

## **mechANized: Antinatalism & Open AI #1**

**Matti Häyry & Amanda Sukenick**

How intelligent is artificial intelligence when it comes to Antinatalism? We asked the OpenAI Chat Bot some simple questions and received ... interesting ... answers.

Hello, my name is Matti Häyry, I am an Antinatalist philosopher.

And my name is Amanda Sukenick, I am an Antinatalist activist. We'll try to clean up some of the messes made by the OpenAI Chat Bot, but first, Matti, are you sure this is worth our while? The bot keeps learning all the time, and I had this conversation with the bot last night... if we use these first answers ... well, we might be working on already dated material. So what do you think?

You're right, of course, But we are not only interested in this particular bot's skills and database. The uneducated answers that it gave reflect, I think, something deeper, namely the most popular biases and misconceptions that people have about antinatalism. So yes, it's worth our while.

Alright then, let's do it! For those out there listening who might also like to ask the OpenAI chatbot some questions, you'll find a link to it directly below in the description. Once on the site, click the tab up top called, Playground, and from there, select the Chat preset. Lots of other settings can be played within the sidebar - messing with the temperature, as they call it, can yield a lot of interesting results. Have fun, and please do report back in the comments if the bot gives you any particularly interesting answers to your Anti-natal inquiries!

Our first question was: **How do you define Antinatalism?** And the bot answered:

*Antinatalism is a philosophical viewpoint that views procreation—the act of bringing new people into the world—as morally wrong, ultimately due to the potential for hardships that individuals may face in life. Antinatalists generally believe that humanity should reduce its population*

*through word means like contraception and voluntary sterilization in order to reduce suffering.*

So Matti, philosophy mentioned. As a philosopher, what do you think?

I think that while getting some things right the bot simplifies and confuses some others. Much like people with pronatal attitudes would do.

How do you mean?

It's wrong to bring people into this world, yes. That's the central antinatal tenet. But the reason the bot gives is too limited. The "potential for hardships that individuals may face in life". That's essentially my risk argument. But there are others.

David Benatar has for twenty-five years said that the hardships of life are actual, not potential. All lives are bad, no two ways about it, no doubt, no probabilities. A certainty.

And more recently he and others have started talking about the harm humans inflict on other species and on the natural environment.

I don't see these mentioned here. And since the question was about defining antinatalism, I'd say that these are quite serious oversights. Or am I barking up the wrong tree here, you think?

Yes, I agree with everything you said. It's nice to see some nod to Risk in there, but like you said, the misanthropic arguments don't get any attention, or consent, and there are some less than desirable additions in there too, which we will get to in a moment.

This gets tricky, because as you know, what exactly a definition of Antinatalism must include to be whole, is hotly debated, and very controversial amongst Antinatalists.

I have a further series of questions regarding things that perhaps should or should not be included - Should a proper definition of Antinatalism include a mention of Ethics? Should a proper definition of Antinatalism include an explicit mention of life, as opposed to just procreation?

Should a proper definition of Antinatalism include a mention of suffering? Should a proper definition of Antinatalism include some explicit mention of extinction? Should a proper definition of Antinatalism include some explicit statement regarding Sentience? Should a proper definition of Antinatalism include an acknowledgment of both conditional Antinatalism & Unconditional Antinatalism? Should a proper definition include some mention that Antinatalism encompasses a spectrum of ideas?

There is also no mention of the fact that in addition to being a philosophical position, Antinatalism is also a social movement. Those that could not stomach such a declaration, when that detail was at one time added to an earlier version than the current Wikipedia definition, will rejoice for it's absence here, but I personally think leaving that out would be a mistake.

Any thoughts on all that, Matti?

Not on your additions – they are spot on. Only that I find what the bot says about **population** stuff a little alarming. Reducing humankind's future size by not making more people, yes, but actual population policies might be another kettle of fish. I think this will be more pronounced in some other answers, so let's move on, shall we?

We shall indeed. Our next question was: **Are there different kinds of Antinatalism?** And the answer was:

*Yes, there are different varieties of antinatalism. Some more extreme forms advocate ending humanity's population through mass sterilization or a global one-child policy, while other less radical approaches propose discouraging people from having children due to the potential for suffering. In addition, some proponents of antinatalism believe that procreation should only be allowed in cases of extreme caution and deliberation, with couples only bringing a child into the world when they are willing and able to provide them with a healthy, safe, and supportive environment.*

And that's what I meant by the iffiness of the population stuff. Mass sterilization and a global one-child policy might reduce the number of people but in the hands of governments they are blunt instruments and may do more harm than good.

The biggest danger is that dominant ethnic or national groups impose restrictions on others but not on themselves. This is already the standard policy in the Global North, mediated by the United Nations. Our country needs more children, but the sooner the poor of the Global South stop breeding the better.

I would like to call this real-life policy selective pronatalism and cut any ties that it has in people's minds with antinatalism. The arguments presented in the answer as such are OK – avoid creating suffering, basically – but even those can be harnessed to support selective pronatalism. As in, “Look, our children here have a better chance of having a good life than your children there.”

You stop, we continue, and everything will be hunky-dory.

I agree with you about the one child policy, about the ethnic majorities, and about the dangers of leaving these matters in the hands of governments, even though I'm also unsure if Antinatalism could ultimately be achieved without their money & power - it's a question I have wrestled with...

As much as I like to make an effort to include forms of Condition Antinatalism within my Anti-natal sphere - because I like to meet people halfway when I can, you make an excellent case here in pointing out Condition Antinatalisms inherent relationship to, 'selective pronatalism', as you called it – that is precisely what it ends up being, yes.

What I'm not so sure about, is if things like mass sterilization, even though that would never be my personal, chosen method of practiced Antinatalism, can indeed be cut from either the minds of non-Antinatalists, or some Antinatalists alike – I think that's wishful thinking. Too many Antinatalists would indeed jump on this idea, were it to be possible. In fact, in the face of supposedly scarier things like benevolent red buttons, or, you know, having to actually talk to people,

many AN's would greatly prefer the idea of mass sterilization, as they find it to be kinder. I am not a fan of mass sterilization, let me clarify, and I do not advocate for it.

Also, 'some proponents of antinatalism believe that procreation should only be allowed in cases of extreme caution and deliberation, with couples only bringing a child into the world when they are willing and able to provide them with a healthy, safe, and supportive environment.' That is false. There are exceedingly rare cases where an Antinatalist might condone some birth, most of them being not at all real scenarios, and never for the reasons stated above.

Any thoughts on any of this, Matti?

Millions. But I think that they will be covered by further questions, so onwards, antinatal soldiers, if you don't mind.

Alright then! Marching forward.

And so then we asked: **What are the different forms of Antinatalism called?** The answer was:

*The different forms of antinatalism go by a number of names, including voluntary human extinction, anti-natalism, pronatalism aversion, reproduction avoidance, and pronatalist decline. Each has its own emphasis on how to approach procreation and population reduction. Generally, voluntary human extinction calls for the immediate and complete end of human procreation, while other forms focus more on reducing the influx of new people over time through less drastic measures.*

This one is more your cup of tea than mine. How'd the bot do?

Thanks, Matti - The bot gets a D- on this one. But on some level, it's understandable that it would get this wrong, because few think of Antinatalism in terms of schools of thought – warring factions, maybe, but not schools of thought, or as a spectrum of ideas, so it's no wonder it hasn't learned this. 'Voluntary human extinction', is almost right, if what it's trying to say is VHEMT – The Voluntary Human Extinction Movement. Anti-natalism is of course, correct, death to the hyphen

though – but that’s the umbrella term. ‘pronatalism aversion, reproduction avoidance, and pronatalist decline.’ Do not exist, though I kinda like ‘pronatalist decline’. Other correct answers are Child-free, EFILism, Vegantinatalism & maybe Birthstrike, Anti-AI-Natalism, and Athkneovism.... No idea how to say that last one right though.

If ‘voluntary human extinction’ is a reference to VHEMT, then it does not call for the immediate and complete end of human procreation, I’m quite sure they would adopt some method of phased extinction.

How do you think it did?

I’m not sure I understand the bot’s logic here. In the first answer, it was **always** morally wrong to reproduce. Now it’s only “reducing the influx of people through less drastic measures”. So a little bit of moral wrongness is OK, then. Quite a bit, actually, according to this. Or am I somehow missing a point here?

I’m not 100% sure what it means by “reducing the influx of people through less drastic measures” either, but it could mean something as benign as simply talking to people, and winning through logic, I don’t think it necessarily has to do with anything involving moral wrongness... But, it probably does. Again, I think it’s likely referring to some form of phased extinction... Which would in practice, likely be a grab bag full of moral & ethical right-nesses & wrong-nesses... Maybe?

Yes, sounds about right. But let’s have the next question and answer. And they are?

### **Is all Antinatalism sentiocentric?**

*Yes, all antinatalism is sentiocentric in nature. Sentiocentric antinatalism is the ethical perspective behind the antinatalist movement, which argues that it is wrong to bring about new sentient life due to the potential for suffering associated with doing so.*

You go first. We may have some fun with this one.

So wrong. But yes, now we are getting spicy! I’m in love with the fact that it thinks this - a bot after my own heart! I have to wonder why it

thinks this though... First, let's talk about what being Sentioentric might mean in the context of Antinatalism. Does it mean that the form of Antinatalism in question can and/or does acknowledge sentience, and sentient suffering in some kind of way? A form of AN can do that, be Sentioentric, and have no plan to do anything about it. Does it mean that this or that form of Antinatalism puts an emphasis on Veganism? Or, does it mean that whatever form of Antinatalism we are talking about advocates for Sentient Extinction, like EFILism? Or does it mean something else entirely?

Proto-Antinatalism, that is, most Antinatalism before Benatar, was mostly Anthropocentric, with some exception. We could possibly say that Environmentalist Pre-Antinatalism, which encompasses such groups as VHEMT & The Church of Euthanasia, are types of sentioentric AN, in that they have concerns for the animals... But in different ways than most would understand Sentioentric Antinatalism as it exists now - no one would seriously categorize any of them this way in today's world.

You could make the argument, that between Benatarianism & EFILism, which are arguably two of the most currently dominant forms of Antinatalist philosophy, that Antinatalism is indeed, mostly Sentioentric, in that both make it very clear that they include all of sentience within their considerations... But that's not the way things have panned out in the wider Anti-natal world at all - the vast majority of Antinatalists are fiercely Anthropocentric, and only wish to ever speak about human existence - Sentioentric Antinatalism, for a variety of reasons, either makes them angry, or sends them running away screaming, or both. Most times both.

Yes, I'm sure that you're right.

Perhaps one more observation, though. I think that I'm an antinatalist. But my theory of value is not only sentioentric. It includes the avoidance of suffering but also some independent respect for the autonomy, or self-direction, of conscious sentient beings. Just saying. The bot has been trained by quite a limited group of teachers; it seems.

We have talked a bit about this before, and perhaps today is not the time to fully try to break this one down, but I will for now simply say that I feel you are using the term 'Sentio-centric' here, in a way that is unfamiliar to me, and likely to most Antinatalists. You can be a Sentio-centric Antinatalist, and still acknowledge autonomy – isn't that basically what Benatarianism is doing? I see no totally necessary conflict there. Some Sentio-centrism merely hangs in the air, some does not.

I think you're right – not the time or the place. But with this, I can see another episode, another conversation between us, maybe even beyond our little bot chats here, in the horizon. Let's keep that thought. But for now, next question, next answer.

### **Do Antinatalists want to press the red button?**

*No, antinatalists don't advocate for pressing a "red button" to end life. Rather, they argue in favor of policies and practices that would discourage or prevent the creation of new sentient beings, such as through contraception and abstinence.*

I'm not the expert here, but that seems far too categorical. In fact, I'm pretty sure that some antinatalists would press the button and advocate this solution to others, as well.

These are two different things, though – I only just realized that. You asked about **wanting** to press the button. The bot answered about **advocating** for pressing the button.

If I had any trust in the bot's intelligence, I'd say that it sees through me and people like me. Given the chance, I might, not telling anyone. But you don't catch me **advocating** the thing.

And one reason for the non-advocacy is again the mess that people would make of it. Let's do it with a big nuclear bomb, they'd say. And then we'd all be crippled and maimed on top of having to exist. But I'm sure you have better ideas.



Well, you are sort of an expert on it, Matti, you certainly have a much longer history with it than I do - most Antinatalists, do not have a Cowbridge Diary entry in their archives, after all. But you are quite right, some Antinatalists would indeed press the red button, myself included, and I have openly advocated for it – In fact, I've gone as far as to appear on national television talking about it. Were it to be real, I think it would be the best of final possible solutions for sentience. But it is not in fact real, and you are of course correct in the pit falls of actualizing such a thing into the real world – done badly, it's everything I hope sentience will avoid experiencing, done right however, it's everything I think humanity should be working towards before it's time here is up - Let's prepare the strongest dose of sentient euthanasia possible for when life really needs it, and I fear that it will - but let's do it right, or not do it at all.

The distinction you make here - between wanting and advocacy - is an important one – and that was my mistake, I asked the bot this question in far too casual a fashion, and without considering my words carefully enough – this has nothing to do with desire, and everything to do with engaging with a thought experiment. I don't want to do it, and I don't frankly want to advocate for it – What I want is to go back to playing with my action figures, but I'm guided by a feeling that advocating for it, or something like it, is necessary, as I know that 8 billion humans, and billions of other sentient individuals on a dying planet, will eventually be in need of something that can as painlessly as possible, break the prison bars of the cycle of sentience... And cessation of procreation alone, isn't going to cut it, not for the rest of the animals at least it won't.

But as we mentioned before, many Antinatalists, would prefer forced sterilization of some kind. So, to illustrate for a moment why I think that solution is much worse, let's consider the now sadly departed Efil Blaise's brilliant thought experiment – the Blue button vs. Red button – Pressing the red button ends the existence of all life in the universe instantly – the Blue button sterilizes everyone. Again, because no one dies, many would find the blue button the more ethical option. In my mind though, far better everyone dies, than inflict the chaos & collapse

of a Children of Men scenario. You cause more suffering by going blue than red – So go red.

You had an idea once, in chapter 3 of your 2001 book, *Playing God: Essays on Bioethics*, I quote: “But suppose that this could be changed, for instance, by giving everybody a pill that would make them provisionally infertile. Instead of having to deal with individuals who are, as a rule, capable of reproducing unless this capacity is limited, public authorities would face a population that can have children only with the help of the medical profession. Under these circumstances, the regulation would surely be more widely accepted, as evidenced by the prevailing disinclination to select couples with hereditary genetic problems for programmes of assisted reproduction.” I wonder what you feel about this idea now?

As a practical step forward, I still see my proposal as the most realistic. Efil Blaise’s thought experiment is excellent and reveals the weakness in pro-life thinking that you point out. People would probably much rather choose infertility than nonexistence.

But, as you say, if the point is to reduce suffering, infertility is a bad solution. It would cause many people more suffering. Which could, of course, be removed by my reversibility, but that would be even worse in the big scheme of things. Humankind would continue to exist and there would be further generations that suffer.

Are we on the same page here?

Yes, I think so, I follow you, but I fear you and I could both talk about this particular subject until the end of time, so we had best move on for now, I’m quite sure we will revisit it again soon enough. And the question and the answer.

### **What is Efilism?**

*Efilism is a philosophical belief system that suggests that everyone has a moral obligation to end their own life in order to reduce suffering in the world. It is closely associated with antinatalism, but Efilists often argue for a more proactive*

*approach to ending one's life rather than waiting for natural forces.*

This one is all yours, Amanda. Is the bot on the right track?

Wrong. So wrong. Depressingly wrong. How did it come up with something so wrong? Efilism, currently, really has no official standard definition, but the simplest way that I describe it to people, is that Efilism is fully extinctionist, Sentio-centric Antinatalism. Efil, is life spelled backwards, and it was invented by the YT based philosopher, Inmendham in 2011, after he became disgusted with the Anthropocentric Antinatalism of that particular era. I'm an Efilist, and I have watched the development of Efilism since well before its earliest days, and I made a movie about it in 2016 called *The EFIList*.

Efilism does NOT advocate or suggest, that everyone has a moral obligation to end their own lives – this is an example of Efilism becoming conflated with a species of Promortalism, I think – those lines have become very blurred in recent times. All Efilists, are staunch advocates of The Right to Die – we want people to have access to euthanasia, but there is no moral duty to end one's life, on the contrary, Efilists believe that while you are here, you have a job to do if you can do anything at all about suffering – that you have what Efilists call a, janitorial duty... And I actually think this is precisely why Efilism has become conflated with some version of promortalism – Efilism is hard, and some would rather die than have to endure as janitors...

It is possibly, highly interesting that it specifically brings up the words, 'Natural forces' – that could be in reference to one of Gary's most famous lines – that life is, 'Crude forces in control of precious commodities'... Though I'm probably reading into things far too much.

What Efilists do see as a moral duty - though I can hear Gary screaming all the way in his neck of the woods against the use of the word 'Moral' here - is to at the very least, argue that life it's self should be ended – we have a duty to advocate for as graceful an exit for sentience as possible.

Amen to that. The prophet has spoken. Once you've inhaled deeply a couple of times, would you feel strong enough to push the button for the next question?

Yes, barely.

### **What is the difference between Benatarian Antinatalism and Efilism?**

*Benatarian antinatalism is an ethical belief system which suggests that it is wrong to bring about new sentient beings due to the potential for suffering that this brings. Efilism is a similar ethical belief system, but it does not just suggest that it is wrong to bring about new sentient beings, but rather it argues that everyone has a moral obligation to end their own life in order to reduce suffering in the world.*

Again, your word is mightier than mine. But once again, the “potential for suffering” in Benatar sounds wrong. For him, the badness of life is inescapable, not a mere possibility.

The impression here is that the bot has learned from someone who conflates two separate justifications for antinatalism – Benatar’s quality-of-life argument and my risk view.

But you are a better judge of the bot’s comparison of the Benatarian and Efilist models. What happens there?

No, no, my word is mightier than no ones, least of all against yours. I think you are 100% correct here in regard to Benatar, and I also agree it’s very likely that it’s learned from someone with at least a rudimentary grasp of the quality-of-life argument, and your Risk, yes.

The bot is wrong about Efilism for all the reasons I have already explained, so it really does no job at all in explaining the differences between Benatarian Antinatalism and Efilism – complete fail. F-.

But this is a really tricky one, and I can already feel some of our audience members sharpening their spears... There is nearly no more controversial question that could be asked in the Anti-natal world... I’ll try to be brief; this could go on forever.

Both are forms of Sentio-centric Antinatalism. Both are perfectly in alignment with their ability to at least recognize sentient suffering. What to do about it from there, is maybe where the dissimilarities begin, or do they.

Efilism begins with a recognition of Atheism, of unintelligent design. DNA is the one true villain. It's all stuff I don't necessarily think Benatar would disagree with, but a negative view of evolutionary biology isn't really where Benatar derives his Antinatalism from, unless I'm wrong.

Benatar feels that Wild Animal interventionism is utopian, Inmendham feels that it is our duty to intervene in wild animal suffering.

Benatar does not believe we will win Antinatalism through making arguments and changing people's minds, Gary dreams of creating the perfect silver-bullet argument that changes everyone's mind.

Benatarianism is academic, Efilism is more... Punk. Born and raised in video form, on YouTube.

Some would tell you, well, Efilism is for red buttons and Benatarianism would never say yes to such a thing – but is this exactly true? Benatar will tell you why a utilitarian might or might not press it, or why a deontologist may or may not, but no real firm declaration that a Benatarian would or would not, or should or shouldn't. I think it's reasonable to assume that a Benatarian might, might, for all the same reasons an Efilist would, but it's also reasonable to assume that many Benatarians would never. I know Benatarians who fall on either side of the decision.

Benatarianism & EFILism drive the same basic car, they come to the same fork in the road, and there's nothing really stopping a Benatarian from taking the path to Efil town, in my opinion, again though, I see the spears.

The mantra of much of the Anti-Natal world, is that extinction is, 'A consequence, not a goal in itself' and so most I think would tell you that this is the biggest difference between the two – I am much less sure that this is true, I don't think Benatarian Antinatalism is SO blindly moving towards extinction, that it's only just a consequence.

There is a misconception that Efilism has never advocated phased extinction – and that is false. Both Efilism & Benatarianism have advocated, or at least spoken about, phased extinction, or as Benatar calls it, ‘Dying extinction’ So again, more similarity there than difference.

Efilism is very much aligned with Antinatalist activism, whereas Benatar, for a long time had much less interest in it, but he’s always been very supportive of it. He’s come around to it a lot in recent years, and even made us a wonderful audio clip a few years back for the launch event of Antinatalism International called, Antinatalism in a nutshell – many remarked how much more like an activist of him that was. So I think this difference has begun to blur.

But this is getting long, and I promised to be quick – I know you’re still a bit new the whole Efilism thing, Matti, but I would be curious to know what you see as the differences and/or similarities between the two so far?

I think we need a longer discussion, in better time, about all this. Just briefly, my own personal motivation started from the other end. I flirted a long time ago with a moral theory called negative utilitarianism. It states that we should always minimize suffering.

Philosopher colleagues enlightened me that since the only secure method of getting rid of suffering is to get rid of humanity (other sentient species were not on the general agenda yet), and since getting rid of humanity is unthinkable, the theory is unthinkable.

Which is wrong in more ways than one, but for our present purpose, I continued to think, almost secretly, that humankind’s demise would actually be the solution, not a problem. No suffering – and no sentient life, nonhumans included – would be good.

Later on, that clicked with my work on reproductive rights, and only then did I stumble on the idea of a rational and moral duty not to have children, based on the risk of creating suffering. Which, I then learned a few years ago, makes me an antinatalist. Just like that.

But if we agree that we need to discuss this more thoroughly on another occasion, perhaps we should move on in our bot quest.

What did you ask next and what did the machine have to say for itself?

Agreed, looking forward, and onward we go.

### **Are all Antinatalists extinctionists?**

*Not necessarily. While some antinatalists may advocate for human extinction, others accept existing human life and suggest policies or practices that would prevent new sentient beings from entering the world and contributing to suffering.*

May I?

Please, go right ahead.

The bot contradicts itself here, but perhaps in a way that is reflected in people's criticisms of antinatalism.

The contradiction is clear. If you "prevent new sentient beings from entering the world" – and you do it consistently and across the board – you will have to accept the eventual demise of humankind and all other sentient species.

Am I missing something obvious here?

All Antinatalism is extinctionist, it's just that not all Antinatalists are.

The only thing you may be missing, is that this contradiction probably stems less from people who are making a criticism of Antinatalism, than from Antinatalists themselves – Most Antinatalists, want the connection between Antinatalism & Extinction severed, again, 'A consequence, not a goal in itself'- what does that even mean? If we, 'do it consistently and across the board' well then, I think we are acting out of having real goals. But most would never, 'do it consistently and across the board', and they don't want to be associated with anything that does. The only way they want to be responsible, is indirectly, by accident, if at all.

I see. Or I think I do. They want the world to have less children, or maybe none, but they don't want to be accused of causing the end of the world as we know it. I can understand that. There are

ethical theories built around that kind of thinking. We can return to this some other time.

What's up next?

### **Is Antinatalism a form of X-Risk?**

*No, antinatalism is not a form of existential risk. Antinatalism is primarily concerned with moral questions about whether or not it is ethical to bring about new sentient life, whereas existential risks are generally threats to the continued existence of intelligent life, such as asteroid impacts or global warming.*

This is all yours, Amanda. I don't know what an X-risk is.

...What?! The father of the Risk argument doesn't know what X-Risk is?! No no no no no, we have to fix this, right now. X-Risk means anything that poses an extinction risk for humanity. It was the invention of Nick Bostrom in 2002 in his paper, *Existential Risks: Analyzing Human Extinction Scenarios and Related Hazards*. I truthfully, am no expert on X-Risk either, so I'm sure that there are nuances here that I'm missing entirely, do we have any X-Risk experts in the comments?

The interesting thing about X-Risk, is that it's become co-opted and conflated with the Longtermists like Elon Musk & William MacAskill. It's become the obsession of billionaires, who need the suffering to continue to keep the money rolling.

In my opinion, we are X-Risk on wheels – those concerned with X-Risk have no idea what to do with Pro-Extinctionism, we fly directly in their faces, and they see us as potentially very dangerous.

The more interesting question might be, are we an S-Risk, that is, a Suffering Risk... I hope that we will not be, but I'm not so sure we won't... But I'm also unsure if any version of the future is or isn't...

Thank you, so now I know. The Oxford Uehiro lot and I sing from different hymn books and I try to ignore their innovations.



But I remember the X-risk theme now. Only that they see non-existence and humankind's demise as a danger to be avoided; and I see it as a blessing to be embraced.

You are absolutely correct in saying that we are a clear and present, if not immediate, X-risk. Not immediate, because our power is limited. And you would like to have that power. In the form of the impossible red button, I would, as well. But the reality...

Imagine that Elon Musk could be persuaded to be an antinatalist and an extinctionist. Would that be fantastic? I'm not sure how to put this, but I doubt it. I have no confidence that any practical solution offered by Elon Musk would reduce suffering one iota.

So here is a task for you. Explain how Matti Häyry is wrong in his skepticism concerning Elon Musk.

Oh, I don't think you're wrong at all in fact, I would never trust Elon Musk on any of this, no, not fantastic at all. Just like I don't think humanity's survival should be the plaything of billionaires, I don't think that it's extinction should be either. Believe it or not, back in 2016, there was a small yet vocal constituency of Antinatalists who were encouraging others to vote for Donald Trump, because they believed he would bring about extinction. Gross. No thank you.

Incidentally, it should be pointed out - the AI system we are using to make this show, is owned by Elon Musk... So maybe that's got something to do with why all the answers to our Antinatalist questions are so bad...

But this does bring to mind an important question – if not billionaires, if not governments, if not lone actors, who gets to make those kind of decisions for sentience? I would personally like to see extinction won through some kind of Democratic process – not that I'm holding my breath on that – but even if it were to be decided by a majority, there will still inevitably be those opposed – are there systems of fairness fair enough to gracefully end?

These are all good questions. My initial answer is that I'm not holding my breath, either. But for a proper response, we'll have to come back to this in another podcast, methinks.

Agreed, next question and answer, then.

### **Who are some famous Antinatalist philosophers?**

*Some of the most famous antinatalist philosophers include the pseudonymous Inmendham, philosopher David Benatar, and writer and philosopher Christine Overall.*

That does it. The bot is ignorant – or really trained by the wrong people. Or both.

What do you mean, Matti?

Well, the inclusion of Inmendham and David Benatar is a given. No complaints about that. But, unless I'm grossly mistaken, Christine Overall does **not** belong to this group.

Would you care to clarify that?

Christine Overall has for a long time defended reproductive autonomy. There is a thin sense in which this can be counted as antinatalism, as it states that people have no duty to have children. But it also states that people have no duty **not** to have children. It is up to potential reproducers to choose.

The problem is that on this middle ground pro- and antinatalism are compatible. Have children or not, your choice, and others should not intervene.

Christine Overall comes to this conclusion by thinking about things in the real world. The burdens of childbearing fall on women, and especially on women of little means. In a similar vein, coercive birth control policies affect primarily women, and especially women of little means. And, says Christine Overall, it undervalues women's contribution to societies by bearing and rearing children.

Be the last bit as it may, the first concern, about the unequal burdens, is clearly valid. But I think that the target of criticism is, again, selective pronatalism, not antinatalism proper.

Then, I wouldn't know, would I. How would you rate the bot's answer, Amanda?

You are 100% correct regarding Overall, and I agree with your completely. I was shocked to see the bot spit her name out. She's quite offended by Antinatalism, actually, and seems to take it rather personally. I find her reactions to it very interesting to be honest, it clearly strikes a very raw nerve in her.

The rest of the answer is a little surprising, I would not have expected it to spit out Inmendham over Karim Akerma or Théophile de Giraud, or Julio Cabrera, or David Pearce... Or you! But, cool.

Anyway – next question, next answer.

### **What is promortalism?**

*Promortalism is a philosophical perspective which argues that death is not necessarily bad and can even be beneficial in some cases. It is closely related to antinatalism, but it does not question the morality of bringing about new life - instead, it focuses on the benefits of death and the potential for posthumous happiness.*

Your show, Amanda. You know about this stuff. Right or wrong?

Uh, why did I ask it this? This is so hard... It got some of it right... Maybe, it's hard to tell for reasons which will I think become clearer in a moment. Promortalism, as I have personally come to understand it, is an umbrella term for a host of various pro-death views. The philosopher Chrisopher Belshaw defines Promortalism as, 'For death' – a definition that I originally took to be ludicrously far too broad, but that I now think is completely correct.

“Promortalism is a philosophical perspective which argues that death is not necessarily bad and can even be beneficial in some cases.” Sounds slightly similar to my friend Daily Negativities definition - 'Death is good,

for the one who dies'. The interesting thing there, is that Daily does NOT believe Promortalism has any relationship to suicide.

Promortalism is... Confusing. To me, anyway. Is it about suicide or not? Is it about The Red Button, or not? Does it have any relationship to The Right to Die, or Abortion, or not? Is there is mandate attached to Promortalism? Does it have a speed attached to it? In other words, does it mean, DIE NOW!..? Does it advocate murder, or not? I can point you to Promortalists who will answer all over the map on every one of these.

There's an incredibly long line of academic papers now, sighting, for various reasons, that Antinatalism, specifically Benatarian Antinatalism. entails Promortalism – Benatar has fiercely denied this. For the purposes of our conversation here today, I feel it would take us far too long to pull that one apart right now... But we will at some point.

What I can tell you about Promortalism, is that it's something that's become incredibly important to many Antinatalists – it's become an inseparable part of many Antinatalist identities. And this is surprising, because the AN's of the 2006-2010 era, fought hard against any association with it... And they have lost, badly, on that front.

I would say that the bots statement of, 'instead, it focuses on the benefits of death and the potential for posthumous happiness.', is wrong, but there may very well be Promortalists out there who think that... What do I know?

Yes, first of all, agreed. This seems to be a complicated matter and we need to come back to it. In the meantime, I'm vaguely aware of supporters of posthumanism who might be the source of the bot's wording "posthumous happiness".

See, I first thought that this would be some kind of a spiritual afterlife – like you have in some religions. But it could also mean humans crossbreeding, intellectually, emotionally, or physically, with other species and artificial intelligence, and becoming "beyond human". That could then mean a death of humanity of sorts, hence the connection with promortalism. Or something.

Let's hope that audience members can help. The comment box is all yours.

Oh wow, that's a fascinating theory, I would never have guessed that there might be a connection to posthumanism within that answer, you might be correct, I don't know, commentators – yes, please, enlighten us - any promortalists out there, with posthumanist, Island of Dr. Moreau like leanings? We wanna hear from you if so!

But now, we go on.

### **What is the difference between promortalism & efilism?**

*The difference between promortalism and Efilism is that while promortalism argues that death is not necessarily bad, Efilism believes that everyone has an ethical obligation to actively seek out death in order to reduce suffering in the world. Promortalists accept the inevitability of death and its potential benefits, while Efilists advocate for a proactive approach to dying.*

And again, Amanda, you're on. Did the bot get this one right?

If it's correct or not on Promortalism is more nebulous, for all the reasons I have explained above. It repeats much of what I've already explained it doesn't know about Efilism... So not sure what to add really. Not good. Fail.

Yes, even I noticed that that was not a good effort. Fail it is.

But what about the bigger picture? What's our verdict on the bot? May I go first?

Yes indeed!

I'd say that the bot didn't pass the test. Sure, there are truths and half-truths in its responses, but that only makes it worse. It's difficult even for us to dissect it all and the innocent, wide-eyed inquirer would get a rather skewed view. Not to mention the inconsistencies, if I identified them correctly.

What's your verdict?

I think that is of course, an excellent assessment, Matti! The scary thing is, I don't think the bot is actually more confused than most people about Antinatalism, and that includes most Antinatalists. I think much like the rest of the world, the bot is yet another pupil who we should be making every effort to shepherd towards a better understanding of Antinatalism, what do you think?

Yes! And so say all of us! There. We have spoken.

So, should we keep asking it questions, Matti? Maybe revisit this once a month for a bit? Do we have the time?

We'll make the time. We have a hungry audience out there.

Let's do it, then. There's much more than we said here that I'd like to ask you. You have, after all, been doing this for a long time, and although we covered much ground in ExAN #65, too, a lot was left unsaid.

So, we'll talk to the bot a few more times, right?

Yes, Matti, we'll do that, but I'm actually thinking even bigger. Why not start a spin-off series so that I can find out the truth about you, and the emergence of antinatalism from your point of view? You've been at it, one way or the other, for nearly forty years now. Why not cover all that?

Sounds ominous. But tempting. I suppose I could live with it. I have nothing better to do.

There is one condition, though.

Oh yes?

I'd insist on doing separate episodes on each of your rock operas. I've been listening to them, and they would have to be included.

No immediate objection, but would they be of any interest to our antinatal audience?

Matti, you know that there are hidden – and not-so-hidden – antinatal themes both in *Playing God* and *Orkid*. It would be a crime **not** to make the antinatal community aware of them.

Well, if you say so. We should start with some philosophy and other serious stuff, though. To justify ourselves, I mean. But other than that, all right! When do we start?

Excellent! And we start right after we've aired this, and completed a couple of other episodes of mechANized! Audience! Don't go away! Much more to come, stay tuned!

And that's it for today, until next time, thank you for listening to mechANized with me, Amanda Sukenick and

me, Matti Häyry

Links in the description. All the best, and bye for now!