THE EXPERIENCE MACHINE

Stimulus:

Imagine there is a machine that you can attach to your head and it makes you have an experience of whatever you want so that it seems real. It's like having a dream which you can choose that seems like real life. When you are having the experience, however, you think it's real. The machine is called 'the experience machine'.

Task Question 1

- ✔ Imagine you are going to plug in to the experience machine for one day. Try to plan your perfect day. What would your perfect day be like?

Go around the class as they discuss this in pairs or groups and find out what sort of examples are being thought of. Do not let them all share their ideas with the class as this will take far too long but you could mention a few of the ideas anonymously. Either choose an appropriate example or use the following example and explain the following two scenarios.

Example: climbing Mount Everest

Diagram A - happening for real

Draw a diagram of a mountain with a figure climbing it

Diagram B - happening in the experience machine only

Draw a diagram of a mountain with a figure climbing it

Explain that if something like an accident happens in A then it happens for real, e.g. if you break your leg, but if an accident happens in B it hasn't happened for real even though it will feel like it has.

Task Question 2

- ✔ If your perfect day is to climb Mount Everest would you prefer to have done it for real or, safely, in the experience machine? Why?

The next stage is to offer them the opportunity to plug in to the machine for the rest of their lives. They will get exactly what they want in the experience machine but it won't be real though it will feel entirely real to them. If they do not plug in then they could try to achieve their dreams anyway but it may or may not happen in the real world.

Task Question 3

- ✔ Should they plug in to the experience machine or not? Why?

Nested questions

- ✔ Is happiness all that matters?

- ✔ Is experience all that matters?

- ✔ What is important about our achievements?

- ✔ If you think an experience is real is that enough to say that it is real?