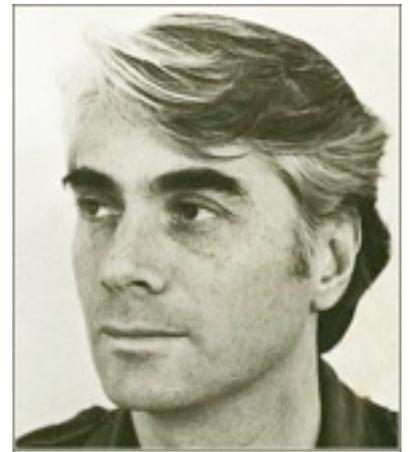


**Utilitarianism, Extract Six**  
**Robert Nozick, from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia***  
**(Blackwell, 1974)**



<http://www.liberal-vision.org/2009/10/01/robert-nozick-1938-2002-anarchy-state-and-utopia-1974/>

Suppose there were an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Superduper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain. Should you plug into this machine for life, preprogramming your life's experiences?...

What does matter to us in addition to our experiences? First, we want to do certain things, and not just have the experience of doing them. In the case of certain experiences, it is only because first we want to do the actions that we want the experiences of doing them or thinking we've done them...

A second reason for not plugging in is that we want to be a certain way, to be a certain sort of person. Someone floating in a tank is an indeterminate blob. There is no answer to the question of what a person is like who has long been in the tank. Is he courageous, kind, intelligent, witty, loving? It's not merely that it's difficult to tell; there's no way he is. Plugging into the machine is a kind of suicide...

Thirdly, plugging into an experience machine limits us to a man-made reality, to a world no deeper or more important than that which people can construct. There is no actual contact with any deeper reality, though the experience of it can be stimulated...

[http://www.sqa.org.uk/files\\_ccc/Philosophy\\_Higher\\_Valid\\_from\\_August2010.pdf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/Philosophy_Higher_Valid_from_August2010.pdf)

### **Questions**

Would you be tempted to plug into the experience machine?

Why does Nozick suggest that we shouldn't?

What do you understand by the term Ethical hedonism?

How does Nozick's example indicate that ethical Hedonism is false?



In the film *Inception* Cobb disagrees with his wife about which world to live in - the dream world they created or reality.

1. What is his justification for the decision he makes?
2. The extract from the film, and this extract from Nozick appear to suggest that happiness is more than merely experiencing pleasure. Explain why Nozick thinks this is the case.
3. Why is the 'pleasure machine' often thought of as a criticism of 'Classical' utilitarianism?

