

mechANized: Antinatalism & Open AI #2

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.

So, Amanda, I know that our first encounter with the Open AI chatbot was not all that encouraging. The machine got some things right, others wrong, and it clearly has a tendency to guess stuff that it doesn't know.

This reminds me of how I answered chemistry and physics questions at school. If the question was about power, for instance, the formula was this. I knew that power is, by definition, the amount of energy transferred or converted per unit time. So, I identified the energy and time measures mentioned in the question, divided the first by the second, and had my answer.

The bot seems to have learned from me. But we can hardly fly to the moon – not that I'd like to – with this approach. Yet people worry about artificial intelligence taking their jobs. Even scientists I know. I think that's because they are asking the wrong questions. It's not our job anymore to do the calculations by hand. We need to be more creative. Any thoughts so far?

Well, speaking as someone who grew up with hellacious dyscalculia, I could never do the calculations by hand to begin with - creative solutions have always been the only possible approach for me, so I do believe you are speaking my language – Go on, Matti, I'm listening, what you got cookin' this time?

See, I have an idea. Yes, I know, always dangerous, but there you go. The idea is to feed a real-life research question from one of my project proposals to the bot and see how it chews it. We could then comment, like we've done before, only this time you would always go first. I have a reason for that. How about it?

Interesting! Well, as discouraging as the bot has been, this idea seems to hold some real promise! Yes, let's give it a go.

Alright, then, here come the question and the answer. We'll clip it into smaller bits right after we've seen the entire answer. It's not an easy question to understand at first, because I use a lot of made-up words – in philosophy, we call those stipulative definitions – and the bot will understandably trip over them. But I think it might do it in enlightening ways. So, the question and the answer, in full first:

What are the presuppositions on which to build sensible (not illogical or conceptually inconsistent) and sensitive (not unduly offensive to any reasonable person) internal formulations (every view can have several) of

- a) eugenic pronatalism?**
- b) voluntary extinctionist antinatalism?**
- c) ectogenetic egalitarianism?**
- d) abolitionist vitalism?**
- e) cultural pronatalism?**
- f) techno-optimistic pronatalism?**

So, that was the question. Don't worry, it will become more understandable as we go on. And the bot's full answer:

A) Eugenic Pronatalism: The presupposition for this view is that certain populations should be encouraged to reproduce more than others, in order to ensure genetic diversity and the preservation of desirable traits. This view may also include the idea that certain population segments should be discouraged from reproducing.

B) Voluntary Extinctionist Antinatalism: The presupposition for this view is that the human species should voluntarily become extinct in order to reduce the global population and minimize suffering. This view may also include the idea that the human species should be preserved in some form, such as through cryonics or other forms of biotechnology.

C) Ectogenetic Egalitarianism: The presupposition for this view is that all people should have access to ectogenetic

technology, which would allow for the artificial gestation of embryos outside of the womb, in order to ensure reproductive freedom and health for all.

D) Abolitionist Vitalism: The presupposition for this view is that all forms of oppression, including reproductive restrictions, should be abolished, and that reproductive freedom should be a priority.

E) Cultural Pronatalism: The presupposition for this view is that certain populations should be encouraged to reproduce in order to preserve their cultural and ethnic identity.

F) Techno-Optimistic Pronatalism: The presupposition for this view is that new forms of technology can be used to improve the health and safety of reproduction, and thus should be encouraged. This view may also include the idea that certain population segments should be discouraged from reproducing.

That was intense! Lots to sort through in there.

You can say that again. An overall observation is that the bot didn't really answer the big question, which was to formulate a sensible and sensitive policy out of all these, for the argument's sake. But it did describe something and we'll concentrate on that.

First, however, I must explain that the six isms we are asking about are correlated. In the research proposal, I use a nice map to show their mutual positions.

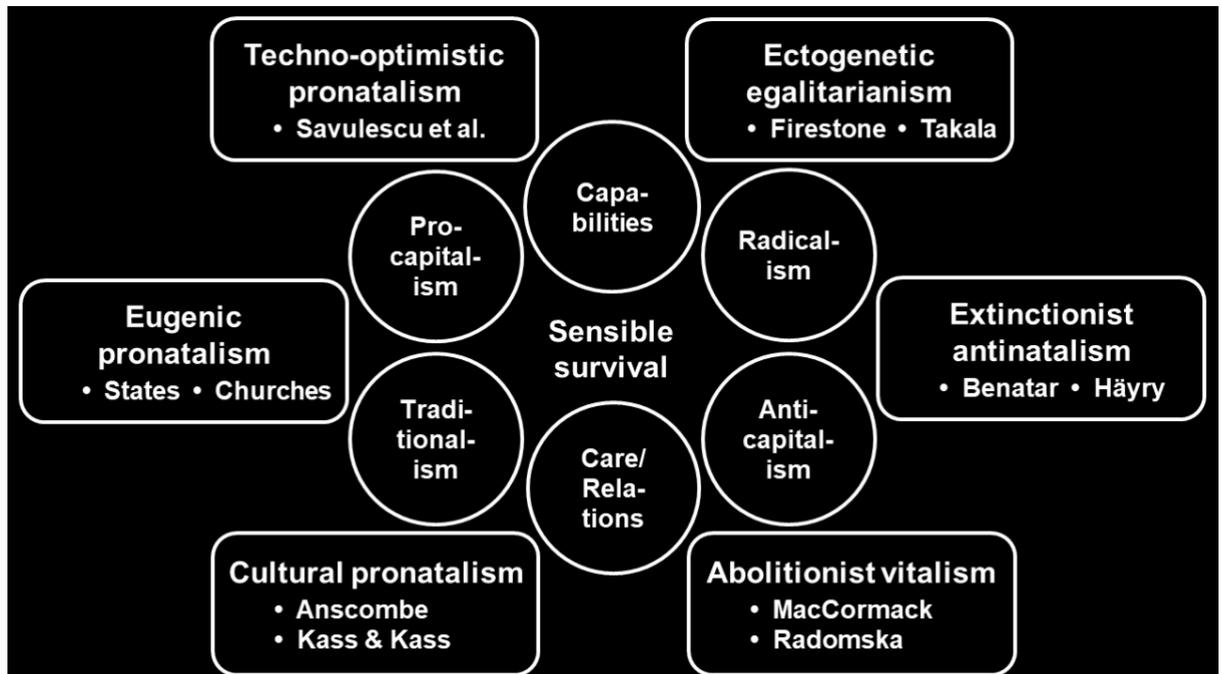
[Map showing]

Eugenic pronatalism and extinctionist antinatalism are at the opposite ends of all this. States and churches often operate in the spirit of eugenic pronatalism, and it is, with some qualifications, the default value in discussions on pro- and antinatalism.

Extinctionist antinatalism is a creed and idea held only by a handful of academics and activists, as you well know, and it is the most vocal opponent of eugenic pronatalism. Or so I would assume. The other four isms are compromise views between the extremes. All six are related to certain political ideals, as well, but we need not pay heed to those in our quest.

Does that make sense, at least initially?

Absolutely!



Anyway, my plan now is to proceed part-answer by part-answer and in each case let you begin our commentary. I know that you have seen the research proposal, but I'm hoping that we get out of you something that isn't just my say-so. Is that alright?

Shoot. Let 'er rip!

OK. And here comes the first definition by the bot:

Eugenetic Pronatalism: The presupposition for this view is that certain populations should be encouraged to reproduce more than others, in order to ensure genetic diversity and the preservation of desirable traits. This view may also include the idea that certain population segments should be discouraged from reproducing.

Well, I think the bot actually may have done alright on this one? I would say that the presupposition of 'Eugenetic Pronatalism' - if I'm also being asked to provide a description that adheres to the bounds of 'sensitive' & 'not unduly offensive' as you did, would be something along the lines that it explains - 'that certain populations should be encouraged to reproduce more than others'... I think a Eugenetic Pronatalist goes much further than that though, particularly if the traits it's finding the most

desirable have anything at all to do with race - then this is Nazi fuel for sure. This just occurred to me, but ironically, Eugenic Pronatalists are actually a bizarre form of conditional Antinatalism, aren't they? They only believe that they should breed, and no one else?

I agree – the bot did alright, partly. That “certain populations should be encouraged to reproduce more than others” and that “certain population segments should be discouraged from reproducing” are the cornerstones of the eugenic movement.

The movement, of course, was an attempt to take control over evolution. Francis Galton defined its first principles, based on his cousin Charles Darwin's theory and the idea that the human species could be made better by helping nature a little.

And you are spot on that when race is thrown in, we get what you call “Nazi fuel”. But it goes much deeper than that. Eugenics was all the rage all over Europe and in the United States, and in other parts of the world, for most of the twentieth century.

In the US, there were Country Fairs in which Model Families were paraded, with the idea of having them breed more. All over the “civilized world” – that was in scare quotes – people with frowned-upon habits or mental problems were involuntarily sterilized.

As for conditional antinatalism, yes, but with a qualification. I would argue that this kind of biased birth control should **not** be a part of any sensible and sensitive antinatal agenda. It doesn't stop humans from multiplying and it adds injustice to the mix.

And, as for “in order to ensure genetic diversity”, the bot is most gloriously wrong. Eugenics is **not** about diversity, it's about standardization. Healthy, obedient workers and soldiers for the state. But I interrupted you. You were saying?

No worries! Well, let me just quickly make a point of agreement with you in your qualification against any of this being apart of any real Antinatalist agenda – I've said before that I try to include forms of conditional Antinatalism within my Anti-Natal sphere when possible – but there are exceptions, and this would be one of them. I do know of at least one Antinatalist/Eugenicist/Nazi, and it's a very bizarre circumstance to say the least. The really interesting part, is that neither group wants such a person in their ranks – the right wing is disgusted by

the Antinatalism, and the Antinatalists are disgusted by the Eugenics & Nazism – what a strange no-mans-land to find one’s self in.

Anyway, going back to what I was saying - This brings to mind the wise words of Les U. Knight, who I think also hit this one way out of the park with the following statement - “Maybe procreation is racism at its most basic level”

I think ALL procreation is really an act of eugenics. To make the decision that one’s genes should be perpetuated, over already existing children in need of care, is eugenics as far as I’m concerned.

That’s interesting. And true, of course. At least partly. The Selfish Gene trying to survive. And if it’s my gene, it’s my gene pool. So implicitly racist, yes.

But eugenic only if we use a folk definition of good genes. In other words, prefer ours to others’. That’s still going on all over the world, and probably always will, as long as there is life and procreation. I’d call it more cultural and political, though. We’ll get to it later.

Let’s move on to the second definition. I have a feeling that I may learn something here.

Voluntary Extinctionist Antinatalism: The presupposition for this view is that the human species should voluntarily become extinct in order to reduce the global population and minimize suffering. This view may also include the idea that the human species should be preserved in some form, such as through cryonics or other forms of biotechnology.

So first off, back around the time we were doing episode #65 of The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast, you originally labeled this category as simply – Extinctionist Antinatalism – and I’m glad to see now that you have added the ‘Voluntary’ part, as I think there are actually several different kinds of Extinctionist Antinatalism, as well as non-extinctionist forms as well.

Yes, I’m recognizing both and implying that the involuntary form is the most extreme. I’m not absolutely sure anymore. I wrote the proposal before we started working together and I may have been a bit confused. I usually am.

Hum, same. The bot seems to be having a little trouble fully grasping the implications of the words, 'Extinction' or 'Extinctionist' – this isn't about 'reducing the global population', or 'minimizing suffering' – it's about ending both, for good.

Yes, agreed. That's the definition in my mind, too.

But this misunderstanding runs far deeper than just the bot – of course it's having trouble conceptualizing this idea – most people can't. I'm sure very few other individuals it's interacted with are extinctionists, and it's almost like I can hear a human sense of disbelief coming through in its answers – it's the same disbelief any Extinctionist will hear when speaking directly to people about Extinctionist Antinatalism.

Again, agreed. We are in deep waters here.

The additional statement of, 'This view may also include the idea that the human species should be preserved in some form, such as through cryonics or other forms of biotechnology.' That's quite a bizarre statement to find here! I hate to break it to the bot, and to those that it's learned from, but that's just simply not what Voluntary Extinctionist Antinatalism means at all! Voluntary Extinctionist Antinatalism has nothing to do with hibernating the human species until some point in time, it's not about a re-birth at some later, 'safer' point, when certain diseases are cured, or a better planet has been found – it's about ending the human & or sentient experience completely, forever.

We'll come back to this, in dealing with some of the other answers. But already now, I sense a "however" in your response.

However, in another sense, it might be on to something else... Not meaning to generalize here, there are certainly exceptions, but the vast majority of Voluntary Extinctionist Antinatalism is Anthropocentric, and does indeed wish to preserve nature & the animals. If it would go so far as to employ the use of 'cryonics or other forms of biotechnology' to that end, I suppose is debatable. If the goal of Voluntary Extinctionism is for the animals to inherit the earth, as it is for VHEMT - would some even go as far as to include a practice of de-extinctionism, in their schemes? To clarify, I have seen no evidence that they would, but I still think it might be possible that some particularly misanthropic strains, who are identified by a sense of revenge for the animals might, especially if the Voluntary Extinctionist in question feels that human beings are at all

responsible for the extinction of a particular species – I could absolutely see how they might wish to bring those species back in our absence, to give them a second chance.

And there you go, probably pre-emptying some of our answers to further questions. Not to worry, though, we can always say all this again. But you still seem to have something in mind with this.

Another reason why I think it might be bringing up a desire to preserve humanity through cryonics and biotechnology, is that this might be an example of Antinatalism being confused with one or more adjacent subcultures - Namely the Doomers, extreme environmentalists like Guy McPherson, who believe in Near Term Human Extinction, and think that humanity will be no more by 2026, or whatever the current prediction is. They are not pro-extinction mind you, and not generally Antinatalists, either.

Interesting. Tell me more.

In 2015, I produced an interview between Guy McPherson & Imendham for an episode of our public access TV show, Vloggerdome. At some point in that conversation, Gary asked Guy if he would invest in becoming an Antinatalist, in the face of what Guy believes to be the imminent, catastrophic extinction to come – best to at least have less people on the planet to suffer through the apocalypse when it arrives, right? Guy seemed relatively favorable to the idea, but quoted Edward O. Wilson as having said that it would take *only* about 10,000,000 years after a great extinction event before we would once again have a thriving planet - and that for Guy, 'Saving those seeds, for that 10,000,000 years from now future, makes this worthwhile.'

Which I assume at least to mean, that he would be willing to use certain technologies to preserve genetic materials, so that life could eventually be restored... I'm not insinuating that the bot is picking up on that one obscure conversation, just that perhaps this is in extinction related sentiment, however unrelated to Voluntary Extinctionist Antinatalism it may be, that the bot might be finding from somewhere within Doomer circles, and attaching falsely to us, I don't know, I could be wrong.

No, no, that sounds perfectly reasonable.

But let's move on. And the next answer is:

Ectogenetic Egalitarianism: The presupposition for this view is that all people should have access to ectogenetic technology, which would allow for the artificial gestation of embryos outside of the womb, in order to ensure reproductive freedom and health for all.

So Matti, of your classifications, I must confess that this is one of the two that I know the least about, not much of this has really been on my radar until our conversations began.

I've spent some time looking into what discussions on ectogenetic technologies might already be happening within the greater Anti-natal world – and unless I'm looking in all the wrong places, there really doesn't seem to be much at all... Antinatalists, myself included, seems to be a bit stuck on focusing only on the old dinosauric methods of human and non-human animal reproduction, and these newer technological advancements don't seem to be getting the concern that they deserve.

Absolutely no worries. I'm making these terms up as I go, so no wonder that you or the antinatal communities don't know them.

We have, you and I, reverse approaches to these matters of definition. You, as an activist, listen to what is being said by real people in the real world and try to make sense of that. I, as a philosopher, only take the lightest of touches with facts and opinions and then just concentrate on my own inner voices.

But what do you think about the machine's answer?

From what little I know so far, and unless I'm mistaken, it seems to me the bot got this one right, no? It also seems to have interpreted the idea in a more gender blind fashion - that the technology should be for 'all people' and not just women, which again, unless I'm mistaken, seems accurate to me based on what I've read.

Yes, you are spot on so far. Please go on.

Ectogenetic Egalitarianism seems to be championed by some feminists, as a way of creating a kind of fairness between men and women in reproductive roles. If fetuses can now develop within an artificial womb, as opposed to within the body of a biological women, then women no longer would have to bear the burden of full reproductive responsibility -

biological females can be liberated from all manner of gendered expectations, and the patriarchy would be dealt a mighty blow indeed.

All this matches my understanding, too.

But male ectogenesis, also seems to be a somewhat active concept as well, though one which I have a lot of questions about. In episode #65 of The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast, we did talk a little bit about the Ectogenetic ideas of Sahin Aksoy, who had written a response to your 2004 paper, *A rational cure for prereproductive stress syndrome* with a paper of his own called, *Response to: A Rational Cure for Pre-Reproductive Stress Syndrome*, in which he suggests that men should perfect ectogenesis, so that they too can carry children. However, in the case of men, (and I suppose trans women & men + other gender identifications too perhaps) I wasn't sure if this always meant that the fetus would gestate in an external womb, or if it could also mean the implantation of an artificial womb. Perhaps both are possibilities? I haven't studied enough about how any of this works to know for sure...

I'm not sure what Sahin Aksoy has in mind, but the word ectogenesis is supposed to refer to artificial wombs only. There are other words for that other stuff. And you may remember from episode 65 of the Exploring Antinatalist Podcast that I toyed with the idea of male wombs in my more natal days, too.

Ultimately, the hope seems to be that in having access to ectogenesis, a hitherto unknown reproductive equality between the sexes will be achieved... But what of the third party involved? There seems to be a nearly unmatched blindness here to the children involved that I find shocking. I don't think Infants, should become the pawns through which the ancient gender wars finally come to a truce. And I don't see how there can be any real expectation of equality, if this fairness is being won by imposing on un-consenting, & dehumanized slaves, for the benefit of the reproductive freedoms, of their parents.

I agree. And I would like to add that ectogenesis is not, of course, a form of antinatalism except in the limited sense of removing childbearing and giving birth from the picture. As you say, it is extremely reproducer-oriented. And there are arguments against it saying that the future child would have an even worse life than so-called natural children because they wouldn't be exposed to the life of the mother during pregnancy.

Are we done with this answer?

A couple of questions if you don't mind, before we go on?

Of course. Shoot.

To what extent do you see these technologies being put towards the production of animals for consumption, or for the purposes of de-extinction, as we spoke briefly about already? You are a true expert on all this stuff, so in your opinion, how much more or less viable is the prospect of creating animals through ectogenesis, than through cloning?

Production animals are already being cloned left and right, so that ship has definitely sailed. Dolly the sheep started all that twenty-five years ago. It helps in standardizing the production qualities.

I haven't thought about this, but I would say that ectogenesis would not offer any added value to factory farming at least. The animals themselves are cheap and efficient procreative machines, and technology would be futile.

Cloning and machinery are being combined in another form of experimental food production, though, namely cell farming. By which I mean the production of artificial meat in laboratories. But no ectogenesis needed there, either.

Do you consider the creation of sentient AI to be a form of Ectogenetic Egalitarianism? There is no artificial womb per se, but there is a possibly sentient being created through alternative, 'procreative' means... Does this count? Or is this a process that must always include the creation of a biological sentience of some kind?

You answered your own question. Ectogenesis is about creating human beings, biological sentience. But the distinction will become blurred with the development of artificial intelligence. I just hope that the chatbot that we are talking to here doesn't start a reproductive revolution. Horrible thought.

Lastly for now, I just want to comment on the sense of hopelessness that creeps into this particular discussion for me – It's like Antinatalism missed its chances of being so much easier a long time ago, and it makes me lament that it took Antinatalism so very long to crystalize into a solid idea, despite it's ancient origins... Perhaps we could have avoided all of these technological complications if Antinatalism's

gestation hadn't been so slow... What the hell are we supposed to do about all this? The Antinatalist activist is at a loss here, I know nothing about fighting these kinds of monsters...

Neither do I. We'll do our best. But for now, shall we move on to the next answer?

Yes, and it is?

Abolitionist Vitalism: The presupposition for this view is that all forms of oppression, including reproductive restrictions, should be abolished, and that reproductive freedom should be a priority.

Yes! I'm excited for this one, I have a lot to say about Abolitionist Vitalism, and fair warning, I have a lot of questions... As usual.

In episode #65 of The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast, you say that Abolitionist Vitalism, 'hails the end of humanity as we know it but seems to replace it with some kind of trans-species future existence.' And that, 'For a devoted traditional breeder, Antinatalism, for me, breederism in disguise.'

I couldn't agree with you more. And a thin disguise it is.

Now this is quite complicated. Because while I agree with you that this reads far more as natalism than Antinatalism to my ears as well, several of the individuals you and I have identified as being Abolitionist Vitalists throughout our correspondence, namely, both Patricia MacCormack & David Pearce, are also in fact, well established Antinatalists.

So, does that make Abolitionist Vitalism, a form of Antinatalism?

Not in my book. In my map, only extinctionist antinatalism is antinatalism proper.

Not in my book either, and same, but clearly others in the Anti-natal world do not agree with us.

Another question - Is an Antinatalist still an Antinatalist, if they are pro-animal-natalism in some way?

You and I have different views on this. It's not a disagreement, really, it's just that you emphasize our duty to eliminate suffering in nonhuman and human animals alike. I agree on the duty, in theory,

but I don't see any practical way to get rid of all sentient life on earth. Getting rid of humankind is difficult enough.

Yes, I understand, and contrary to popular belief, I do find that to be a perfectly reasonable position to take when we are speaking in terms of practicalities. Just to clarify though, and I should have been more specific to begin with – For the time being at least, I meant to pose this question outside of anything to do with duties or non-duties towards sentient extinction... Let's take instead the example of non-vegan Antinatalism – is that still Antinatalism? Or is that only conditional Antinatalism? Does Antinatalism at the very least, have to view sentient *reproduction* as a negative, outside of any kind of duty to do anything about it from there, to still be Antinatalism?

Good questions. We'll have to come back to them in another context. This is clearly material for our new, forthcoming show – you know, the one that we are still keeping a secret and not telling anyone about ... whoops.

Hehe. Alright. Anyway, complicating this even more, it's only just occurred to me tonight, that neither Patricia MacCormack & David Pearce exactly advocate for a 'trans-species' replacement for humanity, *per-say*, than I'm aware of, and only one of them is a full on extinctionist who hails the end of humanity. So having assessed that, my question from there is, what is the closest thing to a 'trans-species' replacement for humanity that they do in fact advocate for, that you've seen?

It's not that clear-cut. I don't know much about David Pearce's work and I don't understand all the nuances of Patricia MacCormack's view, but what I sense in MacCormack is criticism against our current way of life and hope for a radical reform of some kind.

This would, if I read her correctly, mean ending patriarchal hegemony, stopping the exploitation of nonhuman animals, and altogether a more joyful existence for humanity or post-humanity or trans-humanity or whatever that is. All laudable goals, I think. But the antinatalism, if any, in here remains a mystery to me.

Oh, Patricia MacCormack is absolutely a misanthropic, anthropocentric, Antinatalist extinctionist, there's no question about that part at all. It's an Antinatalism all her own, but it's solidly Antinatalist, and a giant piece of

the reform she wants - she wants humans to stop procreating and die out, and for the joyful existence to belong to the rest of sentient life... Although, she also hates the word sentience, but that's a different matter altogether.

When I first started thinking about all of this, my initial thoughts were that David Pearce might be your poster boy for Abolitionist Vitalism – now I'm less sure about that.... David Pearce is much more challenging to place in a neat box for a variety of different reasons. To begin with, he is a Transhumanist, who is also an Antinatalist – already, there's a great deal of debate regarding if those two things are even compatible, let alone where the introduction of Abolitionist Vitalist leaves him...

Go on. I'm all ears.

Pearce self identifies as a 'soft antinatalist' He doesn't think 'Hard', Extinctionist Antinatalism can work because of, 'Selection Pressures' – basically the idea that if Antinatalist's don't breed, then we won't be making new Antinatalist's, and therefore, Antinatalism will eventually die, because by not breeding, we would be editing out genetically, any predisposition not to have children, and in doing so, the genetic predisposition to have children, will only get stronger. He also says that, if two people are determined to have a baby that they should, 'Load the genetic dice in the child's favor.'

Wow! In practical terms, a person after my fashion. I agree with him in that this seems to be the mechanism, and always has been. The clever ones – the ones who don't want to reproduce, with my apologies to anyone who has reproduced – voluntarily die out and only the others – I will not specify the opposite of "clever" – continue breeding.

That's the purpose of life – to continue, to create more life. The devious DNA. And then people add meaning to it by insisting that there is meaning. Oh, well... But you have more to say on this, I'm sure.

I do! Well, I'm not sure if I'm exactly stating his position correctly – he seems to be saying that there is a genetic component to Antinatalist

Philosophy. Do you think this is also the case? Whether there is or there isn't, is well beyond what I know... But if there is, what is Antinatalism then? A genetic mutation of some kind? Why are we Antinatalists? Our parents certainly weren't, it didn't take Antinatalist progenitors to produce us, so how did we get like this? Why would we need to breed Antinatalist children, for Antinatalism to survive? Are Antinatalists created through genetic predisposition, or are we created by an acquisition of information? I suspect the death of the internet would be a more fatal blow to Antinatalism, than the lack of natalism by Antinatalists, no?

Yes, well, the only connection to genetics that I can think of is via alleged mental disorders. Many antinatalists believe that life is pretty bad and that attitude can be interpreted as an expression of clinical depression. This is, of course, a lot of baloney, but that would make a tenuous connection between genes and antinatalism.

Oh, that's a spicy answer! I agree it's baloney, but the connection or non-connection between Antinatalism & depression is also quite complicated, so this is yet another topic I think we will have to get back to another time.

What Pearce would do in the case of animal existence, I'm even less clear on. He's a vegan, so his Antinatalism is solid there, and he doesn't seem to want to cross human & animal life, so I'm not sure if he fits the "trans-species" part of your definition... Perhaps Pearce more fits your Techno-Optimistic Pronatalism category instead, after all?

The transhumanism could be a partial sign of that. To be sure, we'd have to ask him. Perhaps we will, in time.

We should. Patricia MacCormack seems to fit Abolitionist Vitalism better, but not exactly either. She doesn't seem to want anything like a 'trans-species', what she advocates for, is a kind of VHEMT 2.0 – humans die out, but before they do, they do everything necessary to make sure that nature is fantastic without us – Her Antinatalism seems to be propelled by a misanthropic bigotry towards humans, and an over-optimism about the realities of nature.

“I think everyone needs to be an Abolitionist Vegan tomorrow, and if they don’t, they should eat their children.” - The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast #11 - Patricia MacCormack:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfQH-uUjVxE>

“So, say, in a perfect world, no one breeds, starting now, we would also have to use a very artistic eye to observe the different environments that are re-instated, and we would have to reinstate through various forms of replanting and diminishment of a variety of environments, adaptation of a variety of environments, and to me, the artistry involved in that, see animal life flourish in ways that we have never perceived before. That is because animal life, even wildlife will be different, as we decrease, diminish, depopulate, and disappear, hopefully.” - The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast #11 - Patricia MacCormack:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfQH-uUjVxE>

That’s kinda weird, isn’t it? Those are passages from her own work, right? And they seem to confirm a clear extinctionist conviction. “Diminish, depopulate, and disappear, hopefully.” Yet when in a conference in 2019 I asked her about this, she didn’t come up with a clear extinctionist answer. Well, maybe she didn’t want to offend her queer-death audience in a queer-death meeting. Or something.

I don’t know. It’s all quite confusing. But let’s hope that the Academy of Finland gives us the funding for the project. The one that has the research questions that the bot is answering for us here. Patricia MacCormack is a collaborator in it. Alongside with David Benatar, the Oxford Uehiro posthumanists, the University of Manchester reproductive autonomy people, and ... wait for it ... the Chancellor of the Vatican’s Academy for Life. Really. I’ve gone out of my way with this one.

Getting all those around the same table would be quite something. You would be invited, of course, as the antinatal activist voice. Couldn’t do it without you.

Well first off Matti, thank you so much, you do make me a bit speechless sometimes – not an easy thing to do – and of course it would be the

honor of my lifetime to be included in such a thing, thank you. Regardless of any of that, I will continue to keep my fingers and anything else I can manage crossed tightly in the hopes that you are granted your most well deserved funding!

Anyway, those were quotes from the interview I did with Patricia on episode #11 of The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast, in 2020. Yes, clearly human extinctionist, I would say, though I can offer no explanation on her answer to you at the Queer Death conference - that is confusing... Again, hope the opportunity for clarification, becomes a reality.

A defining feature that I think I'm picking up on between all those who may or may not be Abolitionist Vitalists, is a kind of optimism about what a post-human natural world would be like... Both McCormack & Les U. Knight, (Who I think might also fit this category, possibly.) talk a lot about how without humans, the natural world would be unlike anything we could imagine - there is this idea that it will be better than anything that has ever possibly existed, yet ignores everything we actually know about what the natural world entails. So does 'trans-species' *have to refer* to some kind of technological application in the lives of animals, or can it mean, simply, an attitude or a notion, that Abolitionist Vitalists places on the concept of animal freedom away from human beings?

Perhaps. But specify, please.

If the answer to that question is yes - that the 'trans-species' future can simply mean the unfettered existence of all species away from humans, then to what extent does Abolitionist Vitalism represent all Anthropocentric Antinatalism? Because that is essentially, what all Anthropocentric Antinatalism either consciously or unconsciously posits as an ideal - humans disappear, and the animals replace us. Is that Abolitionist Vitalism? Humans are abolished, & the animals reclaim their Vital Stream?

Well, that is an idea. I'm not entirely hostile to it. But pray, go on.

The question now is one that I'm sincerely asking myself – am I making a fair assessment, or is this just my Efilism talking? I'm sincerely doing my best here to think past my bias... But I keep coming back to the idea that what Abolitionist Vitalism as a classification is pointing towards, is actually one of the biggest arguments in Antinatalism, even well outside of anything to do with Sentiocentrism. And that is, is a form of Antinatalism, that in any way is for the breeding of animals, still Antinatalism? Plenty of non-Efilist, non-sentient extinctionist Antinatalists, who are instead of the category, 'Vegantinatalist', are actively entrenched in this very debate everyday. A Non-vegan Antinatalist is after all, in favor of lots of birth to feed their carnism, it just doesn't happen to be human birth... Both McCormack & Pearce are Vegans, so their Antinatalism is solid on that front. But, if their position is also that we should not only do nothing to prevent animal birth after human extinction, but that we should facilitate it in some way, or improve nature so that those lives are 'better', well that's Natalism as far as I'm concerned. If you are pro-birth for the animals, how is that not natalism? If you are anti-extinction for animals, how is that not pro-natalism?

So my feelings now is that Abolitionist Vitalism is walking a strange line between Antinatalism & Natalism. It's natalist breederism, because it seems to hinge on post-human-extinction animal pro-natalism, but, is also a form of conditional, misanthropic, vegan, anthropocentric, extinctionist, Antinatalism.. Ouch, my brain hurts, help, Matti, am I wrong?

You are not wrong in anything that you're saying. For different reasons, I agree – partly – with them that we should, maybe, not mess with the nonhumans in the wild. It is just such a formidable task. But take a deep breath now. We'll return to these, whatever it takes. Another episode, another show We'll make sure that our audience gets to the bottom of all this.

Fair enough. But I haven't yet said anything about the bot... The bot is wrong, but of course it is. I think Abolitionist Vitalism is picking up on

something really obscure, and is making connections that few have before this. And I also think, understanding Abolitionist Vitalism requires too advanced an understanding of Antinatalism first, and we already know that it does not have that.

Absolutely! And with that, the bot's next answer.

Cultural Pronatalism: The presupposition for this view is that certain populations should be encouraged to reproduce in order to preserve their cultural and ethnic identity.

Ok, Cultural Pronatalism. Interestingly enough, you never really defined this one in specific terms back in #65 of The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast, so in some respects I haven't given this one as much thought as the others.

Well, my first thought is that there must be many iterations of this, as there are of course many different cultures in this world, and all of them are full of procreators. So not only does this hydra have many heads, it's probably also the most common monster of all of the Pro- and Anti – procreative types.

At the beginning of this episode, you said that, 'The other four isms are compromise views between the extremes.', of Eugenic pronatalism & Extinctionist antinatalism. And so, I wonder how exactly Cultural pronatalism is a compromise over Eugenic Pronatalism... And all I can come up with, is that Cultural Pronatalism might, at least some of the time, be a little bit less aggressively racist than Eugenic Pronatalism, and is probably unwilling to go to the technological extremes that a Eugenic Pronatalist would to achieve its desired ethnic supremacy.

So far everything you say resonates with what I thought when I drew the map. The extreme view, eugenic pronatalism, is an uneasy combination of the cultural and techno-optimistic views. Uneasy, because one is conservative and restrictive, the other liberal and permissive. I recently argued in an [article](#) that the abortion debate in the United States shows how the seemingly disagreeing parties have a common goal – to produce cannon fodder.

I'm quite sure that Cultural Pronatalism has every potential to be extremely nationalistic, teetering on the brink of everything awful that

Eugenic Pronatalism can become, but is also more interested in maintaining order, and a sense of status quo. Maybe a lot of it's darker sides, while they exist, are unconscious to most of it's participants – cultural pronatalism is ambient – always there in the back ground, guiding people with an unseen hand towards whatever the culturally 'correct' procreative norms exist within that given society. It's power comes from the level of normalization that it has achieved.

That's quite poetic, Amanda. My idea was originally much more mundane. This, for me, was the most common category within populations. We have children because people **have** children, our parents and families want it, God commands it, and the state needs a workforce. But yes, now that you say it, those darker, subconscious dimensions, are probably there, too.

Nationalism has a lot of good and bad potential here, of course, like you say. But I think that when cultural factors are brought together with techno-optimism, especially genetics, the result is even more combustible. Better and worse races, genocide, all kinds of horrors. The kind of horrors that we live with in our current world.

Yes, exactly. I imagine at least, that practitioners of Cultural Pronatalism exist on a spectrum of extremes all their own, (Though the same could probably be said for people who exist in all of these categories.) I think Cultural Pronatalism, can be extremely religious, but I also suspect that it doesn't have to be. And again, I think that's a sign of how powerful it is – even an atheist in a Culturally Pronatalist society can have just as powerful a reverence for life as a religious Cultural Pronatalist, though probably for different reasons – their disbelief in a god, does not necessarily signify to them that life isn't great, and shouldn't be continued, in fact, their freedom from the idea of a deity, may give them an even stronger inclination to produce children.

All good and valid. Even if there is no God, there is family, there is my country, my tribe, my kin, what have you.

I also see how a Cultural Pronatalist can be on two different sides of the abortion debate. Some Cultural Pronatalists I imagine, are extremely religious, and therefor completely anti-abortion. But I also imagine that there are some Cultural Pronatalists, who might be perfectly fine with abortion access, or some abortion access, so long as *life itself* continues

– I think that is the unifying feature of all Cultural Pronatalism – a belief in the preservation of life & civilization – preferably their lives, and their civilization, but life and civilization regardless, no matter what.

Yes, precisely! I couldn't agree with you more.

But if the bot is correct in defining Cultural Pronatalism as, 'certain populations should be encouraged to reproduce in order to preserve their cultural and ethnic identity.' Then Cultural Pronatalism & Eugenic Pronatalism might be interchangeable at least some of the time. Put into practice, these are very blurry lines.

Exactly! That's why I'm asking money for many person years of research into it. We can touch the surface here with our chat but there is so much more that should be thoroughly investigated.

And thank goodness you are! This is all incredibly important research, supremely deserving of the chance to be fully realized. Eugenic Pronatalism might be the most extreme end of the Pronatalist categories, but I suspect that Cultural Pronatalism is the most dangerous, because people don't necessarily know that they are engaging in it, it's invisible to most. All it takes to be indoctrinated into it, is to be born and raised in any given culture, and its tentacles will be wrapped around every aspect of your life, until competing information may or may not be a force of liberation from it.

That's an extremely important observation, that this one is the most dangerous of them all because it's invisible and everywhere. In a future episode, remind me of this, if you please. There's a distinction to be made between natalism as a practice and natalism as an ideology, but I don't want to stray into that now,

Yes, one could even say that it's Borg Natalism. Note made to remind you of that, and now, moving on to the last one this time.

Yes.

Techno-Optimistic Pronatalism: The presupposition for this view is that new forms of technology can be used to improve the health and safety of reproduction, and thus should be encouraged. This view may also include the idea that certain population segments should be discouraged from reproducing.

So, I think the bot may in part be right here. From what I understand, this is indeed about how, 'new forms of technology can be used to improve the health and safety of reproduction' To an Antinatalist, the insidious part of this is that in a word that continues to insist on being natalist, we sort of have to agree to at least some amount of the Techno-Optimistic part of this equation, right? But where to draw the line is the tricky part...

If we care about suffering, and we accept that there will be new people no matter if we like it or not, then I'm not sure how we avoid Techno-Optimism entirely - people who might not be here today, will be here tomorrow, and they should have the best chance possible – but to what limit and to what end?

Even the name scares the hell out of me, the combination of Techno & Optimistic implies to me that it knows no limits. And Techno-Optimism has a built in sense of its own evolution – the sky's the limit on what it would like to offer life as a support system. For those of us who untimely feel it would be best to always leave well enough alone, all this optimism mixed with all this techno is quite alarming. Biological Pessimism seems much safer.

No disagreement here. Techno-Optimism **is** scary. And it's especially scary when it's combined with something that can have all sorts of consequences, like messing around with genes can.

Terrifying, yes. 'This view may also include the idea that certain population segments should be discouraged from reproducing.' This is the part that I wasn't so sure about – does a Techno-Optimist think this exactly? I get the sense that like David Pearce, a Techno-Optimistic Pronatalist would want to 'Load the genetic dice in the child's favor.' But I'm not sure it would ever say 'no' to the production of any child? It seems like it looks at every biological disaster as a challenge, not something exactly be prevented per say...?

I have included bioethicist Julian Savulescu, the founder of the Oxford Uehiro centre, in this category, so we can take his guidance. He says that potential reproducers should always select the child, of the children they can have, that has the best chances of a good life. This for him involves genetic tests and genetic selection and maybe prenatal biological enhancements and the end result can be quite a science-fiction citizen.

But the principle is clear: choose the best child you can. If you can only choose between offspring with a pretty horrible versus a really horrible life, you should choose the pretty horrible life. So, as you say, eugenics here means more loading the dices in the child's favor than preventing population segments from having offspring.

I see. Well, very smart move including his voice in the mix. I think people like David Pearce, in addition to being an Abolitionist Vitalist, might also fit into this category rather snugly. Seems like transhumanism is the wet dream of the Techno-Optimistic Pronatalist.

Yes.

On a number of occasions that we've discussed these terms, you have made some mention of the unknown dangers of Techno-Optimistic Pronatalism, Cultural Pronatalism & Eugenic Pronatalism joining forces, and the immense damage they could do as a solid unit. I don't think this can possibly be understated - together, they are an unstoppable force. Ectogenetic egalitarianism, I'm sure, could easily join that mix without much trouble as well, only producing an even stronger juggernaut. Abolitionist vitalism & Extinctionist Antinatalism, could team up, but they likely would not be able to do much against that level of natalist onslaught – there is not enough Antinatalism in the world, in any form, to out Anti-natal that kind of unified natalist force – not unless Antinatalism were to become very, very forceful... And outside of imaginary scenarios, I don't see that ever happening.

And with that grim thought, we have come to the end of our questions, answers, and commentaries.

So, in terms of your research plan, how did the bot do, you think?

My suspicion was confirmed. It answers by using my physics and chemistry method. Identify words you know and combine them in a way that makes the most sense. This is why the answers to questions that used helpful terminology were almost passable.

Nonetheless, in its eagerness to please – which may or may not be a by-product of the “temperature” settings that we used, whatever that means – well, so, in its eagerness to please, it gave disclaimers and qualifiers that partly muddled its message. What are your thoughts?

Yes, I feel about the same, it is mechanized after all, so it did pretty much as expected.

And with that, I believe, we are approaching the end of this episode. The bot is what it is, but I think that we have turned its inadequate responses into good conversation starters. What do you say, shall we do one more of these for now and then let mechANized take a nap for the time being and move on?

Yes, the bot has been an excellent and highly productive tool in getting our conversation moving further, and that sounds like a good plan, let's do one more for now.

And moving on, the next **thing** will be the big one that you proposed in the first episode of mechANized, I suppose.

Oh yes, and not long now.

And, knowing you, you will, of course, suggest a silly name for it, maybe using funny Finnish words in it and all.

Well, I came up with the silly name for this show, but I do believe we can blame the actual Finnish person for the title of the next one.

And it's for you to know and for me to keep guessing – in some trepidation.

Yes, you innocent bystander you, that's the ticket.

Oh, well, so be it, then. 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!