THE history of philosophy is cumulative. Every fresh point of view may be considered an advance provided it is sufficiently comprehensive. And each in its turn must be fitted in a larger scheme.

Kant supposed that he had constructed a theory of knowledge which would have to be taken for granted by every future metaphysics. How well has his effort stood the test? In confronting this question one hundred and fifty years after the death of its author, we have the advantage of a long perspective which ought to lend to our vision some measure of detachment. But before we can answer we must first clear away the narrower and more exclusive conception held by those enthusiastic Kantians who, considering Kant's framework the largest possible, try to fit everything into it. They identify the philosophy of Kant with the greater scheme. Are they rendering justice in this? Remember that they run the risk for him of an all-or-nothing judgment in committing his final position to its consequences; which may mean having in the end to abandon the Kantian system altogether when it is discovered to fail

1. Kant's Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics, translated by Paul Carus (Chicago 1933, Open Court), p. 12. All references to this work (hereinafter Pro.) will be to this edition.
at accomplishing the entire task of philosophy. Asking so much of it is unfair to it, and might amount to risking the loss of what it does have that is of value. The best plan, it develops, is to clear away the excessive claims and to interpret the remainder in terms of what we have learned since Kant.

Kant set forth a metaphysics, but he did so for the most part in epistemological terms, just as Hegel set forth a cosmology in the terms of rational psychology. What we wish to assay here is the value of Kant’s findings from one contemporary point of view. Just what that point of view is, and how comprehensive, must emerge from the contentions which are made in the criticism and from the conclusions we shall reach.

To know what questions ought to be asked presupposes a range of answers; it assumes a philosophy. One might say paradoxically that there are no presuppositionless questions and metaphysics is the search for them. Kant begins from a more sophisticated position than that of most great thinkers. Perhaps first it will be necessary to explain why he cannot be accepted on his own terms. This will lead us from critical exposition to negative criticism. Then it will be argued in what way he can be accepted on our terms. Before we close we shall endeavor to look ahead of him, which is to say, ahead of ourselves with the advantage of what we have learned from our study of him.

Kant extended to his unborn followers all the courtesies of equivocation and thus guaranteed two sets of adherents whose vigorous conflicts have continued to elicit from all observers the recognition that his influence is still very much alive. Partly as a result of his carelessness in the use of technical terms, partly as a result of inherent inconsistency; and partly also perhaps as a result of a change of mind, the philosophy of Kant is to say the least ambiguous. Probably every serious student will have his own Kant, and the best result of such confusion is the persistent spread of his reputation. What is the genuine benefit of such a state of affairs? In terms of the pure Kantian doctrine (just in case there is indeed such a thing), nothing; otherwise, the