

Question #1:

I recently came to know about Antinatalism and its acolytes, one of its most prominent being David Benatar. A friend sent me a link to Benatar's conversation with Sam Harris which you can watch here;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2hyj-8fw10>

The crux –and summary– of the antinatalist position is that creating children is wrong based on the fact that every human life will undoubtedly experience harm at some point.

What I found interesting in all of this is the picture shared below which further encapsulates Benatar's position. Obviously, this view point and picture raise a lot of questions, but I intend to leave that to be sourced out in the commentaries that'll follow.

To steelman this position, it's been syllogized with the following premises;

- Every human alive has been harmed.
- Causing harm is wrong.
- Creating a person necessarily exposes them to harm.
- Therefore creating a person is wrong.

Feel free to use the video, this picture and the premises posited OR your general understanding of the subject to respond. I'll do my best to moderate the conversation that'll follow and only delete those irrelevant to the discourse.

That being said, what are your reasons for/against antinatalism & the argument presented?

Response #1:

Sorry, can't watch the 2-hr vid right now, and I can't be sure when I will be able to, so I will be responding to the syllogisms as you framed them.

I have two problems here.

- i. How is "harm" being defined by his argument? Is that anything that causes pain? If so, why is that necessarily a bad thing?
- ii. Is "good" made "evil" by its allowance of "harm" in order to produce "good"? Why is it so? To explain, granting the world as it is right now, is it evil to allow a surgical

procedure on one's child to fix their bodily health just because it would be a painful procedure?

Question #2:

Harm is the occurrence of change for the worse, but fantastic example. Pain can be inflicted in the short-term which sometimes result –deliberately– in something good.

Response #2:

That suggests that it's time-sensitive. If the occurrence of change for the worse ultimately leads to change for the better, it would seem that what would have been considered "harm" is really not. That would mean that if the final change in the chain is for the worse, then it does not matter that the immediate change is for the better and the reverse is also true.

That is to say that pain inflicted in the short term that results in something good ultimately is not harmful in the end even if it is temporarily harmful. And pain avoided in the short term that results in pain in the end is harmful even if it is temporarily not. That is the point that _____ was making.

Question #3:

Just because some pain might be necessary to achieve something good does not mean that the pain in itself is good - that's why we use anesthesia during surgeries. I think everyone would prefer to do things pain and suffering free.

Also, surgery can't be said to be "harmful".

Response #3:

It's hard to see how surgery can't be said to be harmful if "suffering in general is more relevant" to the definition of harm than what suffering produces. Surgery causes suffering. If that is all we care about, then it seems to me that it must be harmful. But if we factor in the good that comes from the pain, then we may say that it is good even if it is temporarily painful. That would mean that maybe we need a broader appreciation of pain and suffering to decide whether having kids is morally good or not.

Question #4:

When we speak of causation, we generally say the act is either intentional, negligent, or reckless in terms of liability for an act or choice. Surgery, when performed properly, is not *inherently* harmful otherwise.

When I put forward antinatalism, it definitely isn't just for its sake, or some act of moral masturbation. The choice to not bring new life into this crazy, absurd world is one I take very seriously.

Response #4:

I think that the issue is whether this world is crazy and absurd by definition or whether it is only so by your perception. If it is not crazy and absurd and the pain and suffering has a purpose that you either fail to or choose to not acknowledge, then wouldn't your proposition be false?

Question #5:

When talking formally of ethics (as in, the philosophical discipline with its various accoutrements), I always find it best to explicitly discuss consequentialism formally rather than dancing around it. As one of the largest systems of prescriptive ethics, it only makes sense to.

This conversation of consequences we are having as humans bound by spacetime is completely handicapped by the fact that we cannot see the true consequences of our actions in totality, because we do not see the eternal ripple-effects they have.

Let me repeat: because eternity is veiled from our eyes, it is impossible for us to know the true consequences of our actions (good or bad).

Where I am going with this is the following:

The proposition under current discussion is whether or not it is an ethical decision to have offspring given the impossibility of avoiding pain and suffering in this world.

If one limits oneself to the physical world, then, as I mentioned before, I actually buy the consequentialist argument that it is better to not have been born into this world of misery and pain than to have been born into it.

But the point made above stands. That is *ignoring* all consequences coming from the spiritual dimension. And as I argued before, that's what makes the question rigged.

By simple act utilitarianism (contrast rule utilitarianism, which is an argument that would have to be formulated somewhat differently) -- it is trivial to make an argument that eternal gain outweighs temporary suffering. That is why I brought up 2 Corinthians 4:17 -- scripture states this outright. If we have children, and they go through the world and experience pain and suffering, so long as they exercise their free will and put their faith in Jesus Christ, they will be more than compensated for it on the other side. Therefore, having children isn't unethical because the positive eternal consequences (assuming faith) outweigh negative temporal consequences, QED.

Atheists will always protest that we cannot scientifically measure the eternal consequences of our actions or even prove that they exist deductively with logic. I agree. That's why this life is all about faith and choice. As it ever has been, and ever shall be.

So [Odii Ariwodo](#)'s restatement of my position is exactly correct. This is exactly what I believe:

> That is to say that pain inflicted in the short term that results in something good ultimately is not harmful in the end even if it is temporarily harmful. And pain avoided in the short term that results in pain in the end is harmful even if it is temporarily not. That is the point that _____ was making.

I'm not trying to be patronizing, but this seems like a rather straightforward argument to make. Would others like _____ or _____ care to explain why things are more complicated than this argument (if we are believers, in any case)?

I should also like to point out that the very smallest eternal reward would still infinitely outweigh the very greatest temporary suffering. But our God blesses us far out of measure, so the rewards being stored up for us as we soldier through suffering are going to be so much more worth it than we can even imagine.

I suppose I should ask (and should have at the outset) if we are having this argument as Christians, or if we are not allowed to presuppose scripture in this debate.

I think I have been clear that in my opinion, this is no hard matter if we are believers. The utility of suffering is emphasized in many places in the Bible (for example, Romans 5:3-5), aside from the consequentialist argument I made above. (Also compare James 1:12).

If we are not allowed to debate on that front, I have nothing to contribute since due to my presuppositions it is nonsensical to debate things independent from the Bible and Christian epistemology. If people don't buy my set of presuppositions, I'm sure they won't find my arguments convincing. Similarly, I find any positions that are unwilling to consider eternal consequences in an appraisal of things extremely flawed right from the outset.

Response #5:

I suspect that _____ isn't a Christian, but I could be wrong. That was why I didn't quote the Bible. I feel that common sense is enough in quite a few matters to see why Christians believe the Bible, so not quoting it does not handicap me here. In this one, for example, it should be obvious that predicating choices on immediate or temporary results is not always a good idea. We are typically wise to weigh long term consequences into our decision-making. That is what we Christians do. We think of eternity in making our choices. If non-Christians don't, then how far are they willing to go with their ideas?

If one chooses to avoid having children because the world is such a pain-filled experience, what other things are they planning to stop doing to avoid putting themselves and others in the path of pain? At some point, it is unavoidable to ask if avoiding pain for ourselves and others is a meaningful approach to life. We do have everyday proof that temporary pain often leads to permanent benefits (at least, within the limits of our experience on earth). Women suffer the pain of childbirth and then have sometimes-wonderful children who are a source of joy for the rest of their lives. We struggle through the pains and difficulties of apprenticeship or college or some other training and then make successful careers that provide us with a desirable standard of living for the rest of our lives. We rise early and work in the heat of the sun to cultivate plants and feed and tend animals and reap a good harvest and expand our flocks and herds as a result. Life is full of these examples. So, when a Christian says that pain and suffering are not in themselves enough reason to not have kids, they are only speaking to motifs that anybody in this world can relate to.

One who argues that it should be possible to have all manner of benefits without striving and enduring pain is still missing the point. The point is not whether there should be pain and suffering or not; it is that pain and suffering do not necessarily make human life meaningless and undesirable. So, antinatalism fails to convince on that point. What makes life meaningless and undesirable is expunging God and His purposes from it. I think that just about anybody who has given it even a minute of thought knows that to be true, so it's not really a point of debate. For the antinatalist, God is already an abandoned thought: The experience of life in this

world is the only thing of interest. The problem there is that there is no point to pleasure in and of itself or to the absence of pain and suffering. So, even if the world had no pain and suffering, antinatalists would struggle to make sense of having children since perpetuating human existence for no reason would still carry a pain of its own: A meaningless life is a hard one to enjoy.

In short, I think that using the Bible is exactly right. I just tend to not be obvious about it when I am not sure what the interest of the person engaging is and whether they are worthy of the treasures of the Bible or not (Matthew 7:6 and all, you know).

Question #6:

I am indeed an atheist, but I am perfectly happy to accept the premise of God and eternity in heaven for argument's sake. The validity of the argument remains.

What you are essentially engaging in is the "net benefit" argument - ie that the good outweighs the bad - but how is ANY bad justifiable, if you believe causing suffering is bad? If you don't believe causing suffering is bad, then antinatalism doesn't apply. But therein lies the absurdity of the "net benefit" argument.

How **much** suffering justifies a good outcome? A cold and flu and a bit of discomfort? A generally comfortable working class life with eternal bliss afterward?

What about being skinned alive on a daily basis enduring absolute agony while being kept artificially alive, for 120 years? Personally, I'd rather not exist, even if eternal bliss awaits. There may be a "net benefit" given that eternity outweighs the relatively infinitesimal torture, but who cares? If I didn't exist, I could not miss out on bliss, and it wouldn't matter, precisely because I don't exist.

On that note, picture a hypothetical - would it be "wrong" or "bad" if heaven was empty? If no souls ever existed, and nobody went to heaven (or hell), would that be inherently bad?

And by extension, is it "bad" or "wrong" to not have children?

Response #6:

The problem with having a debate across philosophies is that we have to have the same definitions. So, for example, you are unlikely to agree that "wrong" or "bad" is anything that God disapproves of. If you grant that definition, then all of a

sudden you will be arguing the Christian's side. If you don't, well, you can't see eye to eye with a Christian.

The biblical position on suffering is that it is a reality of life. It isn't the preferred reality, but it IS the reality. Is it bad? To the extent that it is not the end that God wants for His creatures, yes, it is. To the extent, on the other hand, that He has allowed it in order to accomplish His purpose, it is not. Could God have had things differently? There is nothing that God cannot do. However, this is what He has actually done, so it is meaningless in the Christian worldview to wonder what could have been: We don't have the requisite wisdom or imagination to see how things could have been different in order to accomplish God's purpose except insofar as we know what He preferred from the beginning. So, we know that He intended a pain-free existence for both angels and human beings, but we also know that the gift of free will to His creatures meant that pain was pretty much guaranteed because of the wrong exercise of it. And free will is necessary -- according to His plan as revealed in the Bible -- for His purpose to be realized: A willing eternal family could only be made up of creatures who could choose to be that family.

As for wishing to not exist, the Bible holds that view as a general one from an unbelieving perspective (Ecclesiastes 4:2-3). That is, someone who does not care for God would be better off if they were never born. I imagine that anyone would agree with that argument. The problem though is that the grouse that anyone might have with existing is an unreasonable one from the biblical perspective. You see, only a true God has the right to gripe about existing because His existence is entirely His own; that is, He doesn't owe it to anyone and can make it whatever He wants. Creatures don't exist of their own will. They exist because someone other than them wants them to. Our free will only covers what we do with the gift of life not whether we want to have it or not. So, from the biblical perspective, it is arrogant to not wish to exist since we don't exist for our own sake, rather we exist because God wants us to.

This too is why the Christian position makes so much sense to us Christians. The Bible acknowledges the hardship of existence. It also makes it God's responsibility ultimately since creation is entirely His idea. So, it offers us the hope of eternity with Him as compensation well beyond all the pain we could possibly take in this world. It also explains the pain and suffering as being a normal consequence of the possession of free will and living among creatures just like ourselves all experiencing the same testing. In other words, the Bible does not leave the Christian bereft of understanding and hating existence because it's so painful.

As for the amount of suffering, it's less about what kind and more about the duration. Life in this world is short, extremely short even by scientific standards. However painful our experience might be, it inevitably ends. It simply does not last

forever. Eternity, however, does. We were built to last forever. We can do so in perfect happiness and peace and that will in itself more than make up for all the trouble we could possibly experience in this life, and yet there is more promised than just that. Additionally, no matter the degree of the suffering that we could have in this world, God does not leave us without comfort. In this world, depending on our choices and sometimes circumstances, we often get exceptional friends, food and water, good marriages, and an outlet for our creativity in work. Those are comforts in the midst of the hardships we suffer.

Finally, granted that it's a net-benefit argument, if we factor in God's reward for choosing loyalty to Him, it becomes extremely insane to wish to not exist. Long life without God, even with good health and all sorts of pleasure, gets intensely boring and tedious. God, on the other hand, is the pleasure that can never be exhausted because of His infinity. That may sound silly to an unbeliever, but that is because an unexplored mountain could be a lot of rock and dirt to an uninterested mind or it could house all manner of excitements to the adventurer. God can seem little more than a bother to those who hate Him or He could be a terror to them, but to those who love Him, He is a vast treasure hunt. Christians who actually bother to study the Bible to learn about Him continue to find Him fascinating, and the constraints of this body make us a bit impatient to get the new one that He promises that will allow us to appreciate Him more completely. So, you see, from the biblical perspective, life is a tremendous gift. It is a ridiculously generous gift, an incredible honor to have a real shot at spending eternity with such a fascinating Person as God. The sufferings of this life then, however awful they get, are really a very small price to pay, from the Christian perspective, for such a benefit.

Question #7:

[Odi Ariwodo](#) thanks for the detailed explanation, I entirely understand why Christians find the net-benefit argument so convincing, since our temporal existence is infinitesimal compared to eternity.

But does God say that it is wrong to choose not to procreate in and of itself? If so, that may well be the end of the debate, and there is no convincing a Christian that it could be wrong. But then one could ask, "how much procreation must one do to satisfy God?" Is one child enough, such that the population will dwindle and possibly go extinct? Is it dependent on the existing population? Given that Christianity posits free will, these aren't merely pointless hypotheticals but important questions.

However, if you rely on the net benefit argument in favour of procreation, I reiterate again that procreation causes **inevitable** suffering for a new life - whether it be a

century of torture and agony or some colds and flus, procreation necessarily entails a life with suffering greater than zero, while non procreation necessarily entails zero suffering. Further, there is no guarantee that a person will experience good things, but it is absolutely guaranteed that someone who does exist can't miss out on good things. An eternity in heaven does not matter to those who don't exist and can't experience it.

Also, from a Christian perspective, you can guarantee that by not procreating, no child, grandchild, or descendant of yours could ever possibly end up in hell for eternity, which is presumably as bad as heaven is good. Given that there is no certainty as to where your child may end up, it makes no sense to take that risk when, in avoiding it, there is no risk.

Response #7:

Re: "Does God say that it is wrong to choose not to procreate in and of itself?" He does say that it is better to be single if one can be single without committing sexual immorality (Matthew 19:11-12; 1 Corinthians 7:38), but then it is not an accident that most people cannot be single without committing sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 7:2-9). So, the Bible counsels marriage and also says that it is for procreation (Malachi 2:15). Then, we also have Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 9:1,7 telling us to be fruitful and multiply. Although this is largely a blessing (Psalm 127:3-5), there is a sense in which it is also a command: God once killed a man for deliberately trying to avoid having children (Genesis 38:9-10). I'll grant you that the man was doing more than just avoiding having children since he was specifically trying to avoid giving his brother a legacy, but the point still stands because he was deliberately trying to avoid bringing children into the world for whatever reason. In short then, God wants us to have children, but if anyone chooses not to be married and they can stay away from sexual immorality in order to serve God, He rewards that too.

Re: "How much procreation must one do to satisfy God?" Considering that man was created to replace the rebellious angels, more is better than less in general at least until the number of rebellious angels has been reached in faithful human beings. Considering too that man must be tested for qualification to replace these angels, it only follows that since at least some and in fact the vast majority fail the test, more humans are better than less so that there will be enough of the faithful ones to replace those angels. On a personal, individual level, this does not mean that we must have so many children any more than it means that we must all get married. It only means that those who are serious about God should probably not be aiming to have as few children as possible even if they are not aiming to have children at all costs. As was said earlier, the command to be fruitful and multiply is first a

blessing since children are God's gift. If He is pleased to give many and we can have them without sacrificing health and other important concerns, then we should be happy to have them. If He is pleased to give none at all, then we must be content to endure without. That is the attitude that Christians have or ought to have. So, it is not a question of what we must do to please God here; rather, it is one of what we must be ready to accept from God.

Re: "Procreation causes *inevitable* suffering for a new life." I think that your later statement that procreation guarantees suffering is the more correct thing. If we don't procreate and human beings get into this world some other way (Matthew 3:9, for example), they will still suffer. That God has made it so that human beings will only come into this world through procreation does not make parents guilty of some kind of evil in the Christian worldview. Suffering (as well as blessing) is how human beings are tested in this world. Procreation only means that new generations will experience it not that procreation inflicts it. As I said before, this is where definitions are not the same for us Christians and atheists. God commands procreation, therefore it is not evil. If you reason that it is, you necessarily ignore the Bible, and we Christians cannot do that. If, however, we address it by common sense, it seems obvious to me that just like rain guarantees a harvest but does not necessarily cause one since other conditions must also be met for there to be a harvest, procreation only brings people into this world but does not cause suffering since suffering exists in this world because of free will choices that humans have been making for thousands of years. If humans had not made and are not making the choices that produce suffering, then procreation would not bring anyone into a world of suffering.

Re: "There is no guarantee that a person will experience good things." I think that this is obviously false. Not a single human being living in this world has suffered only pain. All of us have had food and water and/or some comfort from human kindness as well as the air to breathe. Even babies who lived but one second enjoyed something, not least the automatic salvation bought by Jesus's sacrifice for them.

Re: "An eternity in heaven does not matter to those who don't exist and can't experience it." If one never existed, then there is literally nothing to say about one with regard to what may or may not have mattered to one. However, the Christian position is that our existence is entirely God's decision. None of us self-exists as God does, so we don't really get to choose whether we want to exist or not just as computers don't. Just as computers exist because we have use for them, we exist because God wants us to. Since that is the case, the only thing that matters is what we want to make of the opportunity we have. If we say that we would rather not exist, that accomplishes nothing. If we say that we would rather not bring children into this world, then God will bring children in some other way. If we try to stop

other people from having children by guiltting them with accusations of evil because of the suffering that the children must experience once they come into this world, it is up to them to decide whether they will yield to those accusations. If they do, God will have His children some other way. If they don't, He will use them to bring them into the world. Either way, God will always get what He wants regardless of how we feel about it or how hard we might try to prevent it.

Re: "Given that there is no certainty as to where your child may end up, it makes no sense to take that risk when, in avoiding it, there is no risk." Much as our children are ours, they are first God's. The Bible calls them God's inheritance. While one might think of that as meaning an inheritance that He gives to us, it actually means an inheritance for Him. He gives children to us so that they can be tested to see if they will qualify to replace the rebellious angels or not. We might have emotional attachments to them, but we are only stewards for Him with respect to them. They don't belong to us. They belong to Him. Therefore, while we might want to avoid such a risk, it is really He who is taking the greater risk here. Ours is merely to participate in His work if we want. In other words, it makes all the sense in the world if we will be rewarded for working with Him even when we are taking an emotional risk in doing so.

Question #8:

"That God has made it so that human beings will only come into this world through procreation does not make parents guilty of some kind of evil in the Christian worldview. Suffering (as well as blessing) is how human beings are tested in this world. Procreation only means that new generations will experience it not that procreation inflicts it. As I said before, this is where definitions are not the same for us Christians and atheists."

It comes back to basic causation. If you do an act with a reasonably foreseeable outcome, then you are liable for the consequences of that outcome.

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"God commands procreation, therefore it is not evil. If you reason that it is, you necessarily ignore the Bible, and we Christians cannot do that."

Presumably the Bible condemns inflicting harm and suffering on others, but if God does that, and it is said that God never sins, then that is logically a contradiction. But I digress, let's assume God plays by different moral rules.

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"If, however, we address it by common sense, it seems obvious to me that just like rain guarantees a harvest, it does not necessarily cause one since other conditions must also be met for there to be a harvest. Procreation only brings people into this world, but suffering exists in this world because of free will choices that humans have been making for thousands of years. If humans had not made and are not making the choices that produce suffering, then procreation would not bring anyone into a world of suffering."

Firstly, rain is not a sentient, freely acting moral agent. I should point out that when I talk about causation, I talk about moral responsibility. Again, if suffering is reasonably foreseeable in life, and a person chooses to create life, then they have caused suffering.

Secondly, freely acting humans are not the sole cause of suffering - things like cancer, famine, disease, weather, or attacks by other animals are not caused by the free choices of other humans. A person could be born on a desert island with no other humans around and still suffer from countless things.

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"Even babies who lived but one second enjoyed something, not least the automatic salvation bought by Jesus's sacrifice for them."

By this logic, the best thing a mother could do would be to spend her entire life conceiving and aborting babies to send as many, perhaps hundreds of, souls into eternal heaven, even if it meant sacrificing her own life to an eternity in hell.

But somehow this doesn't sound very Christian to me..

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"None of us self-exists as God does, so we don't really get to choose whether we want to exist or not just as computers don't. We exist because God wants us to. Since that is the case, the only thing that matters is what we want to make of the opportunity we have. If we say that we would rather not exist, that accomplishes nothing. If we say that we would rather not bring children into this world, then God will bring children in some other way. If we try to stop other people from having children by guiltting them with accusations of evil because of the suffering that the children must experience once they come into this world, it is up to them to decide whether they will yield to those accusations. If they do, God will have His children some other way. If they don't, He will use them to bring them into the world. Either way, God will always get what He wants regardless of how we feel about it or how hard we might try to prevent it."

Antinatalism does not propose forcing others not to have children nor posit that existence in itself is inherently or necessarily "bad" - it is strictly confined to the personal choice of whether or not to procreate, regardless of what God decides to do. If you follow the logic that life entails necessary suffering, and that causing suffering is bad, then procreation is bad.

Response #8:

Re: "It comes back to basic causation. If you do an act with a reasonably foreseeable outcome, then you are liable for the consequences of that outcome." I don't believe that there is any court of law in this world that holds that opinion. If they did, there would either be no knife manufacturers or they would all be in black markets. Correlation is a well-known fact of life. Things may be correlated without being causally related. Without knives and guns, you will certainly not have knife or gun crimes, but the existence of knives and guns does not cause such crimes; it only makes such crimes possible. I also demonstrated this with rain, so I don't think that I have been unclear. I think that this is one of those places where to agree would have me either becoming an atheist like you or you becoming a Christian like me. Our definitions are just opposed to each other here.

Re: "Presumably the Bible condemns inflicting harm and suffering on others, but if God does that, and it is said that God never sins, then that is logically a contradiction. But I digress, let's assume God plays by different moral rules." I don't believe that there is such a Bible teaching. Inflicting harm and suffering on others is a situational matter in the Bible. In Genesis 9, for example, if anyone (or even an animal) takes a human life, the human community is mandated to kill that person or animal. In other words, there is suffering and harm that we must not inflict on others, but there is suffering and harm that we are responsible to inflict on others in order to preserve the human community from evil. So, it is not a blanket prohibition. More to the point though, having children is not inflicting harm and suffering on them. That is not the way it works either logically or biblically.

Re: "Firstly, rain is not a sentient, freely acting moral agent. I should point out that when I talk about causation, I talk about moral responsibility." I don't see how that matters here. Even non-sentient things have causal relationships with other things. The sun causes things to heat and light up when it shines on them. That does not require moral responsibility to be true. I'm using that instance to demonstrate that there need not be a causal relationship for things to occur in correlation. Procreation, as I said, only results in bringing people into the world. Suffering is merely a part of the reality of life in this world. That people engage in procreation despite knowing that their children will experience the hardships of life does not make them responsible for their children's suffering unless they are directly causing

that suffering by perhaps starving them or being cruel to them in one way or another.

Re: the cause of suffering. What I have said about this is not that human beings cause suffering. I said that our choices are the cause of the suffering. Some of the sufferings we are facing are the natural consequences of bad moral choices that we and others have made. For example, if greed drives us to hunt or fish an animal species to extinction and that leads to an adjustment in the ecosystem that results in disease and other kinds of suffering for us and later generations, then even though we did not ourselves cause the disease and suffering that follows, our actions did open that Pandora's box. A lot of our experience in this world follow that pattern. The Bible records a similar thing right at the dawn of humanity when God cursed the planet because of Adam and Eve's sin so that they and all their children later would suffer a great deal of frustration in the pursuit of provision for our daily needs. In other words, it is our collective and individual choices that result in our sufferings. We suffer a lot of things because of the choices others make and we suffer a great deal of other things because of the choices we ourselves make.

Re: "By this logic, the best thing a mother could do would be to spend her entire life conceiving and aborting babies to send as many, perhaps hundreds of, souls into eternal heaven, even if it meant sacrificing her own life to an eternity in hell." I can't see how that follows from my argument. Human beings only come into existence when God creates a human spirit and puts it into a viable human body. Human bodies are typically ready for that human spirit only at birth. Of course, it is possible that at the point of abortion, whether of a spontaneous nature or of a deliberately contrived one, a human spirit is also placed into the human body that is being destroyed, but we are not guaranteed this so that it is sheer foolishness to assume that there is any good being done in following this path that you describe. In fact, given that the Mosaic Law in Exodus 21:22-24 places significant value on the life of the unborn, it doesn't seem to follow at all that there is any good being done in what you conclude here. The automatic salvation of babies is a consolation not an excuse for murdering babies not least because "making it into Heaven" is really not all we are called to. The Bible calls everyone to certain eternal rewards so that being deprived of a full life and an opportunity to win those rewards is a grave thing indeed and the only real consolation for it is just not being cast away from God's presence for all eternity.

Re: your last paragraph. It seemed obvious to me that antinatalism wasn't about forcing anyone to do anything, but it is also fairly obvious to me that if one is publicly arguing that procreation is bad, they are necessarily trying to recruit others to their cause. Same thing that happens when Christians publicly argue for the Gospel. As for antinatalism not arguing that existence is bad, I confess that that surprised me to read from you since it seems to me to follow that if existence is

painful and it is bad to bring people into it, then existence is bad for people as long as it's painful. Is it only the absent qualification of pain that you take issue with here? As for the logic, my point has been that it is flawed. By common sense, correlation does not necessarily equal causation. By the Bible, procreation is good and blessed because it is God's gift and command. So, antinatalism has no foot to stand on whichever way you cut it. In fact, once you add in the Bible's position, antinatalism is cruel to human beings because of what it tries to deny them: suffering is not all that life is about; there are also the blessing of God's presence forever, the hope of the incredible eternal rewards, and the multitude blessings and comforts of this life. That you have no appreciation of the value of these things does not mean that someone else doesn't or wouldn't if they lived to have them even together with the suffering that you take issue with.