

Anti-natalism and issues of autonomy.

Lucía López Clavaín

Anti-natalism support that parents do not have the consent of the prospective child to expose them to something that will have a significant impact such as life. Therefore, they are causing inevitable harm to the child, and they will have no other option other than to endure it and live an imposed life while being exposed to suffering.

In this case, the parents have the power to choose whether they want to create a new life or not. They are deciding if their child will go through all the alleged suffering life will cause them. But at the same time, the autonomy of the child is limiting the freedom of the parents, because they are not allowed to have children and build a family in case the prospective child would not give their consent. Therefore, keeping the autonomy of both sides could raise an issue and it is unclear who ethically has the power to choose. The child will suffer the consequences of the decision made by the parents, even if it will also affect their life. Altogether, is it okay to bring someone into the world without their consent? A person's inability to consent does not justify imposing risks and harm to them and this is seen as morally wrong. Anti-natalism supporters say that an unborn child does not need benefits and in addition, these benefits are not worth the risk.

There are three possible scenarios that could occur in this situation. Firstly, the parents genuinely want to create a new life, and accordingly the child consent to living. In this case, it would be ethically incorrect to follow anti-natalism because their freedom will be limited. They both want the prospective child to live and therefore they would retroactively consent. This is most of the situations. Secondly, parents do not want to have the

child. In this case there is no need to ask for the consent of the prospective child, as no life will be created. Here autonomy is respected if anti-natalism is either followed or not followed. They are not having children, but they could follow different values and reasons to not procreate as anti-natalism, so it would be ethically irrelevant. Finally, there is the scenario in which the prospective child does not consent to be born, but the parents genuinely do want to procreate. This scenario might happen, so in the case, the prospective child does not want to live due to the potential harm and suffering, is it morally right to risk violating their consent? Most people are happy to be able to live and enjoy life, but it can be an issue for those who are miserable and see life as suffering, like anti-natalism supporters.

Further reflection would be needed for the third scenario. According to anti-natalism, life is suffering, and bringing a person into existence will cause nonstop and avoidable harm for the living being and others (Lougheed, no date). This is the main reason why a prospective child would not want to live. However, they are not demonstrating why just being born would inevitably lead to a life of misery. There are countless other factors in the chain reaction to consider that influence whether your personal life is just suffering. There is suffering because benevolence also exists, so somewhere along the way, there are things that can be controlled by every person that can change the attitude they have towards life and therefore mitigate the harms. One common example is that the parents of a criminal person are criminals themselves and are ultimately responsible for the crimes. However, the fact that this person was born is not what lead them to commit the crime, a series of decisions during life is what could have taken them to make the decision to commit a crime. This decision is within the autonomy of the offspring, and they are choosing how to use their freedom.

Anti-natalism also assures that the truth of existence is that each one of us will inevitably suffer in some way throughout our lives, thus no great joy is guaranteed. This reasoning means that because living could take you to experience some harm, then do not even be born until positive proof is provided that there is zero risk of suffering. Similarly, Max Freiheit said that the best thing we can do to protect children from harm is to not live (Freiheit, 2021). With this in mind, all the opportunities that life can give would be taken away. The best thing a Scottish parent can do to protect their children is to take care of and educate them well. If you teach your child the skills needed to navigate successfully through life, then their life will not be only filled with suffering. This is why being a parent is such a big responsibility. However, not only parents can influence someone's life, society, school, and the Scottish government also have a major role in helping people achieve their best. There are a high number of Scottish organizations that offer support to mitigate any problems that might cause suffering. If a person suffers from depression, a mental health disease that one cannot control oneself, then the support available and the education given should have taught him the skill to reach out for help, so their suffering can get to an end.

In conclusion, anti-natalism is not an ethical stand for Scottish parents to take. If the parents want to have a child and the offspring gives their consent, then the parents would be taking away their life. Similarly, in the hypothetical case that the child would not consent to live because of the reasons anti-natalism support, they would also be taken away from the possibility of having a good life. Risk and harm are present, but love, support, and success are as well.

References

Freiheit, M. (2021) *A Libertarian Case for Antinatalism*, pp. 1–8.

Lougheed, K. (no date) *Anti-Natalism*, *Internet encyclopedia of philosophy*. Available at: <https://iep.utm.edu/anti-natalism/> (Accessed: December 20, 2022).