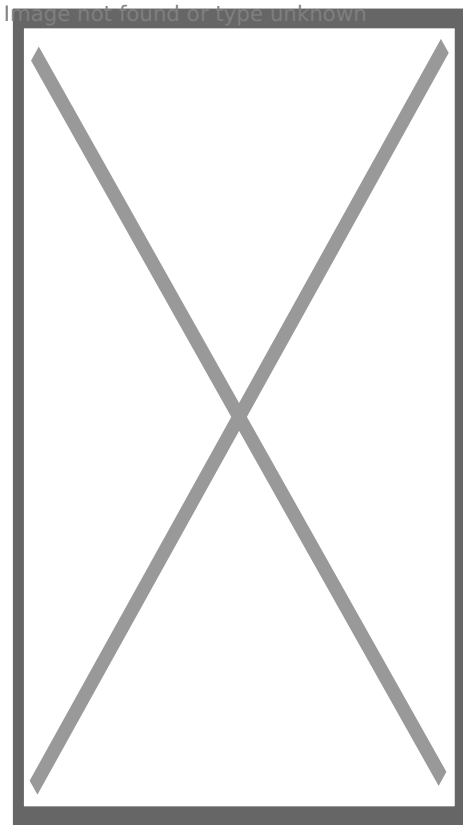


Hypotheticals: Would An Epicurean Hook Himself Up To An "Experience Machine" or a "Pleasure Machine"?

Post by "Cassius" of December 4, 2025 at 2:50 PM

As another way of revisiting the same question in this hypothetical, I recently rewatched the Star Trek original series two part episode: "The Menagerie." I would say that this story sets up the question pretty well.



[The Menagerie \(Star Trek: The Original Series\) - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Menagerie_(Star_Trek:_The_Original_Series))
en.wikipedia.org

In that episode, the Christopher Pike, the first captain of the Enterprise has been tragically injured in a radiation accident and injured to the point where he is a total invalid with a fully working mind but the with the inability to move over than to blink one for yes and two for no through light bulbs on his wheelchair. Spock kidnaps Pike and hijacks the Enterprise and takes him to a planet where the occupants have incredible powers of illusion. On that planet they have a female human (who like the [Epicurean gods](#), did not have a pattern by which to

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1494-hypotheticals-would-an-epicurean-hook-himself-up-to-an-experience-machine-or-a-p/?postID=38029#post38029>

reassemble her remains after she crash-landed on the planet) and that want Pike to be her mate. In the original pilot Pike refused to stay, but in the Menagerie he is so injured and disfigured that it becomes debatable whether he should return to the planet and live "under the illusion" of perfect health, or reject the opportunity in favor of his existing reality.

All variations of this hypothetical require that you grapple with the question of who evaluating who is running the machine, and this scenario is no different.

But for those who like Star Trek this is an interesting way to ask the question of choosing between something that is apparently an "illusion" as opposed to "reality."

The final words of the second episode are something to the effect:

"Captain Pike has his illusion and you have your reality. May your way be as pleasant."