

# Implications of a plausible Sentience Platonism in the prevention of suffering

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## Summary

Even if the probability of *Sentience Platonism* were extremely small, while there is a higher than zero probability, and considering that is not very clear where sentience comes from, we might think twice before disregarding this idea, because should it be true, its implications for preventing suffering would be immense.

## Introduction to Platonism

Platonism is considered an [ontological dualism](#) which proposes the existence of two kinds of reality:

1. a sensible world (the world of things perceived by the senses, in which the individual realities, materials, which happen in time and space, such as an apple, are found) and
2. a world of ideas (the world of things known through reason, where the immutable, eternal, invisible, intangible, independent of time and space realities, such as the idea of apple, are found).

Platonism may seem an unnecessary complication, as well as being unintuitive. It seems reasonable to think that the things which we perceive exist without being inherited from some ideal.

However, [platonism in mathematics](#) can be very intuitive and difficult to reject. The numbers in the infinite series of natural numbers (1, 2, 3, 4...) seem to have some sort of timeless and independent platonic existence. Arbitrarily large natural numbers which no one has ever thought of and no one has ever represented (written, spoken...) seem to have some kind of eternal, unchanging self-existence. Natural numbers seem to be in an ideal place, always available to be invoked or discovered, but not invented.

If it does not seem impossible to have some kind of platonism in numbers why not propose a possible platonism of experiences?

## Sentience Platonism

The different perceptions we have (and particularly, the visual ones) converge towards a specific, objective material external world where water weighs more than oil. Curiously, something similar happens with platonic ideas, such as mathematics, which also converge towards a set of certain truths, where the length of a circumference is equal to the diameter multiplied by a curious number that we call Pi. If it is the convergence of subjective experiences that gives credibility to the physical world, should not the convergence of mathematical ideas give credence to

the platonic world of mathematics? Many people agree on the first point, very intuitive (convergence of subjective experiences gives credibility to the physical world), many less with the second point (convergence of mathematical ideas gives credibility to the platonic world of mathematics). I further propose a third: that the convergence of subjective experiences gives credibility to a possible platonic world of experiences.

I will give the name *Sentience Platonism* to the idea that experiences exist by themselves, regardless of the sentient beings who experience them. Even if the probability of *Sentience Platonism* were extremely small, while there is a higher than zero probability, and considering that is not very clear where sentience comes from, we might think twice before disregarding this idea, because should it be true, its implications for preventing suffering would be immense.

It does not seem entirely unreasonable to think that if somehow the experiences of concrete beings depended on certain platonic experiences, then modifying or even eliminating the platonic experience could alleviate certain negative experiences for all beings or even cause them to disappear altogether.

Sentience Platonism can be reinforced by the idea that perhaps we live in a simulation and beings may be "instantiated" from an ideal object, in the same way as "instances" of software objects in "Object-Oriented Programming"

### **Implications regarding relief and prevention of suffering**

In sentient Platonism we can consider at least three possibilities. In all three cases I am going to talk about a platonic experience that generates in some way several conventional experiences and I will analyze, assuming that this hypothesis was true, what would be its consequences in terms of relief and prevention of suffering.

- The first hypothesis is that a single Platonic experience can generate multiple independent conventional experiences, which exist by themselves, disconnected from the Platonic experience that generated them, in the same way that a **cookie-making mold** (equivalent to the Platonic experience) can make countless individual cookies (equivalent to multiple conventional experiences), there being a complete disconnection of each cookie with respect to the mold once generated, because even if we destroy the mold, the cookies generated by the mold will continue to exist.
- A second possibility is that the Platonic experience generates multiple experiences that are totally dependent for being permanently "connected" to the Platonic experience, in the same way that a **radio station** that emits a happy song (equivalent to the Platonic experience) can emit towards an infinity of individual radio receivers (equivalent to multiple conventional experiences). If we turn off the station, instantaneously all the radio receivers will stop playing that signal.
- Finally, there is another possibility, which is that all the experiences produced from the Platonic experience of a certain type are ultimately the same experience, essentially the same, the same thing, as happens for example when a deal is closed, as a loan or a **purchase agreement**. Once an agreement has been reached (equivalent to the Platonic experience) we can reflect it in several documents (equivalent to multiple conventional experiences). A single agreement can be mentioned in several documents, and of each one of the documents that reflect agreements or contracts, several copies are usually made, but the agreement is unique. All copies of a

contract are really the same thing. Destroying one of them will not eliminate the agreement. Not even eliminating all copies of a contract will eliminate that agreement, we will only eliminate documentary evidence of that agreement. On the other hand, if we reach a new agreement that cancels the previous one, immediately all the documentary copies will be invalid.

The implications of each modality of sentimental Platonism in the alleviation and prevention of suffering are the following

- **"Cookie mold"**. By eliminating a "cookie mold" from a negative experience we can avoid generating this negative experience in the future. But in order to help the beings that currently experience negative experiences, which have previously been generated by this "mold", we must work to help these beings, one by one. This type of Platonism recalls a situation that is not metaphorical but real: genetic patterns are a kind of "cookie mold" that generates beings and therefore experiences of a certain type. By controlling and modifying genetic patterns we could avoid suffering in the future, as proposed by [David Pearce](#).
- **"Radio transmitter"**. In this case, turning off the radio station that generates the negative experience will avoid this negative experience in all beings. The great advantage is that if we can access the station, it will not be necessary to intervene helping individual beings one by one. Simply turn off the station (or change the song it emits) and the effect will be immediate, in all beings.
- **"Sales agreement"**. The implications of this type of sentimental Platonism are overwhelming. This would imply that the total sentience of the universe remains constant, and that by helping an individual being who has a negative experience we would not be essentially doing anything, we would only do it apparently. If this hypothesis were true, the only effective way to alleviate suffering would be to eliminate or modify the Platonic ideal of such suffering.

### **About the document**

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- This article is a summary of the piece "[Sentience Platonism](#)"