The View from Everywhere

Realist Idealism without God

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For Richard
(even though his credence in idealism is irrationally low)

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Preface

CPP3 *Everything is just pictures offset by a frame or two.*

CPP4 When my (then) two-and-a-half-year-old told me this, I was flabbergasted. Could he possibly have said what I think he did? Could he possibly understand what he had just said?[1] He was insistent. "Everything—[his] bed, the ceiling, the table—it's all pictures offset by a frame or two." The following day, my question was answered. He put a water bottle down on the kitchen floor, and walked around it using a pretend camera to take pictures of it from all angles. He smooshed the imaginary photographs together with a *bzzzzt* and handed me the result: "Here Mama, here's a bottle-like-thing for you."

CPP5 One of two things seems to follow: either idealism is genetic or Berkeley is right that idealism is the pretheoretic view of common sense.

CPP6 While the view my son came to as a two-year-old is not quite the view developed in this book, it has striking similarities.

CPP7 I first began thinking about the ideas developed in this book in 2012, while sitting in on a graduate seminar on perception taught by Mark Johnston and Frank Jackson. Mark supplied my first exposure to a "naïve" view of perception. I was mystified. It was a way of thinking about our relation to the world that was completely at odds with my background conception of how the world works. And I couldn't wrap my mind around it.

CPP8 But I think an important part of philosophy is being able to step outside of one's own worldview and appreciate the perspective of the other side. I think of it like having a collection of "worldview hats" that one can put on to see the world through different eyes. The hats don't become *mine* by virtue of doing this, but—if I'm successful—wearing them can enable me to understand what motivates the other sides and how my perspective looks from their perspective.

[1] We later worked out that he'd acquired the concept of pictures being offset by frames from a Smarter Every Day video he'd seen that mentioned fast-frame differencing—in which you "take one layer of video and put another layer of video on top of it and then offset it by a frame or two." You can then look only at the pixels that are different in the second frame, allowing you to detect motion that would otherwise be imperceptible to us. The conception of objects *as* pictures offset by a frame or two seems to have been entirely his own.

CPP9 I wanted very much to understand Mark's perspective and to develop a "naïve view of perception" hat. Eventually, I found that I could do so . . . but only given the background assumption that the world was intrinsically experiential. I could make sense of the naïve view of the world . . . but only as *naïve idealism*.[2]

CPP10 So my initial thoughts about idealism were a form of play: seeing how far I could develop this curious not-my view. But as I've crafted my idealist hat, I've come to the conclusion that the virtues of idealism shouldn't be ignored.

CPP11 A challenge you face when you construct worldview hats is this: What do you do when you have a collection of them? Do you keep your initial hat as *your* hat, and only wear the others to silly hat parties? Do you abandon your first hat and find a better one? How can you know which is better? Does it feel better when you have it on? Does it look better from the perspective of your first hat? What *should* you do?

CPP12 I've tried to say something about this in Chapter 6, proposing that it's sometimes possible and desirable to evaluate matters with a bare head.

CPP13 One might think that, having written this book, I must be a card-carrying idealist. I am not to that point yet. But I put a significant degree of confidence (perhaps 30%) in something like the view described in the book being true.

CPP14 This book has benefited enormously from feedback I've received over the years from others. Here is a non-exhaustive list of some whose engagement I've benefited from:[3] David Yetter, Plato Tse, Galen Strawson, Hwan Ruy, Howard Robinson, Michael Pelczar, Kenneth Pearce, Ivan Ivanov, Tyron Goldschmidt, Philip Goff, Keith Frankish, Lok-Chi Chan, and David Chalmers. I've also benefited enormously from comments on work presented at the UNC Idealism Summit, the Rice Philosophy of Mind Conference, Uriah Kriegel's Autumn of Consciousness Workshop, the Idealism and the Mind-Body Problem at NYU Shanghai, and colloquia at National Taiwan University, Sun Yat-sen University, Mount Holyoke College, Florida International University, the University of Birmingham, and the University of Reading.

CPP15 Work on this book was supported by a University of Miami Humanities Fellowship (2020–2021). And the book was made stronger thanks to the feedback of my 2022 graduate seminar at the University of Miami, which read an

[2] Though, in the end, I've concluded that this view may be much closer to Mark's view than I initially appreciated (§6.2.3).

[3] Alas, I suspect I've forgotten many who've given invaluable feedback. Apologies for not giving you the credit that's due.

early draft of this book. In one of my seminars, Wali Hussaini described my view as "the view from everywhere," inspiring the title of the book.

CPP16 Thanks also goes to three fantastic anonymous reviewers for Oxford University Press who raised some really fun and tricky challenges, and whose feedback prompted me to get clearer on the structure of the phenomenal tapestry and its relation to the structure of the laws of nature.

CPP17 Finally, my greatest gratitude is to my husband, Richard Yetter Chappell: my most frequent and best philosophical interlocutor, my emotional support, and my greatest advocate. I have been bouncing the ideas in this book off of Richard for the past decade. He has read and given feedback on countless versions of draft chapters and the book as a whole. I'm sure there are uncredited objections and examples that I owe to Richard. Thanks also to my son, Elian, for his more-than-maximal love, his faith in his mama, and many interesting philosophical discussions. I can't wait to read your book explaining why I'm wrong![4]

CPP18 Some of the ideas in this book appear in other papers. I first wrote about core idea developed in this book in: "Idealism without God" (2018a) in *Idealism: New Essays in Metaphysics*, ed. Goldschmidt & Pearce (Oxford University Press). My "naïve idealist" theory of perception is developed in "Get Acquainted with Naïve Idealism" (2024), to appear in *The Roles of Representations in Visual Perception*, ed. French & Brogaard (Synthese Books). And I make the positive case for embracing idealism in "Idealism and the Best of All (Subjectively Indistinguishable) Possible Worlds" (n.d.), in *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Uriah Kriegel, Vol. 4.

CPP19 Like its namesake, this book contains a great deal of speculation about the world and how we fit into it. Some of it will seem wild, but the world is a strange place, and nothing but radical speculation gives us hope of coming up with any candidates for truth. (Nagel 1986, 10)

CPP20 Of course, as Nagel tells us, this "is not the same as coming up with the truth." Perhaps our world does not number among the idealist worlds. I will be content if you agree that idealism should be taken seriously as a viable *candidate* for truth. Few are antecedently inclined to grant any non-negligible credence to idealism; I hope this book will change that.

[4] The age of naïveté is fleeting!

C1

1

Berkeley without God

C1P1 I look outside my window. I see dull green of palm leaves, the richer green of a mango tree, a glimpse of blue sky. The rhythmic flow of Vivaldi helps to focus my mind as I write. A black kitten sits curled up in my lap, warm and soft. There is nothing out of the ordinary about this scene. This is the world we live in: a world of soft, warm kittens, greens and blues, pitch and timbre.

C1P2 At least, this is the world we think that we live in. But philosophers are very good at denying the obvious: at turning the world we live in upside down and giving reasons to justifying doing so. Consciousness is an illusion. You shouldn't lie to the murderer who's come to the door to kill your father. Whether you survive may be merely a matter of convention. We don't have free will (in the sense of being the ultimate source of our actions).[1]

C1P3 When it comes to the nature and character of the world we live in, there are compelling empirical reasons to think that we must give up on the world that seems so clear to us. As David Chalmers (2006) puts it:

C1P4 > Science suggests that when we see a red object, our perception of the object is mediated by the reflection or radiation of light from the surface of the object to our eyes and then to our brains. The properties of the object that are responsible for the reflection or radiation of the light appear to be complex physical properties, such as surface spectral reflectances, ultimately grounded in microphysical configurations. Science 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.

C1P5 We do not need leaves to *be green* in order to explain why they appear green to us. Furthermore, there is no gaping hole left in the scientific picture of the

[1] Counterintuitive claims due to illusionists (e.g., Frankish 2016; Kammerer 2019), Immanuel Kant, and compatibilists.

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world by leaving them out. We've got complex microphysical configurations and light, and surely that's enough. We can happily do away with warmth, in favor of molecular kinetic energy, pitch in favor of frequency, color in favor of surface reflectance profile.

C1P6 We can. We can embrace a world without color, a world without warmth, a world without pitch or solidity or sweetness. We can embrace a world beyond our grasp, a world entirely alien to us save for its dispositions and structure. We *can*. And yet. . . .

C1P7 What if we didn't have to? What if it turned out that a world of color, sweetness, and sound—the very world we took ourselves to know so well—is perfectly compatible with science? What if it turned out that the complex causal chain from light to surface reflectance properties to our retinas and brains . . . was compatible with our *directly, unmediatedly grasping* shape and color? What if we could embrace the world as-it-seems . . . and have our science, too? That is the promise of idealism. That is what this book aims to deliver. Idealism offers a way of understanding the world, on which the nature of reality is intelligible: we don't merely grasp empty structure, but the nature of that which instantiates this structure. Idealism reveals that we don't have to dismiss the way the world seems as "mere appearances." We don't have to take ourselves to be cut off from reality. Idealism renders it intelligible how we can literally and directly grasp the world around us. And—as I'll argue—idealism is *uniquely* able to capture these common-sense intuitions. Embracing the naïve picture of the world requires embracing idealism.

C1P8 There are times when we must abandon what "common-sense tells us." We find that there is no "further fact" to personal identity beyond constantly evolving physical and psychological states. There is nothing that can ground our common-sense intuitions about personal identity, and so we must abandon them. We find that we are not the ultimate sources or origins of our actions, but are like conscious computers, acting in accordance with their programming. (Both these examples are obviously controversial. Feel free to fill in with something else counterintuitive, which you think we have no choice by to accept.) There are other times when we simply *cannot* reasonably deny common sense. The existence of consciousness is like this. We can coherently debate the nature of conscious experiences. But we cannot intelligibly deny their existence. To do so would be, to borrow a favorite term of Galen Strawson's (2006), *silly*.

C1P9 The reality of the sensible world is not in this latter group. It is not unintelligible or silly to think that the world we live in is nothing like it seems. The

space of possible worlds is vast. It includes worlds of a spectral nature, and it includes materialist worlds: worlds of insensible matter.[2]

C1P10 Some of these materialist worlds are worlds that appear to their inhabitants just as our worlds appear to us. We are not logically required to be idealists.[3] But neither are we logically required to be materialists. The space of possible worlds also includes idealist worlds: worlds constructed out of phenomenology. This book offers a blueprint for constructing such a phenomenal world—a world that is not only fundamentally phenomenal but is subjectively akin to the world we ourselves inhabit.

C1P11 If I'm right that there are both idealist and materialist worlds that subjectively appear to their inhabitants the way that our world appears to us, the question is not *must* we embrace idealism (or materialism). Rather, the question to ask is: how confident should we be that *the actual world* is among the idealist worlds, versus among the materialist worlds?

C1P12 There are times when we must abandon our common-sense views. There are times when they conflict with empirical reality or are logically inconsistent. But we should not abandon common-sense willy-nilly. We should not abandon it without a damn good reason for doing so.

C1P13 This book will develop a complete idealist worldview: showing that idealists can offer compelling accounts of the nature of reality, the mind-body problem, and the nature of perception. And this book will argue that neither science nor scientific theory offers reason to reject idealism, as they are neutral concerning the metaphysical nature of reality. We do not find a damn good reason for rejecting common-sense.

C1P14 This is the same promise that Berkeley found in idealism. As Berkeley summarizes his view in the Third Dialogue (1996, 172):

C1P15 > I am of a vulgar cast, simple enough to believe my senses, and leave things as I find them. To be plain, it is my opinion that the real things are those very things I see, and feel, and perceive by my senses. These I know; and, finding they answer all the necessities and purposes of life, have no reason to be solicitous about any other unknown beings. . . . It is likewise my opinion that colours and other sensible qualities are on the objects. I cannot for my life

[2] "Materialism" has (at least) two meanings. It can be used as a theory of the nature of the world, or as a theory about the nature of consciousness. Traditional mind-body dualism is a version of materialism in the first sense, but not in the latter. Here and throughout this book, I'll use "materialism" to contrast with idealism—denoting the theory about the nature of reality. I'll use "physicalism" to specify the view that consciousness is grounded in matter.

[3] See Chapter 6 for brief discussion of my expansive conception of modal space.

> 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.[4]

C1P16 So idealism offers the promise of a reality that captures common-sense: a world that is intelligible; a world that is as it appears; a world that we grasp and know directly.

C1P17 But while the idealism developed in this book is similar in spirit to Berkeleyan idealism, I will not be defending Berkeleyan idealism. Berkeley's idealism is constrained by his theological commitments, and (perhaps because of this) he does not offer an adequately fleshed out account of reality and our place within it. Berkeley is not alone in this. Previous work on idealism has often focused on offering "refutations of realism" and "vindications of idealism," at the expense of offering a well-developed positive alternative. This book is different. I won't argue that all worlds subjectively like our own are idealist worlds. Instead, I'll flesh out the details of how there could be an idealist world akin to ours. I'll consider not only the nature of the world, but its *structure*, and *how beings like us could relate to such a reality*.

C1P18 The idealism I'll develop is a *realist idealism*, which—unlike Berkeley's idealism and that of neo-Berkeleyans like Foster (1982, 2008) and Robinson (1985, 1994, 2022)—is not essentially theistic.[5]

C1P19 Realist idealism is a form of *realism*. It no more denies the reality of the physical world than realist materialism does—it simply gives a different account of the *nature* of the physical world. An analogy may clarify: most physicalists about consciousness do not take themselves to be *doing away with experience*, but to be giving an account of the *nature of experience*. The concept of experience is substrate neutral. Similarly, the realist idealist is not (by definition) doing away with the physical world. Rather, they are giving an account of the nature of this world. It's an account that one may disagree with. But it is no more a contradiction in terms than materialist phenomenal realism is.

[4] Berkeley goes on to claim that idealism provides an answer to skepticism, and that the denial of idealism is as ridiculous as the denial of our own being. I don't think we should put stock in either claim.

[5] Though, despite the title of the book, the view is not essentially *a*theistic. It is simply neutral as to the existence of God. We'll return to this point in §6.4.3.

C1P20 Of course, one might reject the substrate neutral conception of experience. One might insist that *by definition*, phenomenal realism requires that experiences are non-material. Likewise, one might *define* realism (about the external world) as requiring that the world is non-experiential. In this case, realist idealism would be a contradiction in terms. Perhaps *real* realism requires matter that has OOMPH—and being phenomenal just isn't sufficiently oomphy.[6] I don't understand what this oomphiness is supposed to be.[7]

C1P21 Beyond this, the parallel to phenomenal realism suggests that substrate-biased accounts of realism are a mistake. While I think that physicalism is incompatible with phenomenal realism, I take this to be a *substantive* claim—not something that we can know to be true simply by definition. What's important about phenomenal realism is its commitment to capturing the what-it's-like of experience—not its commitment to what experiences are made of.

C1P22 Likewise, insofar as external world realism is a view that's worth caring about, it's not because it claims there's some substrate that we should all be committed to. If not a particular substrate, what is the core idea of realism? What's worth committing ourselves to is simply the idea that reality is independent of *our* minds.[8]

C1P23 For the realist, my mind (human minds, animal minds, finite minds) do not constrain, construct, or shape reality. Our minds are but incidental.[9] This—more than the alleged oomphiness of insensible matter—strikes me as the important insight of realism.

C1P24 So the realist idealist is a realist. But they are also an *idealist*. What is the nature of this real physical world? For the idealist, it is fundamentally

[6] A similar intuitive commitment to "oomphiness" might lead one to define realism in such a way that digital realism and ontic structural realism become contradictions in term.

[7] Though I do understand wanting more than mere structure. We want the *qualities* that inhere in the structure!

[8] This accords with Nagel's (1986) account of realism. In arguing against idealism and in support of realism, Nagel writes, "I leave aside views, also called idealist, that hold reality to be correlative with minds in a much wider sense—including infinite minds, if there are such things. . . . The realism I am defending says the world may be inconceivable to *our* minds, and the idealism I am opposing says it could not be" (90–91).

[9] Not all forms of idealism are realist in this sense. Thomas Hofweber (2022) has recently defended an anti-realist form of idealism, on which totality of facts is constrained by human minds. Donald Hoffman (2019) defends a "consciousness realism," according to which physical objects are *our* conscious experiences, and do not exist when unperceived. And Foster (2008), insofar as he grants a privileged role to *human* sensory experience, also is not a realist (though I think one can also read Foster as emphasizing the importance of human sensory experience, without *privileging* it).

experiential.[10] On the view developed in this book, physical reality is a vast, non-agential unity of consciousness—independent of all ordinary minds—weaving together sensory experiences of colors, shapes, sounds, smells, and so on into the trees, stars, teacups, and bodies that fill the world around us. The world we inhabit is not a construction out of our own experiences, nor is it constructed out of merely possible experiences. Much as the materialist's world, it exists regardless of our beliefs, experiences, and existence. It existed before life evolved in our universe, and will (presumably) continue to exist long after we are gone. Unlike the materialist's world, it is a world of phenomenology—a world that is constructed out of the very thing we're directly acquainted with, the very appearances that form our conception of the world.

C1P25 Berkeley is—as I read him—also a realist idealist, with similar ambitions to capture our common-sense view of the character of our world and our acquaintance with it. But the two views diverge from there. (i) This book develops an idealism that is nontheistic (in contrast to Berkeley's essentially theistic idealism). I offer (ii) a radically different and more minimal conception of subjects; (iii) a fleshed-out solution to the mind-body problem; (iv) a novel account of perception (though similar in motivation to Berkeley's); and (v) a wholly different way of understanding natural laws, which is more akin to standard materialist theories than Berkeley's theistic account. The motivations and broad shape are familiar, but the details are both novel and developed in far greater depth. Since Berkeley is also a realist idealist, I will use *nontheistic idealism* as shorthand for the view developed in this book.

C1P26 It will be helpful to begin with Berkeley's positive view, to situate nontheistic idealism in relation to its more familiar predecessor.

C1S1

1.1 Berkeley's Theistic Idealism

C1P27 The details of Berkeley's positive position are the subject of significant debate. There is disagreement as to the nature of sensible objects, how Berkeley's God ensures the persistence of reality, and whether objects persist when not

[10] The traditional framing casts idealism as the view that reality is fundamentally *mental*. I opt for the weaker assertion that reality is fundamentally experiential, as I'll remain neutral as to the precise relationship between experiences and minds. While I think it's plausible that experiences require experiencers (and hence minds, in some sense), I also want the view to be compatible with the possibility of free-floating experiences. This is an issue we'll return to in §1.3.

perceived by ordinary minds. Given that my aim is neither to interpret nor to defend Berkeleyan idealism, I will not dwell on the nuances of Berkeley's idealism. Rather, I'll offer a brief overview of a few possible interpretations of Berkeley, in order to clarify the relation between his view and nontheistic idealism.

C1P28 Sensible objects, for Berkeley, are collections of—or constructions out of—ideas (roughly, sensory phenomenology). As Berkeley puts it:

C1P29 > what are [sensible objects] but the things we perceive by sense? and what do we PERCEIVE BESIDES OUR OWN IDEAS OR SENSATIONS? and is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these, or any combination of them, should exist unperceived? (Principles 4)

C1P30 > Take away the sensations of softness, moisture, redness, tartness, and you take away the cherry, since it is not a being distinct from sensations. A cherry, I say, is nothing but a congeries of sensible impressions, or ideas perceived by various senses: which ideas are united into one thing (or have one name given them) by the mind, because they are observed to attend each other. (D3, 193)

C1P31 One might object: we perceive non-mental external objects! Surely our ideas are but reflections of these external objects, that resemble the objects themselves. But, Berkeley argues, "an idea can be like nothing but an idea." As Philonous puts it:

C1P32 > [H]ow can that which is sensible be like that which is insensible? Can a real thing, in itself INVISIBLE, be like a COLOUR; or a real thing, which is not AUDIBLE, be like a SOUND? In a word, can anything be like a sensation or idea, but another sensation or idea? (D1, 146)

C1P33 So if we are to have a world of color and sound, a world of the sort ours seems to be, we are left with a world of sensations. But this picture is not complete for Berkeley, for "[a] little attention will discover to us that the very being of an idea implies passiveness and inertness in it, insomuch that it is impossible for an idea to do anything, or, strictly speaking, to be the cause of anything" (Principles 25). Since extension, figure, and motion are but ideas themselves, they cannot cause our (other) sensations.

C1P34 But "[w]e perceive a continual succession of ideas, some are anew excited, others are changed or totally disappear. There is therefore some cause of

these ideas, whereon they depend, and which produces and changes them." Since ideas are causally inert, and Berkeley takes himself to have shown the incoherence of material substance, he concludes that "the cause of ideas is an incorporeal active substance or Spirit" (Principles 26).

C1P35 Mind (spirit) is not merely posited to account for causation. It is something that we are taken to be directly acquainted with. I am aware not just of ideas flitting through my mind, but of my own *willing*, and the effects that it has on these ideas. I can imagine a child running, imagine him tripping over a stone and falling on the grass. As Berkeley sees it, these ideas aren't just things that happen to me; I can produce and *change* them.

C1P36

> [B]esides all that endless variety of ideas or objects of knowledge, there is likewise something which knows or perceives them, and exercises divers operations, as willing, imagining, remembering, about them. This perceiving, active being is what I call MIND, SPIRIT, SOUL, or MYSELF. By which words I do not denote any one of my ideas, but a thing entirely distinct from them, WHEREIN THEY EXIST, or, which is the same thing, whereby they are perceived—for the existence of an idea consists in being perceived. (Principles 2)

C1P37 While in imagination, I can create, change, and get rid of ideas at will,

C1P38

> I find the ideas actually perceived by Sense have not a like dependence on my will. When in broad daylight I open my eyes, it is not in my power to choose whether I shall see or no, or to determine what particular objects shall present themselves to my view; and so likewise as to the hearing and other senses; the ideas imprinted on them are not creatures of my will. (Principles 29)

C1P39 Berkeley concludes that "[t]here is therefore some other spirit or will that produces them." This other spirit is God. God plays three central roles in Berkeley's metaphysics: He accounts for (i) the persistence of reality, and (ii) phenomenological difference we find between ideas of imagination and those of sense.

C1P40

> The ideas imprinted on the Senses by the Author of nature [God] are called real things; and those excited in the imagination being less regular, vivid,

> and constant, are more properly termed *ideas*, or *images of things*, which they copy and represent. (Principles 33)

C1P41 Further, (iii) God underwrites Berkeley's understanding of laws of nature.

C1P42

> The ideas of Sense are more strong, lively, and distinct than those of the imagination; they have likewise a steadiness, order, and coherence, and are not excited at random, as those which are the effects of human wills often are, but in a regular train or series. (Principles 30)

C1P43 Berkeley takes the liveliness and coherence of our ideas of sense to reveal the wisdom and benevolence of the mind from which they originate. Laws of Nature, then, are the "set rules or established methods" whereby God produces ideas of sense in us.

C1P44 I take it to be fairly uncontroversial that Berkeley endorses the picture described thus far. But the precise manner in which Berkeley takes God to perform roles (i) and (iii) is contentious. First, there's the question of how God ensures the persistence of reality. At least four interpretations have been offered as to God's role in (i).

C1P45 The *Perception Interpretation* holds that God's *experiences* sustain reality: God is always perceiving (or, more neutrally, experiencing[11]) the totality of reality. And, Ronald Knox's famous limerick would have it, "that's why the tree continues to be // since observed by, Yours faithfully, God."[12] John Foster (1982, 30) embraces this reading, writing that "God has an all-embracing perception of a vast spatiotemporal arrangement of sensible qualities—a perception, of course, of which he is the causal agent, rather than the passive recipient."

C1P46 The *Conception Interpretation*, proposed by George Pitcher (1977), takes God to sustain reality, not through his perceptions, but through his thoughts—"i.e. by having ideas of them in His understanding" (175).

C1P47 The *Phenomenalist Interpretation* of Berkeley holds that it's God's *dispositions* that sustain reality: to say that the tree continues to exist alone in the quad is to say that, although God is not continually perceiving the tree,

[11] As Pitcher (1977, 167) notes, perceptions must be caused (in part) by something outside of the perceiver, and no external being can affect God.

[12] As quoted in Downing (2011).

his will is responsible for ensuring that were we to attend in the right way, we *would* perceive the tree.

C1P48 The *Phenomenalist Interpretation* is radically different from the previous two interpretations and seems at first incompatible with them. But Kenneth Winkler (1989) argues that the *Phenomenalist Interpretation* and the *Conception Interpretation* are compatible and mutually supportive. Given that Berkeley plausibly agreed with his contemporaries in the denial of "blind agency," for God to will that we have appropriate perceptions, God must have an idea of what it is that he's willing us to perceive. Thus, on Winkler's interpretation, the tree's continued existence depends on both dispositions and on his ideas. God both has an idea of the tree *and* wills that, under the right circumstances, we should perceive it.

C1P49 A related interpretive question concerns the relation between our ideas and the corresponding divine ideas (assuming there are such ideas). When I have ideas of sense, do I literally share the same (numerical) idea as God? Possible readings of Berkeley include (i) that God does not have the same (numerical) ideas as me—but simply excites distinct ideas of sense within me; (ii) that God does have the same (numerical) ideas as me; and (iii) that the question of whether two ideas are numerically identical is unintelligible. Each interpretation has strikingly different implications for the nature of reality and its persistence. But since my interest here is not in Berkeley interpretation, I will set this question aside.[13]

C1P50 So this is Berkeley's view in a nutshell: the trees, stars, bodies, and so on that populate our world are bundles of sensations (ideas). In addition to sensations, there also exist minds. Through introspection, we find that sensations (and the real things they constitute) are causally inert, whereas minds are *active*—affecting the world through acts of volition. Real things are those sensations which are "imprinted on our senses" by God. Perhaps God shares these experiences, or perhaps he just ensures that we have them in the appropriate circumstances. Regardless, the rules that God follows in imprinting these ideas on our senses are Laws of Nature, and account for the regularity of the world we live in.

[13] (i) fits naturally with the *Conception Interpretation* and the *Phenomenalist Interpretation*. (ii) fits naturally with the *Perception Interpretation*. (iii) seems compatible with any of these interpretations. Personally, I'm inclined toward (iii) as a reading of Berkeley, but I am philosophically most attracted to option (ii). Given that I'll take the *Perception Interpretation* as a jumping-off point for developing my nontheistic idealism, I'll start from an assumption of (ii).

C1S2

1.2 Idealism without God

C1P51 However it is that God accounts for the persistence and stability of reality, it is clear that God plays an enormously central role in Berkeley's metaphysics. In fact, Berkeley thought that idealism offered a novel argument for the existence of God: since ideas of sense can't be caused by other ideas or our own minds (and insensible matter is incoherent), they must be caused by some other spirit. And given the incredible complexity and regularity of ideas of sense, this other spirit must be incredibly wise, powerful, and good . . . and hence, is God. But one philosopher's modus ponens is another's modus tollens. Few philosophers are persuaded by Berkeley's arguments for idealism, and it seems plausible that the theistic implications are a significant barrier to philosophers embracing idealism.[14]

C1P52 Whatever your views about the existence of God, logically weaker claims are more likely to be true. An idealism that remains neutral as to the existence of God is theoretically superior to one that is inseparable from theism. So does idealism really require God? Is God—an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent creator—really, as Berkeley argues, the only remaining candidate to account for our ideas of sense? Or is there a more theologically and ontologically neutral way of accounting for these regularities?

C1P53 I think that Berkeley has overstated his case. I think that we can have a coherent realist idealism without God, which captures the common-sense picture of the world and our relation to it that Berkeley sets out to deliver.

C1P54 A theologically neutral account has two main advantages: first, ecumenicalism is a dialectical virtue. Not only will theologically neutral views have broader appeal as a matter of sociological fact, it has the virtue of making assumptions that are no more robust than necessary. Second, there's a methodological advantage. It's difficult to speculate freely about the structure and contents of the mind of God. Doing so seems a matter for theologians or mystics. Once we embrace the idea that there is a traditional God who accounts for the persistence and stability of the physical world, it's tempting to leave things at that. "God is aware of the totality of reality. He excites relevant ideas in me. *How* does he do this? What are his experiences

[14] The 2020 philpapers survey of philosophers found that 18.8 percent of faculty in target departments lean toward theism, and a mere 6.6 percent lean toward idealism (Bourget and Chalmers 2023).

like? Surely it's hubris to speculate!" The story ends there. The details of the theory are concealed within the "black box" of God's mind.

C1P55 But this leaves crucial details of the metaphysics as mysteries. My experiences are all had from a single perspective. But God's mind encompasses *all* perspectives (human and otherwise). How could such a multi-perspective experience be structured? How does God account for the coherence and consistency of different individuals' experiences? How is it that I consistently perceive only the greenness of leaves, as opposed to their redness (which my color-inverted twin perceives)? These are details that a complete theory ought to flesh out.

C1P56 Moving away from God gives us license to speculate about how such a fundamentally phenomenal world could hang together and what it could be like. It gives us license to speculate and to flesh out the details. And, as I'll argue in §6.4.3, the value of this is preserved, even if one ultimately adds God back into the picture. Even if we subsequently return to a more traditional theistic conception of reality, contemplation of idealism without God can help us to flesh out the details of a possible idealist world with far greater depth and precision.

C1P57 So let's consider what an idealism without God might look like. I'll take Berkeleyan idealism as my starting point. This will yield a number of possible ways of thinking about nontheistic idealism, depending on which interpretation of Berkeley we begin with. The view I'll develop in this book corresponds to a nontheistic fleshing out of the *Perception Interpretation*.

C1S3

1.3 God-minus

C1P58 If real things are identified with divine dispositions—as opposed to with the *experiences* that God is disposed to create in us—then subtracting God yields a nontheistic phenomenalism. Reality is identified with a collection of dispositions. Without God to ground these dispositions, they are simply *ungrounded, brute* (cf. Pelczar 2019).

C1P59 Alternatively, suppose that real things are collections of sensory experiences had by us, where God's volition accounts for the regularity of our experiences. Then, in the absence of God, we are left—as Tom Stoneham (2002) suggests of nontheistic Berkeleyanism—with real objects popping in and out of existence, with no explanation for this.

C1P60 This is more radical and, I think, less plausible than a standard Millian phenomenalism. For Mill (1865), reality is comprised of Permanent Possibilities of Sensation (roughly, dispositions for there to be certain experiences under the right circumstances). My chocolate cake continues to exist when closed in the refrigerator, because these possibilities of sensation exist regardless of whether anyone is actually having a chocolate cakey experience. But on this second reading of Berkeley without God, the chocolate cake is identified with actual experiences had by finite beings. The chocolate cake may be experienced whenever I open the refrigerator door; but it does not literally persist when the door is closed.

C1P61 We can also consider what happens when we subtract God from the view that reality is a collection of ideas *had and sustained by God*. The answer to this might seem obvious and unilluminating. Suppose we start with the *Perception Interpretation* and (per impossibile) vaporize God. In doing so, we obviously vaporize the physical world. But there's another way we can make sense of the *Perception Interpretation* without God.

C1P62 Many attributes of God are not essential to the metaphysical role he plays in sustaining reality.[15] It's not essential that God be omnibenevolent. (God could, on occasion, have wicked thoughts, and still sustain our world.) It's not essential that God be all-powerful. (God could be unable to change the laws of physics or perform miracles, and yet sustain our world.) It's not essential that God be all-knowing, as it's not essential that God have doxastic attitudes at all. It is God's *experiences*, not his beliefs, desires, intentions, or anything about him as an agent, that are relevant to physical reality's continued existence. Rather than "vaporizing" God, a more promising way to construct a nontheistic idealism is to peel away the attributes of God that aren't essential for sustaining a reality, and see what sort of world we're left with (Yetter-Chappell 2018a).

C1P63 If God sustains the external world through continual experiencing of it, what's essential to reality is his sensory phenomenology[16]: the experience of

[15] Cf. Mary Calkins (1927), 141–143, who argues that "it is far from evident that a spirit adequate to produce nature should be 'eternal, infinitely wise, good and perfect.'"

[16] Note: I use "sensory phenomenology" here to distinguish the relevant sort of phenomenology from cognitive phenomenology. I use this to delineate experiences that are qualitatively akin to those that we gain through our senses. I don't mean to suggest that God has sensory organs or perceives anything independent of himself. I do not propose that God perceives *by* sense, merely that he has experiences qualitatively akin to those that *we* so perceive. It's still controversial to think of Berkeley's God as having such experiences. Berkeley holds both that God can "suffer nothing," and also that our experiences of great heat are one sensation inseparable from pain. We might take God to have experiences that are qualitatively akin to our own only in a weak sense (i.e., not qualitatively *identical* to ours). Or we might disagree with Berkeley, either about God's "suffering nothing" or about the

the pine needle's greenness, its shape, the smell of pine, the roughness of the bark, and so on. Of course, reality is not a disjoint collection of colors, shapes, textures, sounds, and smells. The greenness of the needles seems to inhere in their shape; the roughness of the bark seems bound up with the brownness. Reality has *structure*. God's experiences are no more disjoint than reality is. God's experiences, too, must have structure. (Without structure, God would not experience reality as a *whole*. Without structure, God would not experience *trees*, but merely green, brown, rough, soft, thin, fat, jumbled among all other features of existence.) And for the *Perception Interpretation*, the structure of God's experiences is presumably what gives reality its structure.

C1P64 When we strip away features of God that are inessential to his role in grounding the world, we retain the structure of the remaining phenomenology. And this provides the structure of our world. What we're left with is a structured collection of sensory experiences: a unity of consciousness, weaving together sensory experiences of colors, shapes, sounds, smells, sizes, and so on, into the trees, chairs, black holes, and central nervous systems that fill the world around us. We might call the resulting structure *God-minus*.

C1P65 Whereas I only experience reality from a single perspective—restricted by my spatial location and sensory apparatus—God is not so limited. God would not merely perceive the side of the tree visible from my window, but the tree in its entirety: top, bottom, sides, roots, and all. God would not merely perceive the human-visible spectrum, but ultraviolet, infrared, radio waves, and gamma rays: the entire electromagnetic spectrum. God would not merely perceive the greenness of the tree (which I perceive), but the indistinctness (perceived by the red-green colorblind), and the redness (perceived by my inverted twin). God contains multitudes. And the phenomenal unity that is God-minus would retain all this phenomenal complexity.

C1P66 We saw that God performs a number of roles in Berkeley's metaphysics: he accounts for (i) the persistence of reality; (ii) phenomenological difference we find between ideas of imagination and those of sense; and (iii) laws of nature. God-minus seems equally well suited to playing the first two roles.

C1P67 First, the persistence of reality. The tree persists in all its richness, even when no one's about in the quad. Why? Because there is unified sensory phenomenology as-of a tree in all its glory, whether this is perceived by

unity of great heat and pain. At the end of the day, my interest is not in defending Berkeleyan idealism or even to defend a neo-Berkeleyanism (de dicto). It's of little importance whether the starting point is one that Berkeley strictly would have adopted, so long as we wind up with an attractive form of realist idealism.

any ordinary minds or no, and *that's* what the tree is. What about the phenomenological difference between ideas of imagination and those of sense? To flesh this out, we'd need an account of perception (to be developed in Chapter 4). But the rough idea is that—just as on the traditional Berkeleyan view—ideas of sense are not generated by my will, but come from God-minus. Given that God-minus is not an agent, and has no volition, these ideas are not "imprinted" on my mind by another will. Rather, I shall propose that we literally overlap with reality, sharing (partaking in) the ideas of God-minus.

C1P68 But while God-minus can account for the stability of reality in roughly the same manner as God (on this interpretation of Berkeley) it cannot facilitate an analogous account of laws of nature. Having stripped away will and benevolence from the phenomenal unity, we cannot hold that laws of nature are *rules ordained by God*. (God-minus has no thought or will.) Laws of nature cannot be taken to display "the goodness and wisdom of that Governing Spirit whose Will constitutes the laws of nature" (Principles 32). So nontheistic idealism will need to offer a radically different account of laws of nature. I'll argue in Chapter 5 that the nontheistic idealist is in precisely the same position as the nontheistic materialist. And any account of laws that is available to such materialists is equally available to the nontheistic idealist.

C1P69 This is, in a nutshell, the view that will be developed in this book: Reality is a vast unity of sensory phenomenology,[17] the phenomenal content and structure of which corresponds to the sensory experiences that would be had by the God of the *Perception Interpretation*. Just as God is not limited to a single perspective, but perceives reality from all perspectives, so too, this phenomenal unity includes phenomenology as-from all perspectives. And just as God's experiences are (presumably) not an incoherent jumble of sensations, but have structure, so too, this phenomenal unity has structure. This phenomenal unity is governed by laws analogous to those posited by materialists.

C1P70 Unlike Berkeley, I've said nothing about Spirits. The entire picture, thus far, has been constructed out of phenomenology and relations between phenomenology. This naturally raises the question of *who* has the experiences of God-minus. We began with God, and imagined stripping away all doxastic attitudes and agency, as well as traditional divine attributes. Is the result still a mind? This is a question that I'll remain neutral on throughout the book.

[17] Again, I use "sensory phenomenology" simply to distinguish from cognitive phenomenology.

I see three candidate positions, which I'll label *Robust Mind*, *Thin Mind*, and *No Mind*.

C1P71 One might think that experiences require experiencers, reasoning that experiences are essentially experienc*ed*—and for something to be experienc*ed* there must be an experienc*er*. As Frege (1956) puts it, "[t]he inner world presupposes the person whose inner world it is" (299). "Can there be a pain without someone who has it? Being experienced is necessarily connected with pain, and someone experiencing is necessarily connected with being experienced" (305).

C1P72 But embracing an essential connection between experiences and subjects doesn't in itself tell us what subjects *are*. One option would be to follow Berkeley and take subjects to be something over and above—ontologically distinct from—the experiences that they experience. This would give us an ontology of experiences and minds. On this picture, the experiences that constitute our world would be collectively had by a cosmic mind—God-minus—where God-minus is a *Robust Mind* that experiences reality.

C1P73 By contrast, Galen Strawson (2003) argues that subjects might be nothing over and above the experiences themselves—provided that we properly understand experiences as things that are by their very natures experienced. Strawson holds that experience is necessarily experience-for: he takes the idea of an experience without an experiencer to be an incoherent failure to grasp what experience is. Nevertheless, it does not follow from this that experiences are somehow distinct from subjects.

C1P74

> It is not . . . clear that we can know that this . . . involves some sort of genuine ontological . . . distinction, as opposed to a merely conceptual distinction. . . . For there is a real distinction between two phenomena (so that genuine ontological plurality is in question) if and only if they can possibly "exist apart," and a merely conceptual distinction between them if and only if they are conceptually distinct but cannot possibly exist apart, like trilaterality and triangularity. And when we confine our attention to thin subjects . . . it seems quite unclear that the actual subject S of any given actual experience E can exist apart from E, even in thought. (Strawson 2003, 294–295)

C1P75 This way of understanding the relation between subjects and experiences yields a different and more minimal picture of reality. Reality is constituted by a vast phenomenal unity. The experiences that make up our world are experienc*ed*, and hence there is an experienc*er* of these experiences. But this

does not entail any addition to our ontology. There is a unity of sensory phenomenology. And, given an appropriate understanding of phenomenology, this entails that the unity is experienced. But there need not be some ontologically independent entity that does the experiencing. There is simply the sensory unity. The experiences that constitute reality are (essentially) experiences of a *Thin Mind*, which brings to our ontology nothing over and above the bundle of experiences themselves.

C1P76 A third way to understand nontheistic idealism would be to deny any essential connection between experiences and minds: to embrace the idea that there could be free-floating phenomenology. If this were right, reality would simply be constituted by an experiencer-less phenomenal unity. This is the *No Mind* reading. One might question whether this is really a form of idealism, given that minds and mentality are in no way central to the picture. This doesn't worry me, per se. I don't care whether minds or mentality are essential to the picture, but with whether *phenomenology* is—as I'll argue that this is essential to capturing the common-sense picture of the world that motivates idealism. The difficulty with the *No Mind* view is that it's not clear that experiencer-less experiences are coherent. As Strawson argues, being experienced seems to be the essence of an experience. And it's not clear how something could be experienced without there being an experiencer. Still, the *No Mind* view is structurally identical to the earlier interpretations, and so it will be interesting to keep it in the back of our minds going forward. (I'll suggest in §6.2.3 that the *No Mind* view may be akin to Mark Johnston's [2007] picture of reality.)

C1P77 I myself am partial to the *Thin Mind* view. I see no reason to add robust minds to our ontology. In fact, I'm not sure I understand what it is that robust minds are supposed to be. Like Hume, "when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I can never catch myself at any time without a perception, and can never observe anything but the perception" (2000, 165).

C1P78 But if you are attracted to the *Robust Mind* view, everything written in this book is also compatible with this. You should feel free to interpret the rest of the book accordingly. (The resulting view will be closer to the traditional Berkeleyan view than on the thin reading.)

C1P79 Thus far, I have focused on the nature of the physical world that we inhabit. But I have said nothing about creatures like us and how we fit into this picture of reality. Developing such a view is the second main aim of this book

and will be central to showing how idealism can make good on its promise to give us a world that not only is as it appears, but which we can *grasp directly*.

C1P80 The central idea is that in perception, the perceived aspects of reality are bound by the unity of consciousness relation into two distinct phenomenal unities: God-minus (physical reality) and the mind of the perceiver. In perception, the perceived features of reality become a part of your mind in just the same way that your aches and pains are. Your acquaintance with them is equally direct. Central to this is giving accounts of (a) our minds and (b) their relation to the physical world, that renders this intelligible. This is the task of Chapters 3 and 4.

C1S4

1.4 The Plan

C1P81 Thus far, I've characterized reality in a top-down way, beginning with God and then eliminating the features that weren't essential to ensuring the persistence of reality. Doing so enabled us to quickly get to the heart of nontheistic idealism. But starting with a black box and subtracting from it doesn't help to illuminate the contents of the box. And this is essentially what we have done in characterizing reality in terms of God-minus. Chapter 2 develops an alternative way to understand nontheistic idealism. Rather than beginning with God-minus (the phenomenal unity) and trying to deconstruct the contents and structure of the physical world, we'll begin with the aspects of the phenomenal unity—phenomenal greenness, warmth, roughness, sweetness, middle C—and see how they can be woven together into a world like ours. I'll describe reality as a phenomenal tapestry, weaving simple bits of phenomenology into a complex structure akin to God-minus. By considering how such a tapestry of reality might be constructed, we'll come to a better grasp of the structure of idealist reality, and the way in which the different phenomenal threads hang together. This will be essential in future chapters for developing detailed accounts of perception and the compatibility of idealism and science.

C1P82 My aim is to show how there could be an idealist world that is precisely the way we take our world to be. As such, I'll take our world[18] as a guide. There could be all sorts of different idealist worlds: worlds with alien properties, worlds with floating pink elephants that only certain people can see, worlds

[18] Our empirical observations and intuitions about what our world is like.

with conceptualizations built into the very fabric of reality. But I don't take such worlds to be *our world*. My aim is not to make claims about what idealist worlds *must* look like, rather I'll endeavor to give most plausible snapshot of *our* world as an idealist world.

C1P83 In Chapter 3 I begin the work of situating *us* in idealist reality, considering what the mind-body problem looks like within an idealist framework. For idealists, our bodies are bits of phenomenology within the phenomenal tapestry (God-minus). But how do experiences, thoughts, and conscious subjects-of-experience like us fit into the picture? Are my pains, desires, and perceptions parts of the phenomenal tapestry? Are they primitive or do they reduce to other bits of phenomenology, such as those that constitute my brain?

C1P84 Idealism, per se, is not a position on the mind-body problem. It is simply a view about the nature of physical reality. In fact, idealism does not directly constrain the options available in addressing the mind-body problem. There are, I will argue, idealist analogues of reductive physicalism, dualism, and panpsychism. But embracing idealism does render reductive accounts of the mind-body transparently implausible (a result that, I'll argue, points toward a novel argument against physicalism).

C1P85 I'll argue that idealists ought to embrace a nonreductive solution to the mind-body problem, in conjunction with a novel externalist account of psychophysical bridging laws. This externalist account of bridging laws holds special appeal within an idealistic context, as it will facilitate the direct contact with reality defended in Chapter 4.

C1P86 Chapter 4 shows how an epistemically powerful theory of perception is made available through the conjunction of the nontheistic idealism (Chapter 2) and the externalist account of bridging laws (Chapter 3). Externalist bridging laws function to "expand" our minds, ensuring that the perceived facets of reality are *literal constituents* of our mind. As a result, our perceptual contact with reality is just as direct as the contact we have with our own minds. We are not merely acquainted with a representation of the world or a sense datum corresponding to it: we are directly acquainted with *the world* itself. The greenness of the leaves and the roughness of the bark are aspects of reality . . . and, in perception, they are also aspects of me. I dub this theory "Naïve Idealism." This account of perception bears obvious similarities to naïve realism. I return to this issue in Chapter 6, where I argue that such direct contact with reality is only intelligible if the world is fundamentally phenomenal.

C1P87 In addition to fleshing out an idealist account of veridical perception, I offer accounts of hallucination and illusion. The latter diverges markedly from Berkeley's purely cognitive account, and shows that idealists have the resources to give a more common-sense explanation of illusions, on which (at least) some involve defective phenomenology, as opposed to merely defective judgments.

C1P88 Chapter 5 turns to compatibility of idealism and the scientific worldview, including the physical structure of reality, the nature of space and time, and laws of nature. Idealism gives us a world of color, warmth, and sound. But, I argue, the idealist does not need to deny that there are also microstructural facts about the surfaces of objects that cause (only) certain wavelengths of light to be reflected. The idealist does not need to deny that there are molecules and molecular kinetic energy. The idealist does not need to deny that vibrations cause compression waves to propagate through the air, to my ear, causing me to hear sounds. This chapter looks at how the idealist makes sense of these microphysical truths (hint: they're collections of structured phenomenology), and at the relation between microphysics and the macroscopic entities we're directly acquainted with.

C1P89 Next, we turn to the regularities we find in nature. As we've seen, when we move away from theistic idealism, we lose Berkeley's explanation of these regularities. The phenomenal tapestry (God-minus) is not an *agent* with a *will*. Laws of nature cannot be taken to display "the goodness and wisdom of that Governing Spirit whose Will constitutes the laws of nature" (Principles 32), as God-minus has no such will. Nontheistic idealism needs to offer a different account of laws of nature. But the task facing the nontheistic idealist is no different from that facing the nontheistic materialist. And any account of laws that is available to such materialists is equally available to the nontheistic idealist, for physical laws are—rightly—neutral as to the metaphysical nature of that which they govern. The idealist need simply understand the elements being related in accordance with idealism: as phenomenal. And there's nothing in any of the standard accounts of laws that prevents us from doing so.

C1P90 I'll argue that idealism is compatible with both substantivalism and relationalism. The idealist relationalist denies that spacetime exists as an independent aspect of physical reality. The threads of the tapestry stand in spatial relations to each other, and that's what it is for there to be space. These relations are *phenomenal* relations insofar as they are relations among phenomenal elements. For the substantivalist idealist, there is an absolute

spacetime that exists independently of the (phenomenal) objects within it. This might seem incoherent. (Surely qualia don't exist within space!) But it's only incoherent given a materialist understanding of space. It doesn't make sense to think of qualia as existing within a *physical* space. But the substantivalist idealist understands spacetime differently: as the sort of four-dimensional array that houses phenomenal properties. I propose two ways to make sense of this, one of which holds the promise of reconciling eternalism with common-sense intuitions about temporal passage.

C1P91 We'll also consider the biggest challenge to idealism: that of ontological profligacy. Nontheistic idealism entails that physical objects have a huge number of phenomenal aspects. The leaf includes not only phenomenal greenness, but phenomenal indistinct-coloredness (as perceived by the red-green colorblind), phenomenal redness (as perceived by my inverted twin), phenomenal infrared (as perceived by the snake), and so on. I'll argue that this sort of ontological profligacy is not such a terrible cost after all.

C1P92 Chapter 6 concludes with an exploration of the theoretical virtues that come from embracing the conjunction of a nontheistic idealist metaphysics and a naïve idealist theory of perception. In contrast with materialism, idealism offers a picture of reality and our place within it according to which (i) the nature of reality is intelligible to us. Not only is reality intelligible, (ii) it is as it appears, and (iii) its nature and character is something that we can grasp directly. The intuitive picture of the world that we began the book with is vindicated. The upshot of this is that we can have our science (Chapter 5) and common-sense too.

C1P93 One might have thought that we didn't need to uproot our metaphysics in order to achieve this. This is the claim of naïve realism. Naïve realists about perception take us to directly grasp the character of the world, and yet take reality to be material (i.e., not fundamentally experiential). Property naïve realists take appearance properties to be mind-independent primitive properties possessed by physical objects. If these naïve realist views are tenable, one needn't embrace idealism in order to capture common-sense.

C1P94 But naïve realism isn't tenable. Chapter 6 argues that that perceptual naïve realism can only be rendered intelligible if the external world has the correct nature: if it's fundamentally phenomenal. This is because the acquaintance relation on which the naïve view depends can only intelligibly relate us to phenomenal items. If we want to account for the epistemic access we naïvely take ourselves to have on the world, we must embrace a phenomenal conception of reality. We must embrace idealism.

C1P95 Nor does property naïve realism offer a viable way of capturing the world of common-sense. We will see that property naïve realists must either arbitrarily privilege certain appearances over others, or abandon the idea that colors are manifest in their appearances. Further, they face serious challenges in explaining how we can be *aware of* color—undercutting the rationale for embracing the view. The world of common-sense is available to us if *and only if* reality is fundamentally experiential.

C1P96 The upshot of this chapter, and of the book, is *not* that you *have to* be an idealist. I have already noted: you don't. My aims are, rather, (a) to present a fully fleshed out idealist picture of reality and our place within it, and then (b) to assess this picture holistically against alternative conceptions of reality and our place therein. Chapters 2–5 develop the idealist's positive picture of the world. Chapter 6 turns to the second aim. If I'm right that there are both idealist and materialist worlds that subjectively appear to their inhabitants the way that our world appears to us, the question is not *must we* embrace idealism, but rather: how much confidence should we have that *the actual world* is among the idealist worlds, versus among the materialist worlds? I argue that the best way to do this is compare the complete worldview on offer from idealism against the complete worldview on offer from materialism. When we do this, idealism looks far more compelling than most philosophers suppose.

C1P97 The book concludes by assessing nontheistic idealism against other "mind-first"[19] alternatives, including panpsychism, phenomenalism, and theistic idealism.

C1P98 While I'll often write about "nontheistic idealism" as though it were a single unitary view, it is actually a family of related views, members of which will be noted in passing throughout the book. One way of looking at the book is as a mix-and-match recipe for constructing a plausible idealism. There are a number of choice points throughout the book. We've already seen one: whether the physical world is a mind or not, and (if so) whether it's a robust addition to our ontology. Each way of answering this question will lead you to a different ultimate account of the world—perhaps with different costs and virtues. Other choice points concern whether cognitive phenomenology is part of the physical world (Chapter 2), the relationship between our minds

[19] This is a term coined by Michael Pelczar to capture what's in common between theories like idealism, phenomenalism, and panpsychism, in which consciousness plays a central role. While not all of these theories make consciousness fundamental, none of the theories can be stated without making reference to consciousness.

and the physical world (Chapter 3), the nature of spacetime (Chapter 5), and whether to reintroduce traditional divine attributes (Chapter 6). At each point, I'll make the case for the position that strikes me as the most plausible, and will stipulate my answer for the rest of the book. But readers may disagree. I encourage readers to make their own judgments at these choice points: to see what sort of idealism you wind up with, and to assess how it fares in relation to the virtues discussed in Chapter 6.

C1P99

The space of possible worlds is vast. The space of idealist possible worlds is vast. Just as when considering the choice between materialism and idealism, when considering different forms of idealism, it seems to me that the question is not *must* we embrace this version of idealism or that one, but rather, which sort of idealist world is the actual world most likely to be? It seems to me that the physical world we live in doesn't include cognitive phenomenology (Chapter 2). It seems to me that our non-perceptual experiences are not a part of the physical world (Chapter 3). But your mileage may vary. Drive it your way.