

## SYMPOSIUM

# Arguing with the Vampire\*

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**Abstract** Certain themes of L.A. Paul's *Transformative Experience* are explored in the context of an argument with a vampire. The major disagreement is about the extent to which third-party data should inform our decisions as to whether to embark on a transformative experience. Three case-studies are explored: becoming a vampire, having a child, and eating durian.

Keywords: Transformative Experience; Decision; Epistemologically Transformative Experience; Personally Transformative Experience

**Riassunto** *Discutendo con il vampiro* – Affronterò alcuni aspetti del libro di L.A. Paul *Transformative Experience* nell'ambito di una discussione con un vampiro. Il punto di maggiore disaccordo verte sulla misura in cui fattori terzi dovrebbero informare le nostre decisioni in merito a un'esperienza trasformativa. Prenderò in considerazione tre casi: diventare vampiro, avere un figlio, mangiare il durian.

Parole chiave: Esperienza trasformativa; Decisione; Esperienza epistemologicamente trasformativa; Esperienza personalmente trasformativa



## I

“A LOT OF PEOPLE BEG for this, you know,” she tells me. We are sitting in a bar in Singapore. It is near midnight.

I do know. Long before we became friends and she revealed her secret, I was well versed in vampire lore. I've read many of the books – my favorites are the Anne Rice novels, especially *Interview With a Vampire* – and seen many of the movies and television shows. I recently learned from her that although some of the stereotypes are wrong (vampires do show up in mirrors, and they

cannot turn into bats), most are true. Pale skin, aversion to sunlight, preternatural strength, subsistence on blood, death from a stake through the heart, heightened sensual pleasure, near-immortality – all of that is real.

It's also true that vampires are not born that way. Vampires can choose to transform a normal human into one of them. All vampires have this power, and so many mortals pester the vampires they are lucky enough to know, wanting to be turned, to be made into sexy, dangerous creatures of the night.

But I'm not begging; I'm not even sure that I'm willing.

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The benefits are undeniable. But I worry about giving up too much. Loss of contact with those I love. No more sunlight. Giving up my tenured position – unless I could somehow arrange to teach only at night and meet with my graduate students after sundown. Most of all, the blood. Biting people in the neck and *drinking* from them!

The real problem here, I explain to the vampire, is that I can't imagine what it would be like to be a vampire, so it's very hard to decide. I explain how I've been influenced by the ideas of my friend, the philosopher Laurie Paul, and especially her book *Transformative Experience*.<sup>1</sup>

Paul argues that the usual way to make choices is by simulating their probable outcomes, imagining what the experiences would be like and then assessing them to see how well they satisfy our desires. This is how one decides between ordering wine versus beer, or whether to take the day off and go to the beach. But Paul points out that are some experiences that can't be simulated; you can't imagine ahead of time what they are like. Such experiences are epistemologically transformative – you have new information as the result of having them. Think of the first time you ate ice cream or had an orgasm or dove into cold water.

Or think about becoming a vampire, which, coincidentally, is Paul's first example in her book. She points out that you can't know what it's like to be a vampire without first becoming one.

So I'm in a bind, I explain to my friend.

"Yes, yes", she responds. "But I can help. I was once human and, believe me, I'm so much better off now. Yes, sure, there's stuff you miss. The hot sun on your face, the taste of real food. But it's so extraordinary to experience the world as I do. It's so blissful, so intense. The heightened senses, the thrill of the hunt, the power. And I know you personally. I know what you like, the kind of person you are – please trust me, you would be *so* happy."

I don't respond and she adds: "It's not just me, you know. Every vampire I've talked to –

hundreds by now – says exactly the same thing. None of us have any regrets."

I'm still quiet, and she finally says: "Do you think I'm lying?"

Not at all, I tell her. But Paul has convinced me that, unlike an experience such as eating ice cream, becoming a vampire isn't just epistemologically transformative; it's also *personally* transformative. It changes the kind of person you are. In this regard, it's similar to other significant experiences, such as going to war or joining a cult. And this influences how I respond to testimony of the sort my friend is giving me.

I pick up my phone, open up the Kindle app, and read some of Paul's book:

A radically new experience can fundamentally change your own point of view so much and so deeply that, before you've had that experience, you can't know what it is going to be like to be you after the experience. It changes your subjective value of what it is like to be you, and changes your preferences about what matters.<sup>2</sup>

And then I move to a pair of passages that are especially relevant to the offer I'm now considering.

[...] it seems awfully suspect to rely solely on the testimony of your vampire friends to make your choice, because, after all, they aren't human any more, so their preferences are the ones vampires have, not the ones humans have.<sup>3</sup>

Your effort to evaluate testimony is complicated by the fact that even people who seemed quite anti-vampire beforehand can change their minds after being bitten, suggesting that some sort of deep preference change is indeed occurring. Although your friends, as vampires, report that they are happy with their new existence, it isn't clear that their pre-vampire selves would have been happy with the

change. For example, your once-vegetarian neighbor who practiced Buddhism and an esoteric variety of hot yoga now says that since being bitten (as it happens, against her will), she too loves being a vampire ... Maybe something about becoming a vampire changes people in a way so that, now, as vampires, they love being vampires.<sup>4</sup>

I elaborate: You see, right now I would hate drinking blood. But if were to become a vampire, my preferences would change and then I'd love drinking blood. But I don't *want* to love drinking blood. It's like the line by the attorney Clarence Darrow: "I don't like spinach, and I'm glad I don't, because if I liked it, I'd eat it, and I just hate it".

"You know that the Darrow line is a joke, right?", says my friend. "If he came to like spinach, he'd enjoy eating it. Maybe he has some other reason not to want to like spinach in the future, but intense dislike right now doesn't qualify."

I begin to speak, and she holds up her hand:

"You don't like jazz, right? Right now, you wouldn't choose to listen to jazz?"

That's right, I agree cautiously.

"What if you had the chance to take a jazz appreciation course, and if you took the course, you would end up loving it. Would you refuse to take the course, on the grounds that it will change your preferences?" She imitates me: "I don't want to like jazz in the future because I don't like it *now*".

I tell her that this is unfair. In this jazz example, I'm choosing ahead of time to adopt this different preference, so maybe I have a meta-preference where I want to want to like jazz.

She cuts me off, "Stop. Preferences change all the time. You get used to your environment, so soon your small and smelly apartment doesn't bother you anymore. Or you get bored with a song and don't want to hear it ever again. Young children find kissing gross and then puberty hits. You get old and then, one day, playing bridge seems like a

perfect way to spend an evening."

"A lot of these preferences choices are involuntary, but some of them are under your control. Shouldn't you want to make choices that will make you happy in the future? If all they are going to serve on your week-long cruise is spinach, isn't a good thing to start liking it? Other things being equal, isn't more happiness better than less?"

I hesitate. Well, ok, yes. But maybe after a transformation as radical as becoming a vampire, I'm no longer the same person. There are concerns about personal...

She interrupts again, "I know psychologists often get confused about personal identity<sup>5</sup> but this is just a red herring. Of course, I've changed a lot since becoming a vampire; there have been big-time changes in my qualitative identity. In some metaphorical sense, I'm 'a different person'. But I'm still me. Becoming a vampire is something that happened to *me*. It's not like one person died, and another one popped into being. Certainly, Laurie Paul understands this; it looks like her whole book is about people's ability to choose their futures wisely in cases where they are not able to simulate them. It's about transformation, not obliteration."

"And anyway," she adds with a smirk, "if you didn't believe it would still be you once you became a vampire, you wouldn't worry so much about what it's like for you to be one."

Yes, I concede, I'll be the same person after becoming a vampire. And it does seem, based on the evidence, that I will be happier person. If I were a hedonist, this would be a no-brainer. But there are moral concerns. Drinking blood isn't quite the same as developing a taste for spinach.

Maybe there's no reason why past preferences should take priority over future ones.<sup>6</sup> But there's no contradiction in saying: Right now I don't think drinking blood is ok, and I don't want to change, because if I thought it was ok, I would do it, and I don't want to do it because it's wrong. (If you don't like this example, surely you would agree that I should very much *not* want to adopt the view

that molesting children is just fine.) More generally, if you think your moral views are correct, you shouldn't want them to change.

Anyhow, I'm not sure I want to give up what I know now – which is that it's really wrong to treat people as food – and replace it with the messed-up morality of a vampire.

We stare at each other.

"Is that it?", she says.

Well, there's one more thing. Maybe I would like to have children. Vampires can't do that.

She rolls her eyes. "Why in the world would you would ever want to have children?"

## II

That's a good question, I say. Having children is another example Laurie Paul gives. She suggests that it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to imagine what it's like to have a young child if you don't already have one.

"Makes sense," my friend says. "But, unlike the vampire case, I'm sure that there's a lot of social science here."

There is, I agree. The study that everyone cites is by Daniel Kahneman and Angus Deaton, where a sample of about 900 employed women were asked, at the end of each day, to recall each of their activities and describe how happy they were when they did them.<sup>7</sup> It turns out that they judge being with their children as less enjoyable than many other activities, such as watching TV, shopping, or preparing food. Other studies find that when a child is born, there is a decrease in happiness for parents that doesn't go away for a long time<sup>8</sup>, along with a corresponding drop in satisfaction<sup>9</sup> with the marriage that only goes away once the kids leave the house.<sup>9</sup>

None of this should be surprising. Having children, and particularly young children, leads to financial struggle, sleep deprivation, loss of enjoyable activities, and, for women, the physical strain of pregnancy and, in some cases, breastfeeding. And children can turn a happy and loving marital relationship into a

zero-sum battle over who gets to sleep and rest and who doesn't. Children provoke a couple's most frequent arguments – more than money, more than work, more than in-laws, more than sex, more than anything.<sup>10</sup>

"Sounds like a nightmare," she agrees. "So, just to put this back on the table, here is what I'd have to do to you to transform you into a vampire. It's just like in the Anne Rice novels except that ..."

But wait, I go on. There are other studies that present a different picture. It turns out that this happiness hit is worse for some people than others.<sup>11</sup> Somewhat older fathers actually get a happiness *boost*, while it's young parents and single parents, male and female, that suffer a happiness loss. Also, most of the original data was from the United States. A recent<sup>12</sup> paper looked at the happiness levels of people with and without children in 22 countries. They found that the extent to which children make you happy is influenced by whether there are childcare policies such as paid parental leave<sup>12</sup>. Parents from Norway and Hungary, for instance, are happier than childless couples – while parents from Australia and Great Britain are less happy. The country with the greatest happiness drop when you have children? The United States.

It's not just who you are and where you are; it's what you want. When you stop asking about happiness and satisfaction and instead ask people questions like "In the bigger picture of your life, how personally significant and meaningful to you is what you are doing at the moment?", parents claim to have more meaning in their lives than non-parents.<sup>13</sup> Other research finds that the more time people spent taking care of children, the more meaningful they said that their lives were – though they reported that their lives were no happier.<sup>14</sup> These data might really sway someone looking for meaning in life.

"It would be useful", my vampire friend said, "to find the best data on just people like you, looking at just what you value. That would tell you whether or not to have a child."

But that data might not be enough, I say. I take out my phone again, and start to read more from *Transformative Experience*.

[...] You can replace your personal approach to decision-making with impersonal decision-making, removing any crucial role for your experience or your individual, personal perspective when you deliberate.

But changing the decision this way gives an unsatisfying answer to the question of how you should make these deeply personal, centrally important, life-changing decisions. For after all, your decision concerns your personal future, and so an essential part of your decision is based on what it would be like for you to have the experience and to live the life you bring about for yourself. You naturally and intuitively want to make your life choices by thinking about what you care about and what your future experience will be like if you decide to undergo the experience. This is why you are expected to weigh evidence from your own personal perspective and decide how you want to apply it to your own situation.<sup>15</sup>

In another discussion, Paul gives the example of Sally, who decides not to have a child because of the data, and says:

For her to choose this way, ignoring her subjective preferences and relying solely on external reasons, seems bizarre. ... If Sally, in effect, turns her decision over to the experts and eliminates consideration of her personal preferences, she seems to be giving up her autonomy for the sake of rationality.<sup>16</sup>

My vampire friend interrupts me at this point.

"Wait. I can see that the relevant findings might not exist, or not be trustworthy. But is Paul saying that even if the data are good,

there's something wrong with relying on it?"

I nod.

"Then I just don't get it.<sup>17</sup> Suppose you want to sun yourself at the beach – for one last time, if you take my offer – and think the weather looks fine. But you turn on the Weather Channel and it says it will rain. You stay home, because you think the Weather Channel is pretty accurate. What's wrong with that? How did you lose any of your precious autonomy?"

This isn't a fair example, I respond. When I'm looking at the Weather Channel, I'm using external information to learn about circumstances, not how I would react to these circumstances.

"Ok, so take something very experiential, from my pre-vampire days. I've read books and spoke to people who described their LSD experiences very positively, and this got me interested and I decided to indulge. Similar positive testimony motivated me to try regular meditation. On the other hand, I've heard enough bad stories about heroin that I gave that one a pass. This all seems totally rational to me, and perfectly autonomous".

"Or take Sally. Of course, Sally might be mistaken in trusting the data. Maybe the research is done poorly – given the replication crisis, someone should be very cautious before giving too much weight to the findings from a couple of studies. Also, happiness data only matter if Sally cares about happiness and meaningfulness data only matter if she cares about meaning. If Sally's preference is to have a child, regardless of whether or not it makes her happy and regardless of whether it would add to her sense of having meaning in her life, then it would be silly for her to even look at the research".

"But let's suppose she wants to have a happy life, and has evidence that having a child doesn't make people happy, it makes them miserable, then she shouldn't have a child".

I shake my head and quote Paul again, responding to just this argument.

Suppose that Sally wants to be happy, but

that she is confident that she'll only be happy if she becomes a mother. Then she sees a lot of empirical data that having children makes people unhappy. What should she do?

Here the strategy of ignoring her own introspective evidence is a lot less straightforward. This is because the empirical data doesn't give Sally evidence that having a child would make her sad. It gives her evidence of what the average association between happiness and having a child has been for other people.<sup>18</sup>

"Hold it", my friend interrupts. "Are you saying that Sally should discount information about other people just because it isn't specific to her? Really? If you heard that Sally was suffering from a severe infection but had no plans to take antibiotics – because everything Sally knows about the efficacy of antibiotics comes from other people – you would think she was nuts. Sally is a person, after all, and so data from other people *are* relevant to her. When Sally took biology as a kid, did she say: Well, none of this stuff is relevant to *my* body, because they never studied *me*? Of course, she didn't."

"Well, the same thing is true about her experiences. Suppose Sally has her heart set on a certain beach resort, goes to a review website, and discovers that it has a one-star rating, with hundreds of reviewers describing it as the worst experience of their lives. Would Sally really conclude that these are data about the association between visiting the resort and happiness *for other people*, and hence they don't speak to what her own experience would be like?"

"I know that I'm moving away from transformative experiences here, but the same point applies even more for them. You should be *especially* sensitive to third-party data for transformative experience because your introspection and simulation can't do the trick".

Paul disagrees, I say. The inability to simulate the experience is a real problem with

transformative experience, because this sort of simulation is what *should* matter. Here's Paul on this:

So when I consider the major, irreversible, long-term and life-changing decision to have a baby, of course I should weigh what other people tell me about it, and I should also attend to what the best science says. But I also want to consider what I think it will be like for me. After all, I'm the one who will be spending the next 18 years raising my child. I want to base my decision, at least partly, on what I think it will be like to be a parent, and I want my thoughts and feelings about it to play a central role in what I decide to do. If becoming a parent is transformative, I can't rationally do that.<sup>19</sup>

"Well," says my friend, "Paul is certainly right that the important question for someone thinking of having a child is what it will be like for them, not for other people. But what if it turns out that your own introspection is a poor way of predicting your own future? What if it turns out that data from other people who have had the experience are actually more informative about what it would be like for you?"

"Well, crack a psychology textbook, buddy, because that's exactly what the situation seems to be. Our introspection about what makes us happy is famously flawed.<sup>20</sup> Just as one standard example, people tend to overvalue the hedonic effects of big houses and fancy cars and undervalue the pleasures of new experiences and new people.

But there is a better way, summed up by Dan Gilbert: When trying to figure out what makes you happier, don't trust your gut; check out the data. See what the experience is like for others. He quotes the 17th century writer François de La Rochefoucauld: 'Before we set our hearts too much upon anything, let us first examine how happy those are who already possess it'<sup>21</sup>.

I start to respond, but she is restless and

nods towards the door.

### III

I pay for my beer and then we walk, my vampire friend and I, towards a night market. She wears a dark cloak, and glides through the crowds like a wraith. The humidity doesn't bother her; she never sweats.

And then we find ourselves in front of a durian stand.

"Are you hungry?", she asks. Of course, she herself would not and could not indulge.

Well, I've never had durian, I explain. If it were pineapple, then it would be easy. I know what pineapple tastes like. I can simulate it. But to eat a durian would be ...

"A transformative experience," she sighs.

Yes, exactly! An epistemological one. And so there no rational way to decide.

"Wait," she says. "Just wait. I accept your point about vampires, your moral concerns." She doesn't hide her disdain. "But what the hell is the problem with durian? If you want to know how it tastes, just ask someone. Have you never tried a new food?"

Well, there's a special problem with durian. There's no consensus here. I point her to a website on the topic.<sup>22</sup> One 17<sup>th</sup> century missionary wrote, "The flesh is as white as snow, exceeds in delicacy of taste of all our best European fruits, and none of ours can approach it." Good, eh? Others, though, have described it as a tasting of "used surgical swabs" and "a bunch of dead cats". Ugh. So it's a tough choice.

I think for a while, and then walk to another stand and buy a Snickers bar.

"You're risk averse," she notes. "Not your best feature."

We walk.

She starts again: "I think you fetishize simulation."

"Imagine a long-married couple at a favorite restaurant staring at their menus. The man says he's going to order the Porterhouse steak. And his wife sighs, says he always orders the Porterhouse, never likes it, com-

plains that they always overcook it, and ends up eating half of her salmon, which he finds delicious. The man remembers none of this; he just has a real hankering for steak; it seems like just the thing when he's hungry. His wife tells him that he always says that. He concluded that he's sometimes wrong, he has a poor memory for the taste of food, and often his wife knows him better than he does. He orders the salmon. And he loves it."

"What's so weird about this? What did he lose?"

That's a small choice, I say quietly. Autonomy isn't such a big deal for small choices. But let's go back to what Laurie Paul said about Sally and how deferring to others for a choice like whether or not to have a child is "giving up her autonomy for the sake of rationality". This makes sense to me.<sup>23</sup> Sometimes we want to be authentic and autonomous beings, and for this, choice is important.

Here's an example from the philosopher Kieran Setiya.<sup>24</sup> Suppose you have a choice between A, B, and C, and you prefer A to B and B to C. Now imagine that you also value having a choice. This might put you in the position of preferring the opportunity to choose between B and C to simply getting A, even though you know that A is better than either alternative. Now, to be fair, Setiya thinks this is absurd. But I'm not so sure.

"We're not talking about choice here," she snaps. "We're talking about *data*. The man in the restaurant can still choose. Sally can still choose. They have their precious autonomy. The question is what they base their choice on. Their unreliable gut feelings? Or something that's actually reliable?"

I tell her that there is something wrong about going against your gut feelings.

Now she's really annoyed: "Sally is like someone who thinks homosexuality is wrong, and when you ask her to defend her view, she says it just feels wrong; gay people disgust her. And when you press her, she says: well, you have to respect my heartfelt feelings on this matter. They're *authentic*, she tells you. She's like someone who won't go on planes

because she worries that they will crash, and when you tell her that it's safer to fly than to drive, she tells you she doesn't care about statistics, she prefers to listen to her heart. And we're supposed to respect that?"

She glares at me: "Would you rather feel good about the dumb-ass way you make decisions? Or would you actually *make good decisions?*"

We walk some more, not speaking, cutting through a secluded alley, and I start to feel anxious about how this night will end.

"I won't transform you against your will, you know", she says, and I remember that one of the powers that vampires are said to have is telepathy.

"Though," she adds, "If I did, you would *thank* me for it later." And she looks at my face, and then laughs and punches me in the arm. "Kidding", she says.

#### IV

You know, I tell her, I really have been thinking of her offer. Maybe I've been looking at things the wrong way.

I tell her about another example by Setiya.<sup>25</sup> It's based on a scenario by Derek Parfit, but he takes it in a different direction. Setiya asks you to imagine that if you and your partner were to conceive a child during a certain period, the child would have some serious problem, such as chronic joint pain, say. If you just wait a week, the child will grow up to be fine.

But for whatever reason, you choose not to wait, and now you have a son. And he grows up and, though he suffers, he is happy to be alive. And like a lot of parents, you love him and he grows to be adult and you're thrilled that you decided to have him.

Do you regret your decision? Well, yes, in a sense. You're no dummy. You have to concede that, on average, it's better to have a child without this condition, better for him and better for you. But then again, if you waited, you'd have a different child. The person you love wouldn't exist. So it's hard to see

your decision as a mistake.

"That sounds like a paradox," she says slowly. "You're in a situation where the decision you made turns out to be the best one, even though, when you look at another way, you concede it's the worst one."

It's a problem for decision theory, I agree. The standard model is that you make decisions by assessing the options and choosing the best one. But it turns out that an option can change its value by the act of choosing it. It's not just whether or not to have children; it shows up for all sorts of significant choices.<sup>26</sup>

"I guess this is reassuring," she says. "Even if things turn out badly, in some objective sense, so that you would have been happier if you didn't choose to have a certain experience, you might still think you did the right thing. And my bet is that the same compensatory mechanisms of satisfaction don't apply if you just do nothing. You justify your actions, not your failures to act."

She concludes, "And this is a good argument for saying yes to transformative experiences. Even if they're wrong, they can turn out right."

I nod. There's a recent study done by Steven Levitt, I tell her, that's very interesting.<sup>27</sup> It was done on a website. People who visited the site were asked to think about something really important that they were on the fence about, and then they got to flip a virtual coin. If it was heads, people were instructed to go ahead and make the change; if it was tails, they didn't. And some of these changes were big. Deciding to open a business, quit their job, break up with their partner. Who knows, maybe some of these choices involved transformative experiences.

The website was left open for a year, and there were more than 20,000 coin flips. After the flip, for each person, there were two email follow-ups, one two months after the flip, the other six months after the flip. And they found that those who made a major change were more likely to report being happier two months later, and even happier six



months later. There was no such effect for the small decisions.

Now I find this really interesting but if this was it, it wouldn't show that making a choice actually had a positive effect. After all, the sort of person who is on the fence about getting divorced and then gets divorced might be more divorce-inclined than the sort of person who is on the fence about getting divorced and then decides not to. And the divorce-inclined might be happier post-divorce than the less divorce-inclined.

But cool thing is that Levitt also found that the flip mattered: Those who got heads were both more likely to make the change and reported greater happiness in their future than those who got tails.

And this suggests, I concluded, that when you're wondering about whether to make a big change in your life and you're on the fence, you are better off saying yes.

She smiles. "So," she asks me for the last time, "Want to become a vampire?"

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See L.A. PAUL, *Transformative Experience*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014.

<sup>2</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ivi*, p. 2

<sup>4</sup> *Ivi*, p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> See C. STARMANS, P. BLOOM, *Nothing Personal: What Psychologists Get Wrong About Identity*, in: «Trends in Cognitive Science», vol. XXII, n. 7, 2018, pp. 566-568; C. STARMANS, P. BLOOM, *If You Become Evil, Do You Die?*, in: «Trends in Cognitive Sciences», XXII, n. 9, 2018, pp. 740-741.

<sup>6</sup> For an interesting discussion of prioritizing past, present, and future preferences, see M. SULLIVAN, *Time Biases: A Theory of Rational Planning and Personal Persistence*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2018.

<sup>7</sup> See D. KAHNEMAN, A.B. KRUEGER, D.A. SCHKADE, N. SCHWARZ, A.A. STONE, *A Survey Method for Characterizing Daily Life Experience: The Day Reconstruction Method*, in: «Science», vol. CCCVI, n. 5702, 2004, pp.1776-1780.

<sup>8</sup> See R.E. LUCAS, A.E. CLARK, Y. GEORGELLIS, E. DIENER, *Reexamining Adaptation and the Set Point Model of Happiness: Reactions to Changes in Marital*

*Status*, in: «Journal of Personality and Social Psychology», vol. LXXXIV, n. 3, 2003, pp. 527-539; M. LUHMANN, W. HOFMANN, M. EID, R.E. LUCAS, *Subjective Well-being and Adaptation to Life Events: A Meta-analysis*, in: «Journal of Personality and Social Psychology», vol. CII, n. 3, 2012, p. 592-615.

<sup>9</sup> See J.M., TWENGE, W.K. CAMPBELL, C.A. FOSTER, *Parenthood and Marital Satisfaction: A Meta-analytic Review*, in: «Journal of Marriage and Family», vol. LXV, n. 3, 2003, pp. 574-583.

<sup>10</sup> See J. SENIOR, *All Joy and No Fun: The Paradox of Modern Parenthood*, Hachette, London 2014.

<sup>11</sup> See S.K. NELSON, K. KUSHLEV, T. ENGLISH, E.W. DUNN, S. LYUBOMIRSKY, *In Defense of Parenthood: Children are Associated With More Joy than Misery*, in: «Psychological Science», vol. XXIV, n. 1, 2013, pp. 3-10.

<sup>12</sup> See J. GLASS, R.W. SIMON, M.A. ANDERSSON, *Parenthood and Happiness: Effects of Work-family Reconciliation Policies in 22 OECD Countries*, in: «American Journal of Sociology», vol. CXXII, n. 3, 2016, pp. 886-929.

<sup>13</sup> See S.K. NELSON, K. KUSHLEV, T. ENGLISH, E.W. DUNN, S. LYUBOMIRSKY, *In Defense of Parenthood*, cit.

<sup>14</sup> See R.F. BAUMEISTER, K.D. VOHS, J.L. AAKER, E.N. GARBINSKY, *Some Key Differences Between a Happy Life and a Meaningful Life*, in: «The Journal of Positive Psychology», vol. VIII, n. 6, 2013, pp. 505-516.

<sup>15</sup> L.A. PAUL, *Transformative Experience*, cit., p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> L.A. PAUL, P. BLOOM, *How Should We Make the Most Important Decisions of Our Lives? A Philosophical Debate*, in: «Slate. A Team of Superpowered Misfit», 2015, 5<sup>th</sup> March – available at the URL: <<https://slate.com/culture/2015/03/transformat-ive-experience-by-l-a-paul-in-conversation-with-paul-bloom.html>>.

<sup>17</sup> The discussion that follows in this section is modified from my discussion with Laurie A. Paul in L.A. PAUL, P. BLOOM, *How Should We Make the Most Important Decisions of Our Lives? A Philosophical Debate*, cit.

<sup>18</sup> *Ivi*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ivi*.

<sup>20</sup> See D. GILBERT, *Stumbling on Happiness*, Vintage, Toronto 2009.

<sup>21</sup> *Ivi*.

<sup>22</sup> <http://mentalfloss.com/article/565968/attempts-describe-taste-durian-worlds-smelliest-fruit>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/annals-of-inquiry/perverse-incentives>

<sup>24</sup> See K. SETIYA, *Midlife: A Philosophical Guide*,

Princeton University Press, Princeton 2017.

<sup>25</sup> *Ivi.*

<sup>26</sup> For other examples, see L.C. EGAN, L.R. SANTOS, P. BLOOM, *The Origins of Cognitive Dissonance: Evidence from Children and Monkeys*, in: «Psychologi-

cal Science», vol. XVIII, n. 11, 2007, pp. 978-983.

<sup>27</sup> See S.D. LEVITT, *Heads or Tails: The Impact of a Coin Toss on Major Life Decisions and Subsequent Happiness*, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2016, No. w22487.