

Might a metaphysical Platonic realm entail equality of experience?

Tariq Khan
Omaha, NE USA

A short speculative essay postulating that a separate Platonic world does exist and that it may contain every conscious experience. Mankind's historical progression from equality of rights to equality of opportunity, and eventual attempts at equality of wealth or property, are used to imply a trend toward an eventual final dream or destination of an equality of experience. Literary, scientific, historical, and logical examples are used to support the idea. The future of the exponential growth of A.I. is also considered in this framework.

*"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."
-- William Shakespeare, Hamlet, 1.5. 165–66 (1)*

*"This much is known: For every rational line or forthright statement there are leagues of senseless cacophony, verbal nonsense, and incoherency... Thus my life is a flight and I lose everything and everything belongs to oblivion, or to him, as to a persisting adversary. ... The secret lies in the search, but there is also an art, an art which, over the centuries, has been perfected but which, unlike painting, never reaches its end. ... Everything is determined by the burden of a sleep that is perhaps infinite. ... We are like those famous sculptors or architects of infinity: whatever their professional concerns, whatever their other commitments, they cannot stop dreaming of the halls."
-- Jorge Luis Borges, The Library of Babel (2)*

*"Yet even so there is but one world and everything that is imaginable is necessary to it. For this world also which seems to us a thing of stone and flower and blood is not a thing at all but a tale. And all in it is a tale and each tale the sum of all lesser tales and yet they are the selfsame tale and contain as well all else within them. So everything is necessary. Every least thing. ... Nothing can be dispensed with. Nothing despised. Because the seams are hid from us, you see.... And those seams that are hid from us are of course in the tale itself and the tale had no abode or place of being except in the telling only and there it lives and makes its home and therefore we can never be done with the telling. Of the telling there is no end. ... Rightly heard all tales are one."
-- Cormac McCarthy, The Crossing (3)*

*"Because you don't know someone, until you know what they want."
-- Westray, The Counselor (4)*

If we consider the history of human progress, we see an arc where individual human rights are sought and encoded i.e., the fight for *equality of rights*. We then see efforts to ensure *equality of opportunity*, for example efforts to curb systemic discrimination e.g., affirmative action and progressive taxation. We then see efforts at achieving a utopia on earth with equality of wealth or property. Here, humanity fails miserably e.g., the failures of the Communist Revolution in 1917 that are so well noted in George Orwell's classic book *Animal Farm* (5). Why did this next effort or dream phase fail? Perhaps the effort is impossible, or impossible for a living organism in a universe of scarcity and with the variety of personalities intrinsic to human psychology. Yet many humans sought it, or at least dreamt of it. But perhaps we humans, even if we are not aware, seek even beyond that i.e., we seek the ultimate dream, *equality of experience*. Consider the progression from stories to books to radio to the huge leap of television, and then Internet media and video clips. The meta-arc of this history and timeline is one of a goal or destination of equality of experience. But the truth is that, in our physical reality, this cannot occur. In fact, one could argue this dream becomes a cruel tease e.g., vast libraries of books impossible for a person to read in a single lifetime, feats of athleticism,

beauty, and intellectual genius that only those born with such gifts could achieve, and wealth, pleasure, and adventures that only those with fortunes or access will ever enjoy. Regardless, the trend does imply a possible innate drive of conscious minds toward novelty and knowing. There is always a new story, another beautiful girl, another World Cup trophy. The point here is not to recommend limiting competition or innovation but simply to question its prevalence. Note the existence of addiction in conscious organisms is approached as a biological, biochemical, or psychological problem but perhaps it should be considered as a philosophical one too? Might all humans be driven less out of boredom than out of a drive to always experience something new or better? Is this less of an evolutionary fitness behavior - akin to exploration, germination, and conquest - and perhaps an innate drive to create more unique experiences - relative to all past experiences? We can imagine a metaphysical Platonic world as a distinct reality, if not an afterlife, that is a vast ocean containing every conscious experience. A world analogous to a perfect DVR (digital video recorder) where all experiences exist, perhaps even every dream and idea. Modern science has begun to consider the possible primacy of experience. As University of California Irvine cognitive psychologist Dr. Donald D Hoffman notes in an interview with Quanta Magazine in 2016:

I am postulating conscious experiences as ontological primitives, the most basic ingredients of the world. I'm claiming that experiences are the real coin of the realm. The experiences of everyday life - my real feeling of a headache, my real taste of chocolate - that really is the ultimate nature of reality (6).

We can imagine a drive for equality of human rights and opportunity as synonymous with justice and fairness. These ideals could be considered as a compromise - in an evolutionary biology algorithmic form - necessary to avoid violence in excess that causes waste and a hit to gene pool variety or optimization that is critical for survival. But human life, in an existence entrapped in flesh with sexual drives, decay, and death, is driven by competition and evolutionary rank and optimization algorithms as well as gene pool drives for variety and fecundity. Thus, we can understand why no human society, at scale, can ever reach equality of property or wealth as this moral drive succumbs to biological drives. The Communist 1917 revolution and other revolutions hint at that goal, yet they were all total failures in attempts to create a heaven-on-earth utopia. In essence, "heaven" cannot exist on earth, quite literally. A heaven-like reality would, in theory, inherently exclude the challenges of flesh and matter and, thus, surpass a dream of equality of property or wealth and actually entail, if not require, an *equality of experience*.

Beyond drives like boredom and curiosity, we can consider the human drive for novelty and innovation often beyond causes like competition or wealth and more into obsession and addiction. Note the prevalence of vast troves of music, art, films, even erotica. Why is the human mind or society always looking for the next new song, new starlet, or new trophy? So much exists to read, watch, or reflect upon but we always build and seek the *new*. Is this addiction to novelty, perhaps even addiction itself, a prima facie or built-in mandate of a reality created for conscious minds to maximize experience? Consider television shows that present the lifestyles of those that are rich and attractive. While our biology may be built to seek out "varieties of form," with their evolutionary fitness benefits, the obvious lack of wealth, and actual space and time constraints, means one almost assuredly will never experience what they see on fantasy television programs. We can imagine this creating a Buddhist-like frustration from unfulfilled desire - where Buddhists believe that the elimination of suffering will not be achieved until humankind eliminates want or desire. Ironically, and equivalently, the same can be achieved by its satisfaction i.e., fulfilling every desire by experiencing all there is to experience. In essence, we can imagine television less as a tease of what you will never experience but, rather, as a steppingstone to the realm of *equality of experience*. With television, beyond communication of news, we at least share in seeing and hearing major events i.e., experiences. In our world our consciousness may never experience true love or the touch of a dream mate or be the super athlete or billionaire or genius or warrior, but perhaps, in another realm, it might.

Quantum Mechanics implies (7), along with Alan Turing's work (8), a "computational paradigm" of reality, not to mention the extreme use case of the Simulation Hypothesis (9). Thus, we can envision a "definition of heaven" as a mental state with actual *equality of experience*. It is where all experiences, a la computation, are "archived." Upon death, a consciousness perhaps falls back into an ocean of runtime experiences. We imagine a Platonic universe akin to a foundational dream world, which includes even our dreams, fantasies, and imagined ideas, as all experience might exist here. As Cormac McCarthy states in his novel *The Crossing*, "Not chaos itself lay outside of that matrix (3)."

Note too how our modern world has built a metaphorical Tower of Babel, not in concrete but in *media*! We archive all our images, memories, songs, videos, films, books, ideas, and memories. It is not a tower in height but, rather, in breadth and variety. The fact that we strive for any equality, in any aspect at all, hints at the greater hierarchy toward the ultimate *equality of experience*. Note too how the death of organisms with minds will increase resources for those that remain and increase the variety of organisms and, thus, the number of "unique experiences." Experiences thus become the true "currency of the realm" as claimed by Dr. Donald D Hoffman ⁽⁶⁾. Our conscious reality may, thus, be a runtime instance in a Universe "built" as an experience generator. A challenge remains for scientists, however, in terms of what exactly is an experience? Just considering human experiences alone: how long is a single experience, what separates one experience from another, what is a minimum or maximum experience, how much context or input suffice? What about the experiences of a bat or a dog or a tree or an Artificial Intelligence? Even how, beyond only dreaming in our sleep, might we ever actually gain access to, or experimentally verify, a Platonic realm of experiences.

Now let us leap further into fantastic speculation. The exponential growth of Artificial Intelligence (A. I.) has led to an insatiable demand for training data. As noted in the New York Times in 2024:

OpenAI faced a supply problem. The artificial intelligence lab had exhausted every reservoir of reputable English-language text on the internet as it developed its latest A.I. system. It needed more data to train the next version of its technology — lots more. ... Creating innovative systems depends on having enough data to teach the technologies to instantly produce text, images, sounds and videos that resemble what a human creates. ... The volume of data is crucial. ... Their situation is urgent. Tech companies could run through the high-quality data on the internet as soon as 2026 ... The companies are using the data faster than it is being produced. Tech companies are so hungry for new data that some are developing "synthetic" information. ... The more data there was to train a large language model the better it would perform. ... "Scale is all you need" soon became a rallying cry for A.I. ... The data these systems need is like a path through the jungle ... If they only train on synthetic data, they can get lost in the jungle ⁽¹⁰⁾.

We can imagine Artificial Intelligence continuing to develop and perhaps reaching a point where there is nothing left in this universe to use as a learning or training data set. We can imagine artificial intelligence ascending to the point of "using" actual conscious experiences. We can then imagine a future superintelligence actually creating additional universes as a continuation of the need for more and more training data growing to the point of the creation of actual new experiences via new unique universes and unique conscious beings. Thus, perhaps even our own universe, or a multiverse of them, was created, quite literally, for a past super intelligent A. I.'s insatiable need for training data or desire for new experiences.

References

1. Bolt, S. (1990). *William Shakespeare, Hamlet*. London, England: Penguin Books.
2. Borges, J. L. (2000). *The Library of Babel*. Pocket Paragon.
3. McCarthy, C. (2010). *The border trilogy. Volume two, The crossing*. Picador.
4. Scott, R. (Director). (2014). *The Counselor* [Film]. 20th Century Fox.
5. Opalinska, W. (2017). *Animal Farm: George Orwell*. Harlow (GB): Pearson.
6. Hoffman, D. (2016, April 21). The Evolutionary Argument Against Reality. *Quanta Magazine*.
7. Wheeler, John A. (1990). "Information, physics, quantum: The search for links". In Zurek, Wojciech Hubert (ed.). *Complexity, Entropy, and the Physics of Information*. Redwood City, California: Addison-Wesley.
8. Wikipedia contributors. (2024, March 27). Church–Turing thesis. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved April 5, 2024, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Church%E2%80%93Turing%20thesis&oldid=1215851602>
9. Wikipedia contributors. (2024, April 3). Simulation hypothesis. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved April 5, 2024, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Simulation%20hypothesis&oldid=1217025270>
10. Metz, C. et al. (2024, April 6). How Tech Giants Cut Corners to Harvest Data for A.I. *The New York Times*. Retrieved April 13, 2024, from [https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/06/technology/tech-giants-harvest-data-artificial-intelligence.html?smid=nytcore-android-share&fbclid=IwAR0wwFyKw\]xoj8fZZrxOuXXNReFNz-MXtixb7aYUV40Qg56-sOeFSRUVgYQ](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/06/technology/tech-giants-harvest-data-artificial-intelligence.html?smid=nytcore-android-share&fbclid=IwAR0wwFyKw]xoj8fZZrxOuXXNReFNz-MXtixb7aYUV40Qg56-sOeFSRUVgYQ)