

Reading Questions for September 22

These questions cover two texts: a magazine article by Elizabeth Kolbert called “The Case Against Kids” and excerpts from a book by David Benatar called *Better Never To Have Been*. The answers do not have to be turned in. You will probably have to read more than once to get the answers.

*Background:*

This week we’re looking at fulfillment, well-being, and quality of life. On Tuesday we looked at a more theoretical discussion of these issues. Today we’re looking at how these issues can be applied to a particular debate; in particular, debates about having children.

*Question:*

1. On page 5, Kolbert talks about Christine Overall. Overall discusses an argument for having children that turns on the claim that having a child benefits the child. What does Overall think of the argument and why? Is she right? Why?
2. On pages 7-8, Kolbert discusses an argument from David Benatar that we have a moral obligation not to reproduce. How does the argument go? What do you think of it and why?
3. Benatar runs through three views of well-being, arguing that life is very bad on each view. The three views he discusses are hedonistic theories (starting on 70), desire-fulfillment theories (starting on 73), and objective list theories (starting on 81). Pick one of these and answer the following questions: how does Benatar argue that life is very bad on the theory? Is he right?