

### **The experience machine**

Roberta has recently constructed a machine she calls *The Experience Machine*. A person put inside the Experience Machine has experiences which are completely indistinguishable from experiences of reality, although none of the things experienced are really happened. The way the Machine is set up, the experiences the person has in the Machine are overall more positive than those the person would have had outside of the machine; for some reason the machine can't work any other way. Once someone is put inside the experience machine, it is impossible to take them out without killing them. Roberta tests the Machine out by plugging Keanu into it while Keanu is sleeping; Keanu has no idea that the machine exists. The simulated life Keanu leads inside the Machine is as long as his life would have been otherwise, but overall contains more positive experiences. In the Machine, Keanu experiences what it would be like to have close friendships, a strong relationship, and a successful career, although these are completely simulated. (based on an example from Robert Nozick)

Has Roberta harmed Keanu? Why or why not?

Has Roberta violated a right of Keanu's? Why or why not?

### **An argument about experiences and interests**

1. Some harms never manifest either in negative experiences or a diminution of positive experiences.
2. So not all harms are experienced.
3. So, it is arbitrary to claim that only experiencing subjects of a life have interests / welfare or rights.

### **Another possibility**

- i. If  $x$  does not satisfy a desire of  $A$ 's, then  $x$  is not good for  $A$ .
- ii. If there is nothing that is good for a being, then that being has no interests / welfare.
- iii. Plants have no desires.
- iv. Thus, plants have no interests / welfare.
- v. If a being has no interests / welfare, then it has no rights
- vi. Thus, plants have no rights.

**A pro-plant view**

Humans are a species of intelligent animals that lives on Earth (Sol 3). The Leilons are a species of intelligent animals that lives on Leilonia (Betelgeuse 4). Leilons always die when their children are born, although humans often live for decades after their children are born. Leilons are telepathic, and engage in a variety of interactions that non-telepaths can't even imagine; no human is telepathic or has any knowledge of telepathy.

*Claim A:* It is an important part of human welfare for human parents and children to have good relationships – it is not just instrumentally but also intrinsically valuable. Even so, this is not true for Leilons; their lives are not any less good than human lives just because parents and children never have relationships.

*Claim B:* It is an important part of Leilon welfare to develop their telepathic abilities – this is not just instrumentally but also intrinsically valuable. Even so, this is not true for humans; their lives are not any less good than those of Leilons just because they are not telepathic.

- a. To flourish is to move towards being excellent as the sort of being one is (or “towards living life that is a good life for the sort of being one is”).
- b. Plants can be better or worse as plants (or “can live better or worse plant lives”).
- c. If a being can flourish, then it has welfare / interests.
- d. Thus, plants have welfare / interests.