

As to the Term "Hedonic Calculus" or the "Calculus of Advantage"

Post by "Martin" of February 28, 2022 at 10:59 AM

I keep using the term "hedonic calculus" because I do not know a better currently used term although I fully agree with Godfrey's comment #6.

The listed considerations in other comments of this thread are all useful. My description is meant to complement them:

We use our knowledge and experience to estimate whether it is likely that the considered action produces the desired outcome and that this outcome actually produces the expected pleasure. A severely adverse outcome needs to be expected to be very unlikely to take the risk.

We consider this for all feasible options we would consider and choose the one which appears to be the most efficient or which we simply like the most among several good options.

We should not worry too much about actually hitting the maximum pleasure. It is enough if the result provides considerable net pleasure which is worth the pain in preparations or consequences.

Here are some examples:

I occasionally go for a zipline adventure because before the first time I knew from other experiences that viewing nature from an elevated but close perspective and gravitational and inertial sliding are pleasurable, and I have only moderate fear of height, and I know from the first time that a zipline flight is indeed extremely pleasurable and because I expect the probability of a serious accident to be very low based on that I read about only 2 serious accidents (one high impact with bone fractures under circumstances which do not apply to me, one fatal impact which could have been mitigated by appropriate action of the victim, no falls from snapped lines or harness failures so far) and because the way the lines, break systems, harnesses and procedures are set up appears to be safe.

Already as a kid, I felt great pleasure from knowing stuff and noticed that learning was mostly pleasure but manual work was mostly unpleasant. I figured out that a university degree would facilitate finding a job which I mostly enjoy and which would pay enough to get me out of the somewhat adverse working-class environment in which I grew up. So I put in a lot of effort in studying the subjects which I liked the most to a high degree for maximum choice although the long study would keep me poor for an extended period.

A case where math can actually contribute to the hedonic calculus is the consideration to buy a car: The total cost of acceptable alternatives for my transport needs is much lower than cost of

ownership of a car. Other reasons against a car are the displeasure about its carbon foot print, feeling guilty if I cause an accident, the risk of injury from an accident, the worry about deterioration, theft and sabotage. For me, the greater flexibility in transport and the maybe only imagined facilitation of getting a girl-friend do not weigh up all these disadvantages. Therefore, I never owned a car and currently, I have no plan to ever buy one. Only unexpected changes in circumstances might change that.

I chose based on hedonic calculus to have no fridge, no TV, no washing-machine, no dish washer and no other expensive status symbols in the apartments where I stay alone. However, I am not a minimalist because my rooms are full of stuff which I bought or collected mostly for pleasure.