

NOZRICK'S *THE EXPERIENCE MACHINE*

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What is Hedonism?





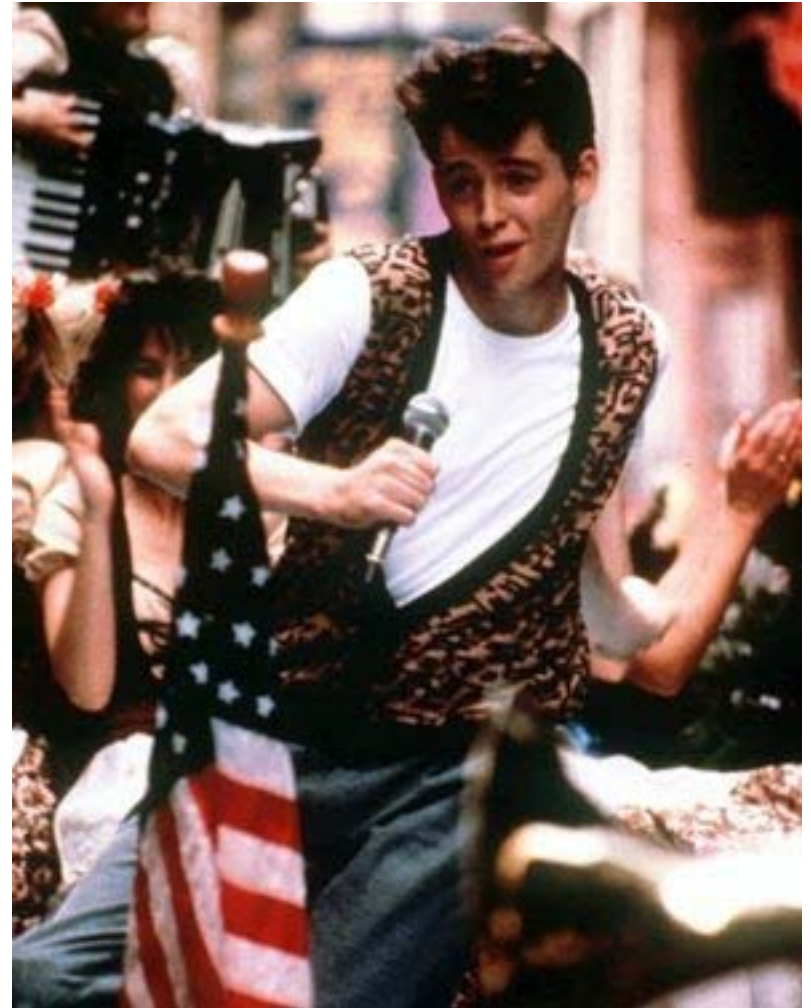
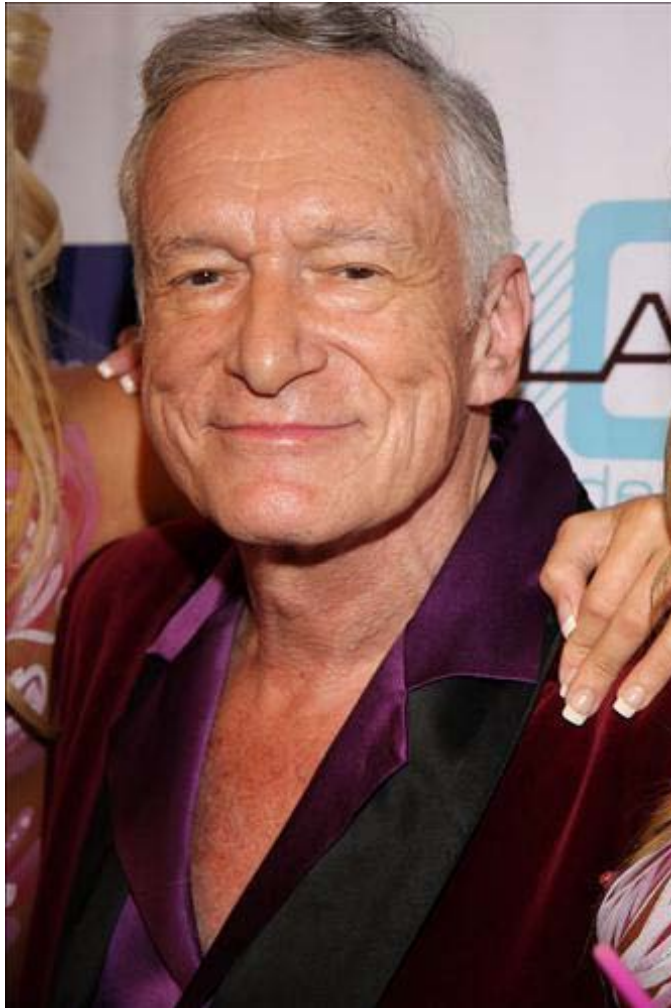
You might think...







People

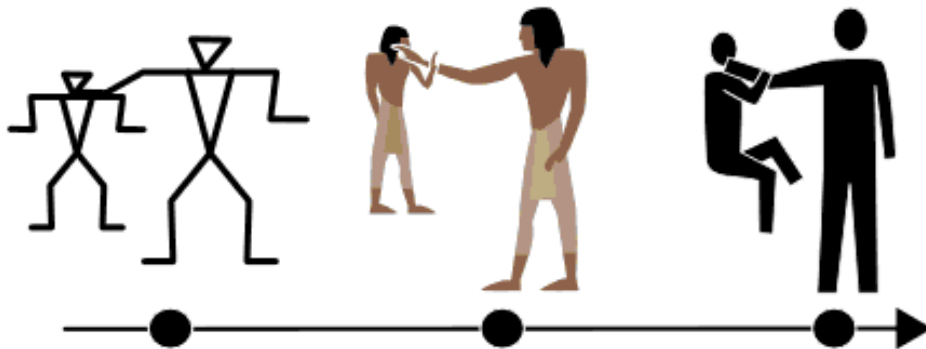


Hedonism is

Hedonism (egoistic) n. - An ethical philosophy where one's own pleasure has the highest moral value.



One of the ethical systems most likely to get its practitioners killed.



Yet, one of the most enduring ethical systems.

- A philosophy that dictates pleasure is the only intrinsic good.



Mill

- Mill says Hedonism (unlike Utilitarianism) is for the birds: “...a doctrine worthy only of swine” (Mill 141b). The standard for morality is sometimes too low some say.
- Qualitative approach: he divides up the pleasures into two schools
 - ▣ Higher pleasures = intellectual + aesthetic
 - ▣ Lesser pleasures = bodily pleasures like food, sex, drink.
- “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their side of the question...I apprehend there can be no appeal (143)”
- Standard is NOT too low if you aim high



Mill Continued

- Some pleasures are not always easy to access and are worthwhile pursuing
- If you go for the rewarding pleasures, the question of moral standards disappears
- So, he concludes, if we opt to pursue the higher pleasures, utilitarianism isn't so bad after all.

The Experience Machine



- Nozick considers the Machine
- Matrix, except you are the architect
- You plug in, deciding the next two years of experiences
- We get all the happiness we want
- Others can plug in too
- Why must we not take this?

Nozrick

- Refutes hedonism with the Machine. “Plugging into it is a kind of suicide.”
- Firstly, “we want to *do* certain things, and not just have the experience of doing them.”
- And experiences build you into someone. “we want to *be* a certain way, to be a certain sort of person. Someone floating in a tank is an indeterminate blob”
- Finally, there is no deeper reality besides one that is man-made (Nozrick 125).



Straight Argument

P1: Experiencing as much pleasure as we can is all that matters to us

P2: If we will experience more pleasure by doing x than by doing y, then we have reason to do x.

P3: We will experience more pleasure if we plug into the experience machine than if we do not plug into the experience machine.

C1: If all that matters to us is that we experience as much pleasure as we can then we have reason to plug into the experience machine.

(P1&P2, by MP)

P4: We have reason to not plug into the experience machine.

C2: Experiencing as much pleasure as we can is not all that matters to us. (C1&P4, by MT)



Nozrick Continued

- Lack of *being* can be made into a machine
- Transformation machines are equally inferior to normal life. “It seems like *cheating*.”
- “Perhaps what we desire is to live ourselves, in contact with reality. (And this machines cannot do *for us*.)”
- The real question left to answer is not right or wrong, but what are the implications of our experiences?

Nozrick's Conclusions

- If we don't want to hook ourselves up to the machine, how can pleasure be an intrinsic good?
- If when it tastes like pleasure and smells like pleasure, and we don't want it from the Machine, then there is an issue with utilitarianism
- Before we can go around talking about life with reality, we need to come to a consensus on what our experiences mean/if we can count animals.

Hedonist's Response

- Experience Machines don't exist so it shouldn't be a concern
- Our intuitions are possibly wrong. If we had a machine we might not see the issue.
- As Cypher from the Matrix says: "I know this steak doesn't exist. I know that when I put it in my mouth the Matrix is telling me it tastes juicy and delicious. After nine years you know what I realize? Ignorance is bliss."

Discussion Questions

- Is enjoying pleasure really that wrong when it is the most elemental “good” we know as humans?
- Can you really blame Ferris Beuller for believing in the pleasures of life?
- “If you don’t open your eyes once in a while, you might miss it.”



Discussion Questions

- Can you aim for one extreme like pleasure, or does the dark define the light?
- “neither pains nor pleasures are homogenous, and pain is always heterogeneous with pleasure” (Mill 143)

Discussion Questions

- Are Machines/drugs an escape?
- “Many persons desire to leave themselves open to such contact and to a plumbing of deeper significance. This clarifies the intensity of the conflict over psychoactive drugs, which some view as mere local experience machines and others view as an avenue to deeper reality” (Nozrick, 125).

Sources



Hedonism, 2004-04-20 Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Mill, J.S Utilitarianism Handout

Nozrick, The Experience Machine Handout