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Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich (review)

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the color but nothing of the figure or magnitude of the object.”² On the surface it would appear that Reid is making the elementary blunder of assuming that a blurry shape is no shape at all. Although this point is particularly important in discussing the ontological status of visible figure, Daniels passes over this problem without even commenting on the “merit of [Reid’s] thought experiment.”

My own view is that Reid’s problem here is caused by his unquestioning adoption of Berkeley’s principle that a sensation can resemble nothing but another sensation (premise 2, above). Since in Reid’s geometry of visible figure, visible figure does in certain cases resemble real (tangible) figure, it is crucial for Reid to argue that visible figure is not a sensation. Although he believes visible figure to be “real and external to the mind” he never does actually explain what its ontological status is, and Daniels does not solve this problem either. The point is that Reid employs dubious arguments to prove the independence of color from figure, and he puts visible figure in some questionable ontological status, all just to preserve Berkeley’s view that sensations can only resemble other sensations. Perhaps he would have been better off to reject premise 2 also.

In conclusion, then, this book is informative, interesting, and well written; one wishes only that it were longer. It should be a starting place for future work on Reid, as well as a useful source in the history of mathematics, psychology, and epistemology. Its faults are in what is left unsaid more than in what is said, and it will provide suggestive insights towards the reading of an undeservedly neglected philosopher.

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Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich. By Gerold Prauss. (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1974. Pp. 238. DM 39. Paper)

In the literature that immediately followed the publication of Kant’s first *Critique*, throughout German Idealism, later nineteenth-century neo-Kantianism, and even contemporary versions of Kant, one single issue seemed continually most problematic in successfully formulating a coherent, systematic critical philosophy. This, of course, was the problem of “things in themselves,” a presupposition without which, as Jacobi first complained, one could not enter the Kantian system, but with which, one could not remain. Simply put, the ambitious attempt of Prauss’s new book is to resolve that issue once and for all. His main line of argument throughout is to claim that all of the various paradoxes generated in the literature depend, in one way or another, on a missapprehension of the correct “transcendental-philosophic” meaning of “things in themselves,” in favor of a non-Kantian “transcendent-metaphysical” interpretation. Prauss’s case is that once the correct nature of Kant’s complex “non-empirical science of the empirical” is made clear, all the “metaphysical” and “empirical” paradoxes associated with the doctrine of things in themselves vanish.

His first step toward that end is simply to point out that the traditional Kant literature, from the start, biases its case by an emphasis on the very phrase, “thing in itself” (*Ding an sich*), with its “metaphysical” connotations, an emphasis not supported in Kant’s texts. To demonstrate this bias, Prauss simply counts up all the occurrences of the phrase in the relevant Kantian passages. He finds that of the 295 occurrences, only 37, or 13% use the short phrase, *Ding an sich*. He finally shows that the only clearcut uses of this “short form” number a mere 6% of the total. The other 94% mention, in one way or another, *Ding an sich selbst*, which Prauss argues is an expression of

² *Inquiry*, p. 118.

the correct Kantian formulation, "things—considered in themselves" (*Dinge—an sich selbst betrachtet*). The Kant literature, by ignoring this far more frequent formulation in favor of the simpler "things in themselves," confuses the correct, transcendental meaning of "in itself." That is, the traditional difficulties all ignore the fact that "*an sich*" is an "adverbial" qualification, modifying our mode of considering things, rather than an adjectival expression, qualifying "the things."

This adverbial interpretation then raises three problems for the remainder of Prauss's book. First, he must show the place of this properly transcendental concept within Kant's whole system, or within what Prauss calls Kant's "two-fold theory of transcendental reflection." Secondly, he must deal with numerous passages where Kant seems to be quite clearly talking *about* a "thing in itself," and *not*, as Prauss would have it, "an empirical thing—considered in itself." Finally, connected with this second issue, Prauss must deal with the problem of "affection," especially the issue of whether we are "affected by" things in themselves.

But if Prauss is right, as supported by passages in the *Opus Postumum* ("an object in itself . . . does not mean an actual thing, which stands over against objects of sense. . . ."), what would it mean to consider an empirical thing *both* "as" an appearance and "as" in itself? Although Prauss eventually claims that this consideration is part of a "transcendental" reflection, he is first careful to distinguish the unique empirical sense in which Kant speaks of "appearances" and "objects in themselves." For Kant does occasionally mention empirical things in themselves (B45 and B60) and contrasts them with empirical appearances. But, Prauss claims, Kant here only wants to distinguish, on the *empirical* level, between mere subjective states, judged *as* merely subjective, and objective knowledge claims. Or: when construed empirically, "appearances" (*Erscheinungen*) denote only mere subjective phenomena ("this *seems* to me to be red"); and, empirically construed, an object "in itself" just denotes the correlate (*Phänomene*) of empirical judgments ("this body *is* heavy"). Such a distinction between judgments of perception, *Wahrnehmungsurteile* (about empirical appearances) and judgments of experience, *Erfahrungsurteile* (about empirical things in themselves) had been worked out in great detail in Prauss's earlier book, *Erscheinung bei Kant*,¹ and is simply presupposed in his argument here.

But this distinction is not at all the same as the transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves. In the first place, the empirical distinction contrasts two "numerisch-existenziell different" contents, a subjective event and an objective occurrence. Transcendentally, however, we are only considering the same event (the empirical phenomena) from two different epistemological perspectives. We do not now wish to contrast, "It seems to me that the sun is warming the stone" with "The sun is warming the stone," but we wish to consider "The sun is warming the stone" *as both* about appearances (*Phänomene*) and as objective (as possibly true or false). Consequently, to interpret the transcendental consideration of an empirical object or event as both an appearance and in itself, in the same way that we consider empirical seemings and empirical objects, would be to commit a paralogism—the paralogism Prauss claims has been at the core of most of the literature's discussion. Such a confusion "hypostatizes" a transcendental reflection into a metaphysical "thing-in-itself," "behind" or "over against" objective phenomena, in the same way that we seek the objective, "in itself" ground for empirical seemings.

Having excluded this empirical sense of appearances, Prauss plunges into his interpretation of Kant's "dual" transcendental reflection. The first step of this reflection is fairly straightforward; i.e., the theory of the necessary place of intuition, concept and judgment in any empirical knowledge (*Erkenntnis*). But Prauss adds a new wrinkle to

¹ (Berlin: Waler de Gruyter, 1971), reviewed in this *Journal*, XII, 3 (July, 1974), 403–405.

this "level." Kant had claimed that any determinate thing or event can only be meaningfully asserted to exist or occur as so "interpreted" by a knowing subject, and thus that all empirical objects could be meaningfully known only in terms of some "possible experience." Prauss claims that the main result of this "first level" reflection on the conditions necessary for possible experience is a Kantian solution to the ancient problems of meaning and truth generated by the classic and early modern *Abbildtheorie* of meaning. Kant can solve the problem of meaningful false propositions since the correlate of empirical judgments, appearances, can themselves be true or false in a way that real objects cannot. That is, according to this first reflection, any appearance is the "bringing" of an intuition to a concept (as opposed to "imaging being" or "picturing a fact"). An intuition can then be brought to the wrong concept and still result in a "meaningful" claim if it conforms to the *rules* for the meaningful subsumption of *any* intuition under a concept (or "categories," which, in a separate argument, can be proven to be, necessarily, those rules). All judgments are thus about "appearances" which have "sense" *only* according to these a priori, subjective rules of projection. Within the horizon of these conditions for sense, a judgment can be false and meaningful since appearances can be meaningfully projected in any number of ways that do not turn out to be true.

Such contents, projected (*entworfen*) a priori according to the rules without which experience could have *no* sense, form the basis for Prauss's interpretation of the last phase of this first level reflection, the "transcendental object." This object constitutes simply an "a priorische Vorleistung" according to which intuitions can be "interpretable" at all; or, finally, the transcendental object is a shorthand expression for the totality of schematized categories, a *Vorentwurf* of the only ways in which empirical intuitions can be brought to empirical concepts. Since this transcendental object, which Kant says defines the conditions for a something being a something at all (*etwas als etwas*), is a characterization both of the subjective aspect of empirical objects (the dependence of their intelligibility on the subject's conditions for meaning) and of the objective aspect of such objects (their being distinguishable from subjective seemings), the "projection of the transcendental object" connotes both a *genitivus subjectivus* and a *genitivus obiectivus*.

Now, Prauss has taken some pains to show that this reflection on the empirical is itself "non-empirical"; that it is not a theory of mental machinery, or psychology, but an analysis of necessary, transcendental-logical "conditions." However, he claims, Kant is also committed to demonstrating the implications of his analysis for empirical knowledge itself. It is only at this *second* level, which reflects on the results of the non-empirical conditions arrived at in the first level, and reflects on the implications of that analysis for empirical knowledge, that Kant can claim that "all knowledge is about appearances" or that it is "necessary" to consider an empirical object as both an appearance and a thing in itself. This second level reflection, although itself still non-empirical, would give us a "Wissenschaftstheorie einer nichtempirischen Wissenschaft vom Empirischen." This complete system may sound vaguely Hegelian, but Prauss, in a series of footnotes, rejects any hasty connection of this interpretation with German Idealism. He wants instead the unique Kantian sense in which claims about appearances and "things—considered in themselves" can be isolated in their proper systematic place.

On what Prauss calls the first level of this reflection, both the "subjective" and "objective" character of empirical knowledge had been explained. Knowledge was "subject dependent" because of Kant's *Deutungstheorie* of meaning; but it was also balanced by a consideration of the conditions for objectivity, or the transcendental object. Likewise, on the "second" level, when these epistemological results are interpreted in terms of empirical objects of knowledge, the same duality must be reflected. This results in the necessity of considering physical objects and events "as" appearances and

"as" in themselves. (Prauss believes that this difference in "levels" explains the difference between the "transcendental object" and "noumena," as at A253.) So, just as modes of "bringing intuitions to concepts" are not merely subject-dependent and thus arbitrary, but are circumscribed within objective rules for judging, so the *results* of any knowledge claim are not mere subjective "posits," but must too be "thought" in their non-phenomenal aspects. Or: every representation is dual—both itself an object of consciousness, *and* a representation "of an object." Thus, when we think an empirical appearance "in-itself," we are not thinking of any other object which lays at the ground of or "behind" these appearances. We are only making clear, within a transcendental theory of appearances, what is involved in claiming something about appearances *other than* their appearance character; that is, when we claim "objectivity." Thus "noumenon" should simply make explicit what is implicit in the concept of "phenomenon" (objectivity, considered *as such*).

But having made such a claim, Prauss now begins to sweep aside with uncharacteristic abruptness numerous problematic passages in Kant where quite another doctrine of things in themselves is suggested. According to Prauss, Kant simply did not "think through" the implications of his own analysis (and, amazingly, his own methodology), especially when he tried to assess the results of his non-empirical theory of experience in terms of actual empirical knowledge. (A superior example of this: the chapters on *Phenomena and Noumena*, and the *Amphibolies*, both oddly out of place in the architectonic.) Kant's confusion about his own enterprise leads him first to an empirical "hypostatization" of these results, and then to a transcendental-metaphysical doctrine. Noumena should only mean the concept of the "concretization" (*Konkretisierung*) of the transcendental object; it should be the results of Kant's first-level analysis construed empirically, or "in terms of" actual empirical knowledge.

But Prauss is now quite obscure in trying to describe what it would be like to consider these empirical results, or "concretizations" in themselves. He has made it clear that this consideration should not be a consideration of something *other* than appearances, but should be another kind of consideration of appearances. But this *Betrachtung* is still radically formal. Our recognition *that* appearances are not merely subjectively phenomenal may not be the same as a claim about *what* lies behind phenomena, and it may only be a "second-level" consideration of the empirical consequences of the critical theory of objectivity, but it is still far too ambiguous about what those features of experience *are*, if other than the transcendently conditioned aspects. Prauss has excluded the metaphysical interpretation of the thing in itself, the neo-Kantian *Grenzbegriff*, and the German Idealist attempt to mediate *Verstand* and *Vernunft*; he is left with some ambiguous requirement to "recognize" (*anerkennen*) what we cannot "know" (*erkennen*). But this just seems to open the door to another, more familiar interpretation, that presented by Krüger's explanation of teleology,² or a practically demanded recognition of the transcendently real within science. But Prauss is unfortunately silent about further implications of this odd "Herausforderung."

The last section of the book is a treatment of what Prauss considers the most egregious error resulting from confusing the various levels of Kant's analysis—the problem of affection. He first ridicules quite effectively the bizarre "double affection" theory popularized by Vaihinger and Adickes, and surviving in various interpretations today. His claim, consistent with his earlier argument, is that such an interpretation mistakes the transcendental reflective concepts of appearance and thing in itself with empirical concepts. And, indeed, affection is an empirical event like any other. Further, many of the traditional Kantian problems of affection can be clarified once we realize that the doctrines of intuition, concept, judgment etc. are not empirical concepts

² Gerhart Krüger, *Philosophie und Moral in der kantischen Kritik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1967), especially the essay "Der Masstab der kantischen Kritik," pp. 237–268.

and thus are not subject to an analysis which treats them as empirically affected. Or: meaning and truth cannot themselves be explained empirically without empiricism itself becoming a dogmatism. But, a sufficient, non-question-begging explanation would necessarily have to be "non-empirical" in Prauss's sense of "transcendental." As Kant puts it, the question to ask is not about the "origin" of experience, but what "in ihr liegt."

However, the last remarks by Prauss so exclude the "thing—considered in itself" from any relation with the issue of empirical affection, that he ends up leaving out any consideration of the one non-empirical, transcendental second-level concept that has traditionally been most problematic in formulating the Kantian theory of experience—the notion of "Angewiesenheit" or directedness *from* the given. In one sense, or as he would say, on one level, the problem of such "guidance" is simply empirical, as is the problem of affection. But, at the transcendental level, it must be possible to explain in what positive sense "thinking" (*denken*) an empirical object as "in itself" can contribute to an understanding of how, or *by virtue of what*, empirical knowledge is guided by empirical experience. But on this point, Prauss is simply ambiguous; occasionally calling such speculation "metaphysical"; at other points not condemning metaphysics, but, apparently, opening the way for considering it in its proper (perhaps practical) context.

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Il pensiero degli Idéologues: Scienza e filosofia in Francia (1780–1815). By Sergio Moravia. (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1974. Pp. 865. Lire 13,000)

The second volume of Sergio Moravia's magnum opus on the French Idéologues richly rewards the reader with careful scholarship and inspired insights into the late Enlightenment effort to construct the sciences of man and society. Where the historical and political study in the first volume (*Il tramonto dell'illuminismo* [Bari, 1968]) had dramatic and narrative continuity, this sequel excels in cogent *Ideengeschichte* of specific Idéologue themes. The major, well-substantiated thesis is the critical re-evaluation by Idéologues of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era of the thought of eighteenth-century *philosophes* such as Condillac, Diderot, Holbach, Helvétius, and Turgot.

Two of the four related but autonomous sections of the book are entirely new: Part I, "Cabanis and the Foundation of a Materialist Anthropology," and Part II, "The Reform of Psychology in France between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries." Part III, "Philosophy and Geography in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," is a revision of an article published in *Studies on Voltaire* in 1967, while Part IV is an augmented and refined version of *La scienza della società in Francia alla fine del secolo XVIII*, accessible with some difficulty in the Acts of the Tuscan Academy for 1967. The reader must be grateful to Moravia for bringing together in one volume the results of ten years of research. One regrets only the lack of an anthology of his many valuable articles on similar subjects.

Moravia attaches the most importance to the section on the physician-philosopher Cabanis, who wrote the *Rapports du physique et du moral* (1796–1802). He justifiably emphasizes the distance between Condillac's "statue-man" and the physiological empiricism of Cabanis. My own independent investigations of Cabanis fully support Moravia's contention that Cabanis revised the Cartesian "static-inert" view of matter with its requirement of a soul in man into a monist human physiology based on Haller's concept of the living fiber and the "sensitivity" of the Montpellier school of medicine. Moravia aptly compares Cabanis's anti-mechanist reductionism to the "materialism"