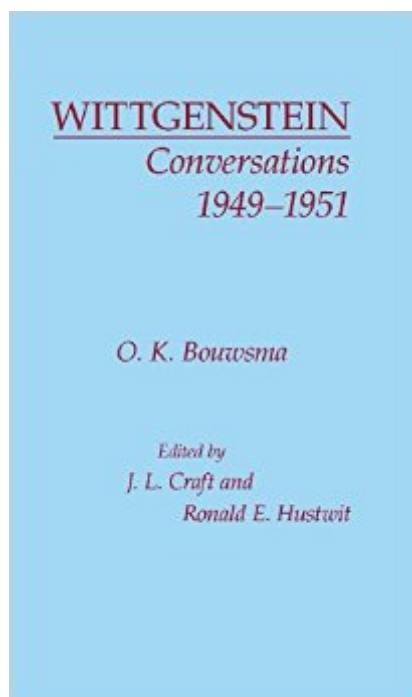


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Wittgenstein Conversations, 1949-1951



Synopsis

"Remarkable how well Bouwsma understood Wittgenstein's approach to philosophical problems and how intelligently he was able to recount Wittgenstein's discussions. The bits about sensation are especially good. And the asides about the other philosophers--e.g. Dewey, Russell, Anscombe--are, while not frivolous, gossipy and titillating." --Riley Wallihan, Western Oregon University

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Customer Reviews

Oets Kolk Bouwsma was a Dutch-American philosopher who met Wittgenstein during his visit to the U.S. in 1949. Norman Malcolm introduced the two philosophers and during the following months the two men had numerous philosophical discussions while on casual walks and at Malcolm's home. At Cornell University, these discussions were either formal or informal, revealing, to a large extent, intensity of thought, and immediacy and pending danger that is so characteristic of Wittgenstein's personality. These discussions influenced Bouwsma to a great degree in terms of his work habits and approach to philosophy in general. Although short in length, these discussions reveal a mature Wittgenstein, a man at the end of his life that had not lost any of his concentration nor passion for life. Wittgenstein discusses many topics from ethics, language, Dostoevsky, Frege, Russell, Descartes, Kierkegaard, religious truth, faith, and Plato. Bouwsma and Wittgenstein would commence on one of their walks and Wittgenstein would ask Bouwsma to choose a topic for discussion, and without anytime for reflection, Wittgenstein would charge directly to the heart of the

subject, stopping in mid-step to make a relevant point, gesticulating in the air while observing his audience of one to ensure his student was comprehending his words. Reading these short "notes" one can imagine and almost feel the power and concentration of the discussions. Despite being very sick, Wittgenstein continued to be almost fanatical about cleanliness, vigorously scrubbing himself for a good hour on a daily basis. Miss Anscombe, one of the philosopher's literary executors, told Bouwsma that Wittgenstein was known back in the Cambridge days to heat several buckets of water for his daily baths.

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