

Robert nozick's experience machine

[Experience](#)



Good experiences are something that we spend our life constantly striving to obtain. Once we gain these good experiences, we look for the next opportunity in order to gain that same great feeling that we had in our last experience. What if someone told you that there was a way to have these good experiences all the time? You could quite literally plug yourself into a machine that would give you the great experiences that you have been searching for your whole life. The best part is that, once you have decided to plug yourself into this machine, you would feel and think that these false experiences you are having are real.

Robert Nozick proposes this very scenario in his book *Anarchy State, and Utopia*. This scenario is known as "the experience machine". (Nozick 1974, 165) Sounds great, doesn't it? I would beg to differ. Is pleasure really the only thing that we spend our life searching for? I would argue that there are far many other important values other than pure pleasure; that is why I would not plug into the experience machine. While Nozick's scenario may seem very tempting, there are several key elements to consider before making a decision to enter this experience machine.

Does entering this experience machine correspond with one's set of values? I would say that there are far more important things than just pleasure. It is fair to say that actually doing certain things, and not just simply having the experience of them is a good core value. We want to actually in our real world accomplish our own goals. Attaining these goals are what many people live their lives for. Aristotle claims, "Man is a goal seeking animal. His life only has meaning if he is reaching out and striving for his goals. (Aristotle, 163) Perhaps this is what we desire; to live our lives striving to achieve our

goals. Whether all of our experiences are 100% pleasurable does not matter. As long as we know that we are actually living our own lives. Clearly, there is opposition to my argument. The opposing party may say something like, "What's the value in the capacity to freely make decisions or the ability to be in the real world if neither of these things allows us to feel good?" (Perry, 166) That is a fair question and one that Peter Unger cleverly answers.

Unger mentions the tendency for us to buy life insurance as a claim that good experiences are not the only thing that matter to us. We do not get good experiences for paying our life insurance. In fact, we will never experience anything that happens to this money. We do this so that our dependents will benefit from this money. With all this said, we are still very rational in buying this life insurance. (Unger 1990, 166) Therefore, we should value our capacity to make free decisions in the real world over just having good experiences.

The life insurance example, that Unger mentions, is a perfect example as to why there are things that matter to us besides pleasure. Nozick sums this up by saying, "Perhaps what we desire is to live as ourselves, in contact with reality." (Nozick? 2010, 1) One can interpret Nozick's statement by his insinuation that gaining pure pleasurable experiences are not as valuable as knowing that we are living in contact with reality. We should cherish and desire our lives in our realistic world; false pleasure experiences have no real value.

In our lives, we want to be certain people—to plug in to an experience machine is to commit a form of suicide. (Nozick? 2010, 1) Plugging into an

experience in order for you to merely experience false happenings would be lying to yourself that this gaining false pleasure is actually being experienced. In the real world, we can actually mold ourselves into the person that we want to become through our real experiences. There is a certain value in actually accomplishing a goal that has been set for yourself. We have free will, unlike in the experience machine.

This free will allows us live in contact with reality and gain real life experiences by our choosing. This in turn, allows us to become the person that we want to be. Robert Nozick's experience machine can be extremely tempting when taken at face value. It offers us false pleasure experiences that could possibly entice and excite many to consider plugging into this machine. However, we must not forget that having false good experiences is not worth throwing away a reality rich world—a world in which we have the free will to decide who we will become as a real person. One must never forget this value. This is a complicated matter but Nozick puts it well by saying, " We learn that something matters to us in addition to experience by imagining an experience machine and then realizing that we would not use it. " (Nozick 1974, 165) When pondering this concept longer, we realize that we actually want to do certain things and not just have the false experience of having done them. (Nozick ? 2010, 1) We come to realize that this experience machine, while being tempting, does not correspond with our values and desires. Losing our free will and all contact with reality is not more tempting than being the authors of our own lives.

Reference List (Works Cited) 1.)Nozick, Robert. 1974. Anarchy, State, and Utopia. (cited in Introduction to Philosophy Fifth Edition. John Perry, Michael <https://assignbuster.com/robert-nozicks-experience-machine/>

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