THIS IS both a very personal and a very impersonal book, and each of these peculiarities requires some accounting. The book is impersonal in the sense that it contains little that is original, and that it makes unusually heavy use of direct quotations. It is intended to introduce a body of literature—the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein and some related developments in contemporary philosophy—and to survey its potential significance for our thinking about political and social life. Two features of that literature necessitate the extensive use of quotations. First, this kind of philosophy relies centrally on examples, especially on examples of linguistic usage or of what we say under various circumstances. The discovery and elucidation of such examples—of examples that succeed in making the philosophical point—is enormously difficult. It is an art, not a technique, and it requires talent. Philosophers like Wittgenstein, J. L. Austin, Stanley Cavell, Paul Ziff, have that talent to remarkable degrees; so I have leaned again and again on the specific examples they adduce.

In addition, the literature being introduced here is difficult to summarize or restate or paraphrase because of certain characteristic obscurities of style, particularly in Wittgenstein himself. Not that Wittgenstein's language, his writing style, is obscure. He writes elegant, lucid German. And while there are some problems about its translation, they are not major obstacles (as is sometimes the case with Hegel or Heidegger). What is obscure and difficult is Wittgenstein's style of thought, his philosophical style. Erich Heller has said "there are philosophies which, however difficult they may be, are in principle easy to teach and to learn. Of course, not everyone can teach or learn philosophy—any more than higher mathematics; but the philosophies of certain philosophers have this in common with higher mathematics: they present the simple alternative of being either understood or not understood. It is, in the last analysis, impossible
to misunderstand them. This is true of Aristotle, or St. Thomas Aquinas, or Descartes, or Locke, or Kant. Such philosophies are like mountains: you climb to their tops or you give up; or like weights: you lift them or they are too heavy for you. In either case you will know what has happened and 'where you are.' But this is not so with the thought of Plato, or St. Augustine, or Pascal, or Kierkegaard, or Nietzsche. Their philosophies are like human faces on the features of which are inscribed, disquietingly, the destinies of souls; or like cities rich in history. 'Do you understand Kant?' is like asking 'Have you been to the summit of Mount Blanc?' The answer is yes or no. 'Do you understand Nietzsche?' is like asking 'Do you know Rome?' The answer is simple only if you have never been there.'

Wittgenstein is, as Heller says, a philosopher of the second kind. He does not develop a systematic doctrine, or write discursive essays. His books are not divided into chapters, but into numbered paragraphs. Sometimes a paragraph contains a complete thought: an epigram, an aphorism, a riddle, an example. Sometimes an argument is developed through several successive numbered sections. Often one has a general sense of continuing themes, but of six or eight themes being developed simultaneously: appearing, disappearing, reappearing unexpectedly. The effect is that of an elaborate mosaic, or perhaps of an intricately woven tapestry. Thus, what Wittgenstein says is bound very intimately to the way in which he says it, as is often true of poetry. To some extent, Cavell's philosophizing presents similar difficulties. So, where I found doctrine uniquely embodied in the original text I have quoted shamelessly. I suppose it is unusual, also, to make as extensive use as this book does of an unpublished doctoral dissertation, not the author's own. About that I can say only that I use Cavell's dissertation because it is indispensable; and that many of us think it should have been published, and honored, long ago.

But this is also a very personal book, because in a sense it is a record of my own intellectual development, the topics that concerned me. It was written because of the significance that Wittgenstein had for my thinking, in an attempt to make that significance available to others. While writing, I often thought of it in images like this one: It was as if I had been for some years on an intellectual journey through territory which, though it might be familiar to some, was totally strange to me. After the beginning, I was accompanied by no guide, but followed trails suggested by certain books. Those trails led me further and further from the familiar ground where my colleagues did their work, and I felt increasingly isolated intellectually. So I hastily sketched an account of my travels, sealed it into a bottle, and threw it into the nearby seas, in hopes that it would be found by someone in the area from which I had come, that he would become intrigued and follow me to the place where I now am.

I first became acquainted with language philosophy while I was a grad-

uate student in Berkeley, through Stanley Cavell. What I encountered at that time was primarily Oxford ordinary-language analysis, particularly Austin's. Though my own field was political science and not philosophy, I decided to write my doctoral dissertation using language-philosophical techniques like Austin's to clarify a troublesome concept in political theory, the concept of representation. Only after that dissertation was essentially completed did I encounter, in rapid succession, Paul Ziff's book, Wittgenstein's later writings, and the manuscript of Cavell's dissertation. Their impact on me was immediate and intense. I felt that for the first time I understood the real significance of the painstaking, grinding work I had been doing on representation. For the first time I became genuinely interested and involved in my work. And all that I had learned about politics, society, and human thought seemed reorganized, enriched, by my new understanding. It was, in short, a transforming experience. No doubt I had been prepared for it by my earlier studies in philosophy, my conversations with Cavell, and my struggles with my own dissertation.

Full of enthusiasm and continuing to read avidly, I began to try to talk about these new discoveries with my colleagues, and to teach courses about them. The results were severely disappointing. People were unfamiliar with the literature that interested me, Wittgenstein's later writings having been published only shortly before and Cavell's manuscript remaining unpublished. As I continued to explore, the gap between me and those I wanted to address widened. When I tried to suggest readings, it quickly became clear how extensive and inaccessible the literature was. Moreover, to political scientists the literature seemed remote in content as well, and irrelevant to their own interests; what few studies did purport to apply the new philosophy directly to politics struck me as almost perverse misrepresentations. Even my teaching was unsatisfactory. Some students left quickly, bored; others were interested, even enthusiastic, but often emerged with ideas I found embarrassingly bizarre. And, worst of all, I was unable to articulate my own ideas. At that point, I began what was to be a short article about ordinary-language philosophy and politics; it became this book.

The book, then, is liable to all the obvious dangers of such an account. In the areas of philosophy with which it deals, I am largely an autodidact and an amateur; no doubt I have made many blunders as a result, failed to see connections to existing work and to give credit where credit seems due. Moreover, there is danger that what was a transforming intellectual experience for me, discovered gradually at just the right time, may be of only minor interest when served up in predigested form for others. Indeed, one explanation of my colleagues' and students' failure to find in Wittgen-
stein what I found there might be that it was not there to be found, that mine was an idiosyncratic and disproportionate response to an objectively uninteresting philosophical doctrine.

But these are relatively superficial dangers, involving as they do at most my personal embarrassment upon the publication of this book. There is a deeper and, to me, more serious danger inherent in the nature of the material to be treated here. For the peculiar difficulties of Wittgenstein's own style, to which I have already alluded, raise the gravest doubts about whether such a book could possibly succeed, whether it is not bound to betray its own cause. Briefly, Wittgenstein's style is obscure, so I have attempted to make clear and lucid and accessible what I think he was trying to say. Though presumptuous, that is a worthy undertaking if Wittgenstein's obscurity betokens a failure on his part, an inability to express his teachings more clearly. But it becomes a disaster if Wittgenstein's obscurity is intentional, in some way necessary to his teaching, if what he has to say can be said and learned only by indirection. Then any attempt to state the message clearly and systematically would be bound to betray it; and any such attempt to introduce readers to Wittgenstein would become a mechanism preventing their genuine encounter with his ideas.

Wittgenstein himself comments on the peculiarities of his style in the introduction to his most important work, suggesting that it was both a failure and an essential element of his way of philosophizing. At first, he says, he had intended to organize his thoughts into a book proceeding “from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks.” But “after several unsuccessful attempts,” he realized that he would be unable to do so. And he apologizes: “I should have liked to produce a good book. This has not come about, but the time is past in which I could improve it.” But Wittgenstein also says that his disjointed and obscure philosophical style results from the very nature of philosophy as he understands it; that it is “of course, connected with the very nature” of his “investigation.”

Before Heller, Wittgenstein himself used the analogy of getting to know a city, as a way to illuminate his work in philosophy. He chose not Rome, but London, a city that he in fact had to learn to know slowly. Two of his students tell us that he said, “In teaching you philosophy I’m like a guide showing you how to find your way around London. I have to take you through the city from north to south, from east to west, from Euston to the Embankment and from Piccadilly to the Marble Arch. After I have taken you many journeys through the city, in all sorts of directions, we shall have passed through any given street a number of times—each time

traversing the street as part of a different journey. At the end of this you will know London; you will be able to find your way about like a born Londoner."  

Significantly, the aim is that the student should become capable of moving about on his own, a notion very different from mastering a doctrine.

For Wittgenstein, philosophy was a highly personal thing—both his own philosophizing and philosophy as a traditional enterprise. Heller suggests that this is why understanding his philosophy "on its own level is as much a matter of imagination and character as it is one of 'thinking.'" Wittgenstein's own philosophizing was, as Heller says, "a consuming passion; and not just 'a' passion, but the only possible form of his existence: the thought of losing his gift for philosophy made him feel suicidal. He could not but have contempt for philosophers who 'did' philosophy and, having done it, thought of other things," who did philosophy "for a living" and, to score debater's points, argued various positions they did not really hold. Above all else, Wittgenstein cherished what the existentialists came to call "authenticity"—the willingness and ability to say what you really mean and to live by what you say.

But in a more general sense, also, Wittgenstein saw all philosophizing as a highly personal activity, as an expression of self, even as symptomatic. The philosopher is a man in the grip of an idea, an obsession; he is his own prisoner "held captive" by "a picture" that haunts him. Wittgenstein knew this from his own experience, and believed that he had found a philosophical method to provide for the prisoners' liberation—his own and that of other philosophers. Cavell has suggested parallels between Wittgenstein and Freud, that for Wittgenstein the primary goal of philosophy is self-knowledge; and that he writes indirectly and obscurely because, like Freudian therapy, he "wishes to prevent understanding which is unaccompanied by inner change." Both Freud and Wittgenstein "are intent upon unmasking the defeat of our real need in the face of self-impositions which we have not assessed, ... or fantasies ('pictures') which we cannot escape."

Such therapy, always personal, always must address itself to the particular individual self and to a particular philosophical position. Thus, Wittgenstein's philosophy was always, in an important way, what philosophy had been for Socrates: a dialogue between guide and seeker, between teacher and student, between two philosophizing individuals. Such

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8 Ibid., p. 204.
philosophy is not easily put into discursive form and published in books. For what is appropriate to say to one man, what might lead him to self-knowledge or philosophical insight, is trivial or useless for another. One can easily apply to Wittgenstein what Philip Rieff says of Freud: that he "has no message, in the old sense of something positive and constructive to offer," and yet "his doctrine contains intellectual and moral implications that, when drawn, constitute a message. . . . His is a very intimate wisdom, tailored to this patient and that occasion." That, too, can help to explain Wittgenstein's style. For if things are said only indirectly, if the reader is allowed—or forced—to find for himself the truths relevant to him, then a book of philosophy may after all be able to accomplish something. Wittgenstein says, "in philosophizing we may not terminate a disease of thought. It must run its natural course, and slow cure is all important." Again one might draw the parallel to interpretation in psychoanalysis. Timing is essential, and questions or indirect statements can often penetrate where direct assertions cannot, allowing the reader or patient to assimilate as much of an insight as he is ready for. "In philosophy it is always good to put a question instead of an answer to a question. For an answer to a philosophical question may easily be unfair; disposing of it by means of another question is not."

The putting of questions instead of answers, the use of indirection and suggestion, also have something to do with the fact that philosophical disease and philosophical cure must both be expressed in the same medium. If, as Wittgenstein maintains, philosophical problems somehow grow out of the vagaries of human language, it is most unfortunate that we have no other medium but language available for solving them, or explaining their nature, or suggesting new methods for dealing with them. "The difficulty in philosophy," as Wittgenstein points out, "is to say no more than we know." We are constantly making new messes in the process of trying to clean up the old. With the very words we use to clarify or resolve one philosophical problem, we seem inadvertently but inevitably to create others. Thus, "in the end when one is doing philosophy one gets to the point where one would like just to emit an inarticulate

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10 No doubt that is why the Platonic dialogues sometimes give us pictures of Socrates that seem so inconsistent. But Plato himself was aware of the problem; see his "Seventh Letter."

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Wittgenstein's style is to some extent an elegant compromise with that desire. Consequently, there is a very real danger that, in trying to make his ideas accessible, lucid, and systematic, I may make their real content and significance inaccessible. In particular, in our impatient and technical age, there is danger of trivializing ordinary-language philosophy into just one more technique. Since method often dictates to content, as Cavell has said, it may well happen that "an intellectual commitment to analytic philosophy trains concern away from the wider, traditional problems of human culture which may have brought one to philosophy in the first place." That this has already happened widely in contemporary philosophy is no secret to anyone who reads the professional journals. Yet I find that Wittgensteinian philosophy need not be trivialized or trivializing; it can do full honor to both the problems of traditional philosophy and our own. Moreover, this book is not itself a work of philosophy, but explores the implications of some philosophical themes for our understanding of politics and society. Perhaps those implications, at least, can be examined systematically without being distorted in the process. In any case, the book is intended only as an introduction. It is not a full account of Wittgenstein's philosophy or ordinary-language philosophy, nor are any of the suggested applications fully worked out. The reader is urged to study Wittgenstein for himself, and make his own applications.

The book proceeds gradually from explication to application. After an introduction, it sets forth certain basic themes in Wittgenstein's philosophy, in Chapters II, III, and IV, but also VI. This broadens into a consideration of some of the general implications of these themes, in Chapters V to VII; then the book is directed more specifically at various continuing concerns of social science and political theory, in Chapters VIII to XIV.

My intellectual debt to Stanley Cavell has already been mentioned and should be evident throughout the book; I am grateful to him in addition for having read the manuscript and given me more useful suggestions in an afternoon than I had dreamed possible. I am grateful also to my friends and former colleagues, John H. Schaar and Sheldon S. Wolin, for reading and commenting on the manuscript; but even more, for having created an enclave in Berkeley where serious work in political theory could be done with pleasure. And I am deeply grateful to the students in my 1969 Wittgenstein seminar, particularly to Harold Sarf and Jon Schiller, whose patient interest and unfailing critical sense forced me, again and again, closer to what I really meant to say.


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