

# Norman Malcolm

*June 11, 1911 — August 4, 1990*

Norman Malcolm was a member of the Sage School of Philosophy for thirty-one years. His intellect, his personality and his character set the tone of philosophical life at Cornell for much of this time, while his writing and inspirational teaching led the Sage School into the ranks of the most distinguished philosophy departments.

Malcolm's wide-ranging work in epistemology and the philosophy of mind consisted, in large part, of the clear and vivid interpretation and ambitious application of the thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein. His association with Wittgenstein (vividly described in his *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* (1958)) began when he was a student at Cambridge, on a travelling fellowship from Harvard, from 1938 to 1940. When Wittgenstein visited Malcolm in Ithaca in 1949, their extensive discussions of knowledge and certainty stimulated thinking of Wittgenstein's that led to his last major work, *On Certainty*, and prompted Malcolm's important exploration of knowledge, certainty and justification in *Knowledge and Belief* (1952). When Malcolm's famous review of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* appeared in 1954, the book was the subject of much discussion but widespread bafflement. Malcolm's trenchant interpretations of Wittgenstein's remarks on mind, language and the self set the stage for decades of important controversy. In his many articles and several books, Malcolm employed Wittgensteinian strategies to combat the confusions and mystifications that he saw as pervasive in philosophy and psychology.

Malcolm's retirement from Cornell in 1978 was not at all a retirement from philosophical work. He moved to London where he continued to teach at King's College in the University of London, and to write both articles and books. He was vigorously engaged in philosophical work until his final brief hospitalization.

Throughout Norman Malcolm's long and productive life both students and colleagues found him a paradigm of philosophical integrity and commitment. He could seem gruff and bearish, but those who began by fearing him soon found that he was very warm and kind. He lived his life and conducted his intellectual projects with full, guileless and fearless commitment, earning the respect of all who knew him.

*Norman Kretzmann, Sydney Shoemaker, Richard Miller*