

**Jean-Pierre Dupuy:  
Rationality and Self-Deception**

§ [Case Studies]

1. the club membership example – sunk cost
2. the TV example – sunk cost
3. smoking and the lethal gene example
4. the divine decree problem
5. the case of Peter and Mary
6. the toxin puzzle

**Q:** Is imitating others a rational thing to do?

**Q:** Can we ever change the past? In what way?

§ Terminology

[Allais's Principle]

\_\_\_ When it comes to rationality, the fundamental maxim is: *only the future matters.*

[Sunk Cost]

\_\_\_ In principle, rationality requires that I not take into account the cost of the investment when I make this choice. This expense is a sunk cost, it will always belong to the past and “only the future matters.”

[The Golden Rule of Rational Choice]:

\_\_\_ Always act so that you maximize your mathematical expected utility.

[Backward Induction]

\_\_\_ Backwards induction consists in first solving the last step of the problem, the one which, by hypothesis, has no future implications. Then, sticking to the solution thus determined, a decision is made on the next-to-last step, which at this point in the reasoning has no *undermined* future. Working backwards in time, step by step, the complete solution is in principle reached.

[the Temporality of History]:

\_\_\_ the principle of the fixity of the past

[the Temporality of Projected Time]:

\_\_\_ *C* is the *inscription* in the past of the agent's future free action ("future contingent"). Everything is already "written." The agent acts according to a previously prepared scenario, but because she is free, she can raise herself to the level at which this scenario is written and exercise a kind of *counterfactual power* over it.

[Rational Path]:

\_\_\_ any path in a decision tree that satisfies the two following conditions:

- a) It is temporally consistent.
- b) It is compatible with the assumption of rational expectation.

[Causal Rationality]:

\_\_\_ The rational principle proposed by the orthodox view.

[Evidential Rationality]:

\_\_\_ The rational principle proposed by the evidentialist.

## § Two Competing Theories

### <Smoking and Lethal Gene>:

[The Orthodox View] ⇒ the Causal Decision Theory

[The Heterodox View] ⇒ Evidentialism

### <Divine Decree and Salvation>:

[The Orthodox View] ⇒ Fatalism

[The Heterodox View] ⇒ The Calvinist Doctrine

### < Peter and Mary: Rational Path>:

\_\_\_ There are two candidates to the status of rational path: (Peter, D), and (Peter, C; Mary, C).

[The Orthodox View] ⇒ (Peter, D)

[The Heterodox View] ⇒ (Peter, C; Mary, C).

### <The toxin example>

[The Orthodox View] ⇒ no reason to drink the poison

[The Heterodox View]  $\Rightarrow$  drink the poison

### § Dupuy's View

**Dupuy:**

\_\_\_ My thesis is that there are two forms of rationality that are irreducible to one another. These two types of rationality correspond to two different, though inseparable, conceptions of time – better expressed as two authentically human experiences of time.

In Dupuy's view, the Calvinists can be said to have the following two beliefs, which are not (necessarily) incompatible.

- (1) The Calvinists believe that they did not place themselves among the elect because they believe God chose them;
- (2) The Calvinists believe that they were free to choose  $x$  or Not- $x$  when they chose  $x$ .

**Q:** What is the significance of free will in the theory of rationality?

[The Case of Peter and Mary]

\_\_\_ To show: that reciprocal exchange is both rational and possible.

1. the issue of promise
2. the issue of trust
3. Pre-commitment

The four plans for Mary:

- Plan 1: intends to reciprocate; defects;
- Plan 2: intends to reciprocate; reciprocates;
- Plan 3: intends to defect; defects;
- Plan 4: intends to defect; reciprocates

Suppose that Mary's intention before the game begins is transparent. Which plan is the best one for her?

Dupuy: The Projected Time Solution (Plan 2)

(Peter,  $C$  at  $t_1$ )  $\Rightarrow$  (Mary,  $C$  at  $t_2$ )

[the fact that Peter cooperates at  $t_1$  is the "writing" in the past of the future fact ("future contingent"): Mary will cooperate at  $t_2$ .

**This is the option that allows counterfactual questions regarding the rationality of choices to be reduced to factual question concerning the rational path.**

§ [The toxin example]

**Dupuy: A Kantian Promise**

**\_\_\_ the ability to limit one's individuality by giving oneself a transcendent, fixed law or rule, and following it.**

**Dupuy's Solution:**

**There is a way out for he who considers that, he has the right to the million only if he pays what seems to him to be the price: the discomfort caused by ingesting the toxin. A world in which he does not drink the toxin at noon is a world in which there is no possibility he will have received the million.... This is his reasoning when his intentions are detected, thus *before* he knows if he has passed the test. Since now he has good reason to drink, he is able to form the intention to do so, and thus pocket the million.**