

Why We Should Create Artificial Offspring: Meaning and the Collective Afterlife

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Main Conclusion

We should (at least) seriously consider creating artificial offspring.

Key Ethical Principle

The collective afterlife (that is: the lives of all those who continue to exist on earth or elsewhere in the natural universe after we die) is an important source and sustainer of meaning in our lives. (**The Collective Afterlife Thesis**).

We should (at least) seriously consider doing things that have a greater probability of supporting or maintaining that which provides our lives with value and meaning.

Outline

- Danaher states his conclusion and summarizes his argument. [pp. 1097-1098]
- Danaher explains what he means by “artificial offspring.” [pp. 1098-1100]
- Danaher presents his argument in premise-conclusion form. [pp. 1100-1101]
- Danaher presents Scheffler’s ideas about the importance of the collective afterlife, and he extends the idea of a collective afterlife to include human-like beings. [pp. 1101-1102]

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- Danaher motivates the collective afterlife thesis using two thought experiments. [pp. 1102-1105]
 - Danaher describes different theories of what type of thing makes life meaningful and valuable. He also discusses the idea that fragility tends to undermine the meaning and value of natural life. [pp. 1105-1107]
 - Danaher defends the claim that creating artificial offspring is a credible way to achieve a collective afterlife. [pp. 1107-1109]
 - Danaher defends that claim that creating artificial offspring is a better way to achieve a collective afterlife than creating traditional biological offspring.
 - He argues that artificial offspring would be able to survive in a wider range of environments. [pp. 1109-1112]
 - He argues that artificial offspring avoid some worries that plague the creation of traditional biological offspring. [pp. 1112-1114]
 - Danaher raises four objections and offers replies. [pp. 1114-1117]

Questions

1. Describe what an artificial offspring, in Danaher's sense, would be like.
2. Explain what the collective afterlife is supposed to be. What is the collective afterlife thesis? How does Danaher motivate that thesis? Explain why his motivation is (or is not) persuasive.
3. Why might someone think that fragility makes natural life less meaningful or valuable? Does it? Explain.
4. Is creating an artificial offspring a credible way to achieve a collective afterlife? Explain.
5. Is creating an artificial offspring a better way to achieve a collective afterlife? Explain.
6. Do all of Danaher's replies to the objections that he considers succeed? Explain.