

Summary

This dissertation verifies the descriptive adequacy of Laurie A. Paul's theory of transformative decisions and experiences. She defined transformative decisions, including reproductive ones, as a special category. She argued these decisions yield new knowledge (epistemically transforming the decision-maker), making it impossible to anticipate what they will be like, and can trigger personal transformation affecting preferences and identity. She linked these features to the impossibility of making such decisions rationally and authentically. This dissertation critiques Paul's theory using an empirical analysis of narratives on reproductive decision-making and the life experiences that follow. It addresses objections, including the possibility of estimating the value or utility of future states, the rejection of others' testimonies and third-person scientific data as decision bases, and the ability to predict one's reactions to future events, highlighting the roles of imagination, empathy, prior experience, and self-knowledge. Two alternative approaches, by Edna Ullmann-Margalit and Agnes Callard, are also presented. The research goal was achieved using data from two interviews and participant diaries (groups: childless by choice, expecting a first child, and parents), analysed with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The material enabled evaluation of the theory's empirical validity, exploration of decision strategies in procreation, and tracing of personal transformation. The author shows the error in rejecting imagination, scientific data, and prior experience as valid decision foundations. Bounded and ecological rationality are proposed as an alternative framework for understanding decision-making processes, showing that people can make justified (thus rational) choices despite epistemic limits, based on coherence within identity-shaping narratives rather than fixed preferences.