

Hedonism and the experience machine philosophy essay



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Hedonism is the philosophy that actions are done solely to produce the greatest amount of pleasure, while trying to avoid pain at all costs. There are some who follow the idea of hedonism, but there are many who reject it. Robert Nozick objects hedonism, and uses the example of an experience machine to support his thought. Briefly, the experience machine is a made up idea that a hedonist would abide by, but a regular person would see the downfalls of only having pleasure. A hedonist is one who is in pursuit of only pleasure, and nothing else. They try and avoid pain, or any unenjoyable actions, or consequences and they feel that pleasure is the one and only intrinsic good. I feel that Nozick's experience machine is a valid objection to hedonism, because pleasure can not be the only thing some one needs in their life.

In Robert Nozick's objection to hedonism, he creates an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. You are connected to a machine from your brain so that you would think only your most pleased thoughts, such as living on an island with an unlimited amount of money, or driving that dream car you always desired. One is able to experience his most admired pleasures on how they "feel from the inside." These would only be thoughts, because in reality you are still stuck to a machine. The question is if you should plug into this machine for life by preprogramming your life experiences? Many people think it will be foolish to plug in, because there's more to life than just pleasure, but a hedonist would want to plug into the machine. Most people desire things other than merely pleasure. People may want to try out this machine for a little bit, but they wouldn't want to stay in it forever. By plugging into this machine, we frustrate some of our

desires. If you want to plug into the machine, this means that pleasure is the only thing that you desire, and if you don't want to plug in to the experience machine, then there other things besides pleasure that matter to you. We have local desires, global desires, and objective desires that all need to be fulfilled, which is why most people would choose not to live in the experience machine forever.

There are a few objections to Nozick's theory. I feel the most interesting and believable one is that people who are against plugging in to the experience machine usually have a second desire after completing a pleasurable task. For example, if one of my desires is to paint a famous painting that people will admire, I will have the desire of the feeling of creating the painting, and I would have a second desire knowing I have painted an incredible painting. Combined, both of these desires are required for painting a great picture and it bringing in the most pleasure. Not all preferences have a twofold desire, but most important ones such as relationships or friendships do. We would not want to plug in to the machine because we believe that the second desires will not be satisfied by plugging in.

If the opportunity arises that we have the option to plug into the machine, the experience machine would allow us to fulfill a very pleasurable act such as paint a famous painting. If it allows me to fulfill one of my greatest pleasures, I would be willing to plug in for sure. if we were mistaken and believed that our second desire will be fulfilled, then we would also plug in to the machine. But Nozick's argument states that at the exact moment of deciding whether to plug in or not, we know that our cravings are going to be subjectively satisfied.

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The problem in this case is that you are not asking me if I want to plug in to the machine while I am connected, you are asking me if I want to plug in before I plug in. Since I haven't plugged into the experience machine yet, I now come to believe that the machine will not gratify my second desire. Therefore, the disappointing thought of my second desire not being fulfilled will significantly reduce the value of any experience, so I would refuse to plug into the Machine.

Nozick could argue back that once you are connected to the experience machine, you will firmly believe that your desires will all be satisfied. It would be a very small time frame of you being frustrated because of your second desire, just until you plug in, compared with a whole life of complete satisfaction of this desire.

I agree with Nozick and his experience machine theory. The objection makes sense, because if you are frustrated that your second desire may not be fulfilled before you are connected to the machine, then you will be unsatisfied. I agree that the small time frame of you being frustrated shouldn't account for the life long pleasure in the experience machine. I am definitely not a hedonist; because I feel that pleasure should not be our only motive for our actions. There is a lot more to life than pleasure. We need to experience all kinds of feelings in order to be defined as a human being. Nozick rejects hedonism, and his claim is that there is more to faring well than simply how our lives feel from the inside.