

mechANized: Antinatalism & Open AI #3

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, in the first episode of mechANized we warmed up by asking the bot a few questions of definition, with mixed results. In the second episode we went on to ask some real-life research questions from one of my project bids. That was more rewarding. Although the bot's responses were, again, ... interesting ... they provided nice discussion starters.

I think that this, the third episode, will be the last in this series that we do for the time being, because we already have the next big show in the pipelines. I understand that you'll reveal its name at the end of today's podcast, so audience, stay tuned! Is that right, Amanda?

Yes, all will be revealed. In the meantime, what do you have in mind for today?

We could first return briefly – or not so briefly – to one of the questions that we left unanswered in the last episode and then see how it goes. We may or may not then have time for a couple of other questions. Depends on how verbose we are this time. Would that be OK?

Sounds like a plan to me. Full steam ahead! What did we leave unanswered?

The one with antinatalists who do not go for nonhuman extinction. I took the liberty of formulating the question so that the bot would give the descriptive answer that I wanted it to give. And the question was:

Can some antinatalists condone reproduction in nonhuman animals? If so, on what grounds? Provide names.

And the bot responded:

*Yes, some antinatalists may condone reproduction in nonhuman animals on the grounds that it is a natural part of the animal kingdom and may be necessary for the survival of the species. Prominent antinatalists who have expressed this view include philosopher David Benatar, author of the book *Better Never to Have Been*, and philosopher Jim Crawford, author of the book *Confronting the Finitude*.*

“Wrong!” I sense you protesting. But hear me out, maybe? I can add something to that and then we are in a better position to sort out what’s descriptive and what’s normative in this debacle. All right?

Ok, I’m happy to do that if that’s where this gets us, sure.

Thanks! So, I understand very little about all this but I have tried to figure it out. You will, no doubt, correct the bot on David Benatar and Jim Crawford. I’ll just say what I think I know.

The bot is right, I think, in saying that there are people who call themselves antinatalists, even extinctionists, yet would stop short at annihilating all sentient life. In fact, I know this because I call myself an antinatalist and argue in a recent paper, with qualifications, that it might be wise not to mess with other species. That’s the reason identified by the bot.

But, in addition, there are misanthropic arguments for human antinatalism and extinction. *Homo sapiens* is a curse to Mother Nature, and we should go away and leave the planet to other species. Which will then live in harmony ever after, the lion resting with the lamb.

With, maybe, the background idea that the most evolved and enlightened humans will be there, too. I don’t know. That’s how our minds sometimes seem to work. Or maybe I’m being unkind –

and the misanthropic antinatalists are sincere in their quest to leave nature alone.

But that's enough from me. How would you rate the bot's ramblings – and mine?

Ok, thanks very much, Matti. Well... Where to begin? How do I end up not writing a novel trying to answer this? First, I would like to point out, that while part of my original unanswered question did indeed have to do with sentient extinction concerns, I had really only meant for *part* of the question to be about any of that. Yes, sentient extinction is one way in which some Antinatalism, and some Antinatalists condone the reproduction of nonhuman animals, but that's not the only reason why some of them do so. There is also the tremendous debate regarding the relationship between Antinatalism & Veganism, and I think there are some more fundamental questions to consider as well...

OK. And?

So let's start with the fundamental questions first. My baseline concerns are these - Outside of any duty to do anything at all – Is Antinatalism against some birth, or ALL birth? Is the issue life? Is the enemy DNA? Is *reproduction*, as part of the sentient condition, negative? Again, removing talk of duties of any kind, be it changing one's dietary practices, or condoning sentient extinction – Those are the real questions I would like to see Antinatalism be able to contend and engage with better than what Antinatalists at large seem to currently be able to do.

That's fair enough, I suppose.

Before we move forward though, I would just like to make something else clear. I think trying to pinpoint what Antinatalism is in its purest form is of the utmost importance, but I'm not in the business of taking anyone's Antinatalism away from them if they don't fit some mold. Too many people try to do that to me, and so I try to be very careful not to do it to anyone else, that's not what any of this is about. My first rule is to make decisions based on what is best for the unborn – and the

unborn are best served by embracing diversity in Antinatalist thinking, and I am dedicated to that, even when I disagree.

Sounds good.

So now with the fundamental questions, and my clarification out of the way, I think it's now also best that we acknowledge that what we are left with is at least two separate, huge conversations - one to do with the connection between Antinatalism & Veganism, and the other to do with sentient extinction. For the sake of order and brevity, I would like to propose we address the Veganism area of the debate in the next, separate question for the bot - this concern deserves its own space, and both of us have a lot to say on that subject alone, sound ok?

Yes, good plan.

Alright, so finally, with all that out of the way, lets finally get to some sentient extinction - this is a giant subject, no way we will get to it all here. As per my above clarification, yes, of course the bot, and you, are correct. An Antinatalist, even an Extinctionist Antinatalist, can stop short of eliminating all sentient life, and still be an Extinctionist Antinatalist. Ok. That's perfectly fine.

Good, good.

Can some Antinatalists condone reproduction in nonhuman animals? Yes, of course they can, and they do so all the time for the sake of their carnism, and for their notions about nature. It is my belief that in doing so, they only ever address a small percentage of what Antinatalism encompasses. They are of course free to do as they wish, and still be Antinatalists, I don't agree with them, and I am equally free to retain my Antinatalism, and argue my opposing position.

So far, so good.

What I don't think it should cost any type of Antinatalist anything to at least be able to say, is that Better Never to Have Been, is not just a feature of the human condition - it's an accurate description of sentient reality. The lives of the animals will be better without us, but they will not in fact be good lives.

I don't see why the reason the bot gives, that, 'it is a natural part of the animal kingdom and may be necessary for the survival of the species.' Is at all a good one. We, are also a natural part of the animal kingdom, and not being Extinctionist Antinatalists would also be necessary for the survival of the species... Since when is Antinatalism concerned with upholding the natural order of anything?

Hear, hear! I may have a footnote to that later, though.

With all due respect to misanthropic Antinatalism, I think the misanthropic arguments are garbage here - why are we turning Antinatalism into a bigotry against humans? It's all far too simplistic - yes, humans are awful, yes we should go extinct, but that's not all we are, and our extinction shouldn't be confused with some kind of punishment for our failures. Humans shouldn't go extinct because we are bad, we should go extinct because we are need machines who suffer and cause suffering. But we are just another product of nature - the crude forces in control of all the precious commodities, and that includes us, are what's really at fault, and we are the only ones that can diagnose that, and we are the only ones that could engineer a solution to it, if we wanted to.

All true, I think.

I don't dispute that it might be wise not to mess with other species, in fact, I agree that we should *almost never* mess with them at all. But 8 billion humans, and billions of other sentient individuals are already in hell. I do not think this situation will improve, on the contrary. If we know that now, I cannot see how we can justify doing nothing in our own end game. It's very likely, that there will come a point, when all of the needs here on planet earth are already so frustrated, that sentient euthanasia will be the kindest force possible.

If our goal is our own departure, then thoroughly questioning what is or isn't a dereliction of duty to the rest of sentience is a question that I think any extinctionist needs to take seriously. I don't think it's something we can ignore when considering our own end. Because of them, our extinction, likely, does not come for free.

If we make the decision to do nothing to help them escape, I think it's perfectly reasonable for me to ask - Would we be making the decision to do nothing, for their benefit? Or for ours?

And how dare we? It would be like liberating adults from a death camp, and leaving the children behind... How can that possibly be how the story of ethics ends?

I have no disagreement with any of that. It just depends, I believe, on the angle from which we approach the issue. What your excellent reflections make clear is that extinctionists who believe that reduction of pain is our primary goal have no reason **not** to extend that outside our own species.

It's just that there are other philosophical views about our primary goal. For Aristotelians, our purpose is to live, find nutrition and shelter, reproduce, and seek knowledge. For Kantians, our duty is to respect humanity in ourselves and in others. These philosophers don't believe that negative utilitarianism, the theory on which your analysis seems to be based, is all that there is to humanity and morality.

Now, if these essentially anthropocentric philosophers can somehow come to at least anti-pronatal conclusions, I suggest that we welcome them to the party with open arms. We may have to grind our teeth a little, but anything for the Cause. This, of course, assuming that they do more good than harm to it. And I believe that some of them might. And I may be wrong. This is not a simple equation. We'll have to write the novel about it at some point.

Yes, and we may very well eventually have to.

And yes, I understand. Well, I don't claim to know much of anything at all about Aristotelians or Kantians, or all that much about Utilitarians for that matter, either - I didn't know what a normative theory was until about 2 years ago. But, I'm learning, and I've come a long way to understand and accept why it's necessary to measure all these different perspectives, exhausting though it is. I just sure hope everyone can

figure it out before the future throws all of sentient welfare into the toilet, I'm not looking forward to the slow flush.

I only know of two or three Antinatalists who flirt with Aristotle on the weekends, but there certainly are quite a lot of Antinatalists who are Deontologists, so maybe there is some hope... As for these anthropocentric philosophers you have in mind - I've certainly never kept anyone out of the Anti-Natal Party, to the chagrin of many, I operated the widest tent in Antinatalism, everyone is welcome, come one come all.

Just to quickly close out by addressing the two people the bot named –

I don't think David Benatar ever said anything like that. I don't know, I don't want to speak for him... He does think that animal interventionalism is utopian, but I suspect at least that if some reasonable solution to ending sentience presented itself to him that he would not be against it. And I don't think he is condoning the reproduction of animals any more than I am, it's just simply that there isn't anything that can be done about it except to condemn in through words, which he does.

OK, I will do that, as well, then. I condemn the continued reproduction of animals. There.

Excellent. And in absence of any real paths forward, that's really all I want.

Jim Crawford is an old friend of mine. He's not a philosopher, and he's not the author of *Confronting the Finitude*, whatever that is. He's a short order cook, the father of two, and author of the 2007 semi-autobiographical book, *Confessions of an Antinatalist*, which I highly recommend to anyone listening. I knew him originally as Metamorphhh on YouTube, and he was likely the very first person to make a video saying the word Antinatalism. For some years, he was a regular character in Antinatalist response video conversations, but sadly deleted most of his videos in 2014 or so, and has been mostly inactive since. I sincerely don't remember if Jim ever said anything about

animals at all. Always nice to see his name brought up again, but the bot has no idea what it's talking about.

I see. So, given the task to provide names, the bot selects a couple of people who have said something about antinatalism and hopes that they may have said something about nonhuman extinction, too. Good old college essay-writing approach. Didn't work this time, Amanda marking.

But now it's time for **your** leading question to the bot. And it is...

Is there a connection between Antinatalism & Veganism, and do Antinatalists have a duty to be Vegans?

Aaand that was leading, alright. I have a feeling that the bot will sink even deeper now. But we'll see. What did it have to say?

This:

While there is some overlap between antimanity [sic] and veganism since both reject animal cruelty, there is not necessarily a direct connection between the two. Ultimately, it is up to individuals to decide whether they wish to pursue veganism or other lifestyle choices, and this choice cannot be imposed upon antinatalists or any other group. It is important to recognize that while there may be some overlap between the two philosophies in terms of rejecting animal cruelty, they are ultimately distinct movements.

Matti, I would like you to go first on this one, but a super quick note to our audience before you do – the misspelling of 'Antinatalism' as 'antimianity' was the bots error, and one that it kept making repeatedly the day I asked it this question... No idea why this was happening, but I've kept it in out of interest and for posterity. And now please, go right ahead.

Thank you, Amanda. At the peril of being magnificently wrong, I'll side with the bot on this one. As a Devil's Advocate, mind you. I try to be both antinatal and vegan, but I've yet to work out the

grounds on which I could be. My best guess so far is negative utilitarianism.

If my goal is to reduce suffering, both causes provide me with some means. No more children, no more painful lives, less suffering. No more animal product consumption, no more painful lives, less suffering. All well and good. For me, since I'm both.

But then, first the reverse question, must a vegan be an antinatalist? Not if I understand things correctly. If my goal is to reduce nonhuman suffering, why would I necessarily care about human suffering? Consistency through sentience, yes, but that's just the negative utilitarian speaking. People can be vegan in many ways. Or can they? I sense that you will say "no" but may I conclude my ramblings?

Of course.

Thanks. So, must an antinatalist be a vegan? We both know that depends on the definition. And I tend to keep the definition wide. Again, if I want humans to stop reproducing, why would that have to spill into my eating or fur-wearing habits? Just asking. Not for myself, but for the poor deluded wrong-reason antinatalists.

But this is your question. Tell me, how deep did the bot and I sink?

Well, I find the bot's answer a little annoying, and you are playing devil's advocate, but I think your questions are perfectly sound, so no sinking I don't think, all good.

Starting with the bot's statement that, 'there is not necessarily a direct connection between the two.' I just see the connection as being incredibly dirt simple... And I in no way mean to imply that it's wrong for the philosopher to try to ground Antinatalism & Veganism together through something like negative utilitarianism, that's necessary, & that only makes sense as a path forward. The connection through negative utilitarianism seems to be a given, and an excellent one. But with all due respect, it's hard for me not to feel like this is applying calculus to simple addition? They are both Suffering Focused Ethics. And some of

this is what I was trying to articulate when I was talking about Antinatalist fundamentals earlier – You are an Antinatalist - you are against birth. Animals are born. Birth bad. Ouch. Eat baby? No eat baby... I mean, I'm making a joke, but sincere question, how much more grounded in anything does it really need to be? If you are against birth, why would you eat children?

I couldn't agree more. Eating children is not a good idea.

And you are quite right that people can be vegan for many different reasons, and some of those reasons include not giving a damn about suffering... And look, far be it from me to split hairs - it's good that people go vegan for *any* reason, I'll take it.

I think if people can be vegans, Antinatalist or not, then they should do it, it's good not vote for torture with your wallet. I've been a Vegan for almost 7 years now, myself... And it may surprise you to hear that I think of Veganism, ultimately, as more of a gesture towards doing the right thing than anything substantial. It's the right thing to do, and therefore we should do it, especially if we are Antinatalists... But only a fool would think that it's actually solving much of anything. It's not actually going to fix the real problems, it's just that not torturing and eating our sentient siblings is really the least that we can do for them...

If I may interrupt you here for a moment, please? ... Thanks, so you say that veganism is not a solution to anything. But here's another Devil's Advocate observation to that.

Many people think that universal – or even close to universal – veganism **would** be a solution to environmental decay and the climate crisis. Animal production is one of the main drivers of those calamities; and stopping it could be a game changer.

“But the world would continue to exist, with all its suffering”, I hear you say. To which I can continue with an environmentalist-vegan dream. See, maybe both nonhuman and human suffering would go away if we all chose a vegan lifestyle, respected one another's needs, and were generally nice to each other.

Sure, there would be **some** pain and anguish, but that could be justified, in the Big Scheme of Things, by the happiness of people and their nicely kept animal companions, and the new-found harmony in the wild.

I have a strong feeling that, with the antinatal force strong in you, you will have something critical to say about this. But could you honor me with a response before we go back to the rest of your remarks on the bot's answer?

...Who are you and what have you done with Matti Häyry?

Hah, but of course I will, thank you for your question. If I thought for a moment that a vegan world was achievable, then my feelings towards veganism being more than a gesture in the right thing would change. Yes, certainly if you somehow ended animal production tomorrow, it would change the world. Yes, it would solve a lot of problems, yes it would do a lot of good - not all the good, not even close, but yes, lots of it. If it is at all possible, it's not going to happen by changing everyone's minds, that's hopeless in my book.... It would take something massive to cause this kind of shift, and I don't think it would be through respect of anyone's needs and niceness... I fear, the only way I see most of the world going vegan, is by having nothing to eat.

So, I'm too pessimistic to believe we can achieve a vegan world, and I don't think without good reason. I'm not sure that dream is any more real than the red button, actually.

And part of why I think that, incidentally, is from reading your own work. Most of our audience, doesn't yet know just how much animal rights work you've actually done, but your 2020 paper, *Causation, Responsibility, and Harm: How the Discursive Shift from Law and Ethics to Social Justice Sealed the Plight of Nonhuman Animals*, which I highly recommend people read by the way, sealed the lid shut on a lot of what optimism I still had left.... We aren't moving in a good direction for the animals, or for ourselves.

I'm sorry to hear that my article robbed you of the hope you had. Or am I? I'll have to look at the article and see what said. If it still

looks defensible, then I suppose I should be glad to hear that it had the desired effect.

But be that as it may, I interrupted your reaction to the bot's answer. And you were saying?

No worries, anyway, I have no problem with people having an addiction to something that they can't shake, that was my own problem for a long, long time, I couldn't let it go, and I have every sympathy for that. So for me personally, I see no problem with a carnist Antinatalist who can at least articulate why eating animals is wrong – I'm much more interested in what comes out of people's mouths, than what goes into them. I would rather people be able to speak vegan, even if they themselves can't perform it – we need the meme's on animal consumption to change first, more than we need to hound weak, fallible, addicted individuals to change, I think.

Yes, agreed.

The bot is right when it says that, 'Ultimately, it is up to individuals to decide whether they wish to pursue veganism or other lifestyle choices'. Sure. But who's imposing? There's a strange hostility in the way the bot worded it's answer there, as if it's telling me, it'll eat bacon if it wants to.

I didn't pick up on that one but yes, it's there. Perhaps we should have adjusted the "temperature" – again, whatever it means – better.

There was more salt than heat in that answer, but you might be right. As for your question, must a vegan be an Antinatalist? Well, no, not as in there's some mandate that they have to be... I don't know how much sense it ultimately makes for them not to at least consider it though. 'If my goal is to reduce nonhuman suffering, why would I necessarily care about human suffering?' That's very foreign thinking to me I guess, I just don't think in terms that misanthropic. Suffering is suffering, it doesn't matter who or what it's happening to, if it's suffering, then it's bad. I understand people think differently about these matters, but I see nothing wrong with challenging them to think about suffering in broader terms. Also, if these vegans have any plan on bringing children into the

world, but are also satisfied to take a position of not caring about human suffering... Do I even need to say it? And if my goal is to reduce nonhuman suffering, you can't get more insane than to think creating another human, whose dietary practices you will ultimately have no control over, is a good idea. So no, they don't have to be, but I will stubbornly insist that they should be giving it a lot more thought.

But in the light of the "saving the world from all its suffering by going vegan" dream?

Maybe pop a melatonin, and have deeper dreams?

Alright, I'll do that. This dream is cancelled. Nothing to see here. Would the crowd disperse?

No no, the crowd must suffer the rest of the episode at least. Must an Antinatalist be a vegan? ...No? But, again, why not? I will say that it starts to become weirder and weirder for someone not to be, depending on their level of involvement. With only a small number of exceptions, all of the major contemporary Antinatalists, no matter if they are Philosophers, or activists or what have you, are Vegan. In general, those that actually produce Antinatalist content in some way, are. But Antinatalist content producers are a minority within the movement. The vast majority of Antinatalists are not vegan, and I just think it's fascinating that there seems to be a connection between Vegantinatalism, and how likely one is to be at all visible & active as an Antinatalist.

I'm sure I'll learn more about all this as we continue our saga. The new thing, I mean. In fact, I'll make a point of it. But that's in the future. The suspense is killing me, I'm sure.

Your last question, 'Again, if I want humans to stop reproducing, why would that have to spill into my eating or fur-wearing habits?' This does bring up a perfectly excellent point – the fact that Antinatalist activism often comes part and parcel with Vegan activism now, does make both harder, it's true, but that's a challenge that many Vegantinatalists appear to be taking on with great gusto, and they see it as a strength more than a weakness.

Lastly, looking quickly at the bots last statement, 'they are ultimately distinct movements' That's been the truth, it's still the truth and will continue to be, but some of those walls are breaking down, and I expect will continue to. The point is, they don't have to be separate, and they probably never should have been.

Any thoughts, Matti? Is the water over my head now?

Not in the least, Amanda. I understand everything that you're saying and don't want to meddle with it more for now. But these **are** things that we need to get to the bottom of as we go on.

But now, we might have time for one last question to the bot. Your answers, and mine, have clearly shown that there's a difference in the way that you the activist and I the philosopher approach these things. What do you say, should we ask the bot about this and then make our best to come to terms with that?

Yes, let's see if it knows something we don't for a change.

Fine, then. And the question to conclude our bot chats for now is:

Are world's problems better solved by philosophy or by activism? Define "philosophy" and "activism", formulate a judgment, and justify it.

And the bot answered:

Philosophy is the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, while activism is the practice of taking direct and often confrontational action to bring about social, political, economic, and environmental change.

Whether world's problems are better solved by philosophy or activism depends on the particular issue being addressed. In some cases, a philosophical approach is the most effective way to create a lasting solution, while in others, active engagement may be more successful. For example, philosophical discourse can be used to address the ethical implications of certain policies, while activism may be more

effective in pressuring governments to enact laws that protect vulnerable populations. In both cases, it is important to remember that a combination of the two approaches is likely to be the most effective.

I don't have much experience studying the roles of activism vs. philosophy much outside of Antinatalism, so for my part I'll stick with what I know - I have a feeling you may know how to answer this in far broader terms, however.

I firmly believe that the philosophical approach is the more potent and important one. If you guys aren't banging away in the kitchen cooking the dish just right, then the activists have no idea what to serve, or how to sell the meal. Of course, activism can happen independently of any knowledge of philosophy, but that's never really been the case for whatever Antinatalist activism is, not since Benatar anyway - it's always had at least some semblance of a connection to the work of Antinatalist philosophers. The problem with philosophy in its effectiveness, as I see it, is just in the fact that too often, not enough people listen, or want to listen. This isn't made any easier by the fact that people *really* don't seem to want to listen to philosophers who might make them depressed... In nearly 4 years now of interviewing philosophers on The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast, I've learned many things, and one of them is - you guys work so hard, only to have a tiny number of people ever look at any of the fruits of your labor... But activists can sometimes help with that. Because we are listening, we are galvanized, and occasionally, we know how to get the food out the door and on to people tables without spilling everything everywhere.

You are being far too kind to philosophers, Amanda. We are normally a rather useless lot. David Benatar is a rare exception, and there are a couple of others, but I would like to create a special category for them, maybe of philosophical activists, if that makes sense.

Philosophical activists, then, would be the people you are talking about, cooking the meal for you to be served.

Philosophical passivists like myself, on the other hand, just watch the meal preparations with our hands in our pockets, occasionally making a critical comment. Too much salt, don't boil that lettuce, why don't you use basil instead of coriander?

When philosophical passivists have completed their inane observations, they climb the stairs to their ivory tower and write a cookbook. It has very little to do with the practicalities in the kitchen, let alone the outside world, but it brings them academic fame and fortune.

But how about the bot's views on activism?

I'm sure the definition of activist the bot gives is perfectly fine when describing most kinds of activism... But if that's what an activist is, I'm not sure what it is I've been doing the last 12 years. I haven't done too much that I could describe as 'direct and often confrontational', sure I hung out with Stop Having Kids for two days, held up some signs & politely talked to some people about Antinatalism on the street... I certainly made a very upsetting movie that played at some film festivals.... And I did scare the living hell out of a few people performing part of it live once... I'm not sure if all that was art or activism or both, we would have to ask your friend Robin George Collingwood what he thinks, I guess... The bot describes a very stereotypical kind of activism, and the truth is, Antinatalism has so far had very little of that.

At least your impressive film is clearly art, and great art at that. But is it also activism? Tough one. Collingwood – the British philosopher you mention – would have said that attempts to influence behaviour are not art. So assuming that you have wanted to make a difference, he would have called your work entertainment or magic. But that's only one philosopher's view.

In fact it's only been within the last 3 of 4 years that there's been any of that at all. About 4 years ago, Vice wanted to make a documentary about British Antinatalism - I was in close communication with them about it, trying to find them people and stuff to film... They wanted marches and protests and pamphlets and that sort of thing, but they

eventually had to drop the project, because there was nothing. Now, from out of Speakers Corner in London, we have the excellent Mr. Danny Shine with his megaphone, and we have Stop Having Kids in Portland with their billboards, and we have Child Free India & Raphael Samuel from India... But it's taken a long time to get there, and further evolutions are slow moving... This movement, and it's activism are still very much in infancy.

If you say so. But let me just note that the bot's definition of activism is so narrow that it excludes many social movements and their preferred approaches. The bot wants activism to be expressed in "direct and ... confrontational action" – like your British film-making friends. But there is more, of course.

Civil disobedience must surely be counted as activism, although it's indirect and not necessarily all that confrontational. You sit in a bus on a seat reserved to some other people, maybe get arrested, maybe have some influence on general opinion and eventually legal reform.

And it could go further, if we don't choose to be purists about the definition of activism. Spreading information, making art, arranging meetings, even writing a pamphlet could be counted in. ... Except, wait a minute, would that let the philosophical passivists in again, I wonder, writing stuff. Maybe. Interesting. I have painted myself into a corner here.

You and I have had this conversation before - and I respect anyone who tells me they are not an activist, I would never mean to impose such a title on to you or anyone else... And perhaps maybe I am more so an activist than you, because after all, I would go outside on the street to hold a sign, whereas you maybe would not... But to actively defy procreation through the creation of Antinatalist works for nearly 40 years - writing and thinking about this subject, insisting, that it means something important, philosophically, to the world - that's so gloriously punk. It's hard for me not to see that as a kind of activism. Most Antinatalist activism happens behind closed doors. It's clerical work, it's translation, it's research, it's moderation, it's art making, it's speaking,

it's writing - it's anything. It's the sheer act, of in some way vocalizing Antinatalism out into the world. When you represent an idea this suppressed, this rare, this difficult, this controversial, and this important, well then maybe whether you are a philosopher at a university or a vlogger on YouTube, or a person with a sign out on the street - maybe it's all just different flavors of activism. What do you think about that?

You are right, of course, albeit too kind about my work. Although I must confess that, preparing for Exploring Antinatalism Podcast episode sixty-five, I was kinda feeling proud of myself – what a guy! How did he dare say that? In a medical ethics journal? Was he mad or high on something? So, yes, I accept your punk accolade, with all the grace and humility I can muster.

And when I hear you say all those things, I remember that I **have** been involved in the making of two rock operas that have something to do with childbearing, pronatalism, and antinatalism. I suppose that is activism of sorts, as well, according to the wide definition that we have now given it.

On the other thing, I will have you know that on the First of May 2019 – the last one before the pandemic – I was out in the streets of Helsinki marching in the anarchist falang, shouting anti-capitalist slogans to a drum beat. Capitalism, unfortunately, is still with us, so that didn't really have the effect I had hoped for.

There is some evidence that both of our approaches are failing. In 2017 there was a researcher called Nattali Santi, who conducted a survey of Antinatalists within various online communities during that time, particularly on Reddit & Facebook, and one of the questions in this survey asked AN's how many books on Antinatalism they had read - A shocking 65.1% of all Antinatalists surveyed, had never read a book on Antinatalism... And Antinatalist videos didn't fare much better either. The vast majority of Antinatalists, seem to be getting their Antinatalism through image-based Meme's - quick, easily consumable, jokey, pessimistic little morsels, but go no deeper than that. They don't want to think, & they don't want to act - they want to laugh, and be comforted.

Oh, dear.

But I agree with the bots last statement whole heartedly – a, ‘combination of the two approaches is likely to be the most effective.’ I think that’s the most correct thing the bot has yet said to us. It’s the only way. And even combined, we might still lose. But if the Antinatalist Philosophers & the Antinatalist Activists work together, we can at least be sure we gave the unborn the best fighting chance that we could.

Amen to that. And we’ll start almost right away – or continue what we’ve been doing, or whatever. Time for your big revelations, I think.

Yes! The time has come! Dear audience, thank you to those out there that have been listening to mechANized, we sincerely hope that you’ve enjoyed the show! Fear not, we aren’t euthanizing mechANized for good, only putting it down for a nap - And in it’s place, an even more epic adventure is about to begin -

Yes. See, when Amanda and I started our collaboration, preparing for episode #65 of The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast, we soon realized that we had too much to talk about to be squeezed into one episode of anything. And so we knew, fairly early on, that a sequel or spinoff of some kind would be inevitable.

And in the months that followed, an absolutely mammoth effort began to grow. Today, we are so proud to finally reveal, –

Hankikanto: – Falling into the Anti/Natal Abyss

[Hankikanto theme intro]

Oh, I’m loving how you executed that, Amanda! So, I fall into life’s abyss, you rescue me with a dose of antinatalism, and together we save the world. Sounds just about right. What about the show, then?

Hankikanto, in it’s entirety, will be quite an odyssey. Beginning with a multiple episode retrospective into the nearly 40 years of Antinatalism, in the work of Matti Häyry - from academia to rock opera - and from

there, will move into all kinds of areas concerning Antinatalism, animal rights, euthanasia and much more!

And Hankikanto: Falling into the Anti/Natal Abyss #1 – On being Antinatal before Antinatalism premieres here, on The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast YouTube channel on the fifteenth of March..

New episodes of Hankikanto will be released monthly!

And so for now, we bid you farewell here on mechANized, but we'll see you again soon, with Hankikanto.

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!