

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

fascinating and scholarly record, ranging from the sparse obituaries in Egyptian tombs to the developed introspective technique of St Augustine. The author is aware of a certain recalcitrance in much of this material. The ancient conception of man was rational and objective, largely because of the dominance of the Greek philosophical tradition. Even after the revolution brought about by Socrates and the Sophists which separated mental phenomena from cosmic life, the treatment of the self remains general and rational. For anything like that more inward and dynamic conception of experience which we now associate with autobiographical revelation, we have to wait till the period when the Graeco-Roman world was disintegrating. Even Plato, with all his personal charm and literary subtlety, presents a wooden public self in the *Seventh Epistle*. Professor Misch, from a humanistic standpoint, sees the Christian conversion narratives as one item in man's progressive self-revelation; he neglects the reasons for the entirely new sense of human dignity and importance apparent before Augustine in, for instance, Gregory of Nazianzus, and due to a consciousness of the unique bond between God and the creature after the Incarnation.

The advantage of the phenomenological method is that it precludes a dogmatic philosophy of history. In Professor Misch's pages we are part of the way out of that ghost-world of German *Geisteswissenschaft* where concepts stride abroad with the stature of living beings. Nevertheless, perhaps more is said of 'individuality' than of the revelation of individual minds.

ROGER SHARROCK.

REPAIR THE RUINS: Reflections on Educational matters from the Christian point of view. By H. Blamires. (Geoffrey Bles; 12s. 6d.)

This book is an important one, though it makes no pretentious claims. The author is a teacher of experience who has been specially concerned with training teachers. His theme is the importance of analysing the underlying assumptions of much of the educational material contained in current text-books,—which encourage the unconscious formation of a philosophy of life at variance with the specific principles rooted in the doctrines of the Christian creeds; so that even when these principles are explicitly taught as religious doctrine they tend to be neutralised by what is unconsciously imbibed from the assumptions implicit in the common presentation of secular subjects.

This theme obviously opens up large and fundamentally important questions as to the nature of true education. Mr Blamires discusses some of these with the wisdom and insight of experience, from the point of view of orthodox Christianity, and every word he writes is well worth the thoughtful consideration of Catholics interested in education. He