**Adickes on Double Affection**

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1. **The Problem of Double Affection**

Kant distinguishes between the form of experience, which is determined by the subject’s mind, and the mater of experience, which is determined by how the subject is causally affected by objects. The form of experience is determinable and *a priori* knowable: I know *a priori* that objects of outer experience are spatiomporal and obey deterministic causal laws. The matter of experience, however, is determinate and *a posteriori*: I know only through experience that objects have the determinate sizes and shapes they do, and which causal laws they obey. The form of experience is subjective; outer objects are spatiotemporal and obey causal laws because space, time and the categories are the forms of intuition and understanding, respectively, for human cognitive subjects. The matter of experience, by contrast, is not determined by my forms of experience; I experience objects as having the determinate spatiotemporal properties and sensible qualities (e.g. colors, tastes, textures) I do because of how I am causally affected by objects.

This distinction between the form and matter of experience raises an obvious question: which objects causally affect us and give rise to the matter of experience? The most natural answer is that empirical objects are the causal source of the matter of experience. I experience objects as having the determinate spatiotemporal properties I do because those objects causally affect my perceptual system, and there is a law-like connection between the spatiotemporal properties those objects possess, and the way they are represented in the resulting perceptual experience. This ‘empirical affection’ also explains the non-spatiotemporal component of the matter of experience. In addition to spatiotemporal properties, my experience represents objects as having various sensible qualities: color, taste, texture, etc. This ‘sensory matter’ of experience is determined by the way in which objects affect my sense organs.[[1]](#footnote--1)

On the other hand, it might be thought that the matter of experience cannot come exclusively from causal affection by empirical objects, because empirical objects are appearances. Since appearances exist, and have the properties they do, in virtue of how they are represented in experience, empirical objects depend partly upon the matter of experience, and thus cannot themselves be the source of that matter. This line of reasoning suggests that the objects that causally produce the matter of experience by affecting subjects are non-empirical objects, things in themselves. On this view, there is a ‘noumenal affection’ in which things in themselves causally affect subjects. This noumenal affection produces sensations, which are synthesized by the subject’s mind into experience of empirical objects.

A third view would be that both kinds of affection are present in Kant’s theory of experience: the subject is affected by empirical objects, and by things in themselves. This view attributes to Kant a ‘double affection,’ and, as such, it is the conjunction of the ‘empirical affection’ and the ‘noumenal affection’ views. Given that there are a number of passages that support the empirical affection’ view,[[2]](#footnote-0) and almost as many that support the noumenal affection view,[[3]](#footnote-1) double affection would appear to be the interpretation best supported by Kant’s texts.

However, the doctrine of double affection has long stood in ill repute. It has found few proponents since Erich Adickes forcefully defended it in the 1920s.[[4]](#footnote-2) The *Historical Dictionary of Kant and Kantianism* entry on ‘double affection’ nicely summarizes the standard view:

*Double Affection*: a theory proposed by the Kant-scholar Erich Adickes to account for the multiple relationships holding between the self as it appears to us and as it is in itself as well as between the appearance of an object and the thing-in-itself . . . The textual evidence for such a reading of Kant is slim, not only in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but also in the *Opus Postumum*, on which Adickes's conjecture is largely based. Not surprisingly, the theory does not enjoy much support among Kant scholars, though it is still occasionally mentioned.[[5]](#footnote-3)

Even Desmond Hogan, who defends the doctrine of noumenal affection in a recent article, makes no mention of, and *a fortiori* no attempt to defend, double affection.[[6]](#footnote-4)

One reason double affection is unpopular is that one of its conjuncts is noumenal affection, which has been controversial ever since the publication of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It is problematic for Kant to posit a noumenal affection for two related sorts of reasons. First of all, it requires attributing the category ‘cause-effect’ to non-empirical objects, which appears to violate Kant’s restriction of the legitimate use of the categories to objects of possible experience. Second of all, it appears to be flatly inconsistent with Kant’s doctrine that we are in principle ignorant of things in themselves. Many of Kant’s readers, from 1781 to today, have sought to free him from the perceived albatross of noumenal affection.

The first alleged problem rests on a mistake. Kant’s ‘restriction’ of the categories to experience means that we cannot know through theoretical means whether things in themselves fall under the categories, but he allows that we can still coherently *think* of things in themselves as falling under the categories.[[7]](#footnote-5) Kant never denied the coherence of attributing categorical determinations to things in themselves; in fact, his theory of freedom requires attributing causal powers to rational agents considered as things in themselves.[[8]](#footnote-6) The second alleged problem for noumenal affection is not a problem specific to noumenal *affection*. Noumenal affection is not the only Kantain doctrine that appears to contradict the doctrine of noumenal ignorance. Kant repeatedly claims that things in themselves are not spatiotemporal, and that we cannot know anything about them. Whatever the right explanation is for why Kant took the doctrine of the ideality of space and time to be compatible with the doctrine of noumenal ignorance, it is likely that this will also be the explanation of why he took the doctrine of noumenal affection to be compatible with the doctrine of noumenal ignorance. In this respect, the doctrine of noumenal affection is no more or less suspect than the doctrine of the ideality of space and time, and no responsible Kant commentator would deny that Kant held the latter doctrine.[[9]](#footnote-7)

However, this paper will not focus on these problems with the doctrine of double affection, for they are problems that double affection inherits from one of its conjuncts, noumenal affection. These are problems *for* double affection, but not the problem *of* double affection. The main problem with double affection *per se* is unique to double affection, because it purports to show that noumenal and empirical affection are incompatible. It is a problem of causal exclusion: the causal role of the thing in itself in producing experience appears to exclude any causal role for the empirical object in producing experience. The reason for this apparent causal exclusion of empirical objects by things in themselves is that empirical objects are appearances of thing in themselves.

What it means for empirical objects to be appearances of things in themselves is a highly contested question in Kant scholarship, and it is not my intention to address it directly in this paper. However, I think all partisans to the dispute about Kant’s idealism can agree to the following principle: if *x* is an appearance, if *x* is *F*, then *x* is *F* in virtue of being experienced to be *F*, as long as we appropriately constrain what counts as ‘experience’ and as long as we restrict *F* to ‘empirical’ properties, i.e. properties objects are represented as having in experience.[[10]](#footnote-8) Where various interpretations of Kant’s idealism differ is what makes this claim true.

This means that Kant is committed to the following two theses:

(*Empirical Affection*) For some appearance *x* and empirical property *F*, in standard cases, *x*’s having *F* causes S to experience *x* as *F*.

(*Transcendental Idealism*) If *x* is an appearance and *F* is an empirical property, if *x* is *F* then *x* is *F* in virtue of S experiencing *x* as *F*.

The first principle is just a restatement of empirical affection: the matter of experience is produced by causal affection by the empirical object. For instance, I experience the bust of Attila on my mantel as having the shape it does, because the bust’s having that shape causes me to experience it as having that shape. The second principle is just the principle I discussed earlier, restricted to empirical properties. But these two principles are not consistent. Intuitively, they are inconsistent because an object that has a property in virtue of being experienced to have that property cannot itself be the cause of that experience. To make this inconsistency more vivid, consider the following, highly plausible claim:

(*Exclusion*) If *p* in virtue of *q*, then the fact that *p* does not cause it to be the case that *q*.[[11]](#footnote-9)

This principle – which I will call the ‘Exclusion’ principle – invokes the in-virtue-of relation. The in-virtue-of relation describes a non-causal order of metaphysical dependence between facts (or propositions, or states-of-affairs, etc.).[[12]](#footnote-10) If *p* in virtue of *q*, then *q* is a metaphysically *more basic* fact than *p* – *q* can be cited to explain *p*, but *p* cannot be cited to explain *q*. If the fact that *q* lies at a *deeper* level than the fact that *p*, then *p* cannot cause *q* to obtain. Since *p* obtains in virtue of *q*, causing *q* to obtain *just is* causing *p* to obtain. Therefore, if *p* were to cause *q*, *p* would cause itself to obtain. Perhaps there are self-causing facts, but facts about the properties of empirical objects are surely are not among them.

If we accept the Exclusion principle, we see that two aspects of Kant’s theory of experience are incompatible with one another: the empirical story, according to which the empirical object causes experience, and the transcendental story, according to which the outer object is merely the appearance of a thing in itself to the subject. This is the problem I will focus on in this paper. While, technically, this is a problem faced by any interpretation of Kant that attributes to him both the doctrine of empirical affection and the doctrine of transcendental idealism (as understood above), it is especially acute for the doctrine of double affection, for it purports to show that noumenal and empirical affection are incompatible.

I want to make clear that this problem for double affection is not a problem of causal over-determination. There is no reason in principle why Kant could not admit that subjects’ perceptual states are causally over-determined, having both a phenomenal cause and a noumenal cause. The Exclusion principle shows that it is not a matter of over-determination but a matter of simple metaphysical impossibility that prevents appearances from being causes of the very perceptual states in virtue of which they exist and have their empirical properties.

In this paper I first explain the best worked-out and most influential extant theory of double affection, that of Erich Adickes, and explore how he would resolve this problem by distinguishing between the “*Ich an sich*” and the empirical “*Ich*.” I then argue that Adickes’s solution is untenable.

**2. Adickes’s solution**

In two classic works from the 1920s – *Kant und das Ding an Sich* (1924) and *Kants Lehre von der doppleten Affektion unseres Ichs als Schlüssel zu seiner Erkenntnistheorie* (1929)[[13]](#footnote-11) – Erich Adickes defends a strongly metaphysical reading of Kant’s idealism, in which the doctrine of double affection plays an important role. On Adickes’s interpretation, Kant takes as one of the starting-points of his philosophy that in experience we are causally affected by a plurality of mind-independent objects.[[14]](#footnote-12) Adickes identifies these mind-independent objects with things in themselves. Although transcendental philosophical investigation forces us to abandon many of our pre-philosophical assumptions about these objects – for instance, that they are spatiotemporal and that ordinary empirical objects are among them – it does not give us any reason to doubt their existence as mind-independent loci of causal activity.

Adickes holds what in the contemporary Kant literature would be described as a ‘metaphysical one object’ view of the relation between appearances and things in themselves.[[15]](#footnote-13) It is a ‘one object’ reading in that it takes the appearance and the thing in itself to be one and the same object; for Adickes, talk about an empirical object and talk about the thing in itself that is its ‘substrate’ are two different ways of considering one and the same object: as it appears to us, and as it is in itself.[[16]](#footnote-14) A thing in itself is a non-spatiotemporal mind-independent bearer of force that appears to us as a spatially extended bearer of moving forces that operate in space and time. What makes Adickes’s ‘one object’ reading *metaphysical* is that this distinction between two ways of considering the one object (as thing in itself, as appearance) arises from a metaphysical distinction between properties the object has, and properties the object merely appears to have.[[17]](#footnote-15)

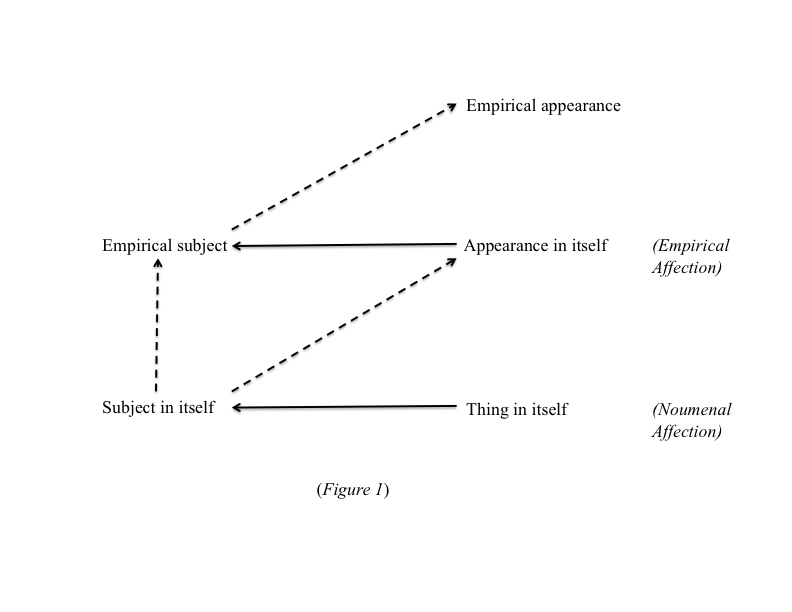
The central feature of Adickes’s version of the doctrine of double affection is the distinction between the subject as she is in herself, and as she appears. Call the first the subject *in itself* and the second the *empirical subject*. The subject in itself is outside of time, outside of space, and has free will. The empirical subject has temporally ordered psychological states (some of which are of outer objects, some of which are of other inner states), which are part of the deterministic causal order of the empirical world, the world as it appears to the subject in itself. But it is important to realize that these are not distinct subjects. They are two aspects of one and the same cognitive subject: the subject considered as she is in herself, and the subject considered as she appears to herself through inner sense.[[18]](#footnote-16)

Adickes’s theory also depends heavily upon his interpretation of the distinction between appearances *as they are in themselves* and *as they appear to the subject.* Adickes reads Kant as holding a familiar Lockean view about primary and secondary qualities: considered in themselves, empirical objects are spatiotemporal nexuses of moving forces. They do not have sensible qualities like color, taste, texture, etc. However, they affect the subject’s sense organs, and cause her to experience them as colored, tasty, textured, etc.[[19]](#footnote-17)

The distinction between the empirical subject and the subject *in itself* combines with the distinction between the appearance *as it appears* and the appearance *in itself* to produce Adickes’s sophisticated version of the doctrine of double affection. The thing in itself causally affects the subject *in itself*, generating in the subject *in itself* representations of objects. The appearance *in itself* is the object represented by the representations in the subject *in itself*. An appearance *in itself* exists and has its properties in virtue of the subject *in itself* representing it existing and having those properties. While Adickes is not especially clear on this point,[[20]](#footnote-18) I take it that one of the objects the subject *in itself* represents is itself; the representations had by the subject *in itself* include representations of that very subject. However, since those representations are temporal, they do not present the subject in itself as it really is, but only as it appears. The empirical subject, therefore, is the subject insofar as it is represented in its own inner representations. The empirical subject possesses temporally ordered psychological states, while the subject in itself is atemporal. These are not two different subjects, but one single subject, considered as it is, and as it appears to itself.[[21]](#footnote-19)

The appearances in themselves affect the empirical subject, producing representations that include not only spatiotemporal content, but sensory qualities as well. Since the appearance in itself does not have sensory qualities, these representations had by the empirical subject are representations of the ‘empirical appearance,’ the appearance in itself considered as it is represented by the empirical subject. The appearance in itself and the empirical appearance are not two distinct objects, but one object considered as it is in itself (equivalently, as it appears to the subject in itself), and as it appears to the empirical subject.

We therefore have two separate causal relations. At the level of noumenal affection, the affecting object is the thing in itself and the affected object is the subject in itself, and the product of noumenal affection is the representation (of the appearance in itself) in the subject in itself. At the level of empirical affection, the affecting object is the appearance in itself, the affected object is the empirical self, and the product of the affection is the representation in the empirical subject (of the empirical appearance). Adickes’s theory of double affection is graphically represented in figure 1, where solid lines designate causal affection and go from agent to patient, and dotted lines designate representation and go from representing subject to represented object.[[22]](#footnote-20)



The problem of double affection was formulated earlier as the inconsistency of three claims:

(*Empirical Affection*) For some appearance *x* and empirical property *F*, in standard cases, *x*’s having *F* causes S to experience *x* as *F*.

(*Transcendental Idealism*) If *x* is an appearance and *F* is an empirical property, if *x* is *F* then *x* is *F* in virtue of S experiencing *x* as *F*.

(*Exclusion*) If *p* in virtue of *q*, then the fact that *p* does not cause it to be the case that *q*.

Adickes’s solution is that the representations and the subjects of those representations in the first two principles are distinct. On Adickes’s view, they should be formulated:

(*Empirical Affection*†) For some *appearance in itself* *x* and empirical property *F*, in standard cases *x*’s having *F* causes the *empirical subject* to experience *x* as *F*.

(*Transcendental Idealism*†) If *x* is an *appearance in itself*, if *x* is *F* then *x* is *F* in virtue of the *subject in itself* representing *x* as *F*.

The appearance in itself exists in virtue of how the subject in itself represents it, but the appearance in itself causes representations in the empirical subject, not the subject in itself. Thus, the Exclusion principle is not violated at either of the two levels of affection within Adickes’ system. At the level of noumenal affection, the object that causally produces the matter of experience, the thing in itself, is not the object that exists and has its nature in virtue of the content of that experience, the appearance in itself. And at the empirical level, the object that causally produces the matter of experience, the appearance in itself, is not the object that exists and has its nature in virtue of the content of that experience, the empirical appearance. Adickes’s doctrine of double affection avoids the exclusion problem by carefully separating the subject in itself from the empirical subject, the appearance in itself from the empirical appearance, and the noumenal level of affection from the empirical level.

## Why Adickes’s Solution is Untenable

Adickes’s version of double affection solution faces a serious problem. How can the subject in itself represent the appearance in itself, which has spatiotemporal and categorical properties but is devoid of all sensible qualities?

Regarding the first problem, recall the Kantian distinction between the form and the matter of experience. For the sake of this discussion, I am going to focus on the intuitive form of experience, so I will temporarily ignore the categories and focus on space and time as forms of outer experience. The forms of outer experience do not by themselves determine the fully determinate spatiotemporal features of objects represented in experience. If they did, we could know *a priori* the fully determinate size, shape and motion of empirical objects. The *matter* of experience includes not only sensory qualities like color, taste, smell, etc. but also fully determinate spatiotemporal properties. I do not experience outer objects as merely spatial; I experience them as having fully determinate sizes, shapes, locations, etc. and as possessing sensory qualities. But an experience has its fully determinate spatial content in virtue of its sensory content. This is just the familiar point that we experience primary qualities in virtue of experiencing differential patterns of secondary qualities. We see the shapes of things by seeing a difference in color or shading between the object and its background. We feel the shapes of things by feeling a difference in hardness between the object and the space that surrounds it. This is not a contingent empirical fact; the idea of a visual experience of an object as a distinct object that does not represent the object as differing from its background in some respect of color, shading, or lighting – or some difference in visible sensory quality -- is the idea of a visual experience human cognitive subjects cannot have.[[23]](#footnote-21)

Put in Kantian terms, we represent the determinate spatiotemporal contents that we do, not merely because of our forms of experience (which specify only the highly determinable spatiotemporal form of experience), but because of the matter of experience. Thus, we cannot represent determinate spatiotemporal objects without there being some matter to the experience. For instance, the *a priori* intuition of space is an experience of pure form, which is why it acquaints us with no real empirical object. For Kant, the matter of experience is always sensation, and sensation is the representation of sensory qualities. The problem I am raising for Adickes is: the subject *in itself* cannot experience objects without there being some matter to that experience, that matter must be sensation, and thus the subject in itself must experience objects as having secondary qualities. How could the subject in itself represent the determinate spatiotemporal features of objects without representing them as patterns of differences in some sensory manifold? If the subject *in itself* represents objects as having secondary qualities, then it cannot experience the appearance in itself, for to experience the appearance in itself is precisely to experience the appearance *without* its secondary qualities.

Adickes’s solution to the problem of double affection rests on the claim that the subject in itself experiences the appearance in itself. I have argued that this claim rests on the idea of an experience with fully determinate spatiotemporal content, but no sensory content. This violates a basic feature of Kant’s theory of experience: experience has both a form and a matter.

Some readers might object that my claim that we experience determinate spatiotemporal properties in objects by experiencing patterns of differentiation in a sensible manifold is incompatible with Kant’s famous discussion of ‘stripping away’ everything belonging to sensation and the matter of experience:

So if I separate from the representation of a body that which the understanding thinks about it, such as substance, force, divisibility, etc., as well as that which belongs to sensation, such as impenetrability, hardness, color, etc., something from this empirical intuition is still left for me, namely extension and form. These belong to the pure intuition, which occurs *a priori*, even without an actual object of the senses or sensation, as a mere form of sensibility in the mind. (A20/B35)[[24]](#footnote-22)

I take Kant’s point here to be that, given an object whose shape I already experience in virtue of the sensory content of my experience, I can abstract the represented shape and consider it on its own. In fact, I can construct that shape in pure intuition, without using empirical intuition (sensory perception) at all. This does not entail that it is possible to experience an outer object as having a shape, without experiencing that shape as a pattern of differences in a sensory manifold (e.g. of color).

This problem shows that Adickes’s solution to the problem of double affection is untenable. However, I do not think the problem of double affection is insuperable. I think it can be solved, and I think the doctrine of double affection adequately represents Kant’s own view and is philosophically defensible. However, defending either claim lies outside the scope of this paper.[[25]](#footnote-23)

1. See A28-9 and A92/B125. For a more nuanced view of Kant’s views on color, see the footnote to B70 and Lucy Allais, “Kant’s Idealism and the Secondary Quality Analogy” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 45(3), 459-84. [↑](#footnote-ref--1)
2. Kant clearly endorses empirical affection at A28, A92/B125, B208, A168/B210, A213/B260, *Prol* §13 Anmerkung II (4:289), *GMS* III (4:457), and the *Vorrede* to *MAN* (4:476). Furthermore, I take it to be implicit in Kant’s examples in the second Analogy of perceiving parts of a house (A191/B236) and of perceiving a ship sailing downstream (A192/B237), as well as the argument of the Refutation of Idealism (B274-279). Adickes discusses these texts and others in *Kants Lehre von der doppleten Affektion unseres Ichs als Schlüssel zu seiner Erkenntnistheorie* (Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr: Tübingen, 1929), 5-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
3. In the third chapter of *Kant und das Ding an Sich* (Berlin: Pan Verlag Rolf Heisse, 1924), Erich Adickes assembles an impressive array of textual evidence for this claim. See especially A190/B235, A387, A494/B522, 4:289, 4:314, 4:318, 4:451 and 8:215. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
4. *Kants Lehre von der doppleten Affektion unseres Ichs als Schlüssel zu seiner Erkenntnistheorie* (Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr: Tübingen, 1929) [henceforth, *Doppelte Affektion*] and *Kant und das Ding an Sich* [henceforth, *Ding an Sich*] (Berlin: Pan Verlag Rolf Heisse, 1924). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
5. Holzhey and Mudroch (eds.), *Historical Dictionary of Kant and Kantianism* (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 108. The claim that Adickes’s argument is based largely on the *Opus Postumum* is unfair; Adickes assembles extensive textual evidence from the first *Critique* itself for double affection. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
6. Desmond Hogan, “Noumenal Affection” *Philosophical Review* 118 (4): 501-532. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
7. See Bxxvi, A88/B120, B167n, A254/B309, 5:43, and 5:55. In this context, Hogan refers to several recent works that defend the application of categories to things in themselves; see “Noumenal Affection,” 504 and note 11 on that page. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
8. See A532/B560-A558/B586, and *KpV* (5:97-98). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
9. Readers concerned with attributing the doctrine of noumenal affection for either of these reasons should see the first section of Hogan’s “Noumenal Affection” for a convincing case that Kant in fact held that view. However, I find the rest of Hogan’s paper, in which he tries to show how noumenal affection and noumenal ignorance are compatible, highly problematic. However, that is outside the scope of this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
10. The restriction of *F* to empirical properties is necessary because empirical objects are appearances of thing in themselves, but are not represented in experience as being appearances of things in themselves. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
11. My presentation of this problem owes much to James Van Cleve’s discussion in *Problems from Kant* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 162-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
12. The ‘in virtue of’ relation has been the focus of some exciting recent work in metaphysics. See especially Gideon Rosen, “Metaphysical Dependence” in Hale and Hoffmann, ed., *Modality: Metaphysics, Logic and Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 109-135 and Paul Audi, "A clarification and defense of the notion of grounding” (forthcoming). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
13. See note 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
14. Adickes, *Ding an Sich*, 14-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
15. For a helpful overview of the literature on the subject, see Karl Ameriks in “Recent Work on Kant’s Theoretical Philosophy” in *Interpreting Kant’s Critiques* (New York: Oxford UP, 2003), 67-97. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
16. *Ding an Sich*, 20, 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
17. What is distinctive of metaphysical readings is not that they are formulated in terms of properties (they don’t need to be), but that take it that there is a *way the object is in itself*, independently of any perspective or standpoint. By contrast, ‘epistemological one object’ readings abjure any talk of how an object is in itself, independent of a perspective or standpoint on the object. For the epistemological reading, to talk of an object ‘in itself’ is to consider the object from a particular, highly abstract standpoint. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
18. *Ding an sich*, 24-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
19. *Doppelte Affektion*, 36-37, 67-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
20. In fact, in neither of Adickes’s books does one find an adequate story of how the empirical subject is generated by the self-directed representations of the subject in itself. While I think this is a source of significant difficulty in Adickes’s view, I want to focus on a different problem with this solution to double affection. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
21. *Doppelte Affektion*, 22-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
22. *Doppelte Affektion*, 39, 46-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
23. Cf. *Doppelte Affektion*, 74-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
24. Translation from *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Guyer and Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
25. See my “Who’s Afraid of Double Affection?” (ms). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)