



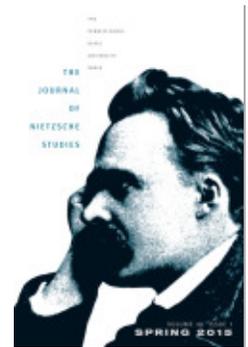
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*“Der Faule Fleck des Kantischen Kriticismus”:
Erscheinung und Ding an sich bei Nietzsche* by Mattia
Riccardi (review)

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Mattia Riccardi, *“Der Faule Fleck des Kantischen Kriticismus”: Erscheinung und Ding an sich bei Nietzsche*. Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2009. 243 pp. ISBN: 978-3-7965-2571-1. Hardcover, €54.60.

It has long been recognized that Nietzsche’s relationship to Kant and neo-Kantianism is of utmost importance for understanding fundamental aspects of his philosophy. Despite recent scholarship on this topic—such as Michael Steven Green’s *Nietzsche and the Transcendental Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), R. Kevin Hill’s *Nietzsche’s Critiques: The Kantian Foundations of His Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), and Tsarina Doyle’s *Nietzsche on Epistemology and Metaphysics: The World in View* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009)—there is still more to be said. In *“Der Faule Fleck des Kantischen Kriticismus”: Erscheinung und Ding an sich bei Nietzsche*, Mattia Riccardi traces the Kantian distinction between appearance (“Erscheinung”) and the thing-in-itself (“Ding an sich”) through various stages of Nietzsche’s career. Riccardi argues that whereas the young Nietzsche worked within a framework that presupposed the Kantian distinction, the mature Nietzsche eventually overcame the distinction with the relational ontology of the will to power. Although certain details of his developmental account are debatable and some may wish for a greater focus on Nietzsche’s published works, Riccardi’s ability to employ an extensive knowledge of Nietzsche’s sources in presenting a philosophically sophisticated account of the topic makes this volume a must-read for anyone interested in the Kantian roots of Nietzsche’s epistemology and ontology.

The work consists of eight chapters that follow the developmental scheme Riccardi finds in the section “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable” of *Twilight of the Idols* and applies to Nietzsche’s works. After an introductory first chapter, Riccardi devotes the next two chapters to showing how Nietzsche’s early thinking assumes the Kantian distinction between appearances and the thing-in-itself. In the fourth chapter, Riccardi examines Nietzsche’s initial criticisms of the thing-in-itself in the 1878 work, *Human, All Too Human*. The final four chapters provide a nuanced discussion of Nietzsche’s later philosophy of the will to power and its ambiguous relationship to the thing-in-itself.

As chapters 2 and 3 make evident, discussions of the sources of Nietzsche’s thought play a central role in Riccardi’s work. In arguing that the metaphysics of *The Birth of Tragedy* is circumscribed by Nietzsche’s belief in an unknowable thing-in-itself, Riccardi devotes separate sections of chapter 2 to explications of Otto Liebmann’s call for a return to Kant, Friedrich Albert Lange’s understanding of the thing-in-itself as a *Grenzbegriff*, Schopenhauer’s problematic equation of the will with the thing-in-itself, and Rudolf Haym’s critique of Schopenhauer’s position. In arguing that Nietzsche’s continued commitment to a thing-in-itself underwrites a skepticism about truth in the period immediately following the publication of *BT*, Riccardi interweaves commentary on Nietzsche’s *Nachlass* from this time and the 1873 unpublished essay “On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense,” with discussions of the work of Johannes Czermak, Hermann von Helmholtz, and Gustav Gerber. Although such *Quellenforschung* can be invaluable for understanding Nietzsche’s views, they sometimes displace, rather than supplement, more detailed analyses of, say, the Schopenhauerian metaphysics of *BT*, in which Nietzsche seems to transcend the limits of Kantian criticism, and the unpublished essay *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, in which Nietzsche seems to reject the thing-in-itself with the relational ontology he attributes to Heraclitus. Riccardi discusses these texts but only briefly. Although he is attentive to the metaphysics of *BT*, he approaches the issue through Nietzsche’s *Nachlass*, rarely referencing *BT* itself. With respect to *PTAG*, he refers to Nietzsche’s association of the thing-in-itself with Anaximander’s philosophy (37n42) and notes that Nietzsche attributes to Heraclitus the view that everything in space and time has only relative existence (70), but he then refers to a passage from section 11 of *PTAG* to argue that Nietzsche has yet to question the Kantian thing-in-itself (77). So although he successfully highlights the presence of a Kantian framework in Nietzsche’s sources and his *Nachlass*, Riccardi would need to do more exegesis of the aforementioned texts to show that the Kantian, rather than a Schopenhauerian or a Heraclitean, framework is dominant during this time.

The focus on Nietzsche's sources continues in chapter 4. The point of the chapter is to show that *HH* constitutes an intermediary stage between the assumption of a thing-in-itself in Nietzsche's early works and a rejection of the thing-in-itself in his later works. To make his case, Riccardi provides careful analyses of aphorisms 9, 10, and 16 of *HH* in the opening sections of the chapter. He then devotes the third and fourth sections of the chapter to Nietzsche's 1875 engagement with Eugen Dühring's *Der Werth des Lebens* and to a discussion of Nietzsche's criticism of the "metaphysical need" central to Schopenhauer's philosophy, respectively.

Although the contents of these sections do not detract from his larger argument, it is surprising that Riccardi does not situate his reading of these aphorisms within the larger context of *HH* or discuss other aphorisms in which the thing-in-itself makes its appearance. For instance, he says relatively little about the distinction between historical and metaphysical philosophy in *HH* 1. The first section of *HH* is important not only because Nietzsche's 1888 reworking of the aphorism indicates that he thinks of his own historical philosophy as a rejection of the "in itself" (*KSA* 14, p. 119), but also because the distinction between historical and metaphysical philosophy points back, again, to Nietzsche's apparent rejection of the thing-in-itself in his interpretation of Heraclitean becoming in *PTAG*. If this is right, it would seem that Nietzsche has committed himself to the relational ontology implicit in Heraclitean becoming prior to the formulation of the will to power in the later works, and so much earlier than Riccardi's account suggests.

Nonetheless, Riccardi is right about two points. First, Nietzsche's earlier works do include claims that presuppose a Kantian framework that he eventually abandons, and so even though there is evidence that Nietzsche is also interested in a relational ontology in these works, such an ontology sits uncomfortably alongside a Kantian framework that entails a skepticism about all ontological claims. Second, Nietzsche's turn to the will to power in his later works entails a rejection of the Kantian distinction between appearance and the thing-in-itself, even though, as Riccardi notes, aspects of the will to power resemble Kant's thing-in-itself.

The fifth chapter is the first of four dedicated to Nietzsche's mature ontology of the will to power. In the first three sections of the chapter, Riccardi turns to Nietzsche's critique of the mechanistic understanding of nature provided by the natural sciences, so as to show how Nietzsche presents the will to power as an alternative to such an understanding (117). Important here is the scientific concept of force. As Riccardi rightly argues, Nietzsche understands forces to be occult qualities that have no explanatory power (135). To fill the explanatory gap left by the natural sciences, Nietzsche follows Schopenhauer in using "man as an analogy" to ascribe an inner quality to these forces that he calls the will to power (137). In this way, the will to power takes on a systematic function similar to Schopenhauer's concept of the will as the explanatory basis for all events and, as Riccardi rightly argues, it therefore resembles Schopenhauer's thing-in-itself (134).

In chapter 6, Riccardi tries to counter this initial characterization of the will to power by examining Nietzsche's critique of the thing-in-itself. After devoting two sections to exploring the concept as it appears in Kant, Riccardi discusses the criticisms Nietzsche raises against Kant's concept. Here, Riccardi focuses on Nietzsche's claim that the thing-in-itself is a *contradictio in adjecto* (*BGE* 16). For Kant, the difference between appearances and the thing-in-itself can be understood as the difference between relational (extrinsic) and nonrelational (intrinsic) properties, respectively. Nietzsche's rejection of the thing-in-itself begins with his acceptance of the Kantian view that empirical objects are constituted by networks of relations. Nietzsche, however, rejects Kant's view that relational properties must be grounded in intrinsic properties, even if such properties are unknowable (166). According to Riccardi, Nietzsche defends his position by arguing that the so-called necessity involved in attributing intrinsic properties to empirical objects stems from a naive understanding of the self as a doer behind deeds and an equally naive belief that the structure of the world must correspond to the subject-predicate structure of language (171–74). Once these naiveties are overcome, there should be no objection to adopting a relational ontology that does away with the thing-in-itself.

In the penultimate chapter, Riccardi shows how the relational ontology implicit in the will to power eliminates the thing-in-itself. To do this, he returns to the relationship between the will to power and the concept of force. Beginning with Kant's understanding of force as *respectus* or relation, he then

moves from Afrikan Spir's understanding of force as relation to a discussion of Alfons Bilharz's, Gustav Vogt's, and Otto Caspari's concepts of will, force, and the thing-in-itself. Similar to Caspari's understanding of force, Nietzsche's wills to power are necessarily relational because they require resistance for existence. Therefore, wills to power do not preexist their relations, and so they are not substances or things-in-themselves. It is in this sense that Nietzsche's rejection of the thing-in-itself is rooted in the relational structure or *Widerstandscharakter* of the will to power (198).

In the final chapter, Riccardi tries to harmonize Nietzsche's inclination for systematic thinking (discussed in chapter 5) with his rejection of the thing-in-itself (discussed in chapters 6 and 7). After showing how Nietzsche wants to collapse the distinction between the real (*wirkliche*) and apparent (*scheinbare*) worlds found in the work of both Gustav Teichmüller and Maximilian Drossbach, Riccardi argues that Nietzsche's perspectivism, as well as his related talk of interpretation, is rooted in his relational ontology (212). Because this relational ontology does away with things-in-themselves, perspectivism not only makes appearance an ineliminable feature of what is now the only reality (215), but also lends appearance a positive valence (212). Riccardi concludes the chapter, and so the volume, by offering a nuanced discussion of Nietzsche's overcoming of the distinction between "true" and "apparent" worlds in *TI*, and then arguing that the relational ontology of the will to power minimizes the affinities with Schopenhauer's system (223).

Although I agree with the general thrust of the concluding chapter, focusing more on the context of *Beyond Good and Evil* may have provided another way of reconciling the two tendencies Riccardi identifies in Nietzsche's conception of the will to power. Specifically, Riccardi seems right to argue that Nietzsche attributes to the will to power the same explanatory and systematic role that Schopenhauer attributes to the will as a thing-in-itself. However, the presentation of the view in *BGE* makes it clear that Nietzsche, in contrast to a dogmatist like Schopenhauer, is *consciously* anthropomorphizing the world with the will to power in order to provide a systematic interpretation. If this is right, the will to power may be Nietzsche's own attempt to provide a systematic interpretation of all events, but may be one that consciously embraces its anthropomorphic and even potentially falsifying character (*BGE* 24).

Despite my wish for more detailed exegesis of Nietzsche's published texts and my concern with a developmental account that overlooks the presence of a relational ontology in Nietzsche's early writings, it should be emphasized that Riccardi's work constitutes an outstanding contribution to the existing literature. Not only is his general account of Nietzsche's mature ontology and epistemology largely correct in my estimation, his work is a treasure chest of *Quellenforschung*, and this short review cannot do justice to the way in which he employs sources to illuminate otherwise obscure concepts and passages in Nietzsche's oeuvre. For these reasons, Riccardi should be applauded for his meticulous study of Nietzsche's Kantian and neo-Kantian influences and the insights it provides in wrestling with Nietzsche's ontology and epistemology.

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Andrea Christian Bertino, *"Vernatürlichung": Ursprünge von Friedrich Nietzsches Entidealisierung des Menschen, seiner Sprache und seiner Geschichte bei Johann Gottfried Herder*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011. xv + 347 pp. ISBN: 978-3-11-025581-2. Hardcover, €129,95/\$182.00.

A common approach to the relationship between two authors—especially if one of them is Nietzsche—is to search for textual evidence that can prove their reciprocal or univocal influence. An alternative approach focuses on common features even if no direct influence can be shown. While the former approach often sacrifices philosophical creativity to philological detail, the latter risks neglecting the authors' distinctiveness.