Thought Experiment from Robert Nozick

The Experience Machine: Would you plug yourself into a machine forever that would give you all the pleasure of action and accomplishment even though there would be no real action and no accomplishment on your part with no real difficulties overcome?

Any person who chose to do so would feel no regret because, after all is said and done, such a person could never feel regret because the person is bound up with pleasure.

However, we would not choose to do so. As Aristotle writes in the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Bk. X, ch. 3, that “no one would choose to live with the intellect of a child, however much he were to be pleased at things that please children.”

Three Consequences of Our Choice

1. One’s good and well-being is to be found in activity, not in mere pleasure. The medieval philosophers expressed this point:

“Omne ens perficitur in actu.”

“Every being undergoes development to fruition through action.”

Principle of Subsidiarity in Catholic Natural Law Political Philosophy:

If an individual can achieve her own actualization through her own efforts, then it is better that the individual do so that that others, the city, the state, and the federal government, do so.

If a city can achieve its own actualization through its own efforts, then it is better that the city do so than that others, the state, and the federal government do so.

A similar statement for the state would be made also.

1. Maintenance of Self-Identity is good. Plugging into the machine is a form of suicide since there are no real choices and no real actions that one does to constitute one’s character.

As Aristotle writes in the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Bk. IX, ch. 4: “No one chooses to possess the whole world if he has to become someone else.”

1. The Real Self of action and accomplishment is better than the mere appearance and illusion of action and accomplishment.

For example, the real action and accomplishments of Nadal and Djokovic are better than the appearance and illusion of action and accomplishment.