

by the colossal stupidity which for Bernanos is the 'chief cause of man's corruption', a stupidity seen at its most abject in the modern rootless intellectual. 'Experience taught me long ago that the fool is never simple and very rarely ignorant.'

Like Gill, Bernanos sees total war as the characteristic mark of our time, particularly in its divorce from morality and individual responsibility. 'A collective group has no conscience.' 'We are not witnessing the natural passing of a great human civilisation, we are witnessing the birth of a new, inhuman civilisation which can only be established by a vast, an immense, a universal sterilising of the higher human values of life.'

If this book does not shake our complacency nothing will. The anonymous translator has conveyed the full impetus of Bernanos' mind in an English as pure and vigorous as the original French.

R.F.T.

DREAM AND REALITY. An Essay in Autobiography. By Nicholas Berdyaev. (Geoffrey Bles; 30s.)

This astonishing book fits into no known category. Although it is probably more courageously self-searching and more devastatingly candid than any autobiography ever written, it is certainly no ordinary autobiography, nor even an extraordinary one. Berdyaev sets out to create something *sui generis*, which he describes as 'an attempt to discover the meaning of life within a biographical framework'. Few will put it down without discovering, if not the meaning of life, at least something rather shabby, trivial, and even a trifle dishonest, in most of the self-portraits of the past, and perhaps in any they may have painted of themselves. However much we must disagree with many of Berdyaev's views, and however little we may sympathise with many sides of his personality, we can hardly fail to find this a humbling and cathartic book.

The book, difficult to describe, is impossible to review. We cannot judge the book without judging the man, and perhaps no book shows more clearly that we cannot judge a fellow-man without judging ourselves. It would be easy to dogmatise about his dogmas (so thinly veiled beneath his passionate anti-dogmatism), easy to moralise about his morals, easier still to expose the naive illusions which escape his ruthless self-criticism. Perhaps the profoundest human judgment that could be passed on him is that which he ascribes to 'a reactionary Russian bishop' who called him 'the captive of freedom'. The book is full, of course, of his passion for freedom, but gives us never a hint that he was for a moment aware of the captivity.

It is not only *De mortuis nil nisi bonum* that forbids facile judgment,

nor yet the ignobility of shooting at so willing a sitting target: it would be entirely to miss the point and purpose of the book, which is to inculcate self-knowledge by the hard way of example instead of the familiar way of precept. Such extremes of egotism and altruism are seldom found together. It is thus a serious book, written with serious intent, and containing much about 'Solitude, Anguish . . . Doubts and Wrestlings of the Spirit'; yet it is also a simple, joyous, even an entertaining book. The author warns us that he is more interested in the impact of his environment on his spiritual development than in the details of that environment itself, yet he gives us many descriptions and comments on places and people which are in turn instructive, diverting or positively impish. He may or may not enlighten us about Man, but at least he enables us to meet a real man and to know him intimately with all his weaknesses, strength and contrariness. He cannot make us drink the bitter-sweet waters of self-knowledge, but he could hardly have done more to lead us to them.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

A HISTORY OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN ANTIQUITY. By Georg Misch. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 42s.)

The original German edition of this work appeared as long ago as 1907. This English version is the product of a collaboration between author and translator, and contains many additions, including a discussion of Plato's *Seventh Epistle*, the authenticity of which has been accepted since 1907 by Wilamowitz and Taylor.

Professor Misch is a pupil of the sociologist Wilhelm Dilthey, and this perhaps explains the somewhat surprising appearance of his book in the International Library of Sociology. This series has recently issued Professor H. A. Hodges' introduction to Dilthey's philosophy, and now we are given an example of his methods applied to a particular sphere of human activity. Dilthey, like Jacob Burckhardt, was reacting against the metaphysical absolutism of Hegel; he aimed at doing justice to the interplay in history of personality and cultural patterns. Beginning with a distinction between the aims of the natural and social sciences (*begreifen* and *verstehen*), Dilthey went on to embark on a vast phenomenology of individual and social life. According to his *Lebensphilosophie* we recognise ourselves only in action and experience: there is no dichotomy of the human spirit and the data of science and history.

Professor Misch is a follower in this tradition. In his view self-portrayal performs more transparently the function of all art, to make life intelligible through life itself. Hence his study is intended to trace the development of the sense of personality in the west. The result is a