

# **We Can Make Rational Decisions to Have a Child: On the Grounds for Rejecting L.A. Paul's Arguments<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract:** L.A. Paul has recently argued that, on the standard model of rationality, individuals cannot make rational decisions about whether to have a child or not. In this paper, I show that Paul's arguments do not plausibly demonstrate that the standard model of rationality precludes rational decisions to have a child. I argue that there are phenomenal and non-phenomenal values that can be used to determine the value that having a child will have for us and, in turn, that can be used to make rational decisions about whether to have a child or not. I also argue that we can have an approximate idea of what it is like for us to have a child, even before we have a child and that, on the standard model, this is sufficient to make rational decisions to have a child.

## **§1. Introduction**

L.A. Paul wrote what is now an infamous paper on the question of whether an individual can make a rational decision to have a child.<sup>2</sup>

The scenario:

You have no children. However, you have reached a point in your life when you are personally, financially, and physically able to have a child. You sit down and think about whether you want to have a child of your very own. You discuss it with your partner, and contemplate the choice, carefully reflecting on the choice by assessing what it would be like for you to have a child of your very own and comparing this to what it would be like to remain childless.<sup>3</sup>

The options:

HC: have a child

~HC: not have a child

Paul's conclusion:

You cannot make a rational decision to either HC or ~HC.

Her argument for this conclusion relies on the standard model of rationality:

1: To determine which of two actions is a rational choice, you must calculate the expected value (EV) of these two actions.

2: To determine the EV of two actions, you must determine, in relation to each action, (1) the value of the outcomes that will result from the action and (2) the probability of these outcomes occurring. The EV of an action is the product of (1) and (2).<sup>4</sup>

3: The action with the highest EV is the rational choice.

Paul focuses on the standard model because she believes that it is implicit in how we typically make, what we consider to be, rational decisions.

The argument for Paul's conclusion:

Claim1: To make a rational decision about whether you ought to HC or  $\sim$ HC, you must determine the expected value (EV) of HC and  $\sim$ HC. The one with the highest EV is the rational choice.

Claim2: To determine the EV of HC and  $\sim$ HC, you must determine (1) the value of the outcomes of HC and  $\sim$ HC and (2) the probability of those outcomes occurring.

Claim3: You can determine the value of the outcomes of HC and  $\sim$ HC only by knowing what it is like (WIL) for you to HC and  $\sim$ HC.

Claim4: You can only know WIL for you to HC by being in a state where you HC.

Claim5: Since, as of yet, you are not in a state where you HC, you cannot know WIL for you to HC.

Claim6: Since you cannot know WIL to HC, you cannot determine the EV of HC.<sup>5</sup>

Claim7: Since you cannot determine the EV of HC, you cannot make a rational decision to HC or  $\sim$ HC.

Conclusion: Therefore, you cannot make a rational decision to either HC or  $\sim$ HC.<sup>6</sup>

The main example that Paul uses to make her case is that of Mary and seeing the colour red:

‘Mary is confined to a black-and-white room, is educated through black-and-white books and through lectures related on black and white television. In this way she learns everything there is to know about the physical nature of the world .

. . It seems, however, that Mary does not know all there is to know. For when she is let out of the black-and-white room or given color television, she will learn what it is like to see something red').<sup>7</sup>

When Mary leaves her cell for the first time, she has a radically new experience: she experiences redness for the first time, and from this experience, and this experience alone, she knows what is like to see red.<sup>8</sup>

What is most important about this example is that Mary, because of her exclusively black-and-white experiences, is unable to “project forward to get a sense of what it will be like for her to see red.”<sup>9</sup> Her knowledge about her other experiences (reading about red, for example) cannot serve as a basis for knowing what it is like to see a colour such as red.

Now imagine that Mary is deciding whether she ought to step outside of the black-and-white room to see red. Paul claims that, according to the standard model, Mary will be unable to make a rational decision about whether to choose to see red or not. On the standard model, in order to make a rational decision about whether she ought to see red, Mary must determine the expected value of not seeing red and of seeing red. To do this, she must determine the value that the outcomes of seeing red and of not seeing red will have for her and the probability of these outcomes occurring. On the standard model, the action with the highest EV is the rational one. Paul argues that Mary cannot know the value of seeing red for her and, in turn, that she cannot determine whether seeing red or not seeing red will have a higher expected value for her.<sup>10</sup> This means that Mary cannot make a rational choice to see red or not to see red.

Why is Mary unable to determine the value of seeing red for her? Paul argues that Mary is in an epistemically impoverished position in relation to seeing red. She does not know what it is like to see red. Since she does not know what it is like to see red, she does not know what emotions, beliefs, desires and dispositions will be caused by her experience of seeing red.<sup>11</sup> May be she will feel excited or may be she will feel frightened. Moreover, she does not know what it will be like to have any of the emotions, beliefs, desires and dispositions that result specifically from her experience of seeing red. Even if she does know that she will find redness fun, exciting, or frightening, she does not know what it will be like to find “red”, in particular, fun, exciting, or frightening. “These are all ways of saying that . . . she cannot know the value of what it’ll be like for her to see red.”<sup>12</sup>

Paul argues that the individual who is choosing to have a child, before actually having that child, is in a situation that is similar to that of Mary’s. On Paul’s view, having a child, like seeing red for the first time, is a unique and transformative experience. It is unlike any experience you have had before. So, before having a child, you do not and cannot know what is like to HC. Without knowing what it is like to HC, you do not and cannot know what having a child will feel like. You also do not and cannot know what emotions, beliefs, desires and dispositions you will have as a result of what it is like to HC. May be you will feel joy or may be you will feel fear. Furthermore, even if you do know that you will find having a child joyful or frightening, you do not and cannot know what it is like to find having that child, in particular, joyful or frightening.<sup>13</sup> All of this means that you are unable to determine the value of what it

will be like for you to HC. In turn, you cannot determine the EV of HC. You are unable to make a rational decision about whether to choose HC or  $\sim$ HC.

Paul's paper has received a significant amount of attention. This is rightfully so. Paul skillfully brings together issues in philosophy of mind, epistemology, decision theory, and normative ethics to raise a strong challenge to the common sense conclusion that we can make rational decisions to HC. The strength of her argument lies in the fact that it relies on and vividly captures something that many of us who have had children believe to be true, namely, that there is something uniquely transformative about the experience of having a child. Few arguments in the philosophical literature on rationality, moral knowledge, or having children have so clearly made a case for the importance of experience in making rational decisions about the value of having a child.

Despite the obvious merits of her argument, I have grounds for questioning its soundness. In what follows, I show that, ultimately, her arguments do not plausibly demonstrate that the standard model of rationality precludes rational decisions to HC. I argue that there are phenomenal and non-phenomenal values that can be used to determine the value that HC will have for us and, in turn, that can be used to make rational decisions to HC or  $\sim$ HC. I also argue that we can have an approximate idea of what it is like for us to have a child, even before we actually have a child and that, on the standard model, this is sufficient to make rational decisions to HC or  $\sim$ HC.

## **§2. Grounds for Rejecting Paul's Argument**

There are at least three grounds for rejecting Paul's argument against the rationality of choosing HC.

#1: Grounds for Rejecting Claim3 (You can determine the value of the outcomes of HC only by knowing WIL for you to HC)

Paul argues that the value of the outcomes of HC is determined by "what it is like for you to have your child, including what it is like to have the beliefs, desires, emotions and dispositions that result, directly and indirectly from having your own child."<sup>14</sup> She refers to these sorts of values as "phenomenal values." Since HC is something that happens to you specifically, the phenomenal value (the value of "what is like for you") is the most important and is likely the solely important factor in determining whether it is rational for you to HC.<sup>15</sup>

This argument moves too quickly. First, there are phenomenal values that can play an important role in determining the value of the outcomes of HC for you, even if you do not know what it will like be for you to HC. For example, many individuals place positive value on transformative experiences themselves. They place positive value on experiencing things that are new and that cannot be known on the basis of past experiences. For example, imagine that a friend of mine tells me that she tried Indian food and that she enjoyed her experience of it. As a result, I become curious about Indian food. However, imagine, having never tried Indian food before, I have no idea what it will be like to eat Indian food. It seems that, even in this case, it could be rational for me to try some Indian food. If I place positive value on having new experiences, then I can know, before hand, that I will place positive value on the experience of eating new food

such as Indian food, even if I do not ultimately enjoy eating the Indian food itself (i.e., I can be glad I tried Indian food, even if I do not end up liking the food itself). Similar factors likely explain why so many people choose to travel to countries that they have never been to and that are very different from those that they have already travelled to or lived in. Many individuals simply place value on experiencing what it is like to undergo a transformative experience. Similar factors can also apply in the case of choosing to HC. If you value having transformative experiences and having a child is transformative in the way that Paul suggests and you know this to be the case (say, after reading Paul's paper), it will follow, that you can know that having a child will have a positive value for you and, in turn, that you can make a rational decision to HC.

Second, there are many non-phenomenal values that can play an important role in determining the value of the outcomes of HC. For example, if you are a member of a dying (or minority) culture that has only two members left (say, you are the last of two Mohicans) and you see yourself as having an obligation to support the persistence of this culture, then you might determine that the outcomes of HC will have positive value for you for non-phenomenal reasons. Alternatively, if you see yourself as having a moral obligation to help the destitute, then you might determine that adopting a child (and thus choosing HC) will have positive non-phenomenal value for you.

Paul explicitly states that, in her argument, she ignores "external non-phenomenal factors" that an individual might take into account when deciding whether to HC or  $\sim$ HC. She suggests that, even if external values are considered, her argument remains plausible. This is because, on her view, even if such external non-phenomenal factors are taken into account, they are unlikely to "swamp any personal phenomenal effects."<sup>16</sup>

This assumption is false. As is the case in the two examples cited above, the non-phenomenal value of HC may very well outweigh any of the personal phenomenal values you might associate with HC and you can determine (through introspection) that this is the case. Indeed, because of the weight you place on your non-phenomenal values, you might even be entirely neutral with respect to the phenomenal values associated with choosing to HC (i.e., “it doesn’t matter what it is like for me. I must meet my obligations to my culture/to the poor”).

In an e-rejoinder, Paul acknowledges that “if you’re really not basing your decision at all on what being a parent is going to be like for you then you can make a rational decision. But relying only on criteria like that is not the usual way to decide to have kids.”<sup>17</sup> Her contention is that this is not the way that we usually conceive of rationality. This response is not convincing, however. First, at least some of the time, this is the way that people typically make decisions to HC. People choose to HC for non-phenomenal (moral) reasons. Second, even if it is not the way that people typically choose to HC, this fact does not in and of itself make it an irrational way to decide to choose to HC. Moral values can determine the value that choosing to HC (or ~HC) will have for us. So, Paul must acknowledge that, even if they constitute only a small number of the decisions that are actually made, it can be rational to choose to HC.

Recall that Paul’s original conclusion was that, on the standard model, we cannot make rational decisions to HC or ~HC. This discussion illustrates that, when properly understood, her arguments support a much weaker conclusion (assuming we accept the rest of her arguments), namely, that we cannot make rational decisions to HC *on the basis of what it is like to HC*, which still leaves open the possibility of making rational

decisions to HC or ~HC on the basis of certain *phenomenal values*, such as those relating to the value we place on transformative experiences themselves, and *non-phenomenal values*, such as those relating to our moral values.<sup>18</sup> Understood in this way, the conclusion of Paul's argument is much less controversial than first appeared. It does not challenge the possibility of making rational decisions to have a child. It just narrows the grounds for such decisions to the sorts of phenomenal and non-phenomenal considerations that I discuss.<sup>19</sup>

#2: Grounds for Rejecting Claim4 (You can only know WIL for you to HC by being in a state where you HC)

Although Paul does not always tackle this issue directly, her view is that there are no other bases for determining what it is like to HC than actually having a child. You cannot know what it is like to HC from your experiences with other people's children, for example.<sup>20</sup> On Paul's view, having a child (of your own) is a transformative and unique experience.<sup>21</sup> Upon becoming a parent, you will experience things you have never experienced before. Among other things, you will experience what is like to see, touch, care for and attend to your newborn child. Before having these experiences, you do not and cannot know what it is like to have such experiences.

The problem with Paul's argument is that it conceives of the experience of what it is like to HC as one unified and distinct experience, namely, the what it is like experience of having a child. However, alternatively, one can conceive of the experience of what it is like to HC as being made up of distinct what it is like experiences, for example, of what it is like to care for, what it is like to meet the needs of, and what it is like to play

and spend leisure time with, and laugh with and be angry at.<sup>22</sup> While we do not and cannot have experiences of these types in relation to the child we are considering having before having her, we can and have had them with other individuals.<sup>23</sup> From these types of experiences, we can and do know something about what it will be like to have experience of these types, even if we do not know what it will be like to have these types of experiences with our own child specifically.<sup>24</sup>

To make the point more vivid, return to the case of Mary. As Paul suggests, seeing red will be transformative for Mary. This transformation occurs because Mary, having only experienced black and white, has no experience of what it is like to see colour and, as a result, cannot project from her past experiences to know what it will be like to see red. This is why, before seeing red, she cannot know what it will be like to see red. However, things are different if Mary is in a pink-room and is considering seeing red. If she is in a pink-room, she can, on the basis of her experiences of seeing pink know something about what it will be like to see red, since pink is not only a colour but is also a red-like-colour and she knows this to be the case. So, she can know what feelings, beliefs, desires, and dispositions will be caused by her experience of seeing a red-like-colour. She can know for example, that that she enjoys seeing red-like-colours, finds it exciting and that she desires to see more. Moreover, to the extent that pink is a red-like colour, she can know something about what it will be like for her to find “red-like-colours” in particular, joyful and exciting.<sup>25</sup> In short, having experiences of a closely related type such as seeing pink, a red-like colour, can serve as basis for knowing what it is like to see red.

Unless they have never been around children, the situation of most people deciding whether to HC is more analogous to Mary in the pink-room than it is to Mary in the black-and-white-room. We can have experiences of a variety of types that are relevantly similar to the sorts of experiences that we will have when we have a child of our own. For example, we can know what it is like to touch and to see a newborn. We can know what it is like to care for and to attend to a newborn (after spending significant time with one). In this way, we can know something about what it will be like to have the types of experiences that we will have when we have a child of our own.<sup>26</sup>

Paul's arguments suggest the following response. The experiences of what it is like to love and to care for a newborn that is not your own are phenomenally very different from what it is like to love and to care for a new born that is *your own*. There is just something phenomenally unique about having these types of experiences with *your own* child.<sup>27</sup> So, we cannot know what having a child of our own will be like on the basis of our experiences with other people's children. Similarly, even if Mary has had experiences of pink, Paul could argue, Mary still cannot know what it will be like to see red. What it is like to see red is very different from what is like to see pink, even though pink is a red-like-colour. Seeing red, specifically, is a unique and transformative experience.

The problem with this response is that it will make many if not most of our everyday experiences unknowable, since something similar could be said of each experience that we have. In some sense, each experience that we have is both transformative and unique. Each experience that we have changes us in some way and is unlike any other experience we have had before it. While I may have seen red before, I

have not seen it on this day, in this particular light, and so on. While I may have eaten chocolate ice cream before, I have not done it on this day, in this weather, in this mood, and so on. So, my experience of seeing red or eating chocolate ice cream, or whatever is, in a sense, unique and transformative. In turn, it would follow, I cannot project from my past experiences of seeing red or eating chocolate to know what it will be like, respectively, to see red or to eat chocolate ice cream on this day, at this time, and in this way. So, if we take this rebuttal seriously, it would work to rule out projection in most cases.

There are two problems with this response. The first problem is that most of us do not find each new experience of eating chocolate ice cream transformative in the way suggested. It does seem that we can project from our past experiences of seeing red or eating chocolate ice cream to know what it will be like, respectively, to see red or to eat chocolate ice cream on this day, at this time, and in this way. To the extent that Paul's arguments suggest otherwise, they go against commonsense.

The second problem is that if Paul's arguments rule out projection in most cases, then her arguments prove too much. Paul claims that her arguments are meant to show that the standard model fails in relation to life transforming decisions, not all decisions.<sup>28</sup> If, however, we accept Paul's claim<sup>4</sup>, that you can only know WIL for you to HC by being in a state where you HC, and the response that seems to follow from accepting this claim (as I outlined above), then her argument proves too much because they rule out projection in most cases. If projection is ruled out in most cases, and we cannot know what it is like to eat ice cream or to see red on this day, in this weather, in this mood and so on, and knowledge of what it is like is necessary to make a rational decision, then it

follows that we cannot make rational decisions in most cases. It will not only be irrational, on the standard model, to choose to have a child. It will also be irrational to choose to see red, to eat chocolate ice cream, to drive your car, to brush your teeth, and so on. This sort of rebuttal pushes too far and takes us beyond Paul's stated aims of merely showing that the standard model fails only in the case of life transforming decisions. It also makes Paul's argument as a whole less plausible, since, as Paul seems to acknowledge, the standard model does lead to rational choices in the case of most non-life transforming decisions.

#3 Grounds for Rejecting Claim3 (You can determine the value of the outcomes of HC and ~HC solely by knowing what it is like (WIL) for you to HC and ~HC)

This discussion raises perhaps the most important grounds for questioning claim3. It concerns Paul's emphasis on the importance of *knowing* what it is like to have a child of your own. On the standard model, in order to determine the EV of HC, you must determine the value of the outcomes of HC and the probability of these outcomes occurring. On Paul's view, the value of the outcomes of HC is determined only by *knowing* what it is like to HC. But why think that we have to "know" what it is like to HC in order to determine the value of the outcomes associated with HC? On the standard model, rationality requires that we determine the value that we estimate will be associated with the outcomes of HC, not the *known* value of the outcomes of HC. Something less than full knowledge of what it is like to HC is sufficient to determine the EV of the outcomes of HC and, in turn, to make a rational choice to HC. So, even if we allow Paul's claim (claim4) that we can only know what it is like to HC by being in a state

where we actually HC, not on the basis of similar types of experiences, we can, on the basis of related experiences, at least *estimate* what value the outcomes of HC will have for us. This is sufficient to make a rational decision about whether to HC. In turn, claim3 is false. We do not need to *know* what it is like to HC to determine the value of the outcomes of HC.<sup>29</sup>

In response, Paul could claim something stronger: we cannot form even an approximate idea of what it is like to HC before actually having a child of our own. In turn, we cannot form even an estimation of the value of the outcomes of choosing to HC. This is a difficult claim to accept. On the basis of closely related experiences, it does seem that we can have at least an approximate idea of what is like to have a child and, in turn, that we can at least estimate the value of the outcomes of HC. Given that most of us accept this view and, on the face of it, it seems plausible, the onus is on Paul to show that this view is false.

### **§3. Conclusion**

I have tried to show that there are three main grounds for rejecting Paul's arguments. First, Paul's claim3, that we can only determine the value of the outcomes of choosing HC by knowing what it is like to HC, is false. We can determine the value of the outcomes of choosing to HC on the basis of certain *phenomenal values*, such as those relating to the value we place on having transformative experiences themselves, and *non-phenomenal values*, such as the moral value we place on preventing the demise of our cultural or ethnic group.

Second, in relation to claim<sub>3</sub>, I suggested that *knowledge* of what it is like to HC is not needed to determine the value of the outcomes of choosing to HC. Something less demanding, such as having an estimate of the value of these outcomes, which can be based on an approximate idea of what it is like to HC, is sufficient.

Third, her claim<sub>4</sub>, that you can only know what is like to have a child by actually being in a state where you have a child, is false. We can on the basis of experiences of similar types know what it is like to have a child. Just as Mary can, on the basis of the experience of seeing a red-like-colour such as pink, know what is like to see red, we can, on the basis of our experiences with other children, know what is like to have a child. Denying this claim would mean that many of our daily decisions are irrational, something which runs strongly against our commonsense and Paul's own views.

In short, the upshot of this paper is that, contrary to what Paul suggests, we can, on the standard model, make rational decisions to have a child.

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<sup>2</sup> "What Mary Can't Expect When She's Expecting," *Res Philosophica* 92. 2 (2015): 1-23.

<sup>3</sup> Paul, "What Mary Can't Expect," p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> In other words, where EV = Expected Value, V=Value and O=the set of resulting outcomes, and  $\emptyset$  = the action,  $EV\emptyset = VO(\emptyset) \times P(\emptyset)$

<sup>5</sup> It is unclear whether Paul thinks a similar argument can be made in relation to  $\sim$ HC. It does seem that before choosing to have a child, you are already in a state of  $\sim$ HC. So, you have experienced what it is like to  $\sim$ HC and, in turn, you can know the EV of  $\sim$ HC. This would explain why, throughout her paper, she focuses on HC and our lack of WIL experiences of HC before choosing to HC. Her argument seems to be that, even if we can determine the EV of  $\sim$ HC, not being able to determine the EV of HC leaves us unable to make rational decisions about whether to HC or  $\sim$ HC. If she is correct about not being able to determine the EV of HC, this would be sufficient to show that you cannot make rational decisions about whether to HC or  $\sim$ HC, since you need to know the EV of both HC and  $\sim$ HC in order to determine which is the rational choice.

However, one could argue, along the lines of Paul, that the WIL experience of actually choosing  $\sim$ HC will be phenomenally different for you than the WIL experience of  $\sim$ HC before  $\sim$ HC is actually

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chosen. The experience of WIL to choose to remain childless is potentially different from the experience of WIL to currently be childless. So, perhaps her arguments support the conclusion that we cannot know WIL to experience  $\sim$ HC before we choose  $\sim$ HC. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on her arguments relating to HC, since this is her focus. However, much of what I say here about HC should apply in relation to  $\sim$ HC as well.

<sup>6</sup> That is, you cannot make a rational decision to HC or  $\sim$ HC on the “standard model” of what this requires.

<sup>7</sup> Frank Jackson, “What Mary Didn't Know,” *The Journal of Philosophy* LXXXIII 5 (1986), p. 291 quoted in Paul, “What Mary Can't Expect, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Paul, “What Mary Can't Expect, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Paul, “What Mary Can't Expect, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> In other words, she cannot know  $V(\emptyset)$ .

<sup>11</sup> Paul, “What Mary Can't Expect, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Paul, “What Mary Can't Expect, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Notice that this argument applies to those who are deciding to have their second and not only their first child. You are epistemically impoverished in the same way in both instances. You lack knowledge of what it is like to have a particular child before you have that particular child (even if that child is your second child).

<sup>14</sup> Paul, “What Mary Can't Expect, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> According to Paul, “the value of what it is like for the agent plays the central, if not the only, role in the decision to procreate” (Paul, “What Mary Can't Expect, p. 5).

<sup>16</sup> Paul, “What Mary Can't Expect, n. 4, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> L.A. Paul and Kieran Healy, “What You Can't Expect When You are Expecting,” accessed September 23, 2013. <http://crookedtimber.org/2013/02/27/what-you-cant-expect-when-youre-expecting/>

<sup>18</sup> Paul suggests that “in the past, external facts and circumstances played a much larger role in the causal processes leading up to parenthood. Before contraceptive devices were widely available, you didn't choose to have a child based on what you thought it would be like . . . to the extent that you actively tried to choose to have children, often it was because you needed an heir, or needed more hands to work the farm, or

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whatever” (p. 28). She does not explicitly state that these constitute more rational basis for making decisions to have children, but her arguments support this conclusion.

<sup>19</sup> In general, Paul’s focus on phenomenal knowledge as a prerequisite for being able to determine the value of the outcomes of HC is not well founded. There is nothing in the standard model that states that we can only determine the value of the outcomes of X when we know what it is like to X. This is Paul’s addition and she seems to derive this requirement from a notion of commonsense rationality. She suggests that this is implicit in how we typically come to make, what we think are, rational decisions. Paul claims that we typically make decisions that we believe are rational on the basis of what we think a particular action will be like for us. The standard model does not claim to be and certainly does not need to be understood as representing commonsense rationality. So, even if Paul is right, proponents of the standard model can accept her claims that we cannot determine the phenomenal value of HC before having a child of our own. They can just emphasize that there are other non-phenomenal values that can and ought to be the basis of rational decisions.

<sup>20</sup> On Paul’s view, you also cannot know what it is like to HC on the basis of conversations with other people about their experiences of WIL to HC.

<sup>21</sup> Note that Paul thinks this is true in cases where the child that you have is your biological child and where the child is adopted.

<sup>22</sup> In “Big Decisions, Opting, Converting, and Drifting,” *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 58 (2006), pp. 157-172, Edna Ullman-Margalit suggests that big or life changing decisions are often made up of smaller and less significant decisions. Similarly, the choice to HC can be described as being made up of less significant or smaller choices. It involves deciding to stop using birth control, to take prenatal vitamins, to start seeing an OBGYN, and a number of other small choices. Though, I will not pursue this concern here, it may be that the standard model can be used to make such smaller decisions and, in turn, can ultimately provide a basis for making rational choices to HC.

<sup>23</sup> There may also be other ways of gaining phenomenal or what it is like knowledge through related types of experiences caused by imagination, empathy, and art. Art and film, through stimulation of empathy and imagination, may be the basis for phenomenal knowledge, since they may cause what it is like to feel, believe, desire and to be disposed to do something. For example, artistic works about parenthood, giving

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birth to and rearing and raising children may cause experiences of what it is like to have a child of one's own, without causing the person to actually have a child. Eric Schliesser also suggests that a rich vocabulary can help us to gain phenomenal knowledge. He argues, for example, "we can know what it is like to see purple rain without ever seeing purple rain" (<http://www.newappsblog.com/2013/02/weekly-philosophy-of-economics-the-uncertainty-of-parenthood.html>). Perhaps, similar things can be said about language relating to having a child. If this is right, then literature, fiction, and non-fiction, may also give us grounds for knowing what it is like to have a child.

<sup>24</sup> Another useful way to think about this worry may be in terms of the distinction between type and token. In other words, I am suggesting that Paul fails to make the distinction between type and token. It may be true that you lack knowledge of the specific token, "a child of your own," but you do have knowledge of the type of experiences that are part of having a child of your own such as "caring for" and "loving".

<sup>25</sup> These are all ways of saying that she can know the value of what it will be like for her to see red-like colours such as red.

<sup>26</sup> It has been suggested to me that perhaps one thing we cannot know what it is like before doing it is bearing and giving birth to a child. These are experiences that are unlike any others that a person can have before actually bearing and giving birth to a child. There are no relevantly related types of experiences. This is something that I am not convinced of. In other cultures, where people are more involved in pregnancy and delivery, people can know something about what it is like to have a child. Art and film may also cause related types of experiences. Moreover, even if it is true that we cannot know what it is like to bear and to give birth to a child before actually doing so, these are only some of the what it is like experiences that result from choosing to HC. Choosing to HC will involve much more than bearing and giving birth to a child and we can know something about what it is like to have those types of experiences. This knowledge can be the basis for making rational decisions to HC.

<sup>27</sup> This argument can be understood as claiming that there is something uniquely transformative about this particular token of the type.

<sup>28</sup> Paul, "What Mary Can't Expect," p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Paul suggests that we cannot determine the phenomenal value of the outcomes of HC on the basis of what other people report about their experiences of what it is like to HC. Paul's conflation of knowledge

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with rationality may explain this claim. It may be true that we lack knowledge of what the value of the outcomes of HC is, even after talking with other people. Yet, it does seem true that we can gain an approximate idea of what it will be like for us to HC and, in turn, that we can gain an approximate idea of what value the outcomes of HC will have for us. This is particularly true if we collect reports from people we deem to be relevantly similar to ourselves.