Plugging into the 'experience machine'

Would you be happy if you were plugged into the ' Experience Machine'?

If chosen to plug into the experience machine, we can strongly agree that the agent is choosing for hedonic illusion in order to achieve happiness. As hedonist would say the simulation of pleasure is qualitatively the same as real experiences of pleasure. I will discuss the two main factors which conclude that one would not be happy when plugged into the Experience Machine. According to Haybron, hedonism is not a sufficient condition to achieve happiness and the life satisfaction theory is absent when one is the Experience Machine.

First, we need to identify what happiness is. Taken by Daniel M. Haybron, *Happiness A Very Short Introduction* , he identifies three basic theories about happiness. Emotional state theory: ' happiness as a positive emotional condition,' Hedonism: ' happiness as pleasure' and Life satisfaction theory: ' happiness as being satisfied with your life.' Both emotional state theory and hedonism identify happiness in terms of feelings, while the life satisfaction theory identifies happiness in terms of judgments about one's life. To be satisfied with one's life is to regard it as going well by one's standard. By considering all things together, one sees its life as having enough of the things one care about. Thus, life satisfaction is the overall evaluation of one's life. Haybron mentions that life satisfaction should not be taken together with pleasure. The focus of life satisfaction which Haybron describes is not about a question of pleasure as people care about other things besides their own pleasure, but to track people's value. An example can be given by a high achieving artist or scientist who might be satisfied with their life even it is not terribly pleasant, she is getting what she cares about.

Haybron categorized three terms to describe happiness under life satisfaction theory. Endorsement: " feeling happy and other classic emotions." This is an emotional state which signifies one's life as good. Engagement: " vitality and flow." This term concerns the engagement with one's life in the form of energetic, interested, and engaged. However, this can occur even when events are not going well, as an example: when struggling to accomplish a difficult goal. There are two types of engagement. The first concerns on the states of energy or " vitality." An example was given by Haybron of a concentrated orchestra conductor who might be cheerful or even happy without being obviously cheerful or happy. The second concerns the notion of " flow," developed by Csikszentmihalyi. Flow is the state one experience when fully engaged in an activity, typically a challenging activity performed well. Athletes and musicians describe it as being ' in the zone'. In this state of flow, one loses the sense of self-awareness. To the individual, time tends to pass different to reality and is not aware of feeling anything at all. Yet Csikszentmihalyi describes it as a highly pleasant state, which an individual is happy. It is opposite to boredom. Attunement: " peace of mind, confidence, expansiveness." To understand this one should understand the aspect of tranquillity. It is similar to ' feeling at home,' not entirely a peace of mind but a kind confidence, and stability. In this state, one feels relaxed, living seems natural without inhibition.

One of the main arguments of Haybron is that hedonism lacks mental state, as pleasure alone cannot prove happiness because pleasure lacks causal depth. I agree on the Haybron's notion that hedonism itself does not constitute happiness. " The pleasure of happiness are not the only pleasures

to be had," (Haybron, 143) Hedonism focuses happiness on a matter of pleasure, and may have a certain kind of " deep" (Haybron, 143) pleasure, or the Epicurean pleasures of tranquillity. However, Haybron distinguishes hedonism from happiness. An important aspect of hedonism's error is that pleasure lacks what Haybron call " casual depth" (Haybron, 144) He states that " all appearances are that happiness has deep, far-reaching, and typically lasting consequences for a person's state of mind and behaviour." Thus according to Haybron, the problem with most hedonistic theories is that " they are too inclusive: all sorts of shallow, fleeting pleasures are made to count towards happiness" (Haybron, 142) … " Intuitively, the trouble seems to be that such pleasures don't reach ' deeply' enough, so to speak. They just don't get to us; they flit through consciousness and that's the end of it" (Haybron, 143). To this extent, Haybron argues that it is a mistake to equate ' hedonic states,' a states of pleasure with happiness. In the sense, hedonism leaves out too much of what we want to include in our concept of happiness. The problem with hedonism, on this view, centers on the way it relates happiness to time. One of the central questions we might ask about happiness is ' what is the time of happiness?' According to Haybron, hedonism's answer is that happiness is " an essentially episodic and backward-looking phenomenon." (Haybron, 143) While this may be true of pleasurable experiences, it is arguably not true of happiness. Arguably, happiness is not just about one's past but also one's present and one's attitude towards, and expectations of, the future. Thus happiness, to a significant extent, is future oriented. Haybron states that " Hedonism does little more than skim the phenomenal surface off of our emotional states and call it happiness. But happiness runs much deeper than that." (Haybron,

144) From this, we could say, by one experiencing the Experience Machine, one is missing the emotion and feeling of psychological state. Thus, when one enters the experience machine to search for happiness, pleasure itself would not suffice because hedonism lacks the detail to handle such cases. Additionally, Nozick provides a similar assertion that the Experience Machine limits us to human-made reality; it is no deeper than the people who programmed it. Thus, both Haybron and Nozick agrees that pleasure is neither the only value nor the highest value of achieving happiness.

When one is plugged into the Experience Machine, engagement would not occur as all challenge is absent in all activities one do because any action one does for a particular activity would only bring positive result in order to experience pleasure. It would be unreasonable to assume that in the Experience Machine, one would painfully spend the time and effort to master a skill. Rather one would avoid such challenge and instantly would obtain such skill. Thus the feeling of " flow" would not be experienced when taken the path without challenge.

Attunement cannot be met when plugged into the Experience Machine because the agent is consciously aware that he is not living the reality. The opposite of attunement, disattunment, define not about anxiety but more like " alienation." (Haybron, 23b) One's circumstances seem alien to them. Unfamiliar with the surrounding environment, realizing that only outcome is to benefit one's happiness. The world would quickly seem unreal as all feedbacks would be inconsistent with any action the agent does. An example of this peculiar experience would be like committing a crime but yet receiving a medal of such action. Thus, one would never feel " utterly at

home" (Haybron, 22b) in the experience machine. The feedback would be different from the reality even though it becomes more pleasurable, it would feel unnatural. Haybron states similar assertion: " a troubled, anxious, tense, or stressed out person does not seem to be happy, however cheerful she might be. She isn't really at home in her life." (Haybron, 23b) This itself diminishes the dimensions of happiness.

Any action one does in the Experience Machine inevitably would not matter because the programmed agents who have social relation with the one in the Experience Machine would only react to bring a positive response in favour of agent's desire. Thus any action one performs would not alter the future or have any meaning to one's goal. The important aspect of life satisfaction is that it is a judgment of one's life which is independent of one's emotional state. Life satisfaction is not about pleasure but how one's life measures to its value. These values are subjective; there is no objective measure for life satisfaction. Humans value actual experiences, character, achievements and their relationships with others, not solely on pleasure. Thus, when one is in the Experience machine, all pleasure one receive are an illusion, a false belief that one believes in experiencing the reality.

Haybron explains that hedonism fails in achieving happiness because it lacks causal depth and it is a mistake to equate the state of pleasure with happiness. The definition of life satisfaction theory demonstrates that happiness has to include other aspects such as engagement and attunement, thus, in the Experience Machine; all these deeper senses of experience are absent. One does not feel the challenge to achieve a certain goal, and all action is immaterial because the feedback is only to bring

desirable result. We could conclude that the Experience Machine is missing both emotion and psychological state and without these, one would not be happy as this structure the condition of one's well-being.

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