

# Thing-in-itself

1868 | Some Consequences of Four Incapacities | W 2:238-9; CP 5.311

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At any moment we are in possession of certain information, that is, of cognitions which have been logically derived by induction and hypothesis from previous cognitions which are less general, less distinct, and of which we have a less lively consciousness. These in their turn have been derived from others still less general, less distinct, and less vivid; and so on back to the ideal<sup>n</sup> first, which is quite singular, and quite out of consciousness. This ideal first is the particular thing-in-itself. It does not exist *as such*. That is, there is no thing which is in-itself in the sense of not being relative to the mind, though things which are relative to the mind doubtless are, apart from that relation.

<sup>n</sup>By an ideal, I mean the limit which the possible cannot attain.

1905 | Materials for Monist Article: The Consequences of Pragmatism. Vols. I and II [R] | MS [R] 288:117-9

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A real is anything that is not affected by men's cognitions *about it*. An external object is anything that is not affected by any of man's cognitions (whether about it or about anything else) to whom it is external. Exaggerate this, and you have the conception of what is not affected by any human cognitions. Take the converse of this definition, and you have the definition of the *Ding an sich*, as that which does not affect human cognition.

1905 [c.] | Pragmatism, Prag [R] | CP 5.525

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An external object is anything that is not affected by any cognitions, whether about it or not, of the man to whom it is external. Exaggerate this, in the usual philosopher fashion, and you have the conception of what is not affected by any cognitions at all. Take the converse of this definition and you have the notion of what does not affect cognition, and in this indirect manner you get a hypostatically abstract notion of what the *Ding an sich* would be.

1913 | On the Meaning of "Real" [R] | MS [R] 930:23-25

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Immanuel Kant, incomparably the greatest philosopher of knowledge that ever was, the great scrutinator of Reality, has in one large part of his *chef d'oeuvre* a good deal to say about the *Ding an sich* meaning all that is independent at once of Perspection and of Understanding. He even many times uses the phrase in the plural, possibly as a help to feebler minds. But it seems impossible upon his own principles that any meaning whatever should rightly be attached to the phrase. What we can in some measure know is our universe in such a sense that we cannot *mean* anything of what may be "beyond." But the *Ding an sich* is very different from my idea of the Real, which is what I *opine*, or

incline to believe that the men wisest about it will some day come unceasingly (as long as such wise men there be) to opine to be be an element of the truth.