

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

Post by "Don" of March 23, 2020 at 9:19 AM

I am so glad you started this thread! The Experience Machine argument against Epicureans has always struck me as specious, and I appreciate the opportunity for us to discuss it.

I would argue that if I was a Cyrenaic, I may indeed hook myself up to the Experience Machine. However, my perspective has always been that Epicurus calls us to experience pleasure by using our feelings of pleasure and pain to choose or reject actions based on our experience of the physical universe informed by our senses and prolepses. We exercise our free will in making those choices and rejections based on that sensory input to maximize pleasure in our lives.

The Experience Machine is merely a simulation of the universe that doesn't provide "real" pleasure or pain but merely the illusion of pleasure. If our physical body is floating in some vat of goo with wires hooked up to our brains *feeding* us sensory pleasures that the Machine is choosing for us, that doesn't strike me as true pleasure. We also don't have real friendships in this scenario. We have simulated friendships with "friends" designed by the Machine.

Ah! But then is the ability to choose and reject the highest good? Is the Faculty of Free Will to Make Choices and Rejections itself the Highest Good? I would say no, but I'm willing to entertain that that appears to be open to discussion. I counter that the very act of choosing is itself a pleasure.

I'm looking forward to reading everyone's posts!