How should we care about the world we'll leave behind?

Thought experiments

Samuel Scheffler presents two imagined worlds - *a cataclysmic asteroid strike* and *an end to human fertility* - both leading to humanity's extinction soon after the end of the subjects natural life. He argues the depression these elicit show that others living on after we die matters more to us than we readily appreciate.

In a similar vein the dramatised novel The Children of Men presents an imagined mass infertility and suggests consequences including a protagonist succumbing to all manner of vices and a general societal breakdown.

How compelling are the stories above?

A chain

If we really do value our position in an ongoing chain of lives lots of questions seem to arise ..

- How does concern for those we know and love compare to a general concern for humanity?
- To what degree does a lively regard for the interests of those we'll never meet reveal a natural selflessness and to what extent is it part of us attempting to escape death as Ernest Becker suggested?
- What significance of contribution is needed for us to be motivated?

Legacy

What's the most valuable we may pass on ..

- family histories / carefully articulated life lessons
- physical assets / knowledge / works of art
- an intact precious planet
- inspiring lives
- something else ..?