

Does Happiness Require a Non-Epicurean Decision Procedure?

Post by “Godfrey” of January 10, 2019 at 10:17 PM

Elon Musk is a great example of how the hedonic calculus might work. It seems to me to be a process, a continuous feedback loop. As a person is considering embarking on a project, they consider the eventual fulfilment/happiness that they may obtain through working on and completing the project. For any project there is a relationship between ambition (or perhaps altruism) and happiness: something along the lines of "wouldn't it be *awesome* if I could put man on Mars?!" Or for another person "I'd really be happy if I could get out of bed and walk on the beach!" At this point there is a particular amount of data with which to perform a hedonic calculus, depending on the person's situation.

Once the project is started, the continual (as opposed to continuous?) feedback loop begins. How much hard work will bring the person happiness? Maybe more or less than they thought, so they make an adjustment. Maybe the plan is to sacrifice short term happiness for long term happiness. As more data accumulates, more decisions can be made. And so on.

If we were blessed with infallible reason we wouldn't need this process. But we use our reason to evaluate the data we acquire through the Canon. Then we act on that and discover where our reasoning, or the data, was incorrect. Then we adjust and carry on.

The beauty of this, to me, is that this is simply how life works. With EP, we're conscious of that and work with it. We're not trying to force our lives, and those of others, into a mental construct.