

## EDITOR'S PREFACE



It has been said that every great philosopher has given philosophy a new direction, but that only Wittgenstein has done this twice—first with his *Tractatus*, published right after World War I, and then again with the ideas that found their final form in his *Philosophical Investigations*, published posthumously after World War II. The early work influenced logical positivism, the later work the analytical philosophy that flourished in the English-speaking world for roughly a quarter of a century. No other philosopher has had nearly so great an influence on twentieth-century Anglo-American philosophy. Yet Wittgenstein was an Austrian who wrote his books in German. His life and personality were enigmatic—especially the decisive years during which he developed his later philosophy.

Knowing of W. W. Bartley's researches concerning the "lost" years in Wittgenstein's life, I invited him to write this book. I had no doubt that it would be interesting and important, but did not foresee the extent of Bartley's discoveries, which may strike some readers as sensational. Right from the start, we are swept up in the excitement of the author's quest for the man who, having published a book that made history, went on to teach at primary schools in two small Austrian villages while he changed his mind about many of his most influential

ideas. The portrait that emerges from this account is human—all too human—but the author's respect for Wittgenstein is never in doubt. Though brief and written so that it can be understood by those with no previous knowledge of Wittgenstein's philosophy, this book is an important contribution to our understanding of the man and of the development of his thought.

Actually, I do not believe that every great philosopher has given philosophy a new direction. This one-dimensional metaphor gives us no idea of Plato's or Aristotle's importance, or of the significance of Spinoza, Hegel, or Nietzsche. If a philosopher's ideas are promptly taken up by a school and developed only in one direction, this may well point to a lack of richness, of dimension, of profundity. It may be a mark of greatness in a philosopher if he feels distressed by his influence—as Wittgenstein did. He was not only one of the most influential philosophers of his century but also one of the most remarkable men of our time. Bartley does not see him merely as a link in a chain, nor does he concentrate on the human being to the exclusion of his thought. What he offers us is a concise intellectual biography of an extraordinary man.

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