

Definition and Categorization of Antinatalism (Ver.5), February 11, 2021

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See *What Is Antinatalism? and Other Essays* (2024) for detailed explanations: <https://www.philosophyoflife.org/tpp/antinatalism.pdf>

I. DEFINITION

Proposed definition of antinatalism: Antinatalism means “the negation of a sentient being’s coming into existence.” Coming into existence means both “being born” and “giving birth to children.”

There are three types of antinatalism: 1) birth negation, 2) reincarnation negation, and 3) procreation negation.

1) Birth negation: This is found mainly among the ancient Greeks (Theognis, Sophocles, etc.). It is the negation of a human’s being born. They compare a person’s being born and a person’s not being born, and conclude that not being born is better. They apply this idea to existing people and lament “we wish we had never been born.” A negative and pessimistic view of life emerges from such negation. This antinatalism has influenced Schopenhauer, Cioran, and Benatar. (Recall Benatar’s pragmatic pessimism). It exists in contemporary society as well.

2) Reincarnation negation: This is found mainly in ancient India. It is the negation of a human’s rebirth after they die. In ancient India, it was believed that after death, a person’s spirit (*atman*, *attan*) or the five *skandhas* reincarnates to other creatures (including human beings) and that this reincarnation continues forever. Therefore, a life of suffering continues forever. To avoid it, Buddhist monks practice hard and try to reach a state of nirvana. Once reaching nirvana, a person’s reincarnation stops, and he or she will never be born into any world. This is considered a unique type of antinatalism, because the practitioner wishes not to be born in the future. Today, Theravada Buddhists practice to arrive at this stage. Of course, monks do not procreate, but they do not think that others should also give up procreation. (It is interesting to know that today, 70% of Japanese women under the age of 40 believe in reincarnation).

3) Procreation negation: This is the universal negation of procreation. It is today’s anti-procreationism.

* Antinatalism should be considered as a combination of at least these three ways of thinking. Considering today’s anti-procreationism alone is not sufficient.

* I have an idea of birth negation at a deep layer in my mind, but I am neither an antinatalist, nor a pronatalist.

* I have proposed the idea of “birth affirmation.” This concept is described in Chapter 4 of my 2013 book *Manga Introduction to Philosophy*. An English translation is available here:

<http://www.philosophyoflife.org/tpp/mangaphilosophy.pdf>

II. CATEGORIZATION

The text in bold refers to variations of antinatalism in a strong sense. (A-1, A-2, A-3, and A-4)
Italics are variations of antinatalism in a weak sense. (A-5, B-1, C-1, C-2, E-1, E-2, E-3, and F-1)
A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4, A-5, C-1, E-1, E-2, and F belong to anti-procreationism.
C-3, D-1, and G-1 do not belong to antinatalism.

A: All births are bad. (Being born is bad. Giving birth is bad.)

- * All births are necessarily or always bad.

 - ** Asymmetry of pleasure and pain [**A-1: Benatar's type**]

 - ** If we had not been born, we would never have felt pain. This can be applied to future human beings.

 - [A-2: Pain avoidance theory]**

- * All births are bad as a whole.

 - ** If we continue giving birth, at least one baby will be unhappy after growing up. [**A-3: Russian roulette type**]

- * Non-existence of consent. There is no informed consent. [**A-4: Non-existence of consent**]

- * All births are bad but I do not force this idea on others. [**A-5: Diversity type**]

B: Being born is bad. I wish we had not been born. But I do not necessarily evaluate the goodness or badness of giving birth. [*B-1 Birth negation*]

C: Being born is not necessarily bad.

- * Being born is not necessarily bad, but giving birth is always bad. [*C-1: Negation of procreation*]

- * Rebirth in other worlds (or in this world) by reincarnation should be stopped. Rebirth in the next world is allowed only if a practitioner wishes to reach a state of nirvana after a series of succeeding reincarnations [*C-2: Negation of reincarnation*]

- * I do not give birth. I do not force this idea on others. [C-3: Childfree]

D: Forcing someone to give birth is always bad. Procreation ideology promoted by a nation, society, relatives, men, and others should be abolished. [D-1: Negation of the "promotion of procreationism"]

E: Sentient being-oriented antinatalism. (This may include aliens and AI/robots that can experience pain).

- * All cattle rearing should be abolished (before artificial human extinction). [*E-1: Domestic animal type*]

- * All sentient creatures should become extinct. [*E-2: Efilism*]

- * All pain in sentient creatures should be artificially removed. [*E-3: Biotechnological approach type*]

F: All living creatures should become extinct. [*F-1: Biological life-centered type*]

G: No beings should exist. Complete nothingness is preferable. The strongest negation. [G-1: Non-existence type]

- * This chart does not contain all variations of antinatalism. It is possible to have multiple variations at the same time.

- * If you find anything that should be revised please contact me at morioka[at]waseda.jp.