome’?

Matti:

Hah! Yes, the submission to the New England Journal of Medicine meant that I had to catch their attention. And I thought that calling the desire to have children a disease would do the trick. Didn’t work with them, but got the paper published in the Journal of Medical Ethics, so, good choice! Just to make this clear to our audience here, there is no ailment called “prereproductive stress syndrome”. I made it up.

But just now I started thinking. Should there be one? I mean, medical labels are used for all sorts of political and ideological purposes. The International Classification of Diseases used to say that sexual orientation can be a disease and being introverted is a form of mental illness. So yes, why not have prereproductive stress syndrome there, as well? That would give family planning doctors something to think about.

Amanda:

This quite short paper makes some very strong arguments against both the irrationality and the immorality of having children

Beginning first with The Rationality of Risk Aversion, you write that your ideas on avoiding risks is based on something called Maximin Strategy, which was not a term I was at all familiar with before this, could you tell us more about what that is?

Matti:

The maximin principle comes from game theory – a discipline that studies rational decision making. Employing the maximin strategy means that you maximize the minimum outcome of your choice. For instance, you don't choose the alternative with the worst possible outcome because that would minimize the worst outcome instead of maximizing it.

In the paper, I argued that we could use this in reproductive decision making. The worst outcome, in terms of potential future individuals, is that their lives would be miserable. And since any life can turn out to be miserable, maximin caution dictates that we should not have children at all.

People who are cleverer than I have objected by saying that this is not how the principle works. My logic could be used if we knew nothing about the probabilities. Then we could perhaps assume a fifty-fifty chance of a miserable life and employ the maximin principle like I suggest. But, as they point out, we do know something about the probabilities. In fact they claim to know that miserable lives are such an unlikely outcome that it can be ignored. We should try to maximize expected utility instead, and this favors having children.

They could be right about the principle – I'm no expert in game theory. I'm not so sure about the application that they propose. Risk is the badness of the outcome multiplied by its probability, so much hangs on the severity of the badness. If it's truly catastrophic, then even a small likelihood produces a huge risk. And I thought – and think – that a well-and-truly miserable life is a catastrophic outcome.

Just recently, I have also thought about the likelihoods that my opponents

would accept. Let's say that a miserable life is not catastrophic but insist that it's pretty bad. My opponents could then argue that, in terms of value, a wonderful life is as good as a miserable life is bad. And since wonderful lives are likelier, we should have children.

To which my response is that they are monsters. They would maximize expected utility even in a 51–49 situation in favor of wonderful lives and accept a considerable risk of miserable lives. Or perhaps their threshold would be 40 percent, or 30, or 20, or 10. I don't mind. Monsters, I'm telling you.

But that's quite a bit of brain exercise again. Briefly said, I argued that there are dangers in reproduction and it would be rational to avoid them by not having children.

Amanda:

You also have very strong reasons to believe that procreation is morally wrong as well, can you tell our audience more about these reasons that you lay out in the article?

Matti:

Did I say that I have very strong reasons? That's a bad sign. In philosophical papers, it usually means that the author has lost all faith in the cause and is throwing some kind of a Hail Mary. Let's see if I can remember what mine was. ... Oh, yes, it was the avoidable suffering argument, wasn't it? ... Yes, so.

According to a fairly accepted moral rule, we should not inflict avoidable harm on anyone. That's a no-brainer, really. Should I harm someone if I can avoid it? Of course not.

I proceeded straight to the cake from there. Potential parents can avoid all the harm that their possible children would face by not having them. No children, no harm. As simple as that.

Well, not really. It's again a question of application. The principle is fine, but how should we interpret "avoidable"? My reading is literal. Avoidable is what you can avoid.

Pronatalists see things differently. If we don't reproduce, our potential children will not have lives. And since they must, of course, have lives, what harm they meet in their lives is unavoidable. Harm is a part of life.

I was thinking about something like this the other day. Why do we see things so differently? I was reminded of an incident at school when I was about sixteen. The teacher told that Medieval people built bridges over big rivers because that way commerce routes by land and water could meet. That brought them a lot of wealth and fortune but there was a problem. Their enemies started to loot their cities and cause mayhem. What was the bridge-builders' solution to the problem, the teacher asked?

I lifted my eyes from my habitual tic-tac-toe game at the back row and ventured, "They burned the bridges?" I never learned the correct answer because I was sent to the corridor and sneaked out for a cigarette, as was my way on those (regular) occasions.

Assuming, however, that the answer was something like, "They built walls", then the logical clash here is similar to the pro-antinatalist dispute over avoidability. One says, "possible to avoid", the other, "possible to avoid without changing the fundamental way of thinking".

If my definition is taken, this objection to having children is different from the risk argument. The undisputed claim is that everybody is harmed at some point in their lives. No one is safe from that. There is no question of probability, this is certainty. And if we read "avoidable" my way, it's immoral to have children, because it inflicts avoidable harm on them by making them exist. – Colleagues disagree so strongly that I stay with the risk argument whenever I can.

Amanda:

You then have a section Practical Guidelines, and this was the section I have to say I found to be the most fascinating, as it's all about what we should do as a practice of speaking with people about their Immorality and Irrationality in their desire to procreate - When faced with those who may wish to procreate, you shocked me a bit by saying that, 'So, from my own moral point of view, the best strategy is to tolerate their immorality.' Do you

still believe this to be true?

Matti:

Note the “from my own moral point of view”. That’s the thing with philosophical arguments – we cannot be selective in using them. If I try to avoid inflicting avoidable harm and I know that I can make the parents miserable and I believe that they will have their children anyway, then that’s what the moral view dictates. Don’t make them avoidably miserable.

It’s complicated and has to do with the difference between morality and the law, as well. If my word is law and I only hurt people without any gains, then my word is bad law. I don’t know. Maybe it’s just the utilitarian in me talking. Expressivism is futile. Or something.

Amanda:

I get you I think, I respect that. I don’t want to make anyone miserable either, especially if there’s nothing to gain. I think though, I’m not sure, but I think I am willing to bite the bullet on prevention through reason being an acceptable form of harm. I think I was harmed becoming Antinatalist, an extinctionist, I think I was harmed going vegan - it hurt, there was real pain involved - and I don’t know if we could say it was voluntary really, because I was defenseless against the power of certain memes - they had their war inside my head, there were casualties, and they won, and I’m all that’s left - this is *bad*, but now at least some of my dangerousness to others, (Hopefully) has been mitigated... I’m not sure, but I of course respect the elegance and sanctity of the Hippocratic Oath, and try to live by it under most circumstances as best I can... But, as my friend Matt, Life Sucks has said in the past, ‘If WE are silent, then everyone loses.’

You do believe however, in the cases of irrationality, there is more possible ground to be made with changing peoples minds? you say and I quote two sections -

“The least controversial intervention would be to let possible parents know that their urge is not necessarily rational.”

“Possible parents could be told that, according to at least one philosopher, it would be all right for them not to reproduce at all. In a social environment

where the pressure to procreate makes the choice in the majority of cases less than fully autonomous, this could empower people to make the unpopular, but if my arguments are sound, rational choice, to remain childless. In effect, this would cure their prereproductive stress syndrome.”

Matti:

Yes, I tried to be as non-controversial as possible. And responses have shown that the irrationality aspect gets a slightly better reception. Not great, mind, but slightly better.

Amanda:

So since attempting to put together this interview, we have lost out abortion rights here in America, and I fear we may lose a great deal more than that both in so far as our access to contraception, perhaps many other things as well - and so in my mind at least, this new circumstance makes talking with people about Antinatalism so much more important, because we are in effect losing our other tools that we once had - do you agree with any of that sentiment? I mean I'm curious if your views on Antinatalist counseling had changed since writing this, even before the turning of Roe Vs. Wade, but have we entered a whole new ball game on top of that?

Matti:

Roe and its reversal testify to the correctness of what I said about morality and the law. And there's a connection to antinatalism – or rather, two kinds of pronatalism, one blatant and the other clandestine. Or so I argued in a paper that I just completed on the case and its aftermath.

Neither side in the debate questions the need to have children. More exactly, the capitalist nation's need to have workers, consumers, and soldiers. Those who oppose abortion rights want to make sure that the babies that are already in the making in the wombs of underprivileged women stay there and become cheap labor and cannon fodder. The others want to secure women's reproductive health – about the first words that President Biden uttered in his immediate statement. Not women's health, not women's right to terminate their pregnancies, ... but their reproductive health. Meaning their ability to produce citizens later. There. I rest my case. No saints in the US of A. Just different kinds of eugenic pronatalists.

Amanda:

So, related to this, I did want to ask - so In addition to being a philosophical position, Antinatalism over the last decade+ has also become a developing social movement as well - And for the last few years, real Antinatalist activism has began to develop - we now have Antinatalist street out reach, meetups, flyers, billboards and even the formation of proto-NGOs all over the world, such as Child-Free India, Stop Having Kids, Antinatalism International (Which is my collective.), and The AAPJ, which is The Association of Anti-Procreationism in Japan - Are you familiar with any of these developments? And either way, what are you thought if any on this? Do you see all of this as a good or a bad thing?

Matti:

May I be horrible here, Devil's Advocate horrible? ... Right, OK. Obviously, Amanda, I admire you for your attitude and stamina. That, I hope, goes without saying. But then, enter the philosopher. The utilitarian philosopher. Is any of this achievable? Or are we just being expressive, venting our anger at the stupidity of breeders? What's the outcome? Clever ones stop breeding and stupid ones continue? How is that going to help the world? How does it reduce suffering?

But that's just the utilitarian philosopher. Frack them. Onward with the cause! La lotta continua!

Amanda:

No, I don't think you are being horrible at all, I respect what you say and I take it seriously - my totally impotent answer to that is, I don't know. I don't know if any of it is achievable. I believe in determinism as well, so I aknowldege there are layers upon layers of uselessness I'm utterly powerless against.... Perhaps all the Antinatalist activist is doing is filling time in the day and that's all. I can tell myself pretty little slogans like - 'if I only prevent one life, then it's worth it'... And yes, if I can do at least that, then for me it has been. But lets face it, preventing one life is obviously pathetic in the face of an inability to break the cycle of sentience... And of course, I fully admit to all the selfishness involved - Antinatalism feeds me, it feeds me creatively, it's a burning passion for me, it's an obsession, I can't help myself - I get out of bed everyday for the sake of the unborn and to prevent the Antinatalists of the future - I'm driven... What can I do? Even

in the face of uselessness and futility, I don't see how I can justify taping my mouth shut and not arguing the argument on the off chance it does any good... Just seems like banging my head against the wall is the least I can do in the face of the suffering...

Regarding, "venting our anger at the stupidity of breeders?" - This I will say, is not what at least I'm trying to do. They are just as much victims as we are, they have simply bought into the cycle of abuse and become the abusers, because no one ever makes these argument to them, and I think that if Stop Having Kids for instance has proved anything, it's that, people are showing signs of wanting to have this conversation when confronted with it - I've seen it, up close and personal now - there is a kind of relief, that is absolutely visible when confronted by all of this, because I truly believe, many people do think about these things, and they do want to talk about them, but nearly everybody is too afraid to say anything...

Matti:

Incidentally, I expressed my feelings about the world situation and our inability to change it in a 2010 punk song called Passification. It didn't make the cut to our first rock opera Playing God because no one else understood it. The audience of the podcast might.

Passification 2010 – from Orkid by Visitors from Bellatrix – You can listen to the song [here](#)

The rational cure for prereproductive stress syndrome revisited (2005):

Amanda:

So Matti I know I'm going out of chronological order now, there is one other paper before this one was written which we'll jump back to shortly - but I wanted to talk a bit about your follow up to this first article, written in 2005, "*The rational cure for prereproductive stress syndrome revisited*", which is this great response you wrote to several responses you received to the first entry - The abstract for this one, again short and sweet -

Abstract

If it is irrational to allow the worst outcome of our actions, and if it is immoral to cause suffering, then it is irrational and immoral to have children.

So this sequel to your previous paper, is your response to three colleges who had each written a criticism to the original paper, Rebuttals from - Rebecca Bennett, Søren Holm, and Sahin Aksoy - I just want to touch a little on each of their positions briefly and then get to a bit about your responses to each but before we do that I did want to ask -

For many people, I'm quite sure, your original paper was likely the first time they had ever encountered anything resembling anything like Antinatalist thinking at all - and I have to imagine, in 2004, that that was really shocking to a lot of people! So aside from these three individuals that made proper responses to you, I was wondering if you could kind of give me a window into what that paper was met with in general?

Matti:

I smile a lot when I say these things and move quickly away if I'm under fire. All these people – the three you mention and the dozen others whom I invited to criticize the paper in a Festschrift for my half-a-century birthday – are still my friends and there is no bad blood between us. Matti is like that, they say. He has these harebrained ideas but that's just how he is. That's the academic side of things.

The general public I haven't tested. I took the precaution of never writing any of this stuff in Finnish, to avoid the excrement storm that had met my early work on abortion and euthanasia. I had moved away from Finland, to Manchester, England not to be killed with an axe after yet another TV outing. So, with domestic audiences I stayed with more cuddly topics like saving the whale and hugging a tree. Call me a chicken. And oh, I defended those, too.

Amanda:

Before we go through the criticisms, I just want to clarify that I have not read any of these criticisms directly, though I probably should have done that, so some forgiveness will have to be made, I'm hopefully not mischaracterizing any of them at all.

Beginning with Søren Holm -

Søren Holm:

So if I am not mistaken, Holm claims you are wrong, because -

“He starts from the premise that to make my argument work I would need to regard the maximin rule—the rule specified in claim (a)—as the only criterion of rationality.” and he also says that “On the other hand, if I do not regard the maximin rule as the only criterion of rationality, I cannot defend directive counselling against having children.”

Can you explain for us what your response to Mr. Holm was?

Matti:

I can't remember what I said – I probably tried to wriggle out of it by some deft philosophical footwork – but this is what I should have said: “You are absolutely right. There are other accounts of rationality, for instance the ‘maximize expected utility’ [which I mentioned earlier]. I’m only addressing those who, like me, think that maximin is a good principle and overrides others when suffering could be caused.”

On the “directive counselling” part I’m a bit confused. I tried to say specifically that the only counselling I dare to recommend is nondirective, in other words, just telling potential parents about the possibility that not having children might be rational, as well.

Amanda:

Was there ever any follow up from Holm to your response back?

Matti:

No, we kept it academic and polite. He had his say, I had mine, both left the scene knowing that they were right. We go back more than thirty years, so this was just amenable chitchat among good friends.

Amanda:

Sahin Aksoy:

So Sahin Aksoy’s response is really quite extreme I have to say, I’m not at all familiar with them outside of this paper of yours, and I have to say I’m quite curious if he’s responded to more Antinatalist views as things have

developed over the years, this is honestly one of the most extreme Pro-Natalist responses to an Antinatalist I have ever encountered, it's nothing short of tyrannical natalism. - To quote:

“According to Aksoy, it is right to allow any suffering our potential children can experience, because existence is in and of itself valuable, and non-existence is the paragon of evil. In his view, it is “immoral to ‘sentence’ someone to nonexistence while you have the chance to bring them into life”

And even more than that, he believes women should constantly be pregnant and that even men should find ways of becoming pregnant as well! -

Anyway, I would love it if you can tell our audience about your response and, and also again, if there was any follow up at all?

Matti:

No follow-up and my answer could have been shorter and sweeter. “Thank you for your contribution. Don’t call us, we’ll call you.” Or so I hope. It’s the only reasonable way to respond to this kind of thing.

And let me emphasize that I’m not afraid of criticism or theoretically averse to well-formulated pronatalism. This one was just so clearly addressing the author’s home audience that it was impossible to tackle technically, or philosophically.

Mind you, I’m right now in the process of sticking my head into the lion’s den. In the Academy of Finland bid to study pro- and antinatalism I promise to go to the Vatican and talk to the dignitaries of the Pontifical Academy for Life. Monsignor Renzo Pegoraro is a good friend of mine and the Academy’s Chancellor.

My idea is to ask them this: “How do you reconcile your teaching with the knowledge that if population expansion continues, the probable outcome is much suffering in the Global South?” That should be interesting. But again, let me stress that I have no hidden agenda here. I would like to hear their answer to this one, genuinely.

Amanda:

Re-really? You want to go to The Vatican to speak about Antinatalism? Is there anyway we can strap a hidden camera to you for that event? I'm joking of course, but oh to be a fly on that wall!

Rebecca Bennett:

Moving on briefly to Rebecca Bennett, her claims aren't quite as controversial, but she comes close in that she claims that it would somehow not be wrong to produce savior siblings in the case of one child being ill, and to have another to harvest organs for the first - Like that story always ends up well - she also believes producing some suffering is fine, and she thinks some lives are worthwhile while some are not -

What did you think of Rebecca Bennett's thoughts?

Matti:

Becki and I are bosom buddies and I think the world of her. Oh, the nights at Matt and Phreds, a jazz club in Manchester's Northern Quarter. Never left there remembering anything. Except that once Matt, Becki's partner at the time, treated us to a champagne cascade – the only one in my life so far. Ahhh...

But I digress. Her views. Well, first of all, it was very brave of her to admit that reproduction is probably always irrational. She was, if memory serves, pregnant at the time, so that was a big concession.

As to the savior siblings, we had a lot of that going around at the University of Manchester's Centre for Social Ethics and Policy, our workplace. We believed in the principles of reproductive autonomy and maybe procreative beneficence, and that made us all eugenic pronatalists in disguise. Well, I tried to squirm a little, but not with any serious intent, I'm afraid.

We were impressed by the ideas of freedom to choose and to produce a lot of good and thought that once the liberal policies are in place, we'll sort out the small residue of real-life implications in good time.

I've only begun to realize the error of some of my ways during this process

with you, so thank you Amanda!

Amanda:

I'm shocked, much humbled and delighted to have had any kind of positive influence on your thinking, Matti!

Other critiques:

Matti, while we are here speaking of critiques you've received, I just wanted to briefly touch on the critiques leveled against you by Mr. David Wasserman, in the book he co-authors with David Benatar called, *Debating Procreation: Is It Wrong To Procreate?* (p. 172-6):

Wasserman believes you are being, as he calls it, 'Unreasonably risk averse.' - What do you think of Mr. Wasserman's criticisms?

Matti:

This is a common criticism against the risk view. He takes his lead from a time-honored tradition of throwing doubt upon the views of the Harvard political philosopher John Rawls. Rawls argued that we should choose a government that safeguards the interests of the worst-off in our societies. The counterargument, obviously, is that if we tend to the needs of the worst-off forever, we'll never get to the part where others are properly encouraged to fulfil their potential.

I have no warm feelings for Rawls – just another apologist of global capitalism in my book – but I borrowed his idea back in 2004, because it was a convenient thing to do, and I sensed that the audience might be ready for this kind of argument.

Amanda:

How can we possibly be too risk averse, if our actions aren't performing some necessarily action? When we procreate we create need for no need, we are creating life where there is no purpose being served - it just seems to me that when we take risks with actions that are necessary, like for instance, driving to the store to get food, we have more ethical license to do so, but when we take risks that are, extra curricular, let's say, then we can not possibly be accused of being too risk averse - would you agree with this?

Matti:

You are preaching to the choir here. "Creating need for no need." I will mercilessly steal that one. And yes, the other needs are different.

Amanda:

Oh, please do, though I should say that it's not actually mine, it's an Inmendham-ism.

One thing that I find to be very dishonest of your critics - though perhaps I'm misunderstanding - is that you and other Antinatalists who make the risk argument are not really saying at all that people don't have the right to take risks with their own welfare - we CAN gamble with our own money - it's when it becomes about someone else's welfare, something else welfare, it's when you are gambling with someone else's money so to speak, that it becomes unacceptable - am I correct in thinking this is an area of their criticism that there is a great deal of misunderstanding about?

Matti:

You are spot on. The terrible thing about it is, though, that I may be the one to blame. If I had known in 2004 that I will be the notorious author of the risk argument against human reproduction I would have argued the case more systematically. Then again, would the audience have been ready? Maybe we should just proceed by baby steps, taking into account the sensibilities of breeders, until there are no baby steps. Didn't you say something like that in our correspondence?

Amanda:

Indeed I did I said, "We must take baby steps now, so that perhaps there will literally be no more baby steps in the future"

Have you ever formally responded to Wasserman's criticisms?

Matti:

No, but now that you mention it, I will have to. Now that I know that I'm a Famous Antinatalist. And out of respect for his work.

If you must make babies, then at least make the best

babies you can? (June 2004):

Amanda:

Alright, so moving back to 2004, your second anti-procreative effort was a paper called "*If you must make babies, then at least make the best babies you can?*"

Abstract

This article provides an overview of the reasons why people should or should not have children, and of two attempts to define what we can do to make sure that the lives of the children we have are as good as they can be. It is suggested that the answers to these questions are more complex than we tend to think, and that rational arguments can be found to support many mutually conflicting reproductive policies.

This is a bit more expansive an article than your first two, and I think your Risk argument really shines in this piece -

My honest opinion is that the risk argument is one of the very best, and easiest to understand arguments that there is against procreation. It's so much LESS abstract a concept for people to grasp than something like consent, or the axiological asymmetry - I think those arguments are great, but the Asymmetry especially is like some kind of Rubik's cube people have to decipher, and that's simply not the case for risk - risk makes it clear right away that procreation will not only harm someone else, but the individual making the action as well -

One of the greatest strengths I think the Risk argument has is also how easy it is to create visual metaphors around - it's its own Antinatalist art generator in that sense - Gambling, Drunk Driving, Russian Roulette - and another example is this great metaphor you use in the paper about the Sealed Box, I quote -

"Let me illustrate the strategy of risk-aversion by using an imaginary example.:

You have inherited, as an heirloom, a sealed box. You cannot open it, and you are not certain what is in it. There are two possibilities. The box may

contain valuable jewelry. For all you know, this is the more likely alternative. But you may be wrong. The box may also contain explosives, which are set to go off when it is opened. As far as you can figure, this chance is smaller, but it is realistic. You have a choice. You can keep the box to yourself, and never open it. Alternatively, you can give it to a complete stranger as a gift. If you give it away, the recipient cannot help but open it, although she does not know about the contents. If the box contains jewelry, she is lucky—she can keep it or sell it and buy things she would not otherwise have afforded. If it contains explosives, she is unlucky—she will be badly injured for life. Should you give the box to a complete stranger or not?”

Curious to know your thought in regards to the metaphorability, (If that's a word, HAH!) of Risk.

Matti:

Thank you, Amanda! This was very much a work of magic – not art, not entertainment, remember my follies with the art theory of RG Collingwood? It was created to please and to influence members of the British Fertility Society. They asked me to speak in an occasion of theirs, not knowing about the prereproductive stress syndrome, because the paper hadn't been published yet. I had to tread carefully, or so I thought, and give them the “Life is always good” lines before going to the Gift of Life. Now, you may find this hard to believe, but they lapped it up! Not a dissenting voice in the audience, just nodding and, “Yes, that's something we should be thinking about.” And the fact that they wanted the speech to be published. They wanted to hear this. Take that, all you who believe that people working in reproductive medicine cannot think outside the box!

The ‘metaphorability’ – you're a native speaker and allowed to come up with words – can be dangerous. The Gift of Life is not an exact analogy of reproduction, because the recipient already exists. So, whatever you think about the Rubik's Cube quality of the asymmetry argument, it is always there in some shape or form. After a reviewer had complained about the disanalogy, I added an explanation that in this case the difference actually works in favor of antinatalism. But I've been trying to cut down on my use of imaginary examples since. They are nice and heuristic but they can become a trap. The conversation gets stuck in the example and the real thing is forgotten.

Amanda:

You're right.... This has been a tricky thing for me to come to terms with... I cut my teeth in super metaphorical Antinatalist language, EFILism is FILLED with metaphorical language, enough that I was able to make a whole movie from it... But I do see what you mean, it's maybe similar to the danger of the way people use image based memes on the internet, but never actually learn to talk to one another... I've noticed that eventually all people do is parrot the metaphorical language, but don't understand or learn to converse beyond that... I wish this wasn't so, but I do think you are correct and it's salient to be concerned with the danger of it... I'm reluctant to abandon it though, because as a tactic, it does get a lot of people at least half way there, that wouldn't have gotten anywhere without it...

In addition to philanthropic arguments regarding why people should desist from procreation, David Benatar also presents several misanthropic arguments about why human beings should not be created as well. Unless I am mistaken, I feel as though you have previously only written on the risks of procreation through a more philanthropic lens - being more concerned with the harm that will come to the potential child, and not the harms that that potential child might inflict. I'm interested in hearing your thoughts on procreative risks, as it applies to the creation of 'bad' people?

Matti:

You're absolutely correct, Amanda. I have mostly talked about the philanthropic arguments, concentrating on the wellbeing of the possible future individuals. And, like you say, we could equally well talk about the harm that those individuals would inevitably cause. They would probably have children of their own and continue this needless cycle. And they would hurt their fellow humans, like we do.

My current bid for funding from the Academy of Finland starts with a misanthropic premise. Climate change should somehow be curbed but on the level of existing individuals we are not doing much about it. The obvious alternative would be to reduce the number of people in the future, or at least stall the current population expansion.

I propose to study varieties of pro- and antinatalism to see where exactly

the problem lies. And, as I said before, I find the culprit in eugenic pronatalism – the view that it’s OK for “us” to reproduce as long as we can keep “them” from procreating. That attitude should be reversed and population expansion should be curbed more sensibly.

But the objection is that population control, in practice, always hits women who are worst off and more likely than not living in the Global South. This is unfair, especially as their children would produce a fraction of the greenhouse emissions that children in the Global North will.

Which is fine and well – the objection, I mean – or so I thought. But then, just the other day, I started rethinking this. Long story short, I realized that the critics of population control are eugenic pronatalists just like those whom they criticize.

The Global North people say that they should be allowed to continue to have children, and that population control should be for the Global South. The Global South defenders say that the Global South people should be allowed to continue to have children, and that population control should be for the Global North. Both want the best babies; they just disagree who the best babies are.

What I can do with this revelation, I don’t know yet. But it’s there now, in my tool kit. Time will tell.

Amanda:

I think it’s very wise that you are focusing some of your current Antinatalist work around overpopulation, and population control - the worlds of Antinatalism and Overpopulation are very separate, and I think many Antinatalist’s & overpopulation activists want to keep it that way - but in my opinion this is a huge mistake. Antinatalism is one of the most new important tools we have in the fight against overpopulation, and Antinatalism appeal on a global, international scale should be an indicator of that - antinatalists are everywhere, and if shepherded correctly, I think could have a much wider impact in the fight against overpopulation. It will be interesting though, to see at what point overpopulation and Antinatalism stop being friends, which I also think is an inevitability - those concerned with no population are strange bed fellows to those concerned with only

less, so we'll see, and I shall enthusiastically follow every development in this work that you propose.

You do a really good job of breaking down some of the common excuses people give for having children,

A good deal of the rest of the paper is about fixing life essentially by genetically engineering unwanted traits out of the human make up - though I would love to spend a lot more time unpacking all of this, I believe for the sake of time we won't get to all of it so I'll reduce my thoughts down to one questions -

I really liked the bullet points at the end of this paper, and in two of those points your conclusions reads:

- . Should people be stopped from having children?—Arguably yes.
- . Can people be stopped from having children?—No.

I'm just curious where you are with both of those conclusions now years after this paper has been published - do you feel more or less firmly that people should be stopped from having children, and you feel we are any closer to finding ethical methods of getting people to stop?

Matti:

I stand by my words. Yes, arguably, people should be stopped from having children. And no, they probably cannot be stopped. Most people think that it would be unnatural. That's a concept that I need to discuss with the Vatican people, if I ever get there.

Christian philosophy in Europe was in the Middle Ages dominated by natural law theory, which has since, after the Enlightenment and what have you, made a comeback in a Roman Catholic teaching called Neo-Thomism (it's based on the ideas of Thomas Aquinas, who lived in the thirteenth century).

According to it, human beings have a telos, a goal toward which they are developing, or should be developing under the natural order of things. The human goal is to survive, seek shelter, have children and raise them up,

and to seek knowledge, especially knowledge concerning God.

Apart from rare exceptions – nuns, monks, priests – people should have children, then. Not having them would be unnatural, against nature, perverted. And this is essentially the teaching by which the Roman Catholic population of the world – 17 percent of it – should abide by. No chance for antinatalism, then. Except...

May I go off on a tangent here again? ... OK, here goes. Remember my alternative God who is benevolent and omniscient but not omnipotent? The one who realized that creating sentience was a mistake and is trying to make amends now, by telling people not to reproduce?

Well, she might be the solution to our problem. Let's persuade people that this is the true nature of God. Stranger things have happened. Religions change with times. Perhaps we could effect this change somehow. Didn't you have something in mind about an antinatalist Mary, mother of Jesus? It would be slow but surely worth it. OK, end of rant.

Amanda:

Hah! Indeed I do have an idea like that, thank you so much, Matti! I started writing a musical years ago called Anti-Natal Mary, which was an Antinatalist re-interpretation of the birth and life of Jesus Christ - A kind of Anti-Natal Jesus Christ Super Star if you will. In the story, God tells Jesus, that to grow up to be the 'Saviour' he must end life on the planet in part by spreading Antinatalism and pro-extinction, and that that is his janitorial mission. He's driven to do this, but is resentful of both God & Mary for imposing life on him, and laments the futility of trying to achieve total extinction in a universe which apparently includes not only gods, but that at least one of those gods happens to also be his own father. I've always been really interested in the idea of what Antinatalism looks like in a real modern family context, and what chances for parent/child love & forgiveness can still exist despite at least one party being openly Antinatalist, and I also like the subversives of perverting sacrosanct Christian imagery into some kind of twisted Anti-Natalist vision, so part of this ideas was a study of trying to create Antinatalist mother and child imagery, and also an Antinatalist answer to the Pietà would be. I do honestly really like some of the songs that have come out of it so far, who

knows if I'll ever finish it, I certainly would really like to.

Matti:

That's priceless, Amanda. And to give you some extra pressure, may I tell you that I have told the story of the son of Mary in four minutes in a song for the next part of my Trilogy? Would you like our audience to be tortured with it? It's only a demo.

Amanda:

Indeed! There's nothing I would like more! Lets hear it.

Silent Night 2019 – from Orkid by Visitors from Bellatrix – You can listen to the song [here](#)

Amanda:

Beautiful Matti, beautiful! Thank you so much for letting us use some of your music in this episode.

Matti, Aside from Risk, what do you feel to be the next strongest argument in favor of Antinatalism? Consent? Asymmetry? Something else?

Matti:

They are all needed, minus consent, possibly.

We need asymmetry to prove that we have no duty to reproduce but we can have a duty not to reproduce, For the latter, we have a duty not to have children if they would suffer. With the former – no duty – we run into a snag.

And the snag is that if we use a standard hedonistic utilitarian theory, we have no initial, independent, not-value-related reason not to have children if they would be happy. Our aim is to maximize happiness over misery, and if we can do that, even by reproducing, we should. To claim otherwise would be to go around in circles. In an attempt to prove that there is no duty to do X, we'd start from the premise that there is no duty to do X. It doesn't work like that. Not in philosophy. It's a vicious circle.

I'm only guessing here, but this might be the reason why David Benatar went for the "all life is suffering" line. That would settle it, and personally I

believe that he is right, but quite a few others disagree.

This is why a better line could be to go by my 1994 need-based axiology. There's no need to come into existence. So, even if the maximization of need satisfaction is our moral goal, we have no moral duty to reproduce. Oh, if only more people had read Liberal Utilitarianism and Applied Ethics back then... (Imagine some dramatic gestures by me here.)

Anyway, this is why I think that talking about consent confuses the issue. My starting point was that there is no need to become into existence because there is no one there. Saying that potential children cannot consent unintentionally promotes the idea that there is someone who could consent, in some weird kinda way. In other words, that there would be someone in there. There isn't.

Next up, quality of life. Yes, I agree with David Benatar that life is always bad. But do other people buy this? Maybe, if we could get the idea of our nice but weak God or the antinatalist Mother Mary to take root. Before that, not so much.

And this is where all the accolade for the risk view comes from. All lives may not be bad, but we don't know the result when we are making reproductive choices. Maybe my child's life would be bad. Am I willing to take the risk? Answers vary, but with this we reach a wider audience than with the "all life is bad". Or so I think.

Wow! That became the best formulation of my views ever. Couldn't have done it without you, Amanda. You're a gem! That's the conclusion of our correspondence leading to this interview, really. Thank you!

Amanda:

I'm speechless, brilliant!

There is a small but growing sub category of Antinatalism called AI Antinatalism, which is essentially Antinatalists against the creation of sentient AI - I'm curious to know if your Antinatalism would extend to include being against the create of artificial sentience? Does it matter what material Frankenstein is made out of? Or is Frankenstein always Better

Never to Have Been?

Matti:

Don't go spoiling my cornflakes now, Amanda! I will round up my rock opera trilogy by moving to an alternative reality – a Star Trek holodeck, where I have a happy Groundhog Day over and over again, never remembering it when it starts, always being as happy as ever to go through it.

If you insist on being morose and saying that this will not end up well – the Matrix will be exposed or Huxley's Noble Savage will intervene – then I go to my fallback position. Which is, all right, if I can't have that, then grant me the opportunity to exit when my life is in a serene moment. Epicureans have this concept of ataraxia, or peace of mind, that they saw as the best human experience possible. So give me an exit when I'm having one of those episodes and I will not come back to haunt you on any questions about artificial intelligence. Which are frightening, to say the least. (Said he, evading the question.)

If you must give them a gift, then give them the gift of nonexistence (2022)

Amanda:

Moving on to some of your latest work on the subject of Antinatalism, lets take a look at one of your newest papers called, "*If you must give them a gift, then give them the gift of nonexistence*" - first off thank you so much for sharing this paper with me, and it's accompanying blog version - as far as I know neither of these works has yet been published, so I'm very grateful and honored to have this rare window into them -

Abstract

I present a qualified new defense of antinatalism. It is intended to empower potential parents who worry about their possible children's life quality in a world threatened by environmental degradation and climate change. The main elements of the defence are an understanding of antinatalism's historical nature and contemporary varieties, a positional theory of value based on Epicurean hedonism and Schopenhauerian pessimism, and a

sensitive guide for reproductive decision-making in the light of different views on life's value and risk-taking. My conclusion and main message to the concerned would-be parents is threefold. If they believe that life's ordinary frustrations can make it not worth living, they should not have children. If they believe that a noticeably low life quality makes it not worth living and that such life quality can be reasonably expected for their prospective offspring, they should not have children, either. If they believe that noticeably low life qualities are not reasonably to be expected or that they are but the risk is worth taking, they can, in the light of their own values and beliefs, have children. The conclusion is supported by a combination of the extant arguments for reproductive abstinence, namely the arguments from consent, moral asymmetry, life quality, and risk.

May I ask first, what has caused you to want to start writing about Antinatalism again after so many years?

Matti:

You did, Amanda. I have been vaguely aware that something is brewing – the WikiQuotes realization a few years ago and David Wasserman's recognition, but I have not really seen myself as a player in this field. You convinced me, rightly or wrongly, that I am. So, I'm trying to live up to the challenge. The "If you must give them a gift, then give them the gift of nonexistence" was written as a result of our correspondence.

Amanda:

Thank you so much, Matti, I've never been more proud.

What is, as you call it The Offer That I Could Not Refuse? And, do you feel that this is different to a Right to Die argument?

Matti:

I just came up with this idea. It's the button of oblivion but without repercussions to others. If a reliable agency offered me the opportunity to cease to exist, mentally, while a physical avatar of me would continue my life and do all the things that I would have done, would I accept the offer?

And my answer is yes, no question about it. Self-exit, or suicide, as it is called, is off the table for many people, including me, because there are

emotional and economic dependents. Cannot leave because my parents would be devastated. What if another Ukrainian researcher needs me to get her out of Odessa? X, in the end, couldn't come because of her family, but there might be others who need me. Or Y from Tehran? Would he be allowed to come over if I wasn't here to receive him to the doctoral programme?

Of course I have a right to die. Try to stop me if I make that choice. I've chosen the spot a long time ago, travelling by car in Europe with my parents – ah, those were the days of cheap gasoline and limitless pollution. Grossglockner, the highest mountain in Austria. The road. The resting place. A thousand-meter drop. Clean and simple. And the glacier wardens must be pretty used to cleaning up the mess.

The difference is the others. I don't want to inconvenience anyone unnecessarily.

Amanda:

Would you find any amount of risk of harm acceptable enough to bring someone here?

Matti:

Yes, of course I can. I'm not a nearly-utilitarian philosopher for nothing. If I could have a child who could convince humankind to voluntarily self-exit, I would be a monster not to. Right? Well, not a real-life scenario, that one, luckily.

Amanda:

Yes, I regretfully agree, although he better not just be after humanity, no child of mine is going to be an Anthopopentric Antinatalists!

May I ask when we can expect this paper to become public?

Matti:

It should be out and openly accessible already in the Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics.

ARE SOME CONTROVERSIAL VIEWS IN BIOETHICS JUVENALIAN SATIRE WITHOUT IRONY? (2022):

Amanda:

I also wanted to briefly touch on another recent article you sent me, this one called "*Are some controversial views in bioethics Juvenalian satire without irony?*" - once again, thank you so much - this is a great article, and I think makes some really important points regarding how uncontroversial Antinatalism is compared with other ideas it's sometimes conflated with -

Abstract

The article examines five controversial views, expressed in Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer's *Should the Baby Live? The Problem of Handicapped Infants*, Alberto Giubilini and Francesca Minerva's "After-birth abortion: why should the baby live?", Julian Savulescu's "Procreative beneficence: why we should select the best children", and the author's "A rational cure for prereproductive stress syndrome". These views have similarities and differences on five levels: the grievances they raise, the proposals they make, the justifications they explicitly use, the justifications they implicitly rely on, and the criticisms that they have encountered. A comparison of these similarities and differences produces two findings. First, some controversial views based on utilitarian considerations would probably fare better flipped upside down and presented as Juvenalian satires. Secondly, a modicum of humor or modesty could help presenters of controversial views to stir polite critical discussion on the themes that they put forward.

How is Antinatalism different than these other examples of controversial ideas that you give in your paper?

Matti:

Let's see. Jonathan Swift is in a class of his own: Christian, conservative, strong believer in the sanctity of life principle. The reader knows from the first page that the proposal to slaughter and eat Irish children is fake, so this must be satire. And it is satire.

The next three views are all, interestingly, representatives or at least allies

of eugenic pronatalism. One by one:

First, Kuhse and Singer and killing disabled infants. Well, they are saying, “Let’s get the damaged babies out of the way, so that the parents get a chance to have healthy, functioning offspring, instead.” Eugenic pronatalism. Don’t have those children, have our preferred children.

Then, Giubilini and Minerva and killing unwanted infants. Again, let’s get rid of these undesired ones so that the mother can regain her strength to have more babies later in better circumstances. Eugenic pronatalism. Don’t have those children, have our preferred children.

And then, Savulescu and the parents’ duty to have the best children. I don’t even have to start here. Have children. And have the best children. Eugenic pronatalism.

I said that this is interesting, and it is, because these are all philosophers who are supposed to be “liberal” and believe in reproductive autonomy, And they are, but for them, reproductive autonomy does not necessarily mean that we have a right to be childless, or at least not that it would be recommendable. We have a right to choose when and where and with whom, but abstinence is not an automatic option. It’s like freedom of religion in Europe in the eighteenth century. You can choose which one, but you gotta have one.

But now on to the prereproductive stress syndrome and its cure in nondirective counselling. You don’t have a duty to have children – it’s not even recommended. Human reproduction is an irrational and arguably immoral business and reasonable people stay out of it.

So the differences between the views again:

Swift is in a category of his own. Fake proposal and clear irony. No one will take the proposal seriously, nor should they.

The three others are dead serious about their baby killing and selection and there is not an iota of humor or irony in there.

Prereproductive stress syndrome, then. Who can keep a straight face when a paper begins by an obviously made-up syndrome and concludes by suggesting that potential parents should be informed that Matti Häyry tells them not to have children? I couldn't. If the reader cannot see my inward smile in there, I don't know what else to do.

Half the charm of "A rational cure" is, I believe, that you don't know for sure how seriously it should be taken. Apart from the most extreme pronatalists – and you cited an example of that – readers are lured into thinking about something that they wouldn't normally think about. Maybe. I hope so, anyway.

Amanda:

Is Antinatalism in another sense even more controversial than any of the others, because it is not absurd, not ironic & not Juvenalian? (It does however, offer many avenues towards comedy I will say.) And could have possible real word support? Does this make it a dangerous ideas next to the others?

Matti:

Of course antinatalism is controversial. If I go out there, addressing my usual audience, and say "Human extinction now!" they will bite my head off and learn nothing.

One commentator of "A rational cure" compared it to my view ten years before in Liberal Utilitarianism and said – and I quote from memory – "Gone is the humane – dare I say Enlightenment – utilitarianism of the earlier work, now replaced with the idea that the only reason not to drive humankind into extinction is that it would cause suffering in the way". Well, since that's exactly my point, what else can I say, really?

Except that I can tone the message down with humor. In my latest, "If you must give them a gift, give them the gift of nonexistence" I tighten the screw just a little bit into the more antinatalist direction, but smiling and telling how I personally feel and telling jokes about the history of philosophy as I go. One reviewer thought that the paper is "stellar" – of star quality. I don't know about that and I don't know if the reviewer understood the message but maybe something is getting through. Theoretical baby steps to end

practical baby steps.

Amanda:

Yes, Matti! Absolutely, baby steps through humor is exactly what's been the ethos behind my movie *The EFIList*, and many other works that I've made over the years - if you add some sugar, you can sneak some medicine to the children. And I think it does work, and we're just so lucky that Antinatalism happens to adapt very well to comedy - other ideas are not so lucky - have you ever tried to make a comedy out of *the Right to Die*? It's really hard! I'm not sure why that is, I'm not sure why it's funny, why it has that adaptability, I think it taps into one of those, if I don't laugh I'll cry kind of nerves. Anyway it's a technique that I think still has huge untapped potential, but I lament that likely, it will never end up doing enough.... But perhaps we just haven't been funny enough yet.

So Matti, what are you working on currently? Anything you wish to plug?

Matti:

I don't sell myself particularly well. What should I say?

I just completed a decade-long project on justice and published the main results in a small book called *Roles of Justice in Bioethics*. I'm proud of the opening line and still chuckle when I read it. It is: "The role of justice in bioethics is to perpetuate capitalist hegemony." It's not about Antinatalism - I hadn't met you, Amanda - but it has its moments. And it's open access, freely available on the internet, so I can at least guarantee you your money's worth.

Next up, I'll be working on Antinatalism. And writing an already commissioned book on cloning. And perhaps completing my rock opera trilogy. In the music work, I'll be trying to catch the Antinatalist mood that has already been in there. Especially, I think, when I say (well, the warrior queen says) in *Orkid's Dreamless Night* - a huge favorite among my Brazilian followership: "Give me darkness / Give me silence within". My thoughts exactly, any day of the week.

Amanda:

Ah ha! Yes! And lets play that one before we say some concluding words.

Dreamless Night 2017 – from Orkid by Visitors from Bellatrix – You can listen to the song [here](#)

Amanda:

Just sensational, thank you so much again! Well Matti, before we close out, anything else that we missed, anything else you still wanna plug?

Matti:

Not plug, exactly, but perhaps two things.

First, if I may round up the story of my eight-year old self coming to his morbid revelation under the starlit sky lying in the hankikanto, waiting to fall through the snow at any minute.

Just a few months earlier I had been happy. I had just settled in nicely at school, I had friends in the neighborhood, and life was good.

The end of the summer had seen what I like to think of as my philosophical awakening. I was playing with my toy cars in the sunshine in our little back garden when I had an epiphany. I was there, vividly aware of my existence now and in the future. I was blissfully content but at the same time realized that when people grow up, they don't play with toy cars anymore. I made a vow to myself that I would be different. I would never stop playing. That was a reassuring thought.

Three months later, my parents told me that we were moving. To another town, far away. I would not see my friends again. I would have to go to a new school. My life would be changed forever.

When I eventually returned from the frozen field, there was a police car in front of the house. My parents, returning home late, as they did, had not found me, only my little red kicksled smashed in splinters in front of the garage. They had called the police, and a search party was being organized for the lost boy.

I learned an important lesson that day. However solid the ground on which you stand seems, you can fall through. Life can turn from the bliss of

playing with toy cars to the hell of losing the life you know whenever, and you have no say in it. You can't count on a rosy future of being a not-grown-up adult, so seek solace in nuclear holocaust, instead. The birth of an extinctionist, and perhaps an antinatalist.

By the way, Amanda, I haven't been aware of this sequence of events before I started my preparations for this interview. Your questions made the events click. Thank you!

But we cannot leave the audience with this story – although I don't think it's half as sad as I make it sound. I bounced back and I still haven't grown up, so all is well. That was just to show how the risk argument has, apparently, always been with me.

My other concluding point is different. I would like to send greetings. To all my old friends who have been listening, obviously. You always knew that I'm weird, but I bet you didn't no that I'm this weird. And to all my new friends, who listened to this and thought that I made some sense.

But, last but not least, since you are airing this out of the Great Lakes area, Amanda, my greetings to the people of Houghton, Michigan, if you have been with us! I am a third-generation immigrant in Finland myself. Return immigrant, but that's details. My great-grandparents met and married in Houghton and were married in the town hall, only to come back to Finland with my paternal grandfather in his mother's womb on the voyage back. Oh, how the never-ending cycle of life – the one we are trying to curb – moves us!

Amanda:

Thank you Matti, Matti where can people find you on the internet and help to support your works?

Matti:

Amanda, my name is unique. Net browsing "Matti Häyry" will tell anyone where I am and what I do.

More specifically, I seem to publish my shorter theoretical work with Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics and my slightly longer work with

the Cambridge University Press series Elements in Bioethics and Neuroethics.

If anyone is interested in my art – or magic or entertainment – follies, the address for my better rock opera is orkidrocks.com. Which can also be found in Spotify under Visitors from Bellatrix – Orkid. And my YouTube channel covers that and all my other music stuff. Other than that, if anyone wants to be involved in my work, just email me.

Amanda:

Matti! I think that you are the best kept secret in Antinatalism! And now that secret's out! When I first wrote to you a month or so ago, I really didn't expect to find an academic extinctionist who writes rock operas - You are one in quite a number of millions my friend, and a breath of fresh air! Thank you so much for all that you've done, and for your work, our correspondence together, and everything that has come out of it has been one of the greatest highlights on my nearly 12 years of working within Antinatalism. Thank you so much my friend, for being my guest today on The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast!

Matti:

Thank you, Amanda. This was a blast! You are the best!

[All Matti's responses © Matti Häyry 2022.]

Lots of great links below to help you explore the work of Matti Häyry further! You can find links below to read *A rational cure for prereproductive stress syndrome*, *The rational cure for prereproductive stress syndrome revisited*, & *If you must make babies, then at least make the best babies you can?* for free! Several books by Matti Häyry, including the new book, *Roles of Justice in Bioethics*, can be found on Amazon.com. Follow Matti on Facebook & Twitter, subscribe to his youtube channels, make sure to take special note of the playlist containing music from Orkid as well as other musical projects, and learn more about his rock opera Orkid, at www.orkidrocks.com!

Learn more about the work of Matti Häyry by exploring this Linktree!: <https://linktr.ee/mattihayry>

Read all about Matti's experience of being on the show, here!
<https://antinatalisminternational.com/matti-hayry/>

OUTRO:

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[dchild=1&keywords=The+Exploring+Antinatalism+Podcast&qid=1626809690&sr=8-1](#)

And email me at exploringantinatalism@gmail.com

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And check out our collaborative project along with our friend, EFIL WV:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcaz_CCNWEwFq8qxrM_vxYg

The Right to no Longer Exist, which includes the podcast, The Right to no Longer Exist: A Right to Die Podcast!

<https://www.youtube.com/c/TheRightToNoLongerExist>