

WILHELM DILTHEY

Wilhelm Dilthey

An Introduction. By Prof. H. A. Hodges. (International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction.) Pp. x+174. (London: Kegan Paul and Co., Ltd., 1944.) 10s. 6d. net.

AS Prof. H. A. Hodges says in the beginning of his introduction, this is the first book on Wilhelm Dilthey to be published in England, and it is overdue. Why Dilthey did not attract attention in England earlier is puzzling. The reason is possibly that the most interesting parts of his work only appeared after his death in 1911. Eleven volumes of "Gesammelte Schriften" came out between 1914 and 1936. The challenging "Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften" ("Introduction to Human Studies", as Prof. Hodges translates it) was indeed published so long ago as 1883, but that remarkable work is more the statement of a problem or a challenge than an answer.

Still, the challenge was one which should have been taken up in Britain. For in that book, Dilthey shows that what is wrong with the *Geisteswissenschaften*—human studies—is that it has been continuously assumed that they either ought to be sciences like physics or be philosophy. Quite obviously, he maintained, they are neither one nor the other. Attempts to reduce history to a natural science in the manner of Buckle or to reduce it to philosophy are equally ridiculous. It clearly has its own methods and its own standards.

Now that was very much a challenge to us. We had gone so far in Britain in the direction Dilthey deplores that we have no word corresponding to the German *Wissenschaft*—any systematic thorough discipline with approved methods and standards. Science means in English natural science. Our study of politics and morals has either been predominantly philosophical and therefore not sufficiently empirical or historical, or had its facts falsified to make them fit into an atomism impressed by the example of physics; it had to follow the example set by Hegel or by Bentham, the specific German or the specific English pattern. Karl Marx made a gallant attempt to unite these two sources; but the German and the Hegelian in him conquered the empirical.

Dilthey's attempt is more interesting and far more promising. He was a Kantian. He started with a firm belief in Kant's criticism of metaphysics. The side of Kant which attracted him was the empirical. He wanted only to consider historical studies with the same impartial scrutiny as Kant had given to physics. He held, and rightly, that the rise and progress of historical study in the nineteenth century was in its way as remarkable as the rise of physics before. He proposed in his thoroughgoing empiricism to take history as he found it; not to say it ought to be like physics or like philosophy, but to discover what it was. So he set himself to write a critique of historical reason to be set out against Kant's critique of pure reason.

Can one recognize that the understanding of human beings and society requires a certain imagination, a sympathy, a power of putting oneself in the place of others, which the understanding of the physical world does not, and yet give to this very different kind of understanding the systematic thoroughness and the objectivity of the physical sciences? That is Dilthey's problem. He never completed his critique of historical reason, but he wrote a great deal towards

it. Prof. Hodges gives an admirable account of the conclusions to which he came: his far-reaching contributions to psychology and to sociology as well as to historical method.

As Prof. Hodges points out several times, there is considerable similarity between Dilthey's thought and that of the late Prof. Collingwood. There is, however, this important difference. Collingwood was a philosopher and historian. He was primarily interested in history, in which he was an authority, and not in the other human studies like psychology and economics. Dilthey recognized that mind and body, man and Nature, being so closely knit, the 'human studies' merge at one end of the scale into the natural sciences; but he always maintained that they must all be taken together. The inquiry which co-ordinates them all gives the *Weltanschauung* which is the goal of our understanding and must itself be one of the *Geisteswissenschaften* and follow their methods.

What is the final co-ordinating inquiry which will give what Dilthey calls the *Gesamtaufbau*? Is it sociology or history? Dilthey seems sometimes to have put one and sometimes the other of those two in pride of place. Prof. Hodges thinks that he should have come firmly down on the side of sociology. I should myself press the other alternative.

I hope I have said enough to show the extreme interest of the issues raised and the conclusions set forth in this long and masterly account of Dilthey's thought, supplemented as it is by selections from the most important of Dilthey's discussions. I hope the book will be widely read.

A. D. LINDSAY.

A FLORA OF FAMILIAR ENGLISH PLANTS

Common Wild Flowers

By John Hutchinson. (Pelican Book A.153.) Pp. xxx+222+14 plates. (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1945.) 9d.

THIS admirable little book should supply a long-felt want by all lovers of the English countryside. Handy in form and size, it can be carried comfortably on country rambles, and with its aid many of the wild plants found can be easily identified. As an experienced botanist Dr. Hutchinson brings a skilled experience in dealing with the identification of plants by those having no botanical knowledge.

The introduction deals briefly with the salient features of floral structure and then goes on to describe the use of the key. The key is divided into three sections dealing with the Gymnosperms, the Dicotyledons and the Monocotyledons respectively. These are very clear, and the layman should have no difficulty in determining the genus and species of any plant described in the book. The plants selected number 202, and these are well chosen and represent familiar plants most of which may be found on country rambles in almost any part of Great Britain. Only six Monocotyledons are listed; perhaps the number might have been extended by the inclusion of a few of the marsh plants so common in many parts of the country. Each plant has a page of detailed description and is accompanied by excellent drawings of the shoot, leaves, flower and floral structures, and in many cases the fruit and seed. These drawings are really well executed, and the reproduction is excellent. With all these aids set