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It's nice to see a recent book on phenomenism out there like *Phenomenalism* by Michael Pelczar. I think that he and I both agree with Mill's invention is under-appreciated.

2

I call my own approach, which is semantically driven, *neutral* phenomenism. I take philosophy's "semantic mission" from logical positivism. For contrast, here's Pelczar's own, differing approach.

Phenomenalists think that possibilities of sensation are enough to account for the prima facie orderliness and intersubjective coordination of actual experiences. *There's no need to posit a further level of reality that grounds or underlies the possibilities.*

We do agree on the part I've emphasized. To "needless" I might add "meaningless" or "confused."

3

But I don't think phenomenism needs to explain the orderliness. Instead I'd point out that "things-in-themselves" *were never an explanation in the first place.*

4

The world as a whole is necessarily a brute fact, something beyond explanation.

5

But we don't tend to look for explanations of the expected anyway. It takes, for instance, a phenomenologist to notice what is too close, too familiar —and to find this so fascinating in the first place.

6

I prefer to read or creative misread Mill as a proto-phenomenologist. I take his point to be that *the objects we discuss, and care about, are*

the objects of experience.

7

I think of Mill's phenomenalism as quite close to this strange passage in Kant.

That there may be inhabitants in the moon, although no one has ever observed them, must certainly be admitted; but this assertion means only, that we may in the possible progress of experience discover them at some future time. For that which stands in connection with a perception according to the laws of the progress of experience is real. *They are therefore really existent, if they stand in empirical connection with my actual or real consciousness, although they are not in themselves real, that is, apart from the progress of experience.*

Is this not a denial of "things in themselves" ? Or things *apart from the progress of experience* ?

But elsewhere Kant seems to say otherwise. It's easy to imagine Mill isolating an internally coherent and illuminating fragment like this and developing it. Perhaps Mach, who read Kant in his youth, did the same.

8

Is phenomenalism exciting, revolutionary, counterintuitive ? Or is it a reactionary defense of certain aspects of common sense against speculating philosophers, with their apple behind the apple ?

9

Phenomenalism (as I prefer to understand it) recovers the original meaning of objects from a particular, traditional mystification. Did non-philosophers ever pay attention to this mystification, allow themselves to be guided by it ?

We ontologists are poets heard only by our rivals.

Let me defend my take on phenomenism as a return to the everyday meaning of objects with a quote from Mill.

Matter, then, may be defined, a Permanent Possibility of Sensation. If I am asked, whether I believe in matter, I ask whether the questioner accepts this definition of it. If he does, I believe in matter: and so do all Berkeleians. In any other sense than this, I do not. But *I affirm with confidence, that this conception of Matter includes the whole meaning attached to it by the common world, apart from philosophical, and sometimes from theological, theories.* The reliance of mankind on the real existence of visible and tangible objects, means reliance on the reality and permanence of Possibilities of visual and tactual sensations, when no such sensations are actually experienced.

Mill clearly views himself as *returning* from theories. It's as if Mill is defending a laudable awareness of the lifeworld against these theorists. His talk of reliance hints at the practical significance of objects. The "objects of experience" (just objects, for the non-theorist) might feed children or burn down the houses. We seek good experiences, avoid bad experiences.

Is (my version) of (neutral) phenomenism a "naive realism" ? I think so, but naive to the point of sophistication, I hope, in its embrace as aspect as an alternative to representation.

Just how neutral is this neutral phenomenism ? James puts it this way: *consciousness does not exist.* We undo the work that Kant completed, which was vacuuming up the richness of the world and placing it in the mind. So we empty this subject to repopulate the world.

This is necessary because logic is not personal, not local. The ontological forum is ontology's necessary entity, for this forum is implicit in the

concept of ontology.

14

In other words, either this conversation is real, or we are not doing science (not partaking in rational inquiry, etc.) This anti-skeptical point is carefully targeted only at pretend skeptics who actually seek to impose a (positive) theory of knowledge. For instance, Kant's "reality-in-itself" is a popular postulation, often taken as tautological, due to a conflation of various basic philosophical concepts. (Roughly, this reality-in-itself seems to be an all-purpose truthmaker. It never occurs to our daring thing-in-itselfers to demystify the concept of truth.) Note, however, that only performative contradiction is called out. The true skeptic, who doesn't make earnest ontological claims, isn't addressed.

15

Indirect realism is an insufficiently mitigated solipsism. It's so logically flawed that its continuing popularity among theorists would be a scandal if anyone cared.

16

Bringing these points together, I emphasize that indirect realism's mitigated solipsism complicates or even rules out the ontological forum. We have to be in the same world, appealing to evidence in that same world, and semantic norms in our shared language, in order to make a case for this or that grand ontological thesis about that world in the first place. To make a rational case requires that that world include genuine normativity, an ethical aspect or structure, and this is already in semantic norms, but it is more explicitly latent in the concept of rationality.

17

I hope I've shown why the world should take priority, even if we also stress its "first-personal-ness." The way it is given in or as a system of phenomenal streams. (I discuss this in detail elsewhere.) These "streams of phenomenal consciousness" are better thought of as *stream-*

18

Time becomes central in such a conception. Objects offer one aspect now, another aspect later. The object is not hidden behind its aspects. It is their temporal synthesis. It is also their logical, which is to say interpersonal, synthesis. We all talk about the same objects, though presumably we've always only seen differing aspects of that object. We "talk through" this difference. Indeed, we mostly just take the aspect for the object, and only phenomenological analysis reveals the object as a temporal logical synthesis.

19

To say it in another way: what is called "mind" is better thought of as a streaming of a repopulated lifeworld. My toothache, like my crush or my nightmare, is part of the world, because we can all talk about my toothache, my crush, my nightmare. We can reason about such entities. We can intend them logically as temporal synthesis of actual and possible aspects or moments or appearing.

20

Most of the mind is put back out in a world that is therefore promoted to its original fullness, called of course the "lifeworld." But we still need to account for the privacy and coherence and stubborn association with a body of this or that integrated series of aspects.

The world is not a jumble of aspects. It comes in intensely organized and even purposeful streams, which are just "streams of experience" in the earlier language, which is illuminating but insufficiently neutral. If we careful to avoid the traditional mitigated representational solipsism.

21

We don't want to miss that objects have their shattered being *only* in such streams. There is no aperspectival sofa. There is just the unity, interpersonal and temporal, of its appearings, which we also call moments. But we might also call them shards, to emphasize the shattered

mode of being of such entities. In fact of all entities.

22

Because the being of all entities is shattered and dependent on being streamed, always only a moment at a time, it has been said that being *is* time. The only “real” (enduring) entity is disclosure itself. All The phenomenal stream is like a moving spotlight in a vast darkness. No entity is ever completely present. The whole of it is never lit. In this sense time dominates being. Being “needs time” to show itself.

23

I hope you will forgive the poetry above, written as the sun rises and birds start cheeping.