**ANEEPS Video Abstract CUP**

Antinatalism is a philosophy and social movement assigning a negative value to reproduction. People should **not** have children. Other sentient beings should **not** have offspring. Machine sentience should **not** be developed. In the best possible world, the cycle of suffering is broken.

Many find the idea mistaken and unthinkable. Why suggest something like this when humankind has struggled for survival for so long? Why propose extinction when technology could eliminate suffering? And what could be wrong with passing on the gift of life?

In this Element, we answer these questions.

The Ancient Greeks, influenced by other cultures, realized that human life has no purpose. Why continue it, then?

Plato responded by creating a belief-defying metaphysical system. The world was created by an artisan god who had to work with imperfect materials. Human efforts are needed to complete the work.

Early Christian sects relaunched the antinatalist challenge. Augustine of Hippo countered them by positing that our earthly life is followed by a purpose-giving afterlife, if only we take our suffering in good stride.

The challenges and responses have continued to this day. Western philosophy can, in fact, be seen as an endless struggle against antinatalism.

If reproduction stops, species, including humans, will go extinct. If our aim is to eliminate suffering, this is a good development. If our aim is to perpetuate life, not so good.

Consistent antinatalism must come to terms with the fact that its consequence is the demise of species. At least for humans, this could be accomplished voluntarily.

For some time, the possibility of human extinction was seen to count against antinatalism. Surely our species must survive. We question this premise.

Opponents of antinatalism believe that reproduction itself gives meaning to our existence. Having children and raising them up to have more children gives purpose to human life.

We argue that while this is true, it is also **the** strongest argument against reproduction. It places parents in the horns of a procreative dilemma.

If generations continue to follow one another, sooner or later someone in their line will have a truly miserable life. Parents raising their children to have more children will be guilty of creating that misery.

They can avoid this by teaching their children **not** to have children of their own. But by doing so, they deny their offspring the purpose in life that they themselves achieved by reproducing.

Either way, procreators are doomed to morally corrupt themselves.