**Idealism and the Best of All (Subjectively Indistinguishable) Possible Worlds**

*Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Mind*, volume 4. Ed. Kriegel (forthcoming)

Helen Yetter-Chappell

The space of possible worlds is vast. Some of these possible worlds are materialist worlds, some may be worlds bottoming out in 0s and 1s, or other strange things we cannot even dream of… and some are idealist worlds. From among all of the worlds subjectively indistinguishable from our own, the idealist ones have uniquely compelling virtues. Idealism gives us a world that is just as it appears; a world that's fit to literally enter our minds when we perceive it. If the world is an idealist world, we live in a perceptual Eden. We did not fall from Eden. Rather, we deluded ourselves into believing that we couldn't possibly live in Eden when we committed to materialism. Reflecting on these big-picture issues gives us reason to question this commitment and embrace a radically new account of reality and our relation to it.

Let's begin with what is beyond dispute. We live in a world filled with stars, planets, rocks, trees, rivers, animals, brains … and other physical objects. These objects do not depend for their existence on my perceiving them or on my existence. They do not depend on your mind or Sally's mind or the minds of any other organisms.

Materialists hold that this is because phenomenology is irrelevant to physical objects.[1] The river is made out of flowing water; the water out of $H_2O$ molecules; the molecules out of hydrogen and oxygen; these out of protons, electrons, and (for oxygen) neutrons; protons and neutrons out of quarks, and these… well, they're not fundamentally experiential, that's for sure! Perhaps structure is all that these physical objects are. Or perhaps there is a further "something" that has this structure, but which is beyond our grasp. Whatever the account, it's difficult to see how the materialist's world could be anything like the world we take ourselves to inhabit. The world we take ourselves to live in is one of dark green avocados, blue sky, and warm kittens; a world of

[1] Note that dualists are materialists about the *physical world*. But they think that there is more to *reality as a whole* than merely the physical. While dualists deny that our experiences are not grounded in the physical, they think that physical objects exist independently of phenomenology.

solidity, colors, and smells. But science doesn't reveal properties like these. Instead of color, it gives us surface reflectance properties and wavelengths. Instead of heat, it gives us molecular kinetic energy. Instead of solidity, it gives us closely packed molecules. As David Chalmers (2006) puts it, "[s]cience does not reveal any primitive properties in the object, and furthermore, the hypothesis that objects have the relevant primitive properties seems quite unnecessary in order to explain color perception." Likewise for the other primitive properties that seem to populate our world.[2]

For the materialist, there is the world of appearances: the world of *bittersweet* chocolate, *hot* tea, and *red* strawberries. And then there is the world as it truly is: colorless, tasteless, without odor or warmth. What do we know of this *real* world? Its structure. Its effects. And nothing more.

The materialist picture is perfectly coherent. For any way the world seems, materialists can account for why it seems that way, offering an account of (i) the structure of the physical world and (ii) how this affects our experiences. The microphysical structure of the strawberry explains why it reflects certain wavelengths of light. Light hitting the retina triggers a cascade of brain activity. The brain activity is (or grounds or causes) an experience of a primitively red strawberry. The picture is perfectly intelligible; perfectly coherent.

If materialism offers an intelligible account of the physical world and the way it appears to us, why look any further? Why upset the received wisdom if we don't have to? In short: Because idealism can offer us something better. Because we can embrace all the structural truths that our empirical investigation reveals … and have common-sense, too. Because holding that the world is nothing like it seems is a *cost*. It's a cost that we might have to accept, but it's not one that we should accept unless we *must*. Common-sense is not something to throw out just for the hell of it.

This paper proceeds as follows:

[2] It is not universally agreed that materialism is at odds with (e.g.) primitive color properties. Color primitivists dispute this. We'll return to color primitivism in §2.2, where I'll argue that naïve realist color primitivism is not a viable option.

**§1** *Nontheistic Realist Idealism*: I develop the version of idealism that strikes me as most plausibly capturing the world we live in. This is a form of nontheistic realist idealism (Yetter-Chappell 2018). And I'll lay out a theory of perception that fits naturally with this idealist theory (Yetter-Chappell forthcoming).

**§2** *Living in Eden:* I show how this combined account of reality and perception offers a picture of reality and our place within it according to which (a) the world we inhabit genuinely is as it appears – trees are *green*, fire is *warm* – and (b) we are in literal contact with reality, since perception involves extending our minds to literally overlap with aspects of the physical world. Against naïve realism about perception and qualities, I argue that idealism is uniquely able to capture (a) and (b), and hence offers a uniquely optimistic view of the world and out place within it.

**§3** *Theoretical Virtues or Wishful Thinking?:* I argue that worldviews which intelligibly capture (a) and (b) have an advantage over those that don't. Insofar as direct contact with an intelligible world is possible, such worlds should be taken seriously as contenders for actuality.

## 1. Nontheistic Realist Idealism

I am looking at a daffodil. The bright yellow flower is unmistakable. We could dismiss this as a mere construction of our brain. But let's suspend disbelief and take seriously the idea that the world is as it seems. The *yellow* of the daffodil is part of reality. But there's far more to the daffodil than this. Let's suppose that my color inverted twin is also looking at the daffodil. She sees it as a bright purple. There's no reason to ontologically privilege my experiences over hers. So the *purple* of the daffodil is also part of reality. A bee is buzzing about the daffodil. It sees a striking pattern of ultraviolet stripes all over the daffodil. Once again, there's no reason to privilege my experiences (or human experiences more generally). The *ultraviolet* of the daffodil is part of reality.

Plausibly, there aren't any actual color inverts. We might suppose that there's no bee looking at the flower. We can imagine that I walk on to look at the hyacinths blooming further down the garden and there is now no one perceiving the daffodil at all. Even so, *insofar as it's implausible*

*that objects and their properties pop in and out of existence as different perceivers observe them*, the yellow, purple, and ultraviolet of the daffodil persist as aspects of reality. (And since I find this a plausible assumption to make, and I'm in the business of constructing the form of idealism that most plausibly captures our world, I'll assume this.) How can this be? When I look at the daffodil, I have an *experience of yellow*. How can the experience of yellow persist when I am no longer having it?

Berkeley answered this question with an appeal to God. The exact manner in which God pulls this off is up for debate. Perhaps, as the famous limerick would have it, God is always about (perceiving all aspects of the daffodil) in the quad, and that's why the daffodil continues to be: "since observed by, Yours faithfully, God."[3] Perhaps God sustains the daffodil not through his perceptions, but through his thoughts – "i.e. by having ideas of them in His understanding" (Pitcher 1977, 175). Perhaps it's God's dispositions that sustain reality by ensuring that should a human/color invert/bee come along, they *would* perceive yellow/purple/ultraviolet. Or perhaps some combination of these (Winkler 1985).

The Judeo-Christian God (Berkeley's God) is an *agent*. He has doxastic attitudes. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving. There may be excellent reasons for believing in such a God. But he is *not* essential to sustaining the daffodil in all its colorful glory. Take the Berkeley of the famous limerick: The daffodil exists (and is yellow/purple/ultraviolet) when no one's about in the quad because God is experiencing the daffodil, and God experiences the daffodil in its entirety (as yellow, purple, and ultraviolet). What's essential here to sustaining reality isn't God's beliefs, desires, love, knowledge, or agentiality. What's essential is simply his sensory experiences.[4]

We can construct a more minimal, ontologically neutral form of idealism by peeling way the attributes of Berkeley's God that aren't essential to sustaining the daffodil. God experiences the daffodil in all its yellow/purple/ultraviolet glory. God does not simply experience the world from

[3] The limerick is attributed to Ronald Knox, and cited in Downing (2004) among others.
[4] Something similar is true for other interpretations of Berkeley. Insofar as it's God's *dispositions* that sustain reality for Berkeley, we simply need the relevant dispositions. This would give us a nontheistic phenomenalism, a la Mill (1865) and Pelczar (2019, 2022). Although in this case, getting rid of God leaves the dispositions brute. And this is something one might be skeptical of (Yetter-Chappell ms).

a single vantage point, as limited agents like us do, but from *all* vantage points. Thus, even when no finite agent is in the garden, the phenomenal yellow, purple, and ultraviolet (as well as all the other features of the daffodil) persist. The yellow of the daffodil is not a merely possible experience. And it does not pop in and out of existence as humans perceive it. It is an *actual experience* existing independently of all ordinary minds. When we peel away divine attributes from Berkeley's God, we retain these actual experiences. But this is not all. We retain the phenomenal *structure*.[5]

Walking through a garden, I don't simply have a barrage of disjoint phenomenology: yellow, green, lavender, sweet, cool, soft, rough, blue, pressure, long, brown, trumpet-shape, and so on. The phenomenology is structured by a number of different relations, including: the unity of consciousness relation, property binding relations, spatial relations and temporal relations. As I walk through the garden, I see the yellow daffodils blowing in the breeze, feel the wind against my skin, and hear birds tweeting overhead. I experience this as part of a single over-arching multimodal experience. This is quite different from a case where three different people observe different aspects of the scene: Marcia seeing the daffodils, Jan feeling the breeze, and Cindy hearing the birds. For me, there is a *single, unified* experience combining all these features. The features are related by the *unity of consciousness relation*. But some aspects of my experience are related more intimately than this. The yellow, the softness, and the trumpet-shape of the daffodil seem *bound together*, while the *brownness* of the tree's bark seems bound up with its *roughness* and the *shape* of the trunk and branches. There is a *property binding* relation that fuses certain bits of my experience together such that they behave and present as single objects. My experiences appear to belong to a single shared space. And this shared experiential space has structure: The trumpet-shaped yellow daffodil seems to be *above* the long, green stem; the tree seems to be *behind* the daffodils; its green leaves, *above* its rough brown trunk. Finally, there are temporal relations. The notes of the bird's call aren't merely different pitches; they are arranged temporally, with some appearing *before* others, some enduring *longer* than others.

[5] If God simply had a disjoint set of experiences, with no structure, there's nothing that would make his experiences qualify as *a* world. Without structure binding together the rectangularity of my table, its brownness, and its solidity, there wouldn't be *an object*. Without structure, we could not make sense of space. While Berkeley does not describe the structure of God's experiences, I take it God's experiences must have such structure if they are to form a world.

Thus far, I've simply described the structure of *my* experiences. But the structure of my experiences plausibly reflects the structure of the world I'm experiencing.[6] They yellow of the daffodil really is bound together with the trumpet-shape (as opposed to floating free or being bound up with the tree shape). The yellow head of the daffodil really is above the green stem. The proposal is that the same relations that structure our own experiences of reality – for the idealist – structure reality itself. Property binding provides (some of) the internal structure of objects. Phenomenal spatial and temporal relations are the spatial and temporal relations of our world. And the unity of consciousness binds together all these phenomenal aspects into a single *world*. For the idealist, reality is fundamentally phenomenal, and the relations that structure reality are phenomenal relations.

But while we can largely appeal to the familiar relations that structure our own experiences to structure reality, the idealist cannot leave it at that. The idealist's reality is far richer than our own experiences reflect. While I simply experience the daffodil as yellow, in reality, the daffodil includes purple, ultraviolet, and a myriad other phenomenal properties. I have only a single perspective on the world. But the world contains all perspectives.[7] There is no basis for privileging my experience of the daffodil (with my human perceptual system) over that of the bee or the color invert. Insofar as we find it plausible that the world is as it appears, there isn't just *one* way the world is, but *many.* This raises a challenge: It means that the head of the daffodil is both yellow all over and purple all over. This sounds quite absurd! Note that the same challenge can equally well be raised against the limerick interpretation of Berkeley. If God perceives everything from all possible perspectives, God will perceive the daffodil as both yellow all over and purple all over.

This is far from an insurmountable challenge. But it does show the idealist's world needs an additional layer of structure to account for the multitude of perspectives. Think about Berkeley's God. One interpretation has it that God sustains the reality not through his perceptions, but through his *thoughts*. It's obvious how this interpretation should respond to the challenge. God doesn't have the thought: *Daffodil yellow-all-over and purple-all-over*. Rather, he has the thought:

[6] We could obviously follow Kant in denying this. But my aim is to sketch the world of common-sense.
[7] Or, at least, the phenomenology as-though from all perspectives.

*Daffodil yellow-all-over from perspective 1 and purple-all-over from perspective 2.* And there's nothing contradictory in that!

The nontheistic idealist can offer an analogous response. Rather than constructing reality directly out of experiences, we simply need to construct it out of experiences *indexed to perspectives*. I think of the nontheistic idealist's world as akin to a tapestry. In an ordinary tapestry, fiber threads (typically wool) are woven via over-under relations into a two-dimensional image. A thread is not a single strand of fiber. Rather, multiple individual strands are twisted together to form the thread. The thread is not simple; it has structure! This offers a compelling analogy for understanding a multi-perspective phenomenal unity. Reality is not woven directly out of bits of phenomenology. Rather, bits of phenomenology *indexed to a perspective* are bound into the "threads" out of which reality is woven. The yellow phenomenology I have as I look at the daffodil is indexed to a perspective: $\text{yellow}_{[\text{perspective1}]}$. The purple phenomenology my inverted twin has as she looks at the flower is indexed to another perspective: $\text{purple}_{[\text{perspective2}]}$. These two bits of indexed phenomenology (along with phenomenology indexed to all other possible perspectives) are bonded into the thread out of which the daffodil is woven: $\text{yellow}_{[\text{perspective1}]} + \text{purple}_{[\text{perspective2}]} + \ldots$ Thus, it is not true to say that the daffodil is yellow all over and purple all over *simpliciter*. Rather, the daffodil is yellow all over from *perspective 1*, and purple all over from *perspective 2.* And there's nothing problematic about that.

So here is the picture of the world we've arrived at: Reality is a phenomenal tapestry, comprised out of *actual experiences qualitatively identical to* all possible veridical perceptual experiences.[8] These experiences are akin to the fibers that make up a thread of wool in an ordinary tapestry.

[8] Two complications: (1) This does not mean that all possible experiences are part of the daffodil. It seems plausible that far more experiences than just yellow, purple, and ultraviolet are part of the daffodil. But these need not go on endlessly. There may simply be some possible experiences (e.g. vertigo or the alien phenomenal property ugabav) that are simply *not* part of the daffodil. One having vertigo experience when in the presence of a daffodil would simply not be having a *veridical* experience, given the plausible assumption that no such phenomenology is part of the daffodil of the tapestry.

(2) It's important that we are not defining *possible veridical experiences* in by reference to those experiences present within the tapestry. This would be circular. Rather, when I describe the tapestry as "comprised out of *actual experiences qualitatively identical to* all possible veridical perceptual experiences", I am presuming an *independent* intuitive grasp on what sorts of possible experiences are veridical. The idea is to show that there are idealist worlds that are precisely the way we take our world to be. As such, I am taking our sense of how the world seems to be as a guide. Your milage may vary on what you take the world to be like qualitatively. But plug in whatever you take the world to be like, and the idealist can capture it.

Threads are bundles of such phenomenal fibers, *indexed to perspectives*. These threads of indexed phenomenology are woven into a world via the same relations that structure our own experiences of the world. The unity of consciousness explains why we have *an* experience at a moment (rather than a disjoint collection of experiences). For the nontheistic idealist, it explains why the tapestry is *a* tapestry – *a* world – rather than a heap of disconnected phenomenal threads. Property binding explains why we perceive the yellowness of the daffodil as bound up with the trumpet shape. And for the nontheistic idealist, it explains why the yellow (and purple and ultraviolet) *really are* bound up with the daffodil's trumpet shape. The phenomenal spatial and temporal relations that structure our experiences of the world also provide the spatial and temporal structure *of the physical world itself*. The reality of the world is not disconnected from the appearance. It is comprised of threads of such experience.

### 1.1 The Physical Structure of Reality

Thus far, I've discussed the way the world is at a macroscopic level. We are well on our way to seeing how idealism vindicates common-sense. But I claimed that idealism could do this while embrace the structural truths that revealed by empirical investigation. How can the idealist make good on this claim?

While a detailed account is outside of the scope of this paper[9], the basic idea is straightforward. The world contains not only yellow daffodils, but molecules, atoms, electrons, protons, and quarks. Just as the daffodil is a structure of indexed phenomenology, so too (assuming entity realism) are the molecules, atoms, and so on that comprise it.[10]

By shooting beams of electrons at materials from different angles, physicists are able to construct images of atoms and molecular bonds. While we may not be able to do this without the aid of imaging technology, this is immaterial. The idealist should take there to be such experiences bound

[9] Such an account is developed in Chapter 5 of *A View From Everywhere* (ms).
[10] It is also open to the idealist to reject entity realism. At the most extreme end of this, we could take the entities posited by science (but not directly observed by us) to be mere theoretical posits that are useful for predicting and systematizing observable phenomena, and nothing more. But I'll set this aside, as entity antirealism obviously compatible with idealism, since it doesn't require accounting for any entities beyond those that are directly observed.

up as part of the phenomenal tapestry. God, presumably, would have phenomenology of molecules, atoms … and quarks within his purview. Likewise, the nontheistic idealist should take such experiences to be part of the tapestry.

But this alone does not give us the physical structure of our world. The physical world doesn't merely *have* daffodils, molecules, atoms, and so on. We take the daffodil to be *made up out of* molecules; these to be *made out of* atoms, these out of electrons, protons, and neutrons; and so on. Now, for the idealist, the *yellow* of the daffodil is not made out of molecules (even if molecules are bits of phenomenology)[11]. But if we pull out our electron microscopes, we will find that when we zoom in on the daffodil, there's nothing but cells. When we zoom in on these, there are molecules, when we zoom in on these: atoms. In this sense, we can say that daffodils are made out of atoms. Furthermore, the idealist can accept that macroscopic entities have the appropriate counterfactual dependency relations on microscopic entities. There is a daffodil *because* there are the right sorts of molecules, arranged in the right sorts of ways. These exist *because* there are the right sorts of atoms, arranged in the right sorts of ways. And so on. Were there not atoms, there would not be molecules. Were there not molecules, there would not be cells. Were there not cells, there would not be a yellow daffodil. Appropriate changes at the micro-level bring about corresponding changes at the macro-level.

Why do these dependency relations exist? Much as dualists take the brain to give rise to conscious experience, the idealist (who wishes to accommodate these counterfactual dependencies) should take the micro-level to give rise to the macro-level. In both cases, "giving rise to" is accounted for by phenomenal laws of generation. Just as for the dualist, the micro-level does not metaphysically necessitate the macro. The necessitation is merely nomological. This might seem inelegant, but it should also strike us as natural and empirically unavoidable. Science simply doesn't reveal properties like *greenness* and *warmth.* So of course we should *expect* these to be metaphysically separable from what's revealed by science.

[11] Those with constitutive panpsychist leanings may take this to be a viable option, but I find it deeply obscure how yellow phenomenology could be constructed out of non-color phenomenology (which it presumably must be if the same small set of microphysical particles compose the totality of the physical world).

### 1.2 Naïve Idealism

We now have an idealistic account of the physical world we inhabit. This gives us a world that is as it appears: a world of color, solidity, and warmth. But there's more to our intuitive worldview than this. If we are to have a good basis for thinking that the world is as it appears, we must perceive the world directly – not as it is reflected by carnival mirrors that may distort its character in unknowable ways. Intuitively, we don't stand at a distance from reality, but grasp it directly. To determine whether this sort of direct contact with physical reality is intelligible, we must have more than an account of physical reality: We must have an account of us and our relation to the physical world.

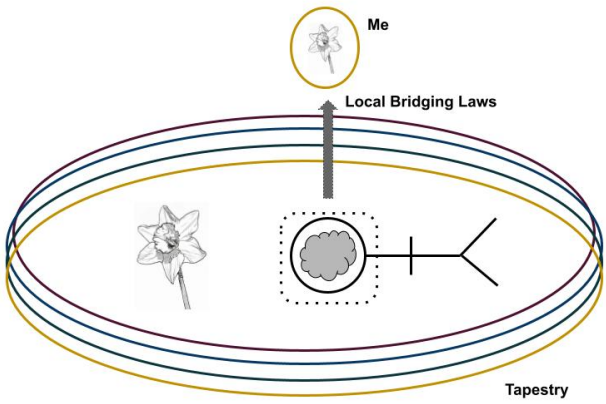
A full discussion of the mind-body problem within the context of idealism is far to large for this paper. So let me make a stipulation of what I think is the most natural way for idealists to understand the mind-body problem, so that we can turn to the nature of perception.

Idealism itself is a position about the nature of *physical reality*; not a position on the relationship between minds and aspects of physical reality. I argue in Yetter-Chappell (ms) that analogues of all the familiar positions on the mind-body problem can exist within an idealistic framework. But I argue that it is most natural for idealists to embrace a non-reductive account of conscious subjects like us, akin to dualism. On this account, our phenomenal experiences do not reduce to our brains. Our experiences are causally related to the tapestry by way of psycho-physical bridging laws akin to those posited by dualists. But instead of linking immaterial phenomenology to the workings of a material world, they link the workings of the immaterial phenomenal tapestry to further phenomenology. Thus far, there is nothing novel here. The only departure from traditional dualism is the dispute over the nature of brains (and the rest of the physical world). Where the difference comes is in the structure of the bridging laws.

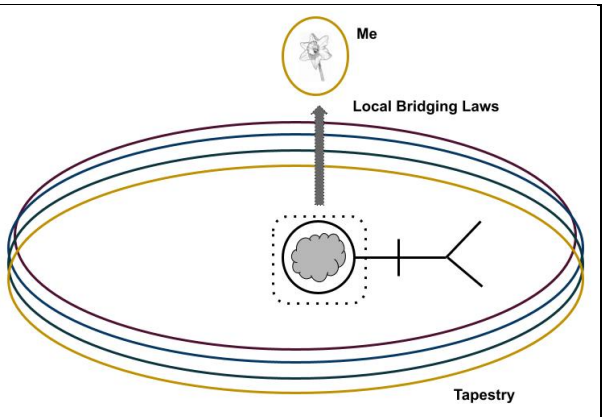
Traditional property dualism presumes that bridging laws are "local": that the intrinsic features of our brain states alone determine our phenomenal experiences. Whether I'm feeling pain, hallucinating a daffodil, or having a veridical perception of a daffodil, my brain is the sole physical entity of relevance to the existence of the phenomenology I'm now experiencing. These local

bridging laws function to *generate* phenomenology which, in some sense, reflects the world. Idealists could likewise embrace local bridging laws, by simply tweaking the account of the nature of brains to understand them as fundamentally phenomenal. Once again, the laws are essentially *generative.* Given that the brain is doing thus-and-so, *generate* daffodil phenomenology. But it's also open to idealists embrace a different, "externalist" account of the bridging laws. Externalist bridging laws concern not only the intrinsic features of the agent's brain, but their circumstances more broadly. I'll argue that externalist bridging laws bring important epistemic benefits. They can put us in a very literal and direct epistemic contact with reality by ensuring that – in perception – the external world literally overlaps with and is a part of our minds.

For local bridging laws, the physical relatum is the physical state of the agent's brain (i.e. the brain-bits of the tapestry). It makes no difference whether there's a daffodil causally related to the agent or not. So long as the same thing is happening in the agent's brain, the bridging laws will function in the same way: to generate daffodil-y phenomenology.



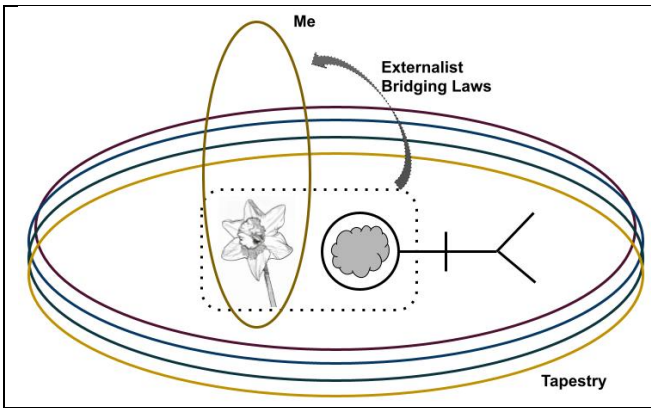

Perception (local bridging laws)



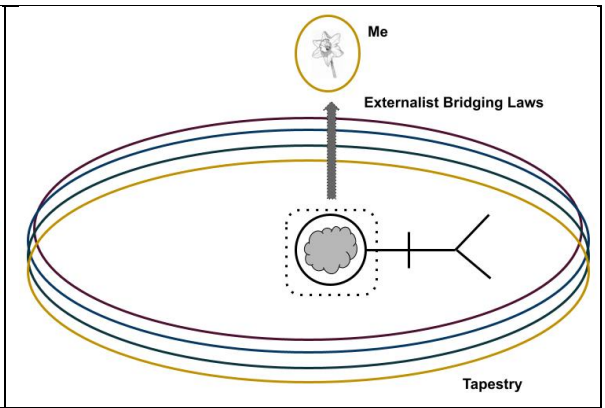

Hallucination (local bridging laws)

By contrast, on the externalist account of bridging laws, the physical relatum includes not just the physical state of the agent's brain, but the agent's physical environment more broadly. As for the local bridging laws, if no daffodil is appropriately causally connected to the agent (as in hallucination), externalist laws are generative: generating new phenomenology that is phenomenally unified with the agent's mind, but not with the tapestry. But when there is a daffodil standing an appropriate causal relation to the agent (as in perception), the laws function differently.

Rather than generating new phenomenology, the laws *unify existing bits of the tapestry with the agent's mind*. We might think of this as "expanding" the agent's mind, so that it overlaps with facets of the existing tapestry.[12] The result is that some of the bits of phenomenology that make up the daffodil's body are simultaneously parts of two phenomenal unities: the tapestry of physical reality and the perceiver's mind. In these contexts, the bridging laws might be described as "laws of phenomenal unification".




Perception (externalist bridging laws)




Hallucination (externalist bridging laws)

So externalist bridging laws play very different roles in cases of hallucination and perception. Although the daffodil phenomenology I'm acquainted with in both cases is *qualitatively* identical, its numerically distinct. In cases of hallucination, the bridging laws are generative: generating new phenomenology that is not part of the tapestry of reality. In cases of perception, the bridging laws are unificatory: phenomenally unifying the perceived facets of reality with my mind.[13]

Whether I'm perceiving or hallucinating, I'm directly acquainted with my phenomenal experiences (since these are parts of my mind). But perception is special. In perception, the phenomenal experiences that partially constitute my mind aren't merely aspects of me, but *are themselves aspects of the physical world*. When I perceive the yellowness of daffodil, the yellowness is part

[12] For this to be possible, the phenomenal unity relation cannot be transitive. This is controversial. (Roelofs 2016) argues that the relation is not transitive. Dainton (2000) and Bayne (2010) argue that it is transitive. In (ms), I find the pro-transitivity arguments wanting.

[13] I don't overlap with the daffodil in its entirety, since I don't perceive all properties of the daffodil. While the color-invert's perspective and the bee's are present within the tapestry and make up part of the daffodil, *I* am not acquainted with these features of the daffodil.

of my mind. But that very yellowish sensation is also a literal part of the daffodil. My mind, quite literally, touches reality. We might dub this view "naïve idealism".

## 2. Living in Eden

David Chalmers (2006, 49-50) evocatively describes our pretheoretic view of the world and our relation to it as a perceptual garden of Eden.

> In the Garden of Eden, we had unmediated contact with the world. We were directly acquainted with objects in the world and with their properties. Objects were simply presented to us without causal mediation, and properties were revealed to us in their true intrinsic glory.
>
> When an apple in Eden looked red to us, the apple was gloriously, perfectly, and primitively *red*. There was no need for a long causal chain from the microphysics of the surface through air and brain to a contingently connected visual experience. Rather, the perfect redness of the apple was simply revealed to us. The qualitative redness in our experience derived entirely from the presentation of perfect redness in the world.
>
> Eden was a world of perfect color. But then there was a Fall.

We ate from the Tree of Science[14]. We came to realize that color perception can be explained in terms of the microphysical structure of objects, the way these microphysical structures reflect light, and the effect this light has on our brain. The world doesn't *need* to be colored to explain why we perceive it as such. Further, scientific investigation failed to reveal primitive colors of the sort we take objects to have. So we abandon Eden. We abandon primitive color and a world that is as our world seems.

> We no longer live in Eden. Perhaps Eden never existed, and perhaps it could not have existed. (Chalmers 2006, 50)

[14] And the Tree of Illusion. There is not space to discuss illusions in this paper. But see Yetter-Chappell (ms) for an account of this.

And yet… And yet, the science by itself doesn't require us to abandon Eden. And yet, if our world is an idealist world, we *do* live in Eden. The idealist world I've described is a world of glorious, perfect, primitive *reds*, *yellows*, *warmth, solidity,* and *softness*. The world does not eschew these appearances, but is constructed out of them. Further, the idealist world I've described is a world in which we have unmediated contact with the world. When I perceive the apple as red, I *literally overlap with* the redness of the apple. The redness of the apple is a part of the physical world (phenomenally unified with the tapestry of reality). But the perceived facets of it are also a part of *me* (phenomenally unified with the rest of my mind). As a result, I have precisely the same sort of direct access to the redness of the apple as I do to my own thoughts and bodily sensations. The qualitative redness in my experience of the apple is derived entirely from apple's perfect redness in the world, for the redness of the apple in the world *is numerically one and the same as* the redness that I experience.

There are some respects in which Chalmers's characterization of Eden does not match the idealist world I've characterized. First, for the nontheistic idealist, there *is* a long causal chain from the microphysics of the surface of the apple, through air, to my brain. (This is what separates perception from hallucination, such that the bridging laws function as laws of unification.) It's just that the end result of this causal story is that I gain knowledge of the primitive redness of the apple, by coming to literally overlap with the apple's redness. If representationalism involves a long causal chain, at the end of which is a *reflection of an apple*, naïve idealism involves a long causal chain, at the end of which is an open door, and *the apple*. The causal chain explains how we come to perceive objects. It doesn't explain what perception consists in.

Second, the experience that I have at the end of this causal chain is one that I have only contingently, for the bridging laws that put me in contact with reality – opening the door on the apple – are contingent. Had the bridging laws been different, I might have been put in contact with the greenness of the apple (which my inverted twin perceives). Had they been absent, I might not have overlapped with reality at all. Nothing would have been presented to me. But *given that the*

*bridging laws are as they are*, it turns out that I am in direct contact with the apple's primitive, perfect redness.[15]

So we have seen how idealism gives us a world that is as it appears, whose character can be grasped directly. And we've seen that idealists can to this without giving up science. But one might wonder whether we have to engage in such a radical revision of our metaphysics to have direct acquaintance with reality or a world that is as it seems. Idealism offers the promise of making good on Eden. But this is only a reason to embrace idealism if it is *uniquely* able to offer this. If we can coherently embrace direct contact with a world that is as it seems *without* embracing idealism, there is no distinctive benefit to idealism, though there may be distinctive costs[16]. In short, wouldn't it be a whole lot easier to just be naïve realists?

Easier, perhaps. The only problem is that it's unintelligible.

### 2.1 Against Perceptual Naïve Realism

Perceptual naïve realism is the conjunction of (i) a naïve account of perception, and (ii) a materialistic account of the world-perceived. Perception fundamentally consists in our standing in a certain sort of disclosing relationship (an acquaintance relation) to mind-independent objects of perception. Our perceptions – or at least the phenomenal characters of our perceptions[17] – are constituted by the mind-independent objects that we perceive. As Michael Martin (1997) puts it,

> the actual objects of perception, the external [mind-independent] things such as trees, tables and rainbows, which one can perceive, and the properties which they can manifest to one when perceived, *partly constitute one's conscious experience*, and hence determine the phenomenal character of one's experience (83-84, emphasis added)

[15] Thus, idealism does not give us a response to skepticism. At least, it doesn't give us a response that goes beyond what a Moorean representationalist could offer.
[16] Potential costs are discussed in Chapter 5 of Yetter-Chappell (ms), the most pressing of which is the challenge of profligacy.
[17] Different naïve realists describe this idea slightly differently. Martin (1997) writes that these object partially constitute *the experience*. Campbell (2002) writes that they constitute the *phenomenal character* of the experience. Nudd (2009) writes that they constitute experiential *episodes*.

Naïve idealists agree with (i). They disagree with (ii). I'll argue that it's only by rejecting (ii) that we can have an intelligible account of (i): In particular, it's only by rejecting materialism that acquaintance with physical objects becomes intelligible. I argue for this conclusion in detail in elsewhere (Yetter-Chappell forthcoming, ms). What follows in this section is a brief account of these arguments.

Naïve theories of perception are predicated on the possibility of our standing in a relation of direct acquaintance with the physical objects that we perceive. The acquaintance relation is not just any old relation. It's a relation that affords us a special epistemic contact with objects, by putting us in direct contact with the truth-makers of our perceptual judgments.

For the naïve view of perception to be intelligible, it must be intelligible how we can stand in a relation of acquaintance to physical objects. Is it?

For the idealist, acquaintance with physical objects poses no more challenge than acquaintance with our own thoughts or bodily sensations. I stand in precisely the same relation to the yellow of the daffodil as I do to the itchiness of my nose: both are intrinsically phenomenal, and both are aspects of my mind (phenomenally unified with my other conscious mental states). While the yellow of the daffodil is *also* a part of the phenomenal tapestry, this does not affect the relationship that *I* stand in to it.

Thus, familiar accounts of acquaintance with our own minds can be co-opted by naïve idealists to offer accounts of acquaintance with the physical world. Acquaintance with the world is just more of the same: just more acquaintance with phenomenal aspects of my mind. The interesting action for the naïve idealist comes from the externalist bridging laws that unify bits of the phenomenal tapestry with my mind.[18]

What account of acquaintance can the naïve realist offer? Curiously, despite the centrality of the acquaintance relation to naïve realism, naïve realists have, by and large, been silent on the nature of this relation. This strikes me as especially odd given that there is a strong prima facie case for thinking that we cannot be directly acquainted with material objects. Recall the Martin quote above: "external things such as trees, tables and rainbows … partly constitute one's conscious

[18] For further details fleshing out the naïve idealist's account of acquaintance, see Yetter-Chappell (forthcoming, ms).

experience" (1997, 83-84). The idea is evocative. And for the naïve idealist, it's easy to see how it could be literally true. But how could an experience literally contain a *mind-independent* object as a constituent? Experiences are paradigmatically mental. Minds can contain sensations, thoughts, desires. But a mind cannot have free-floating numbers or beauty as constituents. Likewise, a mind cannot have a (non-mental) material flower as a constituent. Only the right sorts of things can be bound together by phenomenal unity relations. Only the right kinds of things can be components of minds. And a material flower cannot form a constituent of my mind any more than a material flower can be a constituent of a computer simulation.

It's hard to see how a naïve realist could hold a non-materialistic account of subjects. If subjects are not material, it's difficult to see how material objects could form parts of their experiences. While a naïve realist could embrace externalist bridging laws, analogous to those of the naïve idealist, these bridging laws would essentially have to function as laws of *generation*. And this puts us in contact with generated phenomenology – not (directly) with the physical objects we perceive.

I take it that naïve realists have a very different conception of experience from the one that implicitly underwrites the prima facie challenge. Experiences are not qualia. (Flowers are not constituents of qualia.) Experiences are not brain states. (Flowers are not constituents of brain states.) As Keith Allen puts it, perceptual experiences "*consist in* the obtaining of a conscious relation of awareness or acquaintance between perceiving subjects and mind-independent objects and properties in their environment" (2021, 43 emphasis added). If this is our analysis of experience, flowers can be constituents of experiences, insofar as they are constituents of a subject-acquaintance-flower completion.[19]

We can characterize experience in this way. But it does not dispel the sense of mystery or the need to say more about what the acquaintance relation is such that subjects can be so-acquainted with material objects. The acquaintance relation is not just any old relation. It's one that has a special epistemic significance. It's one that renders us directly *aware* of the object, *disclosing* the object of our awareness to us. How can it do this? Why is it that I can be related to objects in this way,

[19] Where, following Kit Fine's (2000, 4) terminology, "[t]he completion of a relation R by the objects a1, a2, … is the state of the objects a … standing in the relation R."

whereas my car (with its pedestrian detecting back-up camera) can't? What is it that distinguishes me from my perfect blind-sight twin, such that I am acquainted with the daffodil while she is not? As Mark Johnston (2011) might put it, the blind-sighter lacks the attentive *sensory* episodes that I have. But how is it that the material daffodil comes to be a constituent of an attentive sensory episode? Allen's conception of perceptual experience does not address this. The fundamental challenge remains. [20]

Alva Noë has (to my knowledge) offered the most detailed explication of a naïve realist-friendly notion of acquaintance. As Noë (2001, 51) puts it, "[p]erceptual awareness … is a state of interactive engagement with the world, not a state of picture-making." He suggests we think of perceptual awareness as

> a form of active engagement with the environment. In the case [of tactile experience of a] bottle, it is not our possession of an internal model of the bottle that is the basis of our contact. Rather, it is the fact that we are so related to the bottle that we are, as it were, ready and able to acquire information as need arises. And so in the visual case: the ready availability of environmental detail, and … the skill-based confidence on the part of the perceiver that he or she is able to acquire that detail through movement, is the basis of our feeling of the presence of the environment as a whole. (50-51)

This suggests that the acquaintance relation is one of being "ready and able to acquire information as need arises". That may be all that need be said to explain the richness of our conception of the world (where we seem to be confronted by a world with bottles, as opposed to a world of momentary snap-shots of bottles[21]), but it does not answer the central question that I've argued the naïve realist must address. It does not tell us how we can *acquire information* – the sort of direct information that puts us in immediate contact with reality – *in the first place*. Insofar as we have

[20] One might respond: Who knows? But it's manifest that it does. This is something that we can simply take for granted. As Allen (2020, 56) proposes, the naïve realist theory might be taken to be "the transcendental project of explaining *how it is possible* that perceptual experience has the distinctive characteristics that it does" and, as such, might be "immune to falsification". But while there's a case to be made for granting the truth of the phenomenological datum that our experiences reach out to objects and put us in contact with the world, naïve *realism* includes more than this. It includes that the world we're put in contact with is material. I have no idea why this would be taken to be a starting point immune from question, particularly when the world disclosing nature of experience is *intelligible* assuming idealism, but mysterious given materialism.

[21] This is the central question that Noë himself is concerned to address.

such a direct grasp of reality, we can rest secure in our knowledge that the world will continue to present itself to us. As Noë notes, I needn't grasp the bottle in its entirety at any given moment, as I can continue to scan my eyes over new parts of the bottle as time goes on. But all of this is predicated on the background assumption that I am in direct contact with the bottle at all!

Another proposal would be for the naïve realist to embrace a version of the Extended Conscious Mind Hypothesis (Clark 2009) according to which (i) experiences are material, and (ii) they extend into the world such that they include the distal objects of experience. Unlike a local materialist, who holds that the experience of the daffodil is grounded in a brain state (perhaps of daffodil-fires-firing (DFF)), an externalist might hold that the daffodil experience is grounded in DFF + material daffodil. The relation between my experience and the daffodil is, thus, one of constitution.

But while this proposal allows us to *say* that the daffodil and its properties are constituents of my experience, it doesn't account for the distinctive epistemic benefits that naïve realism is supposed to yield. Compare this view to an indirect view on which the experience of the daffodil is grounded in DFF (where these are merely caused by the daffodil). Why does the former, but not the latter, *disclose* the daffodil to the subject? It seems we've done no more than engage in some word-play, carving off "experience" in a different way. On one view, DFF is the experience, and is caused by daffodils. On the other, DFF + causally-related-daffodil is the experience. But it's hard to see why individuating experiences in one way or the other should come with the epistemic differences naïve realists take there to be between naïve views and indirect ones. We still are left with no explanation of the central mystery: If subjects are not material, how can a material world be directly related to them? If subjects are material, how can we relate a material world to them in a way that goes beyond the material relations that fail to be world-disclosing for the representationalist?

One might object that I am asking for too much. Naïve realists often describe acquaintance as a *primitive relation* (e.g. Crane & French 2021). The naïve realist might hold that, as such, it is a relationship about which nothing substantial can be said. Fumerton (1995, 76-77) writes of acquaintance that

> Because the relations of acquaintance and correspondence … are sui generis, there is precious little one can say by way of trying to explain the concept to one who claims not to

understand it. Because acquaintance is not like any other relation, there is no useful genus under which to subsume it.

Some relations can be helpfully elucidated (e.g. being a sibling), while others are simply bedrock. This is certainly true. We can point out the identity relation. But nothing illuminating can be said to explain it to one who doesn't understand. If the naïve realist maintains that we've hit bedrock, is it reasonable to demand further elucidation to render the relation intelligible?

But even if we grant that the acquaintance relation is like the identity relation in this respect, we have not dissolved the mystery. For the puzzle is not simply what acquaintance is, but what it is *such that we can be directly acquainted with material objects.*

By way of analogy, suppose a theorist tells us that electrons are identical to the number four.

> *You:* That makes no sense. How could that possibly be?
>
> *Interlocutor:* Ah, well, identity is sui generis. There's precious little that can be said to explain it to you if you claim not to understand it.
>
> *You:* But I'm not denying that I understand! I understand it well enough. That's precisely *why* it seems incoherent that electrons could possibly be identical to a number.

Similarly, the naïve realist doesn't just tell us that there's a relation of acquaintance, but that *we (conscious subjects) are so related to a mind-independent world.* And, like the claim that electrons are identical to the number four, there is (at least a prima facie) reason to find this unintelligible. (How could a material apple be a part of an experience?[22]) The naïve realist must say more, if not about the acquaintance relation itself, then about how it is that we can be so-acquainted with a material world.

Where does this leave us? The naïve idealist doesn't merely assert that we are in direct contact with the physical world: She has an intelligible account of how this is possible, of how it is that we can literally grasp the phenomenal character of the world around us. The world, for the idealist, is precisely the right sort of thing to be part of our minds. And, in perception, it is. The naïve realist, by contrast, asserts that we are in direct contact with the world. They assert that there is a

[22] Or, likewise, how could a material apple be a part of *the phenomenal character* of an experience?

relation that acquaints us with a mind-independent reality. But what this relation is and *how* it accomplishes this is a mystery. This is not to say that one cannot be a naïve realist. One might simply embrace the mystery. But it is a *cost* to embrace a view that is premised on a mystery. And it is a cost that we should think twice about incurring if there are alternative options that do not have this cost.

### 2.2 Against Property Naïve Realism

We take ourselves to know a lot about the world we live in: The river is a dark, cloudy green. The rain falling from the sky is cold. The tree's leaves are yellow, its bark is rough. The common-sense view is that these are things we know about *the world*: that the world we live in is not disconnected – alienated – from the world of acquaintance.

As Berkeley writes in the Third Dialogue,

> I cannot for my life help thinking that snow is white, and fire hot. You indeed, who by SNOW and fire mean certain external, unperceived, unperceiving substances, are in the right to deny whiteness or heat to be affections inherent in THEM. But I, who understand by those words the things I see and feel, am obliged to think like other folks.

If ours is a world of experience, there is no problem with the color and heat that we perceive existing *in the world*. By contrast, it's difficult to see how the materialist's world could be anything like the world we take ourselves to inhabit. Third-personal investigation doesn't reveal properties like color and warmth. Instead of color, it gives us surface reflectance properties and wavelengths. Instead of heat, it gives us molecular kinetic energy. While some materialists take there to be material properties that are simply unknowable to us, this does not help. The properties of interest (e.g. color and heat) are precisely the properties that *are* known to us. The problem is not that the properties we naïvely take to populate the world are *unknowable*, but that they're only knowable through *first-personal* means. And that is arguably at odds with their being material.

Still, some philosophers take materialism to be compatible with the existence of the sorts of properties that we naïvely take to populate our world. Call this Property Naïve Realism (PNR).

While I'll focus on color properties, as this is what has received the most attention in the literature, I see no reason why the arguments shouldn't extend to other appearance properties.

According to color PNR, colors are mind-independent primitive properties possessed by physical objects. These primitive color properties supervene on microphysical properties, but are not themselves revealed by scientific investigation. Naïve realism about color is often paired with perceptual naïve realism (Allen 2016, Campbell 1993) – the resulting view being one on which perception directly acquaints us with these primitive color properties.

I've argued that idealism gives us a world that is as it appears. If idealism is not required to give deliver on this promise, this would undercut the motivation for embracing idealism. This is just what PNR threatens. But PNR faces significant challenges. Here, we'll just consider one challenge: the question of *which* color properties PNR attributes to objects.[23]

The very same daffodil may appear yellow7 to me, yellow12 to you, and purple to my inverted twin. Which primitive color property(s) does the flower have? The naïve realist about color has two options. They can privilege one of these appearances as the true one, or they can try to embrace the idea that objects can have many color properties at once. The first option seems arbitrary. For the same reason that we should not privilege human experiences or HYC experiences in constructing an idealist reality, there's no basis for including any one perceiver's color experiences in our ontology, to the exclusion of all others. The second option – color pluralism – is intriguing, but faces serious difficulties. Color pluralism entails that the flower is simultaneously yellow all over and purple all over. This is not a problem per se. (Nontheistic idealism holds the same.) The challenge lies in whether a *materialist* can successfully account for this.

For an idealist, there was no problem in holding that multiple conflicting color properties can be simultaneously instantiated, as these can be intelligibly indexed to different *perspectives*. But perspectives essentially require minds. Mind-independent properties can't be essentially tied to perspectives. To say that these properties are inherently perspectival is tantamount to admitting that they're not mind-independent.[24]

[23] See Yetter-Chappell (ms), chapter 6 for further challenges.

[24] Admittedly, this is too quick. Mark Johnston (2007) embraces perspectivality as a fundamental, objective feature of reality, but denies that this requires *minds*. Due to space constraints, I cannot do justice to his view here. But see

This is not to say that materialist color PNR is incoherent. PNR could reject color pluralism, while denying that *real* primitive colors are anything like the colors that agents perceive. This would avoid the challenges of arbitrariness and of inherent perspectivality. But it entails that the world is not (with respect to color) anything like we think it is, undermining the motivation for color PNR. By contrast, naïve idealism has no difficulty coherently embrace color pluralism and a world that is (in part) precisely as it seems to us. Idealism is uniquely able to give us a world that is as it seems.

## 3. Theoretical Virtues or Wishful Thinking?

Thus far, I've outlined an idealistic account of reality. It's an account on which reality is not dependent on our minds or on the minds of any other organisms. It's an account on which there is an external world that is real and independent of our perceptions and thoughts. And it's an account renders the naïve view of perception *intelligible* in a way that (I've argued) it's not, given materialism.

What I haven't done is to offer an argument that idealism is true. Perhaps, if you're a philosopher of perception and you put high credence in the naïve view, you'll take the arguments offered thus far as reason to take idealism seriously. But what about the rest of us? What should we make of idealism? Is it just a curious account of a way some world could be, and nothing more? Or is there reason to take seriously the proposition that *our world* may be an idealist world?

Mind-body physicalism is often taken to be a contingent thesis. Physicalism is taken to be true *at a possible world* iff … every property instantiated at that world is (or supervenes on or is grounded in …) a physical property. Physicalists do not generally argue that no possible world could contain nonphysical elements. Rather, they argue that there is no good reason to think that *our world*

Yetter-Chappell (ms) for discussion of the relation between Johnston's view and naïve idealism. There I argue that while the challenges faced by standard naïve realists do not apply to Johnston, this is because Johnston's view has a fundamental commonality with naïve idealism, in taking reality itself to be irreducibly qualitative as well as irreducibly perspectival.

contains such elements: We can account entirely for the way we take our world to be – including tricky things like conscious experiences – without anything nonphysical.

I think the idealist should take a page from the physicalist's book. Idealism, as I mean to defend it, is a contingent thesis. Idealism is true *at a possible world* iff that world is fundamentally experiential. It should be unsurprising that there are possible worlds where idealism is true: Imagine a world with ghosts, then get rid of everything but the ghosts. More surprising is the idea that there could be *idealistic worlds that appear to their inhabitants precisely as our world appears to us*. That is what the first section of this paper demonstrated.

I began by sketching a novel idealistic account of reality – an account of reality, on which it is a phenomenal tapestry. The world is not free-floating phenomenology, but is structured via phenomenal unity relations of the same sort that structure our own experiences. This is like a *recipe for constructing an idealist world*. Put together the right experiences, structured in the right ways, and you can get a world containing a hunk of quartz (and nothing else). You can get a world that contains all the macro- objects and properties that our world has, but with none of the micro-structure. You can get a world that has micro-structure like our world, but lacks the familiar macro-properties. You can get a world that contains only properties that are observable by humans. … Or you can include all and only the phenomenology for constructing a world of the sort that we take our world to be.

The second task for the defender of idealism as a contingent truth is to argue that there is good reason to think that *our world* is such a world. The reason should not be that only idealist worlds can appear to their inhabitants as our world appears to us. It seems preposterous to deny that there are materialistic worlds that are structurally akin to ours, where complex causal chains relate the inhabitants to their world, giving rise to experiences just like our experiences.[25] (But see Builes (forthcoming) for ingenious arguments to the contrary.) If there are both materialistic and idealistic worlds that appear to their inhabitants precisely as our world appears to us, the question is: What reason do we have for taking our world to be among the idealist ones, versus the materialist ones?

[25] I think such experiences require fundamental phenomenology. But that's not to say the phenomenology must be part of the physical objects.

What should our credence be that – from among the vastness of modal space – our world is among the idealistic ones rather than the materialistic ones?

A thorough comparison of idealistic and materialistic worlds is far too large a task for a paper[26]. But we can gesture at respects in which idealism seems at an advantage. I've argued that the idealist's world is one on which (a) the world we inhabit genuinely is as it appears – trees are *green*, fire is *warm* – and (b) we are in direct and literal contact with reality. We are not cut off from reality, but are directly acquainted with the truthmakers for our judgments about the world. If (and only if) our world is among the idealist worlds, our intuitions about perception and the transparency of reality are vindicated. Idealism offers a uniquely optimistic view of reality and our place within it. This is the appeal of idealism.

But while optimism may make us feel all warm and fuzzy inside, does it really offer a reason to embrace idealism? Does capturing these intuitions really justify us in putting more credence in our world being among the idealist worlds? Or is the idealist's worldview simply better at capturing wishful thinking? While an intelligible world that is manifest to us *sounds nice*, so does cosmic justice. And we don't take this to be a reason for thinking that there *is* cosmic justice. Why should we give more credence to (e.g.) our world being as it appears than to its being an alienating materialistic world?

In fact, while the claims of idealism may sound nice, they may also strike one as *less likely* to capture the way our world truly is. It may seem downright *counterintuitive* to think that reality is as it appears. It may seem that we really no nothing of the thing in itself. Likewise, readers who embrace representationalism might find the idea that we *directly* grasp the world around us completely baffling. We all know that vision comes about by light bouncing off of objects in our surroundings, and carrying information about those objects to our retinas and brains. In light of this, the suggestion that we can literally grasp or overlap with reality might seem to get our world *wrong*.

There is a sense in which I find these points quite compelling. When presuming materialism, I don't presume that the world-in-itself is anything like my experience of it. (And I don't take this

[26] But see Yetter-Chappell (ms).

to be problematic or counterintuitive.) When presuming materialism, I don't take perception to involve direct acquaintance with reality. (And I don't take this to be problematic or counterintuitive.) So why is it that when confronted with idealism, we should take these features to tell in idealism's favor?

Consider an analogy. My son has a puzzle with pieces made out of hexagons conjoined in different configurations. There are countless ways the puzzle can be put together. But each piece you put down constrains the remaining pieces. Trying to make sense of the world around us, and our place in it, is a vast task, with many separate pieces and considerations. Like the hexagon puzzle, there are many different ways the physical world and conscious minds could be and fit together. And like the hexagon puzzle, each explicit position you take and each implicit background assumption you leave in place, functions to constrain where the other pieces of the Cosmic Puzzle can go.

Once we put down the puzzle piece of materialism, that constrains where the other pieces go. Once we lay down materialism, it follows that the world is not as it appears. Given that we have laid down the materialism piece, this doesn't seem bizarre: it strikes us as how the world *must be*. But it would be a mistake to conclude from this that the world's being as it appears is something that we should reject as implausible *independently of materialism*. It would be a mistake to conclude that there is nothing intuitively more plausible about the world being how it appears *if there is another way of putting together the Cosmic Puzzle that renders this intelligible*.

Thus, rather than considering the upshots of idealism against our background presuppositions, we should look at the complete worldview on offer (the completed Cosmic Puzzle) and compare this to the completed Cosmic Puzzle on offer by materialists. These are package-views, with pieces that cannot necessarily be mixed and matched, and we should compare them as such. Further, we should begin by suspending judgment about where individual pieces go, as these judgments may be implicitly based on presumptions that make sense within our original worldview but which should not necessarily be universally presumed. My claim is that when we do this – when we hold up the completed puzzles on offer from the idealist and the materialist, and assess from a truly neutral starting point – we find significant advantages to the idealist's worldview. We find things that, from a neutral starting point, we would take to be theoretical advantages.

Suppose (setting aside preconceptions about what the world is like) that there are two coherent accounts of reality: according to one, reality is just as it seems; according to the other, reality is nothing like it seems. Which seems more plausible? Obviously, that the world is as it seems. Why would one take the world to be other than it seems, unless required to do so by the placement of some other piece of the Cosmic Puzzle? *A win for idealism.*

What of direct perceptual contact the world? Imagine first coming to philosophy from a naïve starting point and finding that there are two coherent theories of perception that you could embrace. On the first view, perception is like an open window on the world. The world is there and we can simply reach out and grasp it. On the second view, perception is more like a mirror, reflecting a world beyond our reach. Which theory would seem more plausible; more likely to be true? The consensus view is that pretheoretical intuition favors the former (e.g. Broad 1952, Martin 2006, Hellie 2007, Logue 2012, Levine 2018, Allen 2019). If this consensus view is right, idealism puts us in the unique position to intelligibly capture another feature of how the world pretheoretically appears: the way we intuitively relate to our surroundings. *A win for idealism.*

Unless forced to hold otherwise by other commitments, we should expect the world to be as it appears; we should expect reality to be directly grasped in perception. Giving up on each of these is a cost. It's a cost we might have felt that there was no possibility of avoiding. You might have thought you simply had to resign yourself to death, taxes, and the veil of perception. But idealism, it turns out, can free us from the last.

Idealism shows us that the world *can be* just as it appears, and that the world *can be* comprehended more thoroughly than merely understanding its structure. Once we see that it is possible to grant each of these intuitive claims, the failure to do so becomes apparent as a cost. Looking out at the space of possible worlds from a theoretically neutral starting point, it looks less plausible that our world is among the materialist worlds – ungraspable, unintelligible, nothing like anything that we're aware of – and far more plausible that ours is among the idealist worlds: worlds of color, heat, and flow, worlds that we can grasp and comprehend.

Of course, there may also be draw-backs to idealism when compared neutrally to materialism. A thorough evaluation of the nature of our world would need to weigh these, too. What is clear is this: (1) It is epistemically possible that our world is an idealist world. There are possible worlds

that appear (from the inside) just like our own, where idealism is the correct account of the metaphysics. (2) There are genuine virtues that idealist theories have over their materialist competitors. When we set aside our background commitments regarding the positions of individual pieces and compare the idealist's way of fitting together the Cosmic Puzzle with the materialist's, there are important respects in which the idealist has the upper hand. Hence, (3) your credence that our world is an idealist world should not be insignificant – and should probably be much higher than it was prior to reading this paper.

If the world is an idealist world, we live in a perceptual Eden. We did not fall from Eden. Rather, we deluded ourselves into believing that we couldn't possibly live in Eden when we committed to the materialism piece in the cosmic puzzle. With this in mind, it's time to reset our commitments. It's time to reevaluate our solution to the cosmic puzzle.

## Bibliography


Allen, K. (2016). *A Naïve Realist Theory of Colour*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press UK.

———. (2019). Merleau-Ponty and Naïve Realism. *Philosopher's Imprint*, *19*(2).

———. (2021). Bridging the Gap? Naïve Realism and the Problem of Consciousness. In H. Logue & L. Richardson (Eds.), *Purpose and Procedure in Philosophy of Perception*. Oxford University Press.

Bayne, T. (2013). *The Unity of Consciousness*. Oxford University Press.

Berkeley, G. (1996). *Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues* (H. Robinson, Ed.). Oxford University Press.

Broad, C. D. (1952). Some Elementary Reflexions on Sense-Perception. *Philosophy*, *27*(January), 3–17.

Builes, D. (forthcoming). Modal Idealism. In U. Kriegel (Ed.), *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Mind* (4).

Campbell, J. (1993). A Simple View of Colour. In J. J. Haldane & C. Wright (Eds.), *Reality: Representation and Projection* (pp. 257–268). Oxford University Press.

———. (2002). *Reference and Consciousness*. Oxford University Press.

Chalmers, D. (2006). Perception and the Fall from Eden. In E. Gendler & Hawthorne (Eds.), *Perceptual Experience*.

Clark, A. (2009). Spreading the Joy? Why the Machinery of Consciousness is (Probably) Still in the Head. *Mind*, *118*(472), 963–993.

Crane, T., & French, C. (2021). The Problem of Perception. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Dainton, B. (2000). *Stream of Consciousness: Unity and Continuity in Conscious Experience*. Routledge.

Downing, L. (2011). George Berkeley. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Fine, K. (2000). Neutral Relations. *Philosophical Review*, *109*(1), 1–33.

Fumerton, R. A. (1995). *Metaepistemology and Skepticism*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Hellie, B. (2007). Factive Phenomenal Characters. *Philosophical Perspectives*, *21*, 259–306.

Johnston, M. (2007). Objective Mind and the Objectivity of Our Minds. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *75*(2), 233–268.

Johnston, M. (2011). *On a Neglected Epistemic Virtue*.

Levine, J. (2018). Conscious Awareness and (Self-)Representation. In *Quality and Content*. Oxford University Press.

Logue , H. (2012). Why Naive Realism *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* 112 (2pt2), 21-237.

Martin, M. G. F. (1997). The Reality of Appearances. In M. Sainsbury (Ed.), *Thought and Ontology*. Franco Angeli.

Mill, J. S. (1865). *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton?s Philosophy, and of the Principal Philosophical Questions Discussed in His Writings*. Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green.

Noë, A. (2001). Experience and the Active Mind. *Synthese*, *129*(1), 41–60.

Nudds, M. (2009). Recent Work in Perception: Naïve Realism and its Opponents. *Analysis*, *69*(2), 334–346.

Pelczar, M. (2022). *Phenomenalism: A Metaphysics of Chance and Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford.

———. (2019). Defending Phenomenalism. *Philosophical Quarterly*, *69*(276), 574–597.

Pitcher, G. (1977). *Berkeley*. Routledge.

Roelofs, L. (2016). The Unity of Consciousness, Within Subjects and Between Subjects. *Philosophical Studies*, *173*(12), 3199–3221.

Winkler, K. (1985). Unperceived Objects and Berkeley's Denial of Blind Agency". *Hermathena*, *139*.

Yetter-Chappell, H. (2018). Idealism Without God. In *Idealism: New Essays in Metaphysics* (pp. 66–81). Oxford University Press.

———. (forthcoming). Get Acquainted With Naïve Idealism. To appear in *The Roles of Representations in Visual Perception.* Eds. French & Brogaard. Synthese Books.

———. (ms). *The View from Everywhere: Realist Idealism Without God.*