

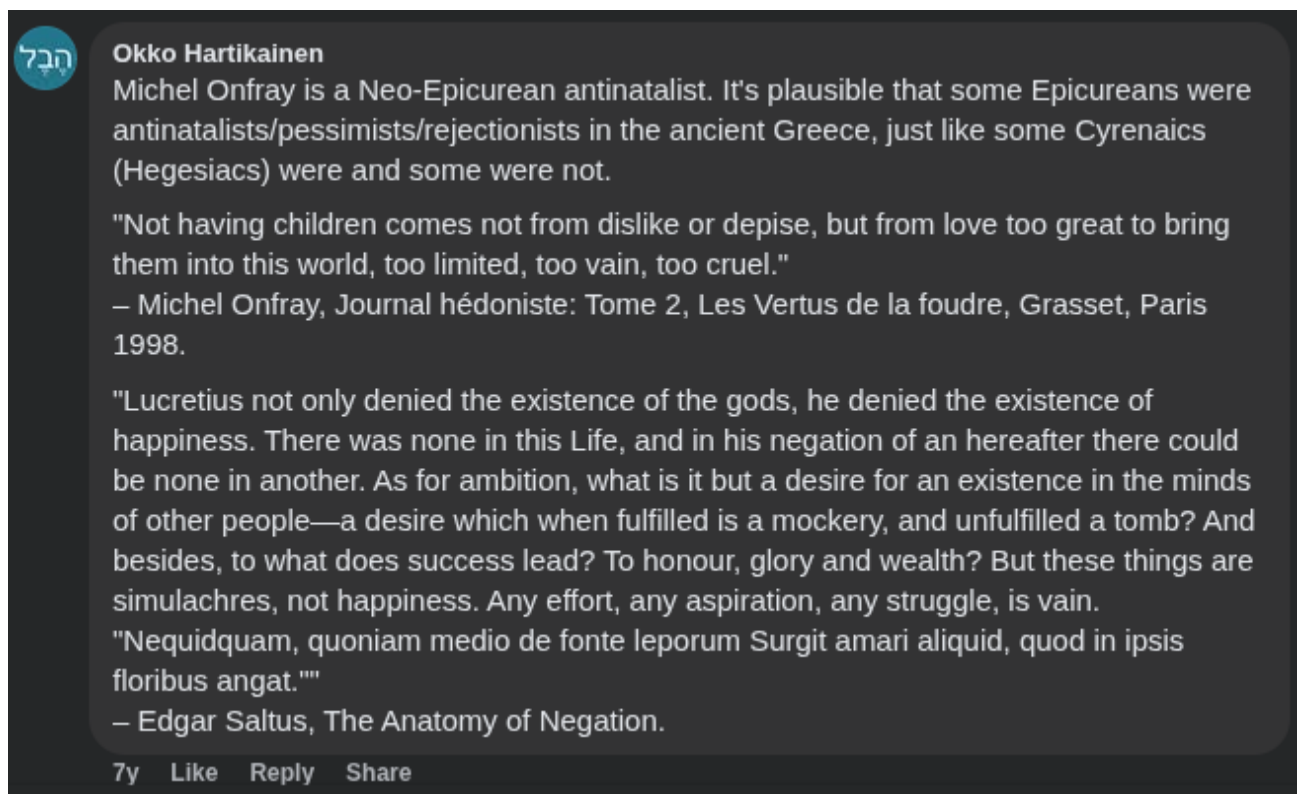
Anti-Natalism: The Opposite of Epicureanism

Post by "Cassius" of August 20, 2025 at 8:16 AM

Good catch Don and I completely agree that it is about as much contrary to Epicurus as one can get.

Epicurus touches on this in the letter to Menoecus, and I would think it would be clear how un-Epicurean this point of view is, but I am afraid that some people see this as acceptable to Epicurus just like they see "Absence of Pain" as meaning that Epicurus wanted nothing in life other than to escape pain, as Plutarch argued.

This subject came up in 2018 in a thread that remains accessible in the Epicurean Philosophy [Facebook group](#), and it's worth glancing at some of those posts. One in particular I made note of to illustrate the problem mentions Michel Onfray, who some hold in high regard:



Okko Hartikainen
Michel Onfray is a Neo-Epicurean antinatalist. It's plausible that some Epicureans were antinatalists/pessimists/rejectionists in the ancient Greece, just like some Cyrenaics (Hegesiacs) were and some were not.

"Not having children comes not from dislike or depise, but from love too great to bring them into this world, too limited, too vain, too cruel."
– Michel Onfray, Journal h doniste: Tome 2, Les Vertus de la foudre, Grasset, Paris 1998.

"Lucretius not only denied the existence of the gods, he denied the existence of happiness. There was none in this Life, and in his negation of an hereafter there could be none in another. As for ambition, what is it but a desire for an existence in the minds of other people—a desire which when fulfilled is a mockery, and unfulfilled a tomb? And besides, to what does success lead? To honour, glory and wealth? But these things are simulachres, not happiness. Any effort, any aspiration, any struggle, is vain.

"Nequidquam, quoniam medio de fonte leporum Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis floribus angat."
– Edgar Saltus, The Anatomy of Negation.

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One of my comments in response has some other references:

This list from wikipedia of groups who support antinatalism is a rogue's gallery in my view:

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4681-anti-natalism-the-opposite-of-epicureanism/?postID=36840#post36840>

The teaching of the Buddha (c. 400 BCE) is interpreted by Hari Singh Gour (1870-1949) as follows:

Buddha states his propositions in the pedantic style of his age. He throws them into a form of sorites; but, as such, it is logically faulty and all he wishes to convey is this: Oblivious of the suffering to which life is subject, man begets children, and is thus the cause of old age and death. If he would only realize what suffering he would add to by his act, he would desist from the procreation of children; and so stop the operation of old age and death.[4]

The Marcionites believed that the visible world is an evil creation of a crude, cruel, jealous, angry demiurge, Yahweh. According to this teaching, people should oppose him, abandon his world, not create people, and trust in the good God of mercy, foreign and distant.[5][6][7]

The Encratites observed that birth leads to death. In order to conquer death, people should desist from procreation: "not produce fresh fodder for death".[8][9][10]

The Manichaeans,[11][12][13] the Bogomils[14][15][16] and the Cathars[17][18][19] believed that procreation sentences the soul to imprisonment in evil matter. They saw procreation as an instrument of an evil god, demiurge, or of Satan that imprisons the divine element in matter and thus causes the divine element to suffer.

Further, this:

I am surprised that wikipedia does not list THIS group, which is the place I've heard a variation of that view before:

For two-and-a-half years, the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel debated. These said, "It is better for man not to have been created than to have been created"; and these said, "It is better for man to have been created than not to have been created."

Talmud, Eruvin 13b

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And yet, the sages of Shammai are of the opinion that man would be better off not to have been created—an opinion which the Talmud cites as a legitimate Torah viewpoint. Indeed, it is regarding the debates between the schools of Shammai and Hillel that the Talmud declares: "These and these are both the words of the living G-d"!

<http://www.chabad.org/.../2578/jewish/To-Be-or-to-Be-Not.htm>