

Both Leon and Reynolds initially exit their respective research programs at relatively the same psychological point, free from external influences. For someone with Leon's level of intelligence, choosing to care for humanity rather than pursue independent transcendence requires an act of will. It would mean resisting the temptation to dismiss ordinary humans and their concerns as beneath notice, and instead recognizing that meaning comes from relationships, emotions, and ethical commitments, not just from absolute knowledge. Their choices can be summarized in this statement: "He [Reynolds] considers intelligence to be a means, while I [Leon] view it as an end in itself." As Leon's cognitive abilities grow, he increasingly sees people as predictable, lesser beings, no longer meaningful individuals. This detachment drives him to focus solely on intellectual pursuits rather than engaging with the world. In contrast, Reynolds remains involved with human society, understanding that intelligence must be applied ethically to create value. Reynolds understands that genuine progress stems from collaboration and ethical responsibility, whereas Leon views detachment as strength. Leon's growing isolation, centered on an egocentric mindset, ultimately leads to his downfall. Early encounters with the CIA, where Leon first experiences a bitter taste of societal forces, reinforce his disdain for the world. He reflects, "This little episode has reinforced my opinion of the affairs of the world; I could detect clandestine ploys everywhere..."

A utilitarian who seeks to maximize and reduce suffering would support Reynolds' choice, as his intelligence is applied in a way that benefits society. By engaging with human institutions and strategically guiding outcomes, Reynolds aligns with the utilitarian principle of maximizing well-being. He plans to use his intelligence for the benefit of all, focusing on technologies like sustainable fusion and toxic waste disposal rather than risky, high-stakes

projects like mind-computer links. This demonstrates Reynolds' awareness of potential harm and his commitment to minimizing risks through the ethical application of knowledge.

During their final confrontation, Reynolds proves to be the superior strategist. While Leon treats the battle as a competition to establish intellectual superiority, Reynolds recognizes the importance of controlling the outcome for the greater good. By defeating Leon, Reynolds prevents a dangerously detached superintelligence from growing unchecked, a choice a utilitarian sees as morally justified, "I make no claims of being a saint." It isn't just about their intelligence; it's about using wisdom to navigate their conflict's social and psychological aspect. Unlike Leon, who relies on brute intellectual force, Reynolds uses his intelligence strategically, understanding that people and their social structures are not obstacles to be ignored but elements to be engaged with. For example, when Reynolds manipulates the grocery store boy's psychedelic shirt, he demonstrates his ability to influence the world subtly and effectively. This further reinforces the idea that knowledge, for its own sake, is meaningless without ethical application.

In the end, Reynolds never resorted to violence; instead, he defeated Leon with his thoughts. This aligns with the utilitarian principle of minimizing harm, proving that intelligence can and should be applied for the collective good, not for self-serving purposes.