

Hypotheticals: Would An Epicurean Hook Himself Up To An "Experience Machine" or a "Pleasure Machine"?

Post by "Don" of December 4, 2025 at 5:18 PM

There's a little more of a twist to the original "experience machine" hypothetical that your Star Trek episode brings up.

I wouldn't necessarily see this as a straight "Would you hook up to the pleasure machine?"

I would see this as more of a question of "exiting the stage" if your life is filled with pain, which Capt. Pike's is arguably at the time of The Menagerie episode.

Pike himself decides to return to Talos IV to live "unfettered by his natural body" (as the Talossians put it). So, this is more a decision to end his current life; and, after a fashion, enter a more pleasant "afterlife" "unfettered by his natural body." This seems more of a commentary on an afterlife than a pleasure machine in many respects. The Talossian even says that "Captain Pike has his illusion..." The life he lives is not real but it can be pleasant for him. What happens to his physical body? Does it matter since it's so damaged?

An interesting take on the original hypothetical, but I'm not so sure it resolves much in the end for the everyday person living their real life. I certainly don't think it's a cut and dried argument for hooking up to the machine (which I don't think you're saying btw!).