

WILHELM

DILTHEY

HODGES



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A
WILHELM DILTHEY

AN INTRODUCTION

by

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PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

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INTRODUCTION

This is the first book on Wilhelm Dilthey to be published in England. It is overdue. This German philosopher, hardly known in this country, has been a growing influence in his own since the beginning of the present century, and his work deserves attention both for its inherent good sense and also for the freshness of his themes. For Dilthey is an innovator and a pioneer. Many of the issues which he raises were implicit in the position reached by German philosophy before his time, but it is he who has drawn them together and revealed their full extent and meaning. Philosophy in the English-speaking world has hardly trodden these paths at all, and British and American readers will find much here that is novel and challenging.

Dilthey's life was uneventful. Born in 1833 at Biebrich am Rhein, near Mainz, the son of a pastor of the Reformed Church, he intended at first to follow the same vocation, but, like so many of the great German philosophers, found while a student that his real bent lay elsewhere. He obtained his Doctorate at Berlin in 1864, and in 1867 became Professor of Philosophy at Basel, where for a year he was a colleague of Jakob Burckhardt. Then he moved to Kiel (1868), then to Breslau (1871), and finally in 1882 to Berlin, where he remained until his death in 1911. His mind matured slowly. The trend of his interests and purposes was manifest from the start, and the main lines of what was to be his great work, his *Critique of Historical Reason*, were established as early as 1880; but the execution was attended by so many delays and side-excursions that death overtook him with the great work still unfinished, though ample material had been accumulated, which has been arranged and published by his literary executors. Through a literary veil in some ways uninviting it is possible to discern a philosophy of real originality, depth, and power.

It is a "critical" philosophy in the Kantian sense, i.e. a philosophy devoted principally to questions of epistemology and logic, the latter term being taken to cover the methodology of the sciences. In this respect it agrees with what has been a dominant tradition in Anglo-Saxon thought all through modern

kind of questions which we are concerned to ask are not altogether the same as in the natural sciences. These differences are bound to be reflected in the methods and logical structure of the human studies, and in the course of their historical development. Dilthey set himself the task of making clear what the difference was, and so exhibiting the distinctive character of the human studies. He was the better able to conceive and execute this task because of the other influences which blended with those of the Anglo-French empiricists in his mind.

(The "critical" philosophy of Kant is not, at least ostensibly, a psychological study such as Hume undertook; but it had a like effect in reducing philosophy to a study of the human mind, its activities and forms of experience. This revolutionary change coincided in date with a double movement of thought which made the years between 1770 and 1830 in Germany a period of concentrated intellectual activity such as has probably no parallel anywhere in modern history. 1. On the one hand there was the romantic movement, which in Germany, as in Britain, but to an even greater extent, was no mere change of literary fashions and styles, but the proclamation of a new philosophy, challenging the jejune rationalism of the eighteenth century with a new conception of man and the world. Coleridge in England united first-class poetic genius and critical ability with a real grasp of deep philosophical issues, and in him and Wordsworth and Shelley the spirit of Platonism broods over English romanticism. In Germany Goethe and Schiller, to name only the two greatest, combined poetic genius with philosophical interests in such a way that each drew support from the other. Schiller adopted in essentials the philosophy of Kant. Goethe worked out a philosophy of a new type which Dilthey calls "evolutionary pantheism", the doctrine of a universal mind which, unconscious at first in nature, struggles towards consciousness in the animal world and reaches self-consciousness in man. Both found in the creative imagination of the artist a reflection of that power which underlies all the phenomena of nature and history. 2. At the same time there was also going on in Germany an intellectual revolution comparable with that which we associate with the names of Galileo and Bacon. This was a revolution not in natural science, but in historical study, and it meant that history itself acquired a consciousness of method and direction which

transformed it into a progressive science, while kindred studies such as philology, archaeology, anthropology, comparative mythology, sprang into life to support it and feed it with facts and principles. A new intellectual world came into being over against the world of the natural sciences, a world where nature is only the environment, and human action the central fact.—All these influences blended in the post-Kantian philosophy. In Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel the transcendental philosophy of Kant, the romantic faith in the creative powers of man and his close kinship with the world spirit, and the new vision of cultural and social development in human history, came together into a brilliant though short-lived unity.)

In Dilthey's generation the unity was already breaking up. A strong reaction had set in against metaphysical speculation. Materialism and positivism were coming into vogue. A cry was raised for a return to Kant: not the Kant of the second and third Critiques, who had inspired Fichte and his successors, but the positivist Kant of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Dilthey shared in the reaction, but at the same time had a deep sympathy for the romantic ideal of life and art, and a comprehension of the historical movement, which made it impossible to write off the post-Kantians as his contemporaries were doing. He wished to do with them as Dr. I. A. Richards has recently done with Coleridge, accepting and developing his psychology and aesthetic while explaining his metaphysics away. Dilthey shows no trace of the influence of that Hegelian Left, represented by Feuerbach and Marx, which found it possible to discard Hegel's idealism while retaining his dialectic. He joined in the cry for a return to Kant, but insisted on the whole Kant, the man who not only analysed the presuppositions of natural science and showed its powers and its limitations, but also pointed beyond it to the moral, aesthetic, and religious consciousness which is the root of metaphysics, even while he showed that metaphysics as a branch of knowledge is a vain dream. By doing all this, Kant set the problem for subsequent philosophers: to retain the deepest understanding of the moral, aesthetic, and religious elements in experience, while redeeming them from speculative interpretations and making them the object of empirical scientific study. It was the problem which the historical movement was solving in practice, and the task of philosophy as Dilthey saw it was to

work out the epistemological and logical foundations of the historical studies and build these into the Kantian structure, side by side with Kant's own epistemology and logic of the natural sciences.

Of the post-Kantians themselves, one stood out in his mind above the rest—Schleiermacher, whom he had met in the course of his early theological studies, and who continued to fascinate him throughout his life. His analysis of the religious consciousness, his conception of the dialectical relation between universal type and individual instance, and most of all his famous hermeneutic, or theory of the principles of understanding and interpretation, remained familiar themes in Dilthey's own philosophy, where the two latter have a fundamental importance. One of Dilthey's best-known works is his *Life of Schleiermacher*, a monumental achievement even though he did not live to finish it. Only in his last years, after 1900, did Dilthey give equally sympathetic attention to Hegel, but when he did so, he found in him, too, a great deal to admire.

Dilthey was fully aware of his dependence on these two main sources, the Anglo-French empiricism and the German blend of Kant with romanticism and the historical movement. He believed that each had faults which could be cured by combining it with the other, and that the union of these two traditions, so disparate and yet alike in making man their central object of study, was the peculiar task of the nineteenth century. In his own philosophy their union is carried far, but not so far that their tension is overcome, and there are points where he failed to reconcile the two sides of himself, and therefore failed to produce a coherent doctrine. He was right, however, in thinking that the two traditions need one another, and that each is strong where the other is weak. The empiricists are strong in their refusal to indulge in speculative theories, their determination to be scientific and realistic, and their successful attempt to make their knowledge a force for social reform, as in the outstanding instance of the philosophical radicals. They fail in their understanding of the deeper levels of experience. The Kantian-romantic-historical tradition has this understanding, but is apt to run off into speculation instead of girding itself for action. Dilthey repeats with approval Carlyle's characterization of it in the typical figure of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, the Professor without

a pupil, who sits in his tower and meditates on things in general, or descends only to utter cryptic epigrams in the *Grüne Gans*.¹ To give Bentham the wisdom of Goethe, and Goethe the practical genius of Bentham, would be the ideal.

Dilthey is one of those philosophers who are drawn to philosophy not only by the direct study of it, but also by questions which arise in their study of other things. His interests ranged widely. In particular he was so deeply interested in history, and wrote so much on historical and biographical subjects, that to many people he is better known as a historian than as a philosopher. It was not political and institutional history that he wrote, but the history of ideas: history of the Renaissance and the Reformation, of various stages in the development of European and especially German thought and culture from this period to the age of the post-Kantians. His *Life of Schleiermacher* and his *Early Life of Hegel* belong to this historical category of writing as much as to the strictly philosophic, and together with his *Conception and Analysis of Human Nature in the 15th and 16th Centuries* and other essays they have given him a secure reputation in this field of learning. His writings on the Renaissance and the subsequent centuries show a great interest in the attempt then made to establish a rational anthropology or doctrine of the nature of man, and to discover a natural law which might be the basis for a generally agreed moral and political system. He also traces through the same period the development of hermeneutics, the art and science of interpretation which, arising in antiquity and kept alive by the Church, came to maturity in Schleiermacher, who generalized it and made it an integral part of ordinary epistemology and logic.

With this interest in history went an interest in the fine arts, especially in poetry and music. This was, however, a philosopher's or a historian's interest in art rather than that of an artist. It was less concerned with technique and formal values than with the content expressed in the work of art, and its significance as a revelation of the mind of man in general and of particular ages and cultures. It found an outlet in numbers of historical and critical essays, in most of which the historical or biographical interest is well to the fore, and in several works on aesthetics, which concern themselves with the

¹ *Gesammelte Schriften*, IV, 507 ff.

whom he had thought himself to be in agreement. In his later years the intellectual climate changed, and before he died he saw the questions which he had raised being taken up seriously by other philosophers, and a group of pupils gathered round himself who promised to continue the work which he had begun.

Since that time, at least until the Nazi purge of German thought, his influence has continued to grow in various directions. His hermeneutic, his psychological and sociological programme, his conceptions of life, history, culture, have all proved fruitful and have become starting-points for work by later writers. To-day he is recognized as one of the most significant figures in the intellectual world since Hegel, and it is safe to say that no future philosophy can afford to neglect his challenge or to overlook his positive suggestions.

the transcendental unity of all selves in the One Self, which is his highest metaphysical doctrine. Dilthey was the first writer to set speculative questions aside and study the process of sympathetic understanding soberly and scientifically. He showed how analysis, clear definition, and systematic exploration of the object play a determinative part in it also, as well as in the method of natural science, and that the two methods, though different, are not antithetic.

He begins by pointing out that most of our knowledge of minds, including our own minds, depends on the ways in which they find expression. Between understanding and expression there is a close link, corresponding to that other link which binds together the expression and the experience to which it gives utterance. Every lived experience (*Erlebnis*), every element of cognitive, affective, or conative activity which forms part of the history of a mind, tends to give rise to an expression; not merely in Croce's sense, i.e., a clarification and definition of feelings and impressions by the formation of precise imagery in the mind, but also and primarily in the ordinary sense of overt expression through word or deed or gesture. There are various types of expression, some automatic and involuntary, others artificial and deliberate; but it is a fundamental characteristic of mental life that in one way or another it expresses or "objectifies" itself. What does not find overt expression in this way still tends to clothe itself in words or other symbols in the subject's consciousness, and it is common knowledge that we do not think we have really got possession of an idea, or fathomed the depths of our own emotional life, until we have put it into words.

Expression, indeed, is indispensable to self-knowledge, since only by it can our view of ourselves acquire either clarity, or stability, or depth. Introspection unaided by the understanding of expressions is a very blunt tool. The stream of psychic events passes so swiftly, each thought or feeling melting so inexorably into its successor, that it is impossible to get a steady view of what is going on in ourselves. Seeing experiences pass in their fleeting way, not staying to be examined and analysed, we must often be at a loss to describe or classify them accurately. Apart from this, the very act of introspection can pervert the evidence on which it should rely, and we are

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apt to find in ourselves the experiences which we come prepared to find.¹

The way to self-knowledge would be blocked if it were not for the inherent tendency of experience to find expression; for expression counteracts in large measure the factors which defeat introspection. It reacts upon the experience which it expresses, not normally distorting it, but clarifying it and at the same time keeping it before the mind for a manageable length of time. Thus what direct introspection cannot do, introspection aided by expression can do with some confidence. Add to this that some types of expression give utterance to things which are buried deep down below the threshold of ordinary consciousness, so that what I think and feel is revealed to me first by what I say or do. It thus becomes clear that expression is the basis on which our knowledge even of our own minds is built.

It is even more obvious that expression is the medium through which we know other minds. Introspection is impossible in this case, the mental life of others is not directly accessible to me even in that degree in which my own is, and nothing can make it accessible unless it is conveyed to me by some physical expression which I can perceive and understand. The fact that I can understand an expression when I meet it is due to a curious psychological law, by virtue of which every physical event which expresses an experience in someone's mind has the power, in normal conditions, to evoke a corresponding experience in the mind of an observer. I see a human figure in a downcast attitude, the face marked with tears; these are the expressions of grief, and I cannot normally perceive them without feeling in myself a reverberation of the grief which they express. Though native to another mind than mine, and forming part of a mental history which is not mine, it none the less comes alive in me, or sets up an image or reproduction of itself (*Nachbild*) in my consciousness. Upon this foundation all my understanding of the other person is built.

This power of expressions to evoke what they express is the basis of all communication and all sharing of experience between

¹ Dilthey gives as an example the question whether my perception of a mountain includes an empathic element. The moment I ask the question, an empathic element is likely to appear, and this is no evidence that it was there before. The writings of certain supporters of the empathic theory of art certainly appear to illustrate and confirm this remark of Dilthey's.

mental reproduction of the experience understood, just as it happened. Even in seeing a play, Dilthey remarks, we cannot grasp it as a whole unless at the end we look back over the whole performance, and this we can only do sketchily, remembering the structural outline of the plot and a few high points of detail, but letting the rest go. It is impossible to hold in the imagination a train of events covering months or years, except by dint of much telescoping and generalizing, omitting the inessentials, throwing the weight on to a few incidents recognized as typical or crucial, and so contriving to grasp much in little. The dramatist and the historian do much of this work for us, and present their material predigested. The amount of sheer intellectual labour that goes into a historian's work, testing the meaning and value of his sources, filling gaps, resolving inconsistencies, detecting causal connections, and so working out a coherent and well-grounded narrative, needs no emphasis. But he is only doing on a large scale what we all do when we understand the sayings and doings of our neighbours.

In this intellectual activity we are guided by the principle of coherence. That interpretation is likely to be true which takes account of all the evidence we have and works it into a story consistent with itself and human nature. Of course the principle of coherence applies, in one way or another, in all spheres of thought, but it applies especially in the sphere of understanding; for the mind is a living unity in which every part is informed by the character of the whole, and if we understand by projecting ourselves into the object, this means that we understand the object as being also that kind of a unity. Dilthey is fond of contrasting the human studies with natural science in this respect. Our knowledge of the physical world comes from disjointed sense-data which come to us with no objective unity or coherence in them, and a minimum of order in the shape of causal sequence has to be imparted to them by the perceiving mind itself, as Kant made clear; but in the mind we see the principle of unity, it is given in inner experience and projected in understanding, and in working with this principle we are not imposing an interpretation on the phenomena, but tracing their own inherent structure.

This process of assembling the evidence and filling the gaps includes, of course, a great deal of reasoning on the lines made familiar to us by formal logic; but it is wholly misconceived if

process. It is in this sense primarily that "understanding" is characteristic of the human studies, in contrast with the natural sciences, which construct a unity of law in place of the inner unity of process which is inaccessible to them.

It goes without saying that "meaning" and "understanding" in this sense are inseparable from "meaning" and "understanding" in the other and equally obvious sense, in which "meaning" is the relation between sign and signified, and "understanding" is the deciphering of signs or expressions. This aspect of the matter comes to the fore in Dilthey's writings after 1897, when we find him defining "understanding" in terms of it. "Understanding is our name for the process in which mental life comes to be known through expressions of it which are given to the senses."¹ He is anxious, however, to keep the two aspects together, and this is especially evident in his treatment of "meaning", where he actually tries to exhibit the "meaning" or significance of words and other expressions as a special case of "meaning" in the sense of living unity.² Here he goes too far. The time-relations which constitute "meaning" in the latter sense are not the same as the relation between sign and signified, or between expression and lived experience. But it is true that time-relations of the kind in question do subsist between one expression and another. The "meaning" of a word from one point of view may be the object to which it refers; from another it may equally lie in the part which the word plays in the development of the sentence, its relation to what comes before and after. It is safe to say that the ambiguity in Dilthey's use of the words "understanding" and "meaning" testifies to a real connection between the two facts, the fact of expression and the fact of living unity, which are distinct but are not found apart. To "understand" the "meaning" of an expression is also to "understand" the "meaning" (in a different sense of both words) of a fragment of mental life.

Dilthey distinguishes three classes of expressions, differing in the depth and precision of the insight they give.

(a) The first comprises all expressions which convey ideas, i.e., language in its logical aspect, mathematical symbolism, conventional signs such as traffic lights or railway signals, and any-

¹ G.S., V, 332.

² G.S., VII, 234-5.

biguous, and can be and constantly is suppressed or counterfeited.

Ordinary language is easily seen to partake of both (a) and (c). It expresses ideas, but often obscurely, and it is also charged with feeling. Only in the exact sciences, if even there, do we find language used without emotional overtones; while in literature proper they are not overtones, but part of the melody. What is true of language and literature is true of most art, and it is from this point that we can most naturally approach Dilthey's account of the nature and functions of art. (His views on the subject find expression in various of his writings, but especially in three essays published between 1887 and 1895. In two of these, *The Poet's Imagination* and *On Comparative Psychology*, he expounds an aesthetic based on the recognition of a double function of art in evoking and governing feeling, and in conveying ideas.)

The poet is a man of exceptionally rich and deep feeling, and of a fertile and flexible imagination. This gives him, in the first place, exceptional powers of understanding and expression, so that he can express for himself and evoke in us emotional states and processes beyond our usual capacity. He can feel to the full the tension of a dramatic situation, and express it without false simplification or sentimentalization; he can feel his way through conflict and suspense to a final reconciliation, and can take us with him on the way. This is art in its capacity as life-expression.

But, in the second place, the poet is our master in the appreciation of excellence in things, the appreciation of that value which lies in the perfection of the type. All life is a complex of functions, and those qualities in the living thing which make for adequate fulfilment of function are singled out by us as the "essential" or "typical" qualities, and become for us both a descriptive norm and a standard of value. An individual being or action which strikingly exhibits these essential qualities is recognized as a "type", and becomes a standard of reference by which other individuals are judged. Everyone has in some degree the "eye for types",¹ but here again the artist is ahead of us. He can single out the essential elements in a thing from the inessentials, and so portray it as to bring out what is typical or truly significant in it. His work is to us "an invitation to vision",² in Dilthey's

¹ *Das typische Sehen*, G.S., V, 279.

² *Ibid.*

tion whose intelligence and moral standards were at odds with its sacred writings, was accepted at Alexandria too, was taken over by the Alexandrian school of Christian scholars, and ultimately conquered the whole Christian world. At the Renaissance the recovery of the classical authors brought with it the recovery of the ancient rhetoric. At the same time the need of a reliable science of interpretation was reinforced for the Renaissance scholars by the unprecedented situation in which they stood, trying as they were for the first time in history to reconstruct a picture of a past civilization out of fragmentary writings and ruins, with the contemporary background fallen away and lost. In no long time the Reformation came to add its note of urgency; for to the Protestant scholars, assailed on the one hand by the Council of Trent, which declared the Bible uninterpretable without the aid of tradition, and on the other hand by Anabaptist sectaries who took their interpretation of it from crazy prophets, and confronted among their own people by the divergence of opinion resulting from private judgment let loose upon so difficult a group of writings as the Bible is, it was a matter of life and death to vindicate the intrinsic intelligibility of the Bible and the possibility of interpreting it in terms of itself.

Thus from Melancthon onwards a line of research stretches out, to be met in the eighteenth century by another line starting from Spinoza and the English Deists, who approached the Bible in a more detached and historical spirit, and showed how it could be understood in terms of the age from which it comes and the movements whose literature it contains. Classical scholarship soon gave rise to analogous problems in the shape of the Homeric question. The stage was thus set for a synthetic mind, well disciplined in all these various lines of enquiry, to bring them together and go behind them all to the common problem which they pose, the problem of the nature of understanding in general. Schleiermacher was the man who did this, and Dilthey regards him as having lifted hermeneutics from the status of a literary technique to that of a philosophic discipline.

Dilthey's own hermeneutic is an elaboration of Schleiermacher's. Before interpretation proper can begin, a background of knowledge is required. This knowledge must be in part grammatical and linguistic and in part historical, so that we have the means of considering the work before us in the light

enquiry and exposition are attempted. This is the birth of the human studies, and in some of his latest writings Dilthey has given us a picture of the stages by which these studies arise from the same soil as art, the soil of ordinary human experience.

The root from which everything grows is the tendency, natural to man, to meditate on the past and future, on his joys and sorrows, successes and failures. He feels life as a casual sequence of events, and looks for a "meaning" in Dilthey's sense, a unity and a direction in it. With most people this happens occasionally and spasmodically, but with some it becomes a chief concern, they enquire systematically into the meaning of their own lives, and often give literary expression to what they find. The result is autobiography, a literary form in which Dilthey shows especial interest, and which he regards as the stem from which the other human studies have all branched out. As a type of enquiry it has special advantages, in that the subject enquiring is also the object enquired into, the historian who tells the story is the same who has already lived it, and knows it from within in a quite peculiar way. Hence "autobiography is the highest and most instructive form in which the understanding of life comes before us".¹ Dilthey singles out for especial praise the *Confessions* of St. Augustine and Rousseau and the *Aus meinem Leben* of Goethe.

Of course there are disadvantages. The autobiographer is likely to have a deep but also a one-sided view of himself, unless he is a man of wide interest and sympathy, and has so entered into the lives of those among whom he has moved that their story has become part of his own. In proportion as he does this, however, his work transcends the limits of an autobiography and becomes something like a history of his own times.

History is the activity of persons, its unit is the individual, though always the individual in relation to his surroundings, and the individual can be understood more fully and deeply than the group. Hence it is natural that the next step beyond autobiography should be biography, and various interests conspire to indicate particular individuals as fit subjects for it. "The family preserves its reminiscences. Criminal justice and its theories may preserve the life of an offender, psychopathology that of an abnormal man."² But the most suitable subjects are

¹ G.S., VII, 199.

² G.S., VII, 247.

historical . . . Mind understands only what it has created. Nature, the object of natural science, embraces that reality which is produced independently of the activity of mind. Everything upon which man by acting has set his stamp forms the object of the human studies.¹

The purpose of historical study, according to Dilthey, is to come to know scientifically and methodically what in art we understand imaginatively, the nature of the human mind. This can never be done completely, and can only be done at all by virtue of the manifestations in which the mind has objectified itself. These manifestations are not purely spontaneous, they are called forth by circumstances, and of course if the circumstances had been different the manifestations would have been so too. Human nature is a reservoir of infinite possibilities, but only those are realized which find occasion for realization, and not all even of these ; since in any situation there are a number of possibilities open to us, of which we can only choose one. The historian explores the record of choices actually made, and tries to fill out the picture by sketching in those possibilities which were open but were rejected. "The point at issue is to seek out the mind itself, how it is always, under the conditions of a present and a space, tied to definite possibilities."² Such exploration is interesting in itself, and also valuable in its effect upon the historian ; for the understanding of how others have reacted to situations unlike his own reveals to him possibilities in his own nature of which his own circumstances had never made him aware. Dilthey instances the effect of his own study of Luther and the Reformation in enabling him at least to understand a religious experience of a depth and intensity such as in his own person he was not capable of sharing. "Man, bound and determined by the reality of life, is set free not only through art—as has often been set forth—but also through the understanding of history."³

This widening of consciousness through historical knowledge has disconcerting results. Every age expresses its attitude to life and the world in certain principles of thought and conduct, which are regarded in that age as absolute and unconditionally valid, as constituting a "law of nature" which only frivolity or ill-will can question. The historian discovers these principles

¹ *G.S.*, VII, 148.

² *G.S.*, VII, 254.

³ *G.S.*, VII, 216.

in every age which he studies, but he also discovers that they vary from age to age, and that, in spite of the claim to absoluteness which is always made, changed circumstances always result in changed principles, which are therefore historically relative. The historian who discovers this has of course principles of his own, and these will appear in the manner in which he writes history. He may slip into treating these as absolute, but his own discoveries about other people forbid us to follow him in this. History, having revealed the relativity of all ideas and practices, ends by pointing to its own relativity, and leaves us in the position known as historicism, or historical relativism. Dilthey recognizes this, and there is evidence that he was visited by occasional twinges of nervousness at the blank prospect which it opens up—a prospect which has led many in the present century to cynicism and apathy, and caused others to seek escape in dogmatic obscurantism and authoritarianism. There are some, however, who have found it possible to look historicism in the face and yet avoid discouragement, and in spite of occasional doubts Dilthey was one of these. He not merely admits the necessity of historicism, he proclaims it, and regards it as a source of freedom and inspiration.

How can he do this? Because he sees historicism first of all as a deliverance from superstition and illusion, and secondly as a revelation of the manifold capacities of human life. If our grandfathers reacted to their situation in one way and we react to ours in another, the conclusion which Dilthey draws is not that no one can ever know how to act or think, but that in every situation man can find a way. Even our illusions reflect something in experience, and are therefore not wholly illusions. Dropping the claim of absoluteness does not mean surrendering every claim to truth, but merely admitting many truths where before we had only a few. And the more we learn that every particular set of principles is the mind's reaction to a particular set of circumstances, the more it appears that even historicism has to admit one absolute after all, viz., the marvellously adaptable human mind itself.

The historical consciousness of the finitude of every historical phenomenon, every human or social state, of the relativity of every sort of belief, is the last step towards the liberation of man. With it, man attains the sovereign power to wring from every experience

its content, to surrender wholly to it, without prepossession . . . Every beauty, every sanctity, every sacrifice, re-lived and expounded, opens up perspectives which disclose a reality . . . And, in contrast with the relativity, the continuity of the creative force makes itself felt as the central historical fact.¹)

Autobiography, biography, and historiography together form a single stem from which other more specialized studies branch out, and these studies are what Dilthey sometimes calls the "systematic human studies". They are very various, including technical disciplines like grammar and rhetoric, normative disciplines like moral and political theory or art criticism, and generalizing sciences such as psychology, sociology, or economics. They have in common an interest in the mind of man, which they satisfy not by tracing the story of human achievement along the line of time, as history does, but by singling out one aspect of it and studying that in abstraction from the rest. They lack much of the aesthetic element which clings about history, and are conducted with more thought for direct practical application. Dilthey is not less interested in these than in the historical disciplines, and spends much thought on the precise relation between the two groups. The two together constitute what he calls the *Geisteswissenschaften* or, as I translate it, the human studies, and it is this whole group, not the historical disciplines alone, that he compares and contrasts with the natural sciences. He clung to this view in spite of pressure from a kindred school which attempted to sever the generalizing sciences from the historical studies and group them with the natural sciences on the score of a common method. Dilthey insists that the proper grouping is not by method but by subject-matter, and it is here that all the human studies stand together in contrast with the sciences of nature. But just because they have a common subject-matter, they have also important epistemological characteristics in common.

Their common subject-matter is man : not the human mind only, but human beings, who are composed of body and mind together, are acted upon by physical things, and can act upon them and communicate with one another only through physical means. It follows that the human studies must have a very large concern with physical things and processes, and must therefore

¹ *G.S.*, VII, 290-1.

simpler pleasures and pains. But it has really nothing to say about creative imagination as seen in the artist, about the sense of value and obligation, about self-sacrifice, about religious devotion, about the understanding and sympathy which make a teacher of genius like Pestalozzi. On points like these we learn much more from the vast but formless literature in which keen reflective observers have written down their experience of life—handbooks, commonplace books, memoirs, proverbs and epigrams and the like. Psychology ought to take this gnomic wisdom and the insights of the poets, and give them precise expression and a logical grounding, but the existing psychology is incapable of this.

It is incapable because it is too formal and too individualistic. Too formal, because it analyses the contents of consciousness into elementary sensations and feelings of pleasure and pain, and pretends to construct all the wealth of human thought and action out of combinations of these. It ignores the real variety of instinctive drives, which are the basis of character and the substance of moral and spiritual life. We need a "real psychology" (*Realpsychologie*) or "content-psychology" (*Inhaltspsychologie*) to do justice to these. At the same time we must recognize that some of these drives are social in character, and that it is just these which are of importance for the foundations of the other human studies. Dilthey believes that not only psychology, but also economics, political theory, and other kindred studies have gone astray in recent times through taking for granted the self-contained individual as their foundation, and failing to recognize that the life of the individual consists largely in the social relations into which he enters, the historical process of which he is a product and upon which he reacts. "Man as a fact prior to history and society is a fiction of genetic explanation; the man whom sound analytical science has for its object is the individual as an element in society."¹ It is not merely that the individual is affected by external factors and reacts upon them in pursuit of his own interest; he goes outside his private concerns, makes the interests and purposes of others his own, and thus becomes in the fullest sense a social being. A true content-psychology or "anthropology" must recognize this.

The *second* defect which Dilthey finds in contemporary

¹ *G.S.*, I, 31-2.

has not these advantages. The character of mental phenomena makes exact measurement impossible, and it and other factors severely limit the scope of experimentation, except on that border-line between mind and body where psychophysics is at home. We can form hypotheses about the relations between mental facts and processes, and between mind and body; but we can form too many, and there is no experimental control.

Is it then possible to construct a psychology without building hypotheses into its foundations? Dilthey thinks it is, and in his *Ideas concerning a Descriptive and Analytical Psychology* (1894) he formulates his view in terms of a distinction between two kinds of science which he calls "descriptive" and "explanatory". All science must analyse its object, seeking to determine its ultimate irreducible units and the laws which express their interrelation. A descriptive science is one whose units and laws are found by empirical analysis, or close examination of what is actually given in experience. An explanatory science is one which takes its units and laws from a methodological assumption which determines their general nature beforehand. Such an assumption, and all that flows from it, is a hypothetical construction. The classic example of an explanatory science is modern physics, which is compelled to use the method of hypothesis because the data of perception contain no principle of unity, and which has found success in the hypothesis of a world of imperceptible atoms possessing only primary qualities. This explains the world of perception, but is certainly far from describing it. This is the influence which has led psychology to adopt its hypothesis of unit sensations and feelings, and other hypotheses which equally go behind the facts of experience. But psychology has no need of this procedure, because, says Dilthey, the data of inner perception contain a principle of order which makes possible a coherent account of mental life in purely descriptive and empirical terms.

Mental life, he thinks, is a functional unity which cannot be reduced to or built up theoretically out of non-functional units. This is where he parts company with sensationalism, and also with Brentano, whose position is only superficially like his own.¹

¹ Brentano was calling for a "descriptive" psychology five or six years before Dilthey reached that point, and his influence was considerable in various directions. It prepared the way for Meinong's philosophy and for Husserl's "phenomenological" method. On the difference between the Brentano-Husserl conception and Dilthey's

and claims of the *Ideas*. He stresses its affinity with poetry, and in one passage even seems to say that it is inferior to poetry in depth and clarity of insight. If so, it obviously cannot be the "basic science" of the human studies as he once thought. There is clear testimony that Dilthey saw this, but there is also evidence that he never abandoned the hope of such a "basic science". He was a prey to conflicting tendencies, and never came to a decision.

(The idea of a psychology distinct from experimental psychology, and studying mental life from the point of view of meaning and content and types of character, has borne fruit since Dilthey's time. Beginning with Karl Jaspers, who in those days was a psychiatrist, a succession of writers have combined Dilthey's conception with hints drawn from Brentano and Husserl, from Rickert, from psychoanalysis and Gestalt theory, to produce the theory of an "understanding-psychology" or "psychology of insight" (*verstehende Psychologie, einsichtige Psychologie*) which is akin to poetry, philosophy, and the human studies, in contrast with experimental psychology, which they reckon as a natural science. Natural-science psychology, they say, takes the mind as a thing among things and studies its processes from a causal point of view, but is not interested in relations based on meaning, which Dilthey calls "structural" and Jaspers "intelligible" connections. It explains mental life from without, it does not understand it from within. The psychology which is a human study is based on understanding in both Dilthey's senses of that word, the interpretation of signs or expressions and the understanding of the part in terms of the whole. It sees the mind not as a thing, but as a thinking and willing subject. The members of the school have spent much ingenuity in exploring different senses of the verb *verstehen*, and have adopted from Rickert a distinction between *verstehen* and *nacherleben*, which in Dilthey are the same thing.¹ One of them, Eduard Spranger, has produced an interesting typology based upon six fundamental attitudes of the mind to its world. The attitudes are the economic or technological, the legal and political, the scientific, the artistic, the social, and the religious, and person-

¹This distinction is a technicality which need not concern us: let it only be said that Dilthey's *Nacherleben* is equivalent to their *Verstehen* and not to their *Nacherleben*.

ality arises from the union of these six factors within a single consciousness. The dominance of one or other of them in a particular person gives rise to six types of outlook and character, for which Spranger claims heuristic value in the study of art and society.)

What is to be said of all this?

There is no doubt that the worker in the human studies needs a conception of human nature to help him to make sense of his sources. Whatever branch of human activity he may be studying, he needs some idea of the main interests which move people in that branch of activity, of how in general people behave under the influence of these interests, of the various types of outlook and behaviour which arise in this sphere, and the influences which help to produce and maintain them, and finally of the relative efficiency of the various types from the point of view of the underlying interest. Every student has, in fact, such a conception as this, not usually derived from psychology, but worked out from personal experience and elaborated by use in application to his sources. Psychology has in it too little about the higher mental functions, and that little is often unbalanced. These things are often better understood and expressed, as Dilthey says, in reflective literature and poetry, and thither we all go to learn them. But Dilthey in the *Ideas* regards this as a temporary state of affairs, due to the immaturity of psychology. He believes that psychology must ultimately become able to cover this ground, and he tries to define the conditions which it must satisfy in order to do so. The later Dilthey and the adherents of understanding-psychology also wish to cover this ground systematically, but not by a development of the existing science of psychology. They think it must be a separate study.

It may be suggested that the human studies and philosophy are now in much the same position with regard to psychology as philosophy once was with regard to natural science. Philosophy was concerned from the beginning with questions whose solution required some knowledge of the system of nature. But since in those days the method which has made modern science possible had not been discovered, the philosophers were compelled to do their physics and astronomy as best they could for themselves. It was amateurish stuff, but it had to last until the

account of art is correct, and art shares with religion and philosophy the function of formulating and propagating *Weltanschauungen*, while philosophy shares with science and not with art or religion the aspiration towards clear definition and logical exposition. All these are points made in various places by Dilthey himself, but not drawn together into a comprehensive view. We need not deny the reality of the various cultural systems as empirical facts, or the substantial accuracy of Dilthey's description of them as far as it goes, but it looks as if on closer examination they might turn out to be surface waves and ripples produced by deeper-lying currents.

Dilthey himself has said something of the kind in the *Introduction to the Human Studies* :

The student of the phenomena of history and society is everywhere confronted by abstract entities such as art, science . . . religion. They are like masses of cloud, which prevent our vision from reaching reality, and yet are themselves intangible. As once the substantial forms, the spirits of the stars, and the essences stood between the investigator's eye and the laws which govern atoms and molecules, so these entities shroud the reality of historical and social life, the interaction of the mind-body units under the conditions of the natural world and their native genealogical articulation. My object is to show how to see this reality . . . and to dispel these mists and phantoms.¹

But he has not himself dispelled them. The distinctions and classifications in the *Introduction* are to be regarded not as conclusions, but as starting-points. The purpose of the book is to call for investigation and to map its course, not to carry it out. But it is a starting-point which Dilthey did not leave behind in the next twenty years, and he could not have left it far behind without being led to a synthetic view of things which could only be called a sociology.

(b) Nor could he have long avoided the question of the interactions and mutual dependences of the factors which analysis discloses. It is not enough to say, as he does, that the factors in society all act upon one another. That is true, but even the plain man can see that some act with greater force than others. The language of a country, or its style of folk-music, have incomparably less effect upon its destiny than its geographical position and its industrial system. Which of the factors are the

¹ *G.S.*, I, 42.

In the closing section of his *Attempt at an Analysis of the Moral Consciousness* Dilthey quotes the words of Pope: "The proper study of mankind is man". It might serve as a motto for his whole philosophy, and that in both a positive and a negative interpretation. Positively, it expresses his keen interest in the human mind and all its works, the understanding of which was a ruling passion with him all his days. Negatively, it sums up his conviction that neither in the physical world nor in the transcendent sphere of religion is it possible for man to know what it is that confronts him. Human life is not only a reality, it is the only reality directly accessible to us, and it is fit and proper that our best efforts should go into the task of understanding it. The fact that such understanding may be expected to have practical consequences in giving us greater control over our own lives is an additional reason for seeking it. On this road we pursue a double freedom: the widening and enrichment of our consciousness through the reflection in it of all the varied possibilities of experience which art and history have actualized, and the extension of our control over our destinies through knowledge of psychological and sociological laws.

This study of man is not a new enterprise to be taken in hand now. It has been going on since the dawn of intellectual life on the earth. The human studies are the long-established organs by which it is carried on, and what Dilthey is doing is merely to urge that they should be taken more seriously and prosecuted more systematically than hitherto. But when he begins to do this in the modern situation he is confronted by two problems. The first is that the human studies are still without a clear and generally agreed conception of their common aims and methods and the relations between them, comparable with that which reigns among the natural sciences; and the second is that the natural sciences are rapidly growing in prestige and are establishing in the public mind an ideal of knowledge which is not congenial to progress in the human studies.

Two groups of philosophers have taken up this question from their respective points of view, the idealists and the empiricists, and neither could satisfy Dilthey.

Idealism grew up and has continued in an atmosphere of coolness towards natural science. This is true whether we make its history begin with Berkeley or with the post-Kantians. The latter had several motives for their attitude. They were associated with the romantic movement, which hated what it considered to be the drabness of the scientific view of nature. The tirades of William Blake or Wordsworth against mechanical science find a German parallel in such poems as Schiller's *Gods of Greece*. Romanticism was a search for life and colour, it exalted the intuitive above the ratiocinative, and imaginative understanding above abstract explanation. So did the contemporary historical movement, which was revolting against the eighteenth-century theories of natural law and abstract principles, and learning to understand and appreciate the wealth and variety of human life. The damaging analysis of scientific claims by philosophers from Locke to Kant was ready to hand, and was used. The result was a philosophy which laid great stress on the contrast between natural science on the one hand and art, history, and philosophy on the other. Natural science is abstract, history is concrete. Natural science generalizes, history grasps the individual. Natural science is a hypothetical account of a phenomenal world, history is real knowledge of mental reality.

This aspect of idealism has been less in evidence in Britain than elsewhere. British idealism has too much Berkeley in its veins, its campaign against natural science has been in the interests of morality, religion, and metaphysics rather than of history or art. Apart from the recent writings of Collingwood, that aspect of the tradition has been chiefly known here through the work of Croce. But in Germany since 1894 it has found vigorous expression in the philosophies of Windelband and Rickert, which cover much of Dilthey's ground, and with which Dilthey in his last years was compelled to reckon. These philosophies distinguish between two types of enquiry, the nomothetic, which looks for laws, and the idiographic, which describes and compares individuals and types. Natural science is nomothetic, history and the "cultural studies" (*Kulturwissenschaften*) are idiographic. There is of course a descriptive element in natural science, e.g., in astronomy or geography, but it is entirely subordinate to explanation. The particular case is of interest only because the general law is exemplified in it.

VI

Modern philosophy is philosophy in crisis. Its history is one long tale of challenges, emergencies, and attempted fresh starts. As time goes on, it becomes increasingly evident that the crisis affects not this or that philosophical doctrine or principle, but philosophy itself, which is now challenged to show reason why it should continue to exist. Dilthey is one of those who have helped to bring the issue to a head, and of this he himself is fully aware. He speaks of himself as in search of a new way of philosophizing, and calls for a radical reassessment of the tradition.

He draws his inspiration, as usual, from two sources : from Kant, and from the Anglo-French empiricists, and his starting-point lies in what these have in common. They are united in an attack upon what had been the very heart of the philosophical tradition, upon metaphysics, the science of being and of first principles. From the time of Plato, if not earlier, until modern times, this science had been the hinge upon which philosophy turned. To it logic and epistemology led up. From it the principles of morality and social life were deduced. Its ultimate object was God himself, the highest of beings and the centre and source of all values, and the knowledge of him was the crown of intellectual attainment. For two thousand years this tradition stood, but in modern times new influences were brought to bear. The new scientific consciousness began to set traditional doctrines in a different light, and metaphysical principles began to be called in question. In the light of the new knowledge, Kant and the empiricists agree that the traditional metaphysic, for all its apparent solidity, was really a mirage, whose illusory nature and whose causes in the human mind are now at length detected. We now know that we can know nothing outside the perceived world in space and time, and philosophy must find a new focus, not in a dogmatic science of being, but in a critical study of the conditions which make experience possible. Epistemology replaces ontology.

Dilthey, deeply influenced by both the critical schools, accepts without question their common basis. He expresses himself by preference in Kantian language. In 1867 in his

attitudes in a given mind ; but one way or another, by subordination of two of them to the third or by some kind of combination or equipoise, in every mature mind a unity is established, and this unity is what constitutes a man's outlook (*Weltanschauung*).

The word *Weltanschauung* has received wide currency in recent years, not always with a clearly defined meaning. Dilthey, who is chiefly responsible for its popularity, analyses a *Weltanschauung* into three structurally connected elements. The first is a belief about the nature and contents of the world of facts ; the second, built on this foundation, is a system of likes and dislikes, expressed in value-judgments ; and the third, resulting from the two preceding it, is a system of desires and aversions, ends, duties, practical rules and principles. This comprehensive system of ideas and habits of thought, feeling, and will, results from the joint operation of the three basic attitudes, and the character of the *Weltanschauung* will vary according as one or another of the three is predominant in it. If the cognitive function is predominant, the man will pride himself on his "realism", will find his highest value in clarity of mind, and will take pleasure in reducing value-judgments and imperatives to statements of psychological fact. This is a recognizable type. So is that in which feeling predominates, and the man singles out those aspects of the universe which most appeal to him, its beauty and its harmony, and makes them clues to its real nature and meaning. The man in whom will is dominant will see the world of fact as the manifestation of a creative power, existing to be a theatre for human action, he will see truth not as cognitive clarity, but as the moral duty of sincerity or honesty, and objective existence as a set of conditions imposing themselves on action. In each case the categories of one basic attitude will swallow up the rest, and so a unity of outlook is achieved.

This growth is natural and inevitable ; but it is powerfully assisted by the conscious endeavour to solve what Dilthey calls the riddle of life, i.e., the problems relating to birth and death, joy and sorrow, love and hate, the power and the weakness of man and his ambiguous position within nature. These questions agitate all reflective minds, and the awareness of them and of the vast issues which they open up for speculation is called by Dilthey the metaphysical consciousness. In it lies the *punctum saliens* of every *Weltanschauung*.

to advertise it. (Dilthey finds it to be characteristic of the artistic mind that it seeks "to understand life in terms of itself" rather than in terms of the supernatural. Not that art has not had a distinguished career in the service of religion; but that is because religious ideas and experiences are after all aspects of human life, just as interesting and significant as any others, and the artist as such is concerned with them from that point of view. He sees the problems of life and conceives his solutions always in terms of human activities, human relationships, human destinies.)

The essence of philosophy is the search for absolute first principles, and we have seen how it looks for them in every department of life and thought. But in so doing it is brought up against the problem of unity; for of course it discovers different first principles in the different departments of life, because different basic attitudes underlie them, and thus philosophy is left with several sets of categories on its hands which must somehow be brought into relation. Here is the origin of *metaphysics*, which is the philosopher's attempt to find a systematic unity, embracing the absolute reality, the absolute first principle of knowledge, absolute good, absolute right, and absolute beauty; to reconcile the regularity which he finds to be absolutely presupposed in natural science with the freedom which is equally presupposed in ethics; and in general to bring all departmental truths together in one absolute truth. Being what he is, the philosopher undertakes not merely to do all this, but to make a science of it, to present the result as a watertight logical system with precise definitions and demonstrative arguments.

The task which philosophy sets itself, both in the grand synthesis of metaphysics and in the departmental studies, is beyond human capacity.

1. (a) The core of every metaphysic is its conception of the Absolute, i.e., of that which is both the supreme reality and the supreme value, and unconditional in both aspects. In the main European tradition this has always been God, the transcendent personal cause of the universe. But such a reality is beyond experience, and can only be approached indirectly. We have no source of knowledge apart from experience, and if we are to think of something outside the range of observation, we must conceive it on the analogy of something which can be observed, and establish its existence by showing that some undeniable fact

phenomena. Philosophy can do no more than study the logical principles which underpin these enquiries, as it also studies the value.principles and the basic aims which underpin all systems of cultural and social life.

Even here we can find nothing which is in the strict sense of the word absolute and ultimate. Logic finds no ultimate truth from which all other truths derive. What it finds are the techniques of valid thinking. Equip a mind with a sensory organization and a discursive intelligence like ours, and place it in a world like ours, and it will have to think along certain lines if it hopes to reach truth. Likewise in ethics we do not find a single end under which all human purpose and conduct can be subsumed, or a single duty from which all duties flow. We do indeed find principles of a high degree of generality, some perhaps which are universally valid. But these represent the guiding principles of the technique of living, which results from placing a being such as man in a world such as ours. They cannot be defined with absolute precision, and the study of them can only be fruitful if it is based on a combination of historical and psychological knowledge. The same may be said of political theory, of aesthetics, of each of the departmental branches of philosophy. In each of them what finally confronts us is not an absolute principle, clearly definable and bearing its validity in itself, but the human situation as a whole, man placed in his world and finding the best ways to set about his various tasks, ways which naturally show certain permanent and universal features because the world is always the same world and man is always man, but which in detail are subject to the endless relativities of history. (And if it is suggested that human nature is at least one absolute factor in the situation, Dilthey replies that nothing is permanent in human nature except the physical and mental structure of man and his basic instincts. All ideas and beliefs, tastes, habits, institutions, are historically conditioned and impermanent. It is his complaint against the natural law school of the Age of Reason that they did not recognize this, but appealed to human nature as if it had real permanent content.)

For these reasons philosophy cannot do what it has traditionally set out to do, and there must therefore be a drastic revision of its aims and methods. Kant was right in proclaiming that it must cease to be dogmatic and become critical ; though Kant

himself retained a belief in absolute first principles and in philosophy as a demonstrative science of them, which we can no longer share. For his transcendental argumentation we must substitute a psychological and historical study of the conditions under which we think and act, and for his transcendental self we must substitute the totality of the empirical self. We shall then be able to say of philosophy as a whole what Dilthey once said of epistemology—that it is “psychology in motion, and in motion towards a definite end”.

That end is twofold. 1. In the first place it is to discover the structural conditions in the mind which make possible the various cultural and social activities, and to show how under the influence of social and historical conditions these activities assume continually changing forms. This is the business of logic and epistemology, ethics and political theory, aesthetics and the rest, which therefore stand in a double relation to the human studies. In one aspect they are dependent upon them all, especially upon structure-psychology, for it is here that the philosopher gets his weapons; but in another aspect they perform a function of the greatest importance not only for the human studies, but also for the natural sciences, by giving them a critical awareness and a sense of purpose and direction.

2. In place of metaphysics we must have a critical analysis of the conditions which give rise to the illusion that metaphysics is possible. These conditions lie in the metaphysical consciousness, the native drive of the mind towards unity of outlook. We have seen how this drive does result in the formation of *Weltanschauungen*, and how religion, art, and philosophy provide vehicles for the elaboration and expression of these. We can see too that they play an indispensable part in the life of man and society. The presence or absence of a *Weltanschauung* makes all the difference between a life that knows where it is going and a life that drifts. Philosophy cannot be less interested in these facts than in the cultural and social activities taken separately; and though we have now found that the traditional claim of philosophy to be able to define and demonstrate and elevate a *Weltanschauung* to the level of scientific knowledge is mistaken, it remains that philosophy must concern itself with them in some other way. Here too, here most of all, the solution is to drop dogmatism and become critical, which does not mean dismissing the *Weltanschauungen* out of hand

as tissues of illusion, but examining carefully what they really are and signify.

Every *Weltanschauung* is the result of reflection on experience. However dubious in detail a given *Weltanschauung* may be, and however the various *Weltanschauungen* may differ, still each of them is based on an experience which, while it may be partial and one-sided, is genuine as far as it goes. A summary of all existing *Weltanschauungen* would give, what is not otherwise obtainable, a complete account of what mankind has hitherto been able to make of experience. And here we see the philosopher's real task; not to dismiss the various systems as so many illusions, but to disengage the central vision of each and bring them together, since it is not separately, but by complementing and correcting one another, that they tell their real tale. The means by which this is to be done is a study which Dilthey calls “philosophy of philosophy”—a comparative and critical *Weltanschauungslehre* which will analyse the metaphysical consciousness and the way in which *Weltanschauungen* arise out of it, classify them under their most frequent types, show how they find expression through religion, art, and philosophy, expose the hollowness of the metaphysical arguments in their support, and finally display their real significance as interpretations of experience.

Dilthey's own *Weltanschauungslehre* is based upon his doctrine of the structure of mental life. We saw how the three basic attitudes can never reach a perfect balance in any mind, but that one must prevail and colour the *Weltanschauung* accordingly. This gives rise to three main types of outlook, which Dilthey calls *naturalism*, *the idealism of freedom*, and *objective idealism*, and he works out their characteristics in detail as they appear in the spheres of religion, art, and philosophy.

Naturalism is that view of things which is based on the animal side of human nature, and on those aspects of the world which are akin to that side of man. In the field of religion it shows itself as a revolt against otherworldliness, and sometimes against religion itself on account of its inherent otherworldliness, and an assertion of the claims of the world and the flesh. In art it takes the form known as “realism”, by which Dilthey means a preference for depicting the passionate side of human nature and the play of capricious chance upon men's fortunes. In philo-

of mastery, of creation, contemplation, and discovery, while the essence of religion lies in the "metaphysical consciousness" as defined by Dilthey. Suppose this to be so. Then surely the different attitudes will view the world through different categories, and this will give rise to typical differences in outlook and belief, such as will come to light in philosophy. Such a view would in fact enable us to overcome one perplexity in Dilthey's own doctrine. Presumably the difference between theism and pantheism or immanentist idealism is of real importance and reveals a difference of mental attitude. But in Dilthey the Platonic and Judaeo-Christian theism and the idealism of Fichte come together as forms of the idealism of freedom. The difference between them cannot be due to purely intellectual conditions. It is not as if the intellectual climate of Hellenistic times had been such as to make an immanentist philosophy impossible; for there was Stoicism. The prevalence of theism in late antiquity and the Dark and Middle Ages and the emergence of immanentism in recent times could more plausibly be understood as the consequence of a change from a society in which religious interests prevailed over cultural interests to a society in which culture has eclipsed religion. Thus the recognition of sociological as distinct from psychological factors would lend to Dilthey's analysis a greater precision and adequacy.

(2. Typology by itself, even if complete, would take us to a position in which we could not rest. It establishes and gives full documentation to the thesis of the relativity of all beliefs; and here it must be admitted that Dilthey has proved his point, and no more needs to be said. But to recognize this fact is only to be brought face to face with a further question—viz., what is the individual to do in this welter of relativities? It is a question which troubled Dilthey himself, as appears from a late writing in which he asks what driving force or inspiration his philosophy can offer, to compare with that which others derive from a positive religious faith. His answer is twofold. The knowledge of the relativity of all beliefs sets us free from illusion, and that in itself is a gain. But that is not all. Though no *Weltanschauung* is true in a sense which would make the others untrue, it does not follow that none of them are true in any degree at all. On the contrary, each one of them, while false as a theory, is true as a record of vision. It gives testimony of how the world can appear

to a certain type of mind in certain conditions, and how such minds in such conditions can confront their world. Knowing as we do that the truth of one does not involve the falsity of the rest, we are free to understand and use them all, and so obtain a fuller and richer and more balanced view of life and the world than could be got by accepting any one of them as it stands.

This really will not do. It is in conflict with Dilthey's own admissions. For he himself has seen the psychological necessity of a *Weltanschauung* to give unity and direction to a life, and it is obvious that a *Weltanschauung* can only do this if it is not merely toyed with, but definitely held. And that means that its rivals must be definitely not held, i.e., must be rejected. It is possible to play with rival points of view, manipulating them like a juggler, so long only as we have not to live and act in earnest, but in times of stress and danger or in moments of responsibility this is not possible. In such times, if not always, we see that points of view, *Weltanschauungen*, are not merely to be studied and enjoyed, but to be held and acted on, and for that purpose we want not many points of view, but one. If philosophy, or rather life itself, confronts us with many rival views of things, then we must take one and reject the rest. Dilthey's philosophy is open in its own way to the criticism which Kierkegaard brought against that of Hegel—viz., that it is full of syntheses where life is full of choices. It is always possible thus to synthesize ideas, or to hold diverse points of view together, so long as we are standing aloof, as spectators, and studying them. When it comes to holding them and acting on them, the oppositions reassert themselves, and we find that we cannot take sides with one without taking sides against another. To live is to act, and to act is to choose, and to choose is also to reject.)

(The present age has seen in many quarters a realization of this truth, and with it a growing dissatisfaction with the type of historicism or relativism which Dilthey represents. But there is a right and a wrong way to show this dissatisfaction. The wrong way is to turn one's back on all the arguments which have led up to Dilthey's position, to appeal against the verdict of history, to write off as misguided the most characteristic developments in philosophy since 1781, or 1619, or even 1274. The right course is to recognize that the way out is the way forward, that if we

wish to escape from Dilthey's position we must have the courage to pass through it.

What lies on the other side? A philosophy of self-examination and deliberate choice. Self-examination, to reveal to us the real springs of our thinking, which lie not in the thought-activity itself, but in deep-seated feelings and desires which determine the direction of our interests. And deliberate choice, to identify ourselves by our own responsible act with what we are already by nature. The precondition of sound work in philosophy is the ability and readiness to make a deep self-analysis, to discover what is one's fundamental attitude to life and the world, and what assumptions this attitude involves, and then (since it is impossible to escape from oneself and impossible even to desire it) to take these assumptions upon oneself with clear consciousness and full deliberation, and try to reduce all the detail of one's thinking to conformity with them. Everyone must necessarily be himself, though with elements of inconsistency, greater or less, due to his circumstances. The philosopher will be the man who *chooses* to be himself, and goes about it with all the consistency of which he is capable.

Philosophy so conceived is certainly a man's work, and of unquestionable value both to individuals and to society. It bears a certain resemblance to psychoanalysis, in that both try to go below the surface of people's beliefs and conduct, to drag into the daylight interests and assumptions which are usually hidden and which people would rather not be made to face. Philosophy, like psychoanalysis, punctures self-conceit and brings inner conflicts into view, and thus it is not surprising if, again like psychoanalysis, it is resisted and spoken against, most of all by those who need it most. On the other hand, there is one important difference. The psychoanalyst is skilled in breaking up morbid configurations of the soul, but his art does not, in itself, equip him to give help and guidance in the reconstruction which must follow. The philosopher's art is both critical and constructive, and those who would keep it purely critical are robbing it of half its virtue, are untrue to their responsibilities and are a danger to the public. They are actuated, in many cases, by a despair which is the natural result of the blows dealt by Locke, Hume, Kant, and their successors at the now ruined edifice of metaphysics as a demonstrative science, and they have not seen

the new vision (which is not new either, but as old as Socrates) of metaphysics as constructive psychotherapy, or rather nootherapy. It is to this that the road through Dilthey leads.

Philosophy on the Continent has already begun to follow this road. When Dilthey was ten years old the first word of challenge was uttered by the eccentric but far-sighted Kierkegaard. It was directed against Hegel, the romanticists, and liberal self-satisfaction, and in the prosperous nineteenth century it fell flat. Positivism and romanticism divided the inheritance of philosophy, and Dilthey, the disciple of both, drew both to the same conclusion in his own historicism. While he was engaged in doing this, another challenge was issued by Nietzsche. Dilthey and Nietzsche had in common a vigorous interest in cultural history, but neither shows any sign of being consciously influenced by the other. Their temperaments were different, and probably Nietzsche thought Dilthey was dull, while Dilthey thought Nietzsche was wild.¹ Nietzsche also fell flat in his life-time, and his isolation perhaps contributed to the overthrow of his reason. Meanwhile Dilthey, himself at first an isolated figure, began to gather friends around him, and his influence was growing when he died in 1911. The war of 1914-18 altered all this. The philosophy of crisis, the philosophy of existential choice, drawing its inspiration from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, has taken possession of living writers, and Dilthey's teaching has proved grist to its mill. A philosophy which destroys the pretensions of speculative reason, and emphasizes the human, all-too-human character of our deepest convictions and our most revealing intuitions, is the proper foundation for a philosophy like Kierkegaard's, which summons us to refuse to drift with the current of events and to become ourselves by making a decisive choice—or like Nietzsche's, which tells us that value-standards are not found, but made, and that the task of our generation may be to unmake and remake them, once more by an act of creative choice.

The leading name in the existential movement is that of Karl Jaspers, who began as a psychologist, a disciple of Dilthey, and one of the founders of the school of understanding-psychology (see above, p. 49). His *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919) already made the decisive step, for it combined a comparative study of the main types of outlook with a recognition of the fundamental

¹ See Dilthey's adverse verdict on Nietzsche, *G.S.*, VIII, 162-4.

importance of those crucial situations which compel far-reaching decisions. In his later writings he has developed further the meaning of existential choice, and of philosophy as existential thinking. His doctrine on this point is the legitimate heir of Dilthey's "philosophy of philosophy".

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its transcendence. By projection of this upon the universe the conceptions of divine personality, of creation, and of the sovereignty of personality in face of the world-process take shape.

Each of these outlooks contains in the sphere of objective apprehension a combination of knowledge of the universe, valuation of life, and principles of conduct. Their power lies in the fact that they give an inner unity to personality in its various operations. And each of them has a power of attraction and a possibility of consistent development, in that it grasps the ambiguous reality of life from the standpoint and according to the laws of one of our typical attitudes.

(27) *Historicism its Own Cure*

(From a posthumously published dialogue, *Modern Man and the Conflict of Outlooks*. G.S., VIII, 232-3)

"The knife of historical relativism," I continued, "which has cut to pieces all metaphysics and religion, must also bring healing. We only need to be thorough. We must make philosophy itself an object of philosophical study. There is need of a science which shall apply evolutionary conceptions and comparative methods to the study of the systems themselves. It stands to the history of philosophy as comparative philology stands to the history of language—and if anyone cares to go beyond the separation of the two, I shall be the last to oppose him . . .

"All *Weltanschauungen* arise from the objectification of the ways in which living man, perceiving and thinking, feeling and desiring, seeking to have his way with things, experiences the world. From the countless points of view in the sequence of generations arise objectifications without number. If someone of unprejudiced mind wishes to combine all that he can relive in himself, if he desires to look the world in the face in order to understand its inwardness, he is confronted by features which refuse to blend in a single interpretation. A likeness to our intelligence in the objective order of natural laws, but also complete singularity in the way that these very laws are linked together in this order in relation to the given elements. Goodness and frightfulness seem continually to alternate on Nature's countenance. Everything seems designed to produce a maximum