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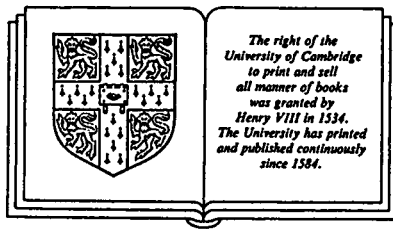
ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF PIAGET'S THOUGHT

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and

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Preface

I did not start out to write a book on Piaget. Rather, in reading his works for other purposes, I discovered a different thinker than I had been led to expect from textbook presentations of his theory. His autobiographical remarks on the importance of the problem of universals for his early thinking had impressed me, being a former student of philosophy, but as yet I did not know what to make of this connection. Later, in searching through his books looking for a clear statement of the relation between the concept of *structures d'ensemble* and the hypothesis of general developmental synchrony, I was surprised to discover that I could not find any. Instead, I found statements to the contrary: Piaget apparently did not believe in the hypothesis of general developmental synchrony commonly attributed to him. This discovery led me to reexamine the notion of *structures d'ensemble* and ultimately back to the problem of universals:

In my subsequent encounter with his adolescent novel *Recherche* and his early writings on religion, I discovered that the original problem motivating his work had been the attempt to reconcile science and values. His interest in psychology now appeared in a different light. Psychological research had been less an end in itself than a way of addressing the problem of values with scientific means. By observing the development of increasingly more powerful forms of reasoning in children, he had hoped to discover a principle underlying development progress. In this way, scientific observation could provide a basis, not for deciding judgments of relative value, but for distinguishing the relative values of different forms of judgment.

The question was how to communicate this new understanding of Piaget's work to others. I could think of no better way than the developmental method he had used himself. The most intuitive way of illuminating the organic structure of this thought was to trace its evolution from the inception of his basic ideas to their full fruition in his later writings. In so doing, I hoped to present a more full-bodied picture of Piaget as a thinker than had been previously available.

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