

himself—and these things for fifty years in America have brought nothing in the long run but disillusion and despair.

Mr. Fitzgerald. Oh, come now—even if it were true that we had all sold out, as you say, don't you think there is really a lot of fun in making money and a big thrill in the power it brings? Don't you suppose even the Goulds and the Hills and the Harrimans had their creative exhilaration? Think of being able to buy anything you wanted—houses, railroads, enormous industries!—food, drinks, automobiles, stunning clothes for your wife—clothes like nobody else in the world could wear—all the greatest paintings in Europe, all the books that had ever been written, in magnificent bindings! Think of being able to give a stupendous house party that would go on for days and days, with everything that anybody could want to drink and a medical staff in attendance and the biggest jazz orchestra in the city alternating day and night! I confess that I get a big kick out of all the expensive things in New York—Why, once I remember when I'd just arrived from the West, after I'd been away for a long time, and I came out of the Plaza after a couple of cocktails with a thousand dollars in my pocket and I looked around and saw that great creamy palace all blazing with green-gold lights and the taxis and the automobiles streaming up and down the Avenue—why, I jumped into the Pulitzer fountain just out of sheer joy!

Mr. Brooks. Well, I must think about what you say. And I'll write an answer to your letter. You know I really appreciate it very much. You mustn't think me ungracious. But this is a question which concerns me very much. You know, I am really much attached to America—and I am terribly sensitive to all her shortcomings. I really

wince at the figure she cuts upon the stage with the rest of the world. And I have thought that to find out our faults and confess them was the most salutary thing I could do. I'm sorry if I've sounded discouraging: I certainly never intended to be.

Mr. Fitzgerald. Well, I'm really sorry that we've bothered you like this. I do hope you'll forgive us.—Look: I don't suppose you'd like to come down to my house at Great Neck for over Sunday. We're going to have a little party. I suppose it would probably bore you to death—but there are going to be some people who really ought to be pretty amusing—Dos Passos and Gloria Swanson and Rube Goldberg and Princess Maria-novsky and Ring Lardner and Ernest Boyd and Marc Connelly and Sherwood Anderson—Anderson's really an awfully good egg, not pre-natal at all like his stories—The Triumph of the Egg, as we laughingly describe his social success—and then some dumb-bell friends of mine from St. Paul and a man that neither my wife nor I can remember the name of but he has a song about "Who'll bite your neck when my teeth are gone?" that's one of the funniest things you ever heard in your life!

Mr. Brooks. Why, really—I'd like to ever so much—but I'm afraid I can't. I have so awfully much to do just now. The James is really an awfully exacting job and since you accuse me of leaving out something I'll have to look into the novels again and go over the whole manuscript carefully.

Mr. Fitzgerald. Well, good-bye then: thank you for listening to the letter. I'm sorry you can't come down. A thousand apologies again.

Mr. Brooks. Not at all. A thousand thanks. I'll think over what you said. Good-bye.

EDMUND WILSON.

Kant after Two Hundred Years

A COLLEAGUE of mine once suggested that old books, philosophic classics, be sent out by philosophic journals for review, to be criticized as if they had just issued from the press. The device would be notable, if it could be acted upon, for bringing to light whatever in the book has stood the test of time as well as whatever is found congenial to contemporary taste and style. The two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Kant, falling in the month of April, suggests application of this method to the thinker who for the past seventy-five years supplied the bible of German thought. It also, however, suggests the difficulty of the task. Most philosophers since the days of the lucky early Greeks have been burdened by the weight of previous writers and the seeming need of carrying their technical ap-

paratus. But no other philosopher has assumed the burden as conscientiously as did Kant. He is so fraught with reminiscence of every other philosopher he has ever read that one is tempted to adopt the statement of an undergraduate who, when asked for the point of interest in Kant, replied that the only interesting thing was how he ever came to be.

There are thinkers full of ancestral piety, and there are thinkers who to themselves at least seem to care nothing for the past, in their eagerness to make a fresh start. It was the fate of Kant, whether fortunately or tragically, to unite the two dispositions in himself. As far as his conscious attitude toward the bases of past thought were concerned, he could hardly have objected to the epithet, given him by his contemporaries, of the

"all-destroying;" although he would certainly have added that he had destroyed only to rebuild on surer foundations. But at the same time almost every sentence he ever wrote is charged with reminders of previous thought. These reminiscences form his vocabulary. This is one reason why a whole library of technical commentaries has been written about Kant. But they also affect his way of looking at the world, and his sense of the problems and issues of philosophy—as vocabularies are likely to do. Sometimes one wonders if Kant ever looked a fact of life or nature directly in the face, or in any other way than through the medium of what previous thinkers had said and thought about it. I do not mean that Kant was peculiar in this respect. Philosophers like other professionals and specialists get caught in the intellectual machinery they are operating. Intellectual preparation is indispensable; then it seizes hold of us, and what was to have been a means of direct vision and interpretation becomes an end in itself.

But while Kant was not unique in this respect, he was preëminent. His period was not one of great historical sense; Kant could hardly be expected to have employed a historical method of interpretation. He used the distinctions with which his acquaintance with historical schemes made him familiar; even when he radically changed their meaning he preserved a terminology sanctioned by traditional usage—as for example in his taking over the Aristotelian and scholastic matter and form. He was extraordinarily sensitive to the ideas of every author he studied. He responded to Hume, Shaftesbury, Burke, and Rousseau as well as to thinkers with whom he was congenitally much more sympathetic. To raw experience, to experience in mass, he was remarkably insensitive. Even his marked proclivities for social and political reform in the direction of republican freedom and equality, seem to be conditioned by his intellectual response to Rousseau and other writers, rather than to be a direct response to what was going on about him.

At the same time, he gave a new turn to philosophical thinking; there is no doubt about that. He put an end to the old attempt to reach conclusions about matters of existence, whether soul, external nature or God, by mathematical and conceptual reasoning. The reasons he proffered have been punctured by modern mathematicians, but the result remains—that concrete experience, not logical conceptions by themselves warrant statements about matters of existence. At the same time, he shattered traditional empiricism by showing that the sensations upon which it depended require thought to get anywhere. All this part of his undertaking is, however, somewhat technical and professional. The significant human thing is that he made these changes in the interest of a system of belief which would give mechanical science,

conceived after the Newtonian pattern, complete sway in all matters of fact, in all matters whatsoever where thinking has a claim to intervene; while he reserved a higher ideal realm with which man's moral and religious interests are concerned, a realm where science has no business to enter and where it could say nothing. This was his great achievement: demarcation of two realms, one of mechanical science, the other of moral freedom and faith, connected yet independent, one beginning at the boundaries of the other.

Thus Kant to himself and to many in his own day was a revolutionary. There is no valid intellectual access, he taught, to the things of ultimate importance to man, the things with which traditional philosophy had been preoccupied, God, the soul, immortality, even the universe as an objective single whole. From this standpoint, all previous philosophy had been on the wrong track; it had been attempting the impossible. But the criticism which proved this conclusion, also proved, it seemed to Kant, the existence of a realm beyond scientific knowledge, a realm of whose being we are assured beyond peradventure by the necessities of moral experience. Nevertheless in his criticisms and constructions he worked with the distinctions, terms and issues of traditional philosophy. He reassorted them to make a new pattern; but he did not draw inspiration from a new and fresh personal partaking in the ultimate sources of new ideas—the realities of first-hand experience. See, he says in effect, the intellectual pieces with which past philosophers were occupied; see how these pieces never fitted together into a world-picture, except with the aid of deep-seated optical illusions. Now put them together in my way, according to my directions, and see how thoroughly and coherently they dovetail into a single picture.

The outcome of Kant's combination of piety toward the old with revolutionary intent was doubtless fortunate for his reputation, and for the influence of his writings for the last century, to an enormous extent in his own country and to some extent throughout the world. Yet it has a tragic phase. Solving a problem by dividing things, putting them in different places where they cannot conflict because they do not touch, is a dangerous procedure. It was a great comfort to many to know they could be as scientific and as mechanistically scientific as they desired in the realm of phenomena, and yet retain intact a superior world of ideal values in which freedom, instead of mechanical necessity, reigned. But the price paid for the comfort was unduly high. Science in such a régime becomes a technical occupation of an intellectual class; it is barren in morals, where fertilization by science is most needed, fruitful only in material appliances and machines used in the material sphere for mundane ends where the world is already too much with us. Morals be-

come an affair of formulas, often sublime in themselves, but without possibility of effective translation, intellectual or practical, into the affairs of the workaday world.

In general, the intellectual problem of Europe since the sixteenth century has been the conflict between inherited traditions and the results and methods of a new science. Even the man in the street is sometimes aware of this conflict, as in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the churches. But every philosopher has been confronted on some level of thought with the question.

The theories of the western world, outside of science and industry, are inherited from a spiritual idealism formulated in ancient Greece and taken over by the Christian church in the teachings of the fathers and the schoolmen. But the conceptions of science have seemed to point to a very different kind of world from that depicted in this philosophy. Yet the emotional, religious and moral life of the European world—of which of course America is culturally a part—and to a large extent its artistic activities and achievements, have been deeply intertwined with the view of nature and life which science appears to have discredited.

In some form or other every philosopher from Descartes to Comte, Spencer and Bergson has published a variant version of the terms upon which the tradition incarnate in the higher forms of western life and the new science can meet and get on together:—schemes of reconciliation, of attack by one side upon the other, of compromises with varying degrees of surrender, imposed on this side or that.

Kant sensitively felt the problem and valiantly wrought to solve it. But to many of us it seems increasingly clear that his methods and conclusions only postponed a vital and sincere facing of the question. A destructive revolutionary to many of his contemporaries, he now seems almost wholly on the side of the conservatives. What was revolutionary was largely a professional and technical matter, a transfer of certain issues and ideas from cosmic nature into human nature; it left the mind with no genuinely new ideas with which to meet and confront the predicaments of experience. It did not help men to use science in morals. The transfer was one of those intellectual tours de force that delight professional intellectualists and call out warm adherence and equally ardent opposition.

But the net human outcome was hardly more than a complete separation of the world of ideals and of facts, of moral practice and scientific knowledge, of aspirations and of necessities. Doubtless they had been almost hopelessly confused previously in their relations to each other. Certainly the place and office of each in experience and its relations to the other needed clearing up.

But it may be questioned whether confusion is not a more hopeful condition than clear-cut and wholesale separation. Confusion at least implies intersection, and a connection which might render co-operation possible.

Separation surrenders the concrete world of affairs to the domain of mechanism fatalistically understood; it encourages mechanical authority and mechanical obedience and discipline; while it sheds over a life built out of mechanical subordinations the aureole of a superworldly ideal, sentimental at best, fanatical and deadly at worst. Kant himself was truly a pious, honest and good soul, substantial to a degree. But the record of his influence and its consequences may cause one to wonder whether these qualities, even when combined with industrious learning and assiduous reflection, can compensate for the absence of that kind of intelligence which emerges only when a thinker is a first-hand partaker in the vital intellectual currents and issues of his own day—I do not say in its practical movements. Without knowledge of what has been said and thought, intellectual participation will not go far or deep. But Kant and the countless tomes written about him, stand a monument to the evil of that too professional and technical intellectual preoccupation which can see the world only at second-hand through problems which the past has formulated, through distinctions which dead thinkers have elaborated. An intellectual revolution is not of necessity a good thing; but a professed revolution compromised from the outset by subjection to the old and traditional is pretty assuredly a bad thing. A revolution in tradition that after all stays within the bounds of tradition is a boon to men who wish to be modern and conservative at the same time; who want to be both scientific and also idealistic in the ways sanctioned by the past. But it only postpones the day of reckoning. It is possible that the Great War was in some true sense a day of reckoning for Kantian thought, and that from henceforth interest in him will openly become more and more antiquarian in nature.

JOHN DEWEY.

Winter Bird

My bird, my darling,
 Calling through the cold afternoon!
 Those round bright notes,
 Each one so perfect
 Shaken from the other and yet
 Hanging together in flashing clusters!
 The small soft flowers and the ripe fruit,
 All are gathered.
 It is the season now of nuts and berries
 And round bright flashing drops
 On the frozen grass.

KATHERINE MANSFIELD.