

The cover features several stylized, light green leaf motifs scattered across a pale yellow background. Each motif consists of a stem with two leaves pointing upwards and to the right.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

A Qualitative Study

Shlomit C. Schuster

 *Greenwood*
PUBLISHING GROUP

THE PHILOSOPHER'S
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

A Qualitative Study

Shlomit C. Schuster
Foreword by Maurice Friedman

PRAEGER

Westport, Connecticut
London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Schuster, Shlomit C., 1951–

The philosopher's autobiography: a qualitative study / Shlomit C. Schuster ; foreword by Maurice Friedman.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-275-97789-7 (alk. paper)

1. Philosophy—Authorship. 2. Philosophers—Biography—History and criticism. 3. Autobiography. 4. Psychoanalysis and philosophy. I. Title.

B52.7.S38 2003

190—dc21 2002070868

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Copyright © 2003 by Shlomit C. Schuster

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, by any process or technique, without the express written consent of the publisher.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2002070868

ISBN: 0-275-97789-7

First published in 2003

Praeger Publishers, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881

An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.

www.praeger.com

Printed in the United States of America



The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48-1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The author and publisher gratefully acknowledge permission for use of the following material:

Schuster, Shlomit C. "Bedside and Philosophically Oriented Clinical Practice." *Journal of Radical Psychology* 2, 1 (2001). Available at: <<http://www.radpsy.yorku.ca/vol2-1/bedside.htm>>. June 2002.

Schuster, Shlomit C. "Philosophical Autobiography." In *Encyclopedia of Life Writing*, edited by M. Jolly, 706-707. London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001.

Schuster, Shlomit C. "Revisiting *Hope Now* with Benny Lévy: A Note on the 1996 English Edition of *Hope Now*." *Sartre Studies International* 4, 1 (1998): 63-75.

Schuster, Shlomit C. "Sartre's Freud and the Future of Sartrean Psychoanalysis." *Israel Journal of Psychiatry* 35, 1 (1998): 20-30.

Schuster, Shlomit C. "Sartre's 'Words' as a Paradigm for Self-Description in Philosophical Counseling." In *Perspectives in Philosophical Practice*, edited by W. van der Vlist, 20-34. Doorwerth: Dutch Society for Philosophy Practice, 1997.

*For my parents
For all they are,
and for their love and goodness.*

Vita Nuova

I stood by the unvintageable sea
Till the wet waves drenched face and hair with spray,
The long red fires of the dying day
Burned in the west; the wind piped drearily;
And to the land the clamorous gulls did flee:
Alas! I cried, my life is full of pain,
And who can garner fruit or golden grain,
From these waste fields which travail ceaselessly!
My nets gaped wide with many a break and flaw
Nathless I threw them as my final cast
Into the sea, and waited for the end.
When lo! a sudden glory! and I saw
The argent splendour of white limbs ascend,
And in that joy forgot my tortured past.

Oscar Wilde

Contents

Foreword <i>by Maurice Friedman</i>	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
1 Philosophical Autobiography	1
2 Philosophy, Self-Reflection, and Life-Writing	21
3 Philosophical Psychoanalysis and Qualitative Research	53
4 The Philosopher Reborn	77
5 The Philosopher True to Nature	111
6 The Philosopher in Revolt	149
7 Epilogue: New Selves for a New Day?	205
Bibliography	219
Index	231

This page intentionally left blank

Foreword

Maurice Friedman

Dr. Shlomit Schuster has written another groundbreaking book, following up on her earlier book *Philosophy Practice: An Alternative to Counseling and Psychotherapy*, the first full-length book in English on this subject. Her new book, *The Philosopher's Autobiography: A Qualitative Study*, is a unique study that makes a significant contribution to such diverse fields as philosophy, psychology, biography, sociology, and cultural history.

The scholarship that undergirds this book is breathtaking, but what Dr. Schuster has done on the basis of this scholarship is even more breathtaking. None of the many works she cites has accomplished what she has. Building on her earlier book, Dr. Schuster lays the foundation of this one by a thorough examination of the meeting of philosophy and autobiography and the special problems and issues that this meeting raises.

Schuster also elaborates on the meeting and "mismeeting" of autobiography and psychoanalysis, offering in the place of the traditional Freudian reductionist approach a psychology of her own that does not remove the reality of the author into the interpsychic or try to demonstrate that the present and the future are determined by childhood upbringing and unconscious complexes. Instead, she presents a philosophical psychological approach, influenced by R. D. Laing and others, that gives ample due to personal decision and the congruence, continuity, and changes of personal existence.

Particularly impressive are the three long chapters on the autobiographical writings of Augustine, Rousseau, and Sartre. These are car-

ried over, with major revisions, from Schuster's doctoral dissertation for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (on which, incidentally, I worked with her for a number of years). That she can do justice to three such different figures from such different time periods and cultural contexts is impressive indeed, especially given her knowledge of both the life and the full range of works of each figure. Still more impressive, however, is the exciting and thoroughly readable way in which she has brought these figures to life. Her presentation and analysis of Jean-Paul Sartre in this context is truly outstanding. I believe the readers of this book will be grateful to her, as I was, for rescuing Sartre from the popular image of him as an extreme existentialist individualist and bringing out the socialism and concern for reciprocal relationships that marked his later writings and his later years.

In her epilogue, Shlomit Schuster deftly presents just what is necessary from the autobiographies of John Stuart Mill, Søren Kierkegaard, and Bertrand Russell to rescue them from the reductionist readings that have been given them and to bolster her conclusion that the self-understanding in all the philosophical autobiographies is in no way inferior to Freudian psychoanalytical understandings. She demonstrates with authority that each of these thinkers in philosophizing was also establishing consistency with his real self.

This is, in short, an original, significant, and exciting book that deserves and hopefully will find a wide readership.

Acknowledgments

The crucial ideas of this book and the chapters on Augustine, Rousseau, and Sartre are based on my Ph.D. dissertation, "Philosophical Autobiography: A Commentary on the Practice of Philosophy," which I wrote at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1990–1997. Although these chapters were considerably revised to be part of this book, it seems right to me to thank all those who were helpful at one stage or another in promoting my dissertation labor, among whom were Jacques Schlanger, Avishai Margalit, and Marcel Dubois. I am particularly grateful to Maurice S. Friedman (San Diego State University) for having been a very kind and helpful advisor. I thank also George Stern (Australian National University) for reading and giving encouraging advice on chapters I wrote more recently.

I thank the editors of the books and the journals in which sections of this book have been published for their permission to republish these texts with some minor changes.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank the commissioning editor, Elisabetta Linton, and others at Praeger Publishers, the Greenwood Publishing Group, as well as the copy editor, Seth Reichgott, of the John Beck Production Group, for their interest and assistance in contributing to the realization of *The Philosopher's Autobiography*.

This page intentionally left blank

CHAPTER 1

Philosophical Autobiography

William [James] kept diaries and at one time made the very revealing confession to Henry Adams that “autobiographies are my particular line of literature, the only books I let myself buy outside of metaphysical treatises.”

Robert F. Sayre, *The Examined Self*

This book is an introduction to the relatively new genre of philosophical autobiography. Though this unique genre existed throughout the ages, it did not receive the recognition that, for example, hagiography received. Only during the last century did a few scholars begin to regard the autobiographies of philosophers as a distinct type. Moreover, this is the first book solely dedicated to the subject of philosophical autobiography, the finest example of philosophical life writing.

In this chapter I outline *The Philosopher's Autobiography* and present a general introduction to this genre. I describe characteristics of philosophical autobiography and show how this type of life writing developed. Also, I survey and list different examples belonging to this category and examine research involving these autobiographies. Chapter 2 is a selection from several representative narratives extending from antiquity to postmodernity: Plato, Marcus Aurelius, Abelard, Al-Ghazali, Dante, Erasmus, Hume, Kahlil Gibran, Simone Weil, Hazel E. Barnes, and Alfred I. Tauber. I examine how philosophy and self-reflection are specified in these texts. However, I intend this book to be more than a survey of a genre, and I extensively analyze in it three

philosophical self-narratives as qualitative research samples and case studies in philosophical psychoanalysis (Chapters 4, 5, and 6).

In Chapter 3 I show the meaning of philosophical psychoanalysis different from the philosophical interpretation of psychoanalysis as presented by Richard Wollheim, Jonathan Lear, and other psychoanalytically informed philosophers or philosophically oriented psychoanalysts. I present philosophy "in itself" as a method for a different kind of psychoanalysis: the analysis of the self and its development from a philosophical perspective. I show as well the philosophical origins of qualitative research and its relationship to psychoanalysis.

Though qualitative research originated in phenomenological philosophy, nowadays mainly social scientists practice qualitative research. Qualitative researchers from diverse disciplines publish hundreds of papers and books yearly, using or explaining qualitative methods. Yet the public and many professionals remain quite ignorant about this flourishing alternate way of obtaining knowledge. I turn to qualitative research as a philosophical method. Justifying it as more than merely a scientific method may promote its use in the humanities as well.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are essays on the autobiographies of Augustine, Rousseau, and Sartre: We are introduced to these life stories from a philosopher's perspective. Mainly, but not only, their subjective voices reveal to us their lived experience and intellectual achievements. The chapters are divided into three sections. Each section presents an analysis of the dynamics of philosophical living, thinking, and writing, while comparing and contrasting these with inner changes accomplished in a successful psychoanalysis.

In Chapter 4 I describe Augustine's *Confessions* as a philosophical text in which Augustine narrates his philosophical development and shows how philosophy shaped his life. Through analyzing other writings of Augustine, I question the consistency of these works with the philosophy of his autobiography. The chapter is divided into subsections: "Philosophical Confessions," "Philosophical Reflections, Theology, and Autobiography," and "Psychoanalysis Informed by Philosophical Rebirth."

I apply a corresponding strategy in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 has the following subdivisions: "The Philosophical Self-Portrait," "Philosophy as Autobiography," and "Psychoanalysis from Nature's Perspective."

In Chapter 6, I analyze Sartre's *Words* under the subtitle "A Philosophical Narrative for All." This section is followed by "Philosophy as Literary and Political Engagement" and "Psychoanalysis on the Writer's Couch." In this chapter I show how Sartre used his own brand of psychoanalysis in becoming the radical philosopher he wanted to be.

Finally, in the epilogue, I reflect on self-renewal or change, and on the likelihood of persons attaining different selves through combining

philosophical psychoanalysis with narrative writing. I illuminate these issues through conclusions drawn from former chapters, while comparing these to the dynamics of consistency and continuity in the autobiographies of John Stuart Mill, Søren Kierkegaard, and Bertrand Russell.

Philosophical autobiography proper need not describe the life of a so-called professional philosopher, though most philosophical autobiographies have been written by such philosophers. Sometimes the recognition of the biographer as a philosopher has been obscured by other eminent professional skills, such as those of the theologian, politician, novelist, and so on. Nevertheless, the philosophical bent of mind and philosophical style of writing in such autobiographies remain obvious (e.g., in St. Augustine, Benjamin Franklin, and Jean-Paul Sartre).

According to the *Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, "The autobiography proper is a connected narrative of the author's life, with stress laid on introspection."¹ Over the last forty years the subject of autobiography has been a flourishing field of academic studies, and more elegant and elaborate definitions are abundantly available. An excellent essay on defining autobiography is Robert F. Sayre's "The Examined Self Reexamined."² In the context of my inquiry into philosophical autobiography, clarifying definitions of "autobiography proper" seems an aside. I consider this minimal denotation of autobiography as a working definition to elaborate further about the main topic of inquiry as sufficient.

In her classic work, *The Autobiography*, Anna Robeson Burr listed autobiographies according to professions and made a special listing for a few philosophers and scientists.³ There she included the philosophers Avicenna, Giordano Bruno, René Descartes, Desiderius Erasmus, Al-Ghazali, Solomon Maimon, John S. Mill, Herbert Spencer, and Giambattista Vico.⁴ Furthermore, Burr categorizes certain other philosophers under other professions; for example, David Hume is found among the historians.

Georg Misch, author of another classic work, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, analyzes the development of autobiography in the ancient philosophical and religious movements.⁵ He describes the philosophical disclosure of personality in Cicero's letters and the self-portrayals of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.

Throughout the ages philosophers have been inclined to write about their own philosophical lives, but it was only in the last half of the twentieth century that the term "philosophical autobiography" was first coined by William C. Spengemann in *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre* to indicate a particular genre.⁶ Karl Jaspers was the first and so far the only philosopher who used for his self-narrative the title *Philosophical Autobiography*. However, there are

autobiographic works with titles such as *Philosophical Letters* (Voltaire, Peter Chaadaev), *Confessio Philosophi* (Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz), *A Philosophic Memoir* (Abigail L. Rosenthal), and *Philosophical Meditations* (Robert Nozick).

Spengemann considers as authentically philosophical those individuals who wrote their lives with a skeptical slant. It is doubtful whether the historical aspects of the self are real; the real self is founded metaphysically: in allegory, metaphor, God, nature, or even opium. Spengemann discerns three genres in autobiography, and all these are manifest in Augustine's *Confessions* as historical, philosophical, and poetical autobiography. The first genre is typical for antiquity, the philosophical model for the eighteenth century, and the poetic narrative is the norm in modernity. Spengemann's reference to Carlyle as having used the concept "philosophico-poetic autobiography" might suggest his source of inspiration for creating these three genres. Unlike Burr and Misch, Spengemann finds the profession of the philosopher—or philosophizing in general—not the main indicator for the philosophical genre. Characteristic is the additional metaphorical meaning of the autobiographers' experiences, as found in Wordsworth's *Prelude* or De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*.

Paul de Man, in a somewhat similar way, suggests that life not only produces autobiography but that, as an additional dimension, "the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life."⁷ Unlike Spengemann, Man finds it problematic "to define and to treat autobiography as if it were a literary genre among others," let alone considering a genre such as philosophical autobiography. Nevertheless, Jacques Derrida observed that Man's allegorical reading of texts is "on the one hand, the Hegelian concept of allegory . . . on the other hand, it is also Hegelian philosophy as allegory."⁸ But unlike Hegelian absolute knowledge, Man's reading of narratives paradoxically leads away from self-knowledge obtained through self-scrutiny.

Martin Warner, in "Philosophical Autobiography, St. Augustine and John Stuart Mill," finds, in contradiction to the additional metaphorical meaning of the life story as characteristic for Spengemann's view, that philosophical autobiography is recognizable in the relation between self-description and personal persuasion. He describes examples of such a tie in the autobiographies of Augustine and Mill:

A model of man which is integrated with the author's perception of his own self in the light of past experience. This integration provides a point of reference for understanding that experience, and hence may constitute a significant element in any cumulative case which seeks to defend (or attack) the model in question. The connection between "Know thyself" and one's overall metaphysical standpoint may not be so dated as is sometimes thought.⁹

Warner's view signifies through its broad perspective of philosophical thought as significant for the philosophical life narrative a recoinage of the term philosophical autobiography in its widest sense.

Genevieve Lloyd observes that she owed much of her interest in philosophical autobiography to Warner's paper. But instead of a "model of man," she finds as a common thread running through the autobiographies of Augustine, Rousseau, and Sartre the attempt to create a "fictional self": "the attempt of a living self to make an object of itself, to grasp itself as a complete being without paying the cost of death."¹⁰

I claim in "On Philosophical Self-Diagnosis and Self-Help" that many philosophical autobiographies are characterized by a dynamic relationship between philosophical conviction and the philosopher's praxis.¹¹ There, and in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of this book, I describe philosophical autobiographies as documents typically providing two kinds of information: how philosophical thought processes influence the praxis of the philosopher, and how life situations influence philosophical thought processes. Nevertheless, such a dynamic dual pattern is not necessarily a vicious circle, or a priori existent.

In "Can Philosophy Speak about Life?" Ilham Dilman sees the pursuit of philosophy itself as a form of engagement: an engagement of the whole person, not just his or her intellect. Philosophy as a marriage "changes the life and perspective of the person who takes it seriously, including his perspective on his own personal problems. And this, indeed, would constitute a change in the person who takes philosophy seriously."¹²

Of course, one can conceive of a professional philosopher who philosophizes—in spite of disliking philosophy—only to earn his or her living. Consequently, a philosopher "in spite of him- or herself" philosophizes only during working hours, and preferably deals with subjects that deny a relationship between philosophy and life. Such philosophizing can be compared with any other professional activity, such as that of a chemist, dentist, or butcher. The professional activity of a chemist would have no bearing on the meaning or content of his or her autobiography: A chemist's autobiography is not written as a chemical formula, nor does it use chemical symbolic language to produce a "chemical autobiography."

One cannot compare philosophy, as done by most philosophers, with a rigidly detached professional activity. Not to love "the love of wisdom" but nevertheless to pursue it is, to put it as delicately as possible, an ambivalent and paradoxical endeavor.

Philosophers are usually characterized by a serious dedication to philosophy. And such dedication, "given the character of its questions, may amount to a spiritual reorientation—as Socrates tells us it did for him. Such a transformation is more than a change in the philosopher's understanding . . . it is a change in *him*, in his mode of existence and,

therefore, in his very being."¹³ The seriously engaged philosopher writing about his or her life writes a philosophical autobiography, since philosophy and the philosopher's way of living and writing are inseparable. Two contemporary philosophers, Bryan Magees and Abigail L. Rosenthal, seem to provide further evidence for this claim by having written their life narratives with the explicit aim of showing how ideas influenced their lives.¹⁴ Nevertheless, philosophical reflection as a free, critical, and creative mental activity comprises only the potential for transcending habitual and slavish trends of cognition.

Different from my view are the views of R. G. Collingwood and Wilhelm Dilthey: They find that historical cognition of the self and philosophy cannot be detached. In *An Autobiography*, Collingwood claims a necessary rapprochement between philosophy and history. In his view the philosophical and the autobiographical are one: Philosophy is a historical investigation into the principles a person is unaware of. Dilthey similarly finds philosophy a hermeneutical "Verstehen," a historical, biographical, or autobiographical practice.¹⁵

An important contribution to the contemporary practice of philosophical autobiography has been made by Paul A. Schillp, the founding editor of the Library of Living Philosophers. At present the Library of Living Philosophers series is edited by Randall E. Auxier.¹⁶ In this series, twentieth-century philosophers were asked to write an autobiographical essay as an important feature of their work. The outcome so far of this initiative is more than twenty-five volumes, containing autobiographic essays by George Santayana, Alfred North Whitehead, G. E. More, Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Karl Jaspers, C. D. Broad, Rudolf Carnap, Martin Buber, C. I. Lewis, Karl Popper, Brand Blanshard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Gabriel Marcel, W. V. Quine, Georg Henrik von Wright, Charles Hartshorne, A. J. Ayer, Paul Ricoeur, Paul Weiss, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Roderick M. Chisholm, and P. F. Strawson. Some of these philosophers produced, apart from their essay in the Library of Living Philosophers, other autobiographical works as well (see listing further on).

Schillp wrote an autobiography in which he reflects on the great minds he encountered: Albert Einstein, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber, Ernest Cassirer, and Brand Blanshard.¹⁷ Another collection of autobiographical essays by philosophers has been edited by James R. Watson, and contains the work of twenty-two contemporary American philosophers (e.g., John D. Caputo, Thomas R. Flynn, David M. Rasmussen, and Hugh J. Silverman).¹⁸

Following is a listing of more philosophical autobiographies. What characterizes the authors of this group of heterogeneous documents is that they attained academic degrees in philosophy and/or demonstrated their talents as philosophers in their writings. Despite the con-

ventional differentiation between the autobiography proper and other autobiographic writings, I include in the main body of autobiographies listed some diaries, journals, memoirs, letters, novels, interviews, and autobiographic essays that seem to me of philosophical and autobiographical significance. My motive for not making too strict a division between the many stylistic forms of philosophical self-narratives is that apparently the essential description of the philosopher's life one expects to find in philosophical autobiography has been conceived by some philosophers as best expressed in a stylistic form different from autobiography proper.

At first glance, some of the autobiographers choose names for their works that do not indicate an autobiographic intention, but upon a closer look the titles chosen often characterize in a single phrase a complete life project. For others the name "Memoirs" or "Journal" is a cover title for their letters. And letters are sometimes autobiography or function as such. Other philosophical autobiographical writings are a mixture of biographical and historical data, or contain so much philosophizing that autobiography per se seems of minor importance. The latter can particularly be said of many apologies: The life worth writing about is mainly, or even only, the author's metaphysical life.

In the listing here I present the names of the authors in alphabetical order. Though titles of the autobiographical writings are all given in italics, not all were published as books. Some of these titles have been published as essays in books by these authors, or are found as a foreword or introduction to their works. Other texts may appear as essays in books about these philosophers, or in their collected works, or as essays in magazines and journals:

Abélard, Peter (1079–1142): *The Story of My Misfortunes*, Apuleius (123–170): *Apologia Apuleius*, Adams, Henry (1838–1918): *The Education of Henry Adams*, Adler, Mortimer J. (1902–2001): *Philosopher at Large* and *A Second Look in the Rearview Mirror*, Adorno, Theodore (1903–1969): *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, Alexander, Samuel (1859–1935): *Memoir*, Al-Ghazali (1058–1111): *Confessions*, Alighieri, Dante (1265–1321): *Vita Nuova*, Althusser, Louis (1918–1990): *The Future Last Forever*, Amiel, Henri Frédéric (1821–1881): *Journal Intime*, Andreas-Salomé, Lou (1861–1937): *Lebensrückblicke*, Antoninus, Marcus Aurelius (121–180): *To Himself*, Aristides, Marcianus (second century): *Apologia*, Artaud, Antonin (1896–1948): *Fragments of a Diary from Hell*, Augustine, Saint (354–430): *The Confessions*, Babbage, Charles (1791–1871): *Passages from the Life of a Philosopher*, Barclay, Robert (1648–1690): *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Barnes, Hazel E. (1915–): *The Story I Tell Myself: A Venture in Existential Autobiography*, Barthes, Ronald (1915–1980): *Ronald Barthes by Ronald Barthes*, Beauvoir, Simone de (1908–1986): *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, *The Prime of Life*, *Force of Circumstance*, *All Said and Done*, *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre*, Ben Gershon of Rosheim, Rabbi Joseph (1478–1554): *Sefer ha Mikneh*, Benjamin, Walter (1892–

1940): *Moscow Diary and Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms and Autobiographical Writings*, Berdyaev, Nikolai Alexandrovitch (1874–1948): *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography*, Berlin, Isaiah (1909–1997): *Personal Impressions and Conversations with Isaiah Berlin*, Bernard of Clairvaux, Saint (1090–1153): *Apology to William of St. Thierry*, Boethius (470–525): *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Bok, Sissela (1934–): *Alva Myrdal: A Daughter's Memoir*, Breton, André (1896–1966): *Conversations: The Autobiography of Surrealism*, Buber, Martin (1878–1965): *Meetings: Fragments of an Autobiography*, Canetti, Elias (1905–1994): *The Tongue Set Free*, *The Torch in My Ear*, and *The Play of Eyes*, Caro, Rabbi Joseph Ben Ephraim (1488–1575): *Maggid Mesharim*, Cavell, Stanley (1926–): *A Pitch of Philosophy: Autobiographical Exercises*, Chaadaev, Peter I. (1794–1856): *Philosophical Letters and Apology of a Madman*, Cioran, Emil (1911–1995): *Les Continents de L'Insomnie*, Coleridge, Samuel T. (1773–1834): *Biographia Literaria*, Copleston, Frederick C. (1907–1994): *Memoirs of a Philosopher*, Croce, Benedetto (1866–1952): *An Autobiography*, Cusa, Nicholas of (1401–1464): *Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, Daly, Mary (1928–): *Outercourse: The Be-Dazzling Voyage*, D'Arcy, Martin C. (1888–1976): *Laughter and the Love of Friends*, Deleuze, Gilles (1925–1995): *Negotiations*, Derrida, Jacques (1930–): *Memoires for Paul de Man*, Descartes, René (1596–1650): *Discourse on Method and Meditations*, Du Bois, William E. B. (1868–1963): *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century*, Einstein, Albert (1879–1955): *The World as I See It and Out of My Later Years*, Eizik of Komarno, Rabbi Isaac (1806–1874): *The Secret Diary*, Eliade, Mircea (1907–1986): *Autobiography*, Emerson, Ralph Waldo (1803–1882): *Journal and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, Erasmus, Desiderius (1466–1536): *Compendium Vitae*, Feyerabend, Paul (1924–1994): *Killing Time*, Flew, Antony (1923–): *Apologia Pro Philosophia Mea*, Foucault, Michel (1926–1984): *Self-Portraits: The Minimalist Self, Critical Theory/Intellectual History, and An Aesthetics of Existence*, Fox, George (1624–1691): *Journal*, Franklin, Benjamin (1706–1790): *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, Friedman, Maurice S. (1921–): *The Covenant of Peace: A Personal Witness and Touchstones of Reality*, Gibran, Kahlil (1883–1931): *A Self-Portrait*, Gide, André (1869–1951) *If It Die* and *The Journals of André Gide*, Godwin, William (1756–1836): *Autobiography*, Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von (1749–1832): *Poetry and Truth: From My Own Life*, Goodman, Paul (1911–1972): *Five Years: Thoughts during a Useless Time*, Gramsci, Antonio (1891–1937): *Letters from Prison*, Gregory, Saint (213–275): *Oratio Panegyrica*, Gurdjieff, George I. (1872–1949): *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, Hartshorne, Charles (1897–): *The Darkness and the Light: A Philosopher Reflects Upon His Career*, Heidegger, Martin (1889–1976): *Vita*, Herbert of Cherbury, Baron Edward (1583–1648): *The Life of Edward Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Written by Himself*, Herder, Johann Gottfried (1744–1803): *Journal of My Travels in the Year 1769*, Herzen, Alexander (1812–1870): *My Past and Thoughts*, Hobbes, Thomas (1588–1679): *Thomae Hobbesii Malmesburiensis Vita carmine expressa*, Honderich, Ted (1933–): *Philosopher: A Kind of Life*, Hook, Sidney (1902–1989): *Out of Step: An Unquiet Life in the 20th Century*, Horkheimer, Max (1895–1973): *Aus der Pubertät: Novellen und Tagebuchblätter*, Hume, David (1711–1776): *My Own Life*, Huxley, Thomas Henry (1825–1895): *Diary of the Voyage of H.M.S. "Rattlesnake" and Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, Ibn Khaldun (1332–1395): *Al-Tasrif*, Isocrates (436–338 B.C.E.): *Antidosis*, Jaki, Stanley L. (1924–): *A Mind's Matter: An Intellectual Autobiography*, James, Henry (1843–1916): *A Small Boy and Others and Notes of*

a Son and Brother, James, William (1842–1910): *The Letters of William James*, Jones, Mary Harris (1830–1930): *Autobiography of Mother Jones*, Justinus, Saint Flavius (100–165): *Dialogue with the Jew Tryphon*, Kafka, Franz (1883–1924): *The Diaries: 1910–1913*, Kenny, Anthony John Patrick (1931–): *A Path from Rome*, Keyserling, Hermann A., Count von (1880–1946): *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, Kierkegaard, Søren (1813–1855): *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard*, Koestler, Arthur (1905–1983): *Dialogue with Death, Scum of the Earth, Arrow in the Blue, The Invisible Writing, and The God That Failed*, Kropotkin, Peter (1842–1921): *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, Kuhn, S. Thomas (1922–1996): *The Road since Structure: Philosophical Essays, with an Autobiographical Interview*, Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm (1646–1716): *Confessio Philosophi*, Leiris, Michel (1901–1990): *Manhood and The Rules of the Game*, Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1908–): *Tristes Tropiques*, Lévinas, Emmanuel (1906–1995): *Signature*, Lewis, Clive Staples (1898–1963): *The Pilgrim's Regress*, Loyola, Saint Ignatius of (1491–1556): *Reminiscences and Spiritual Diary*, Lukács, Georg (1885–1971): *Georg Lukács: An Autobiographical Sketch*, Luxemburg, Rosa (1871–1919): *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*, Mahan, Asa (1799–1889): *Autobiography: Intellectual, Moral, and Spiritual*, Maimon, Salomon (1754–1800): *Salomon Maimon: An Autobiography*, Maine de Biran, François-Pierre (1766–1824): *Journal Intime*, Malraux, André (1901–1976): *Antimémoires*, Mann, Thomas (1875–1955): *Tagebücher*, Marcel, Gabriel (1889–1973): *Metaphysical Journal*, McGinn, Colin (1950–): *The Making of a Philosopher: My Journey Through Twentieth-Century Philosophy*, Merton, Thomas (1915–1968): *The Seven Storey Mountain and The Other Side of the Mountain*, Mill, John S. (1806–1873): *Autobiography*, Molcho, Salomon (1500–1532): *Hayyot Kaneh: Hazon Shelomo Molkho*, Montaigne, Michel (1535–1592): *The Essays*, More, Saint Thomas (1478–1535): *Apology*, Newman, John H. (1801–1890): *Apologia pro Vita sua*, Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844–1900): *Ecce Homo*, Nozick, Robert (1938–2002): *The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations*, Palmer, George Herbert (1842–1933): *Autobiography of a Philosopher*, Pascal, Blaise (1623–1662): *Pensées*, Petrarch, Francesco (1304–1374): *Secretum*, Plato (428–348 B.C.E.): *The Seventh Letter*, Priestley, Joseph (1833–1904): *Autobiography of Joseph Priestley*, Rand, Ayn (1905–1982): *Journals of Ayn Rand*, Raymond, Aron (1905–1983): *Memoirs*, Read, Sir Herbert (1893–1968): *The Contrary Experiences*, Ricoeur, Paul (1913–): *Critique and Conviction*, Rolland, Romain (1866–1944): *Mémoires*, Rosenzweig, Franz (1886–1929): *Diaries and Autobiographic Fragments*, Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1712–1778): *The Confessions*, Russell, Bertrand (1872–1970): *Autobiography*, Sade, Marquis de (1740–1814): *Letters from Prison*, Said, Edward (1935–): *Out of Place: A Memoir*, Saint-Simon, Claude-Henri de Rouvroy, Comte de (1760–1825): *His Life, Written by Himself*, Santayana, George (1862–1952): *Persons and Places: The Autobiography of George Santayana and Apologia Pro Menta Sua*, Sartre, Jean-Paul (1905–1980): *The Words and War Diaries*, Scholem, Gershom (1897–1982): *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, Schurman, Anna Maria van (1607–1678): *Eucleria*, Schweitzer, Albert (1875–1965): *Out of My Life and Thought: An Autobiography*, Segur, Count Louis Philippe de (1753–1830): *Memoirs and Recollections of Count Louis Philippe de Segur*, Sellars, Wilfrid (1912–1989): *Intellectual Autobiography*, Seuse, Heinrich (1295–1366): *Vita*, Shusterman, Richard (1949–): *Next Year in Jerusalem?*, Sidney, Algernon (1622–1683): *Memoirs of His Life and an Apology*, Sontag, Susan (1933–): *Pilgrimage and Conversations with Susan Sontag*, Spencer, Herbert (1820–1904): *An Autobiography*, Stein, Gertrude (1874–1946): *The*

Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, Stein, Saint Edith (1891–1942): *Life in a Jewish Family: Her Unfinished Autobiographical Account*, Steiner, Rudolf (1861–1925): *Story of My Life*, Suso, Henry (1295–1366): *The Life of Blessed Henry Suso by Himself*, Swedenborg, Emanuel (1688–1772): *The Journal of Dreams*, Tauber, Alfred I. (1947–): *Confessions of a Medicine Man*, Tertullian (165–220): *Apologeticum*, Tillich, Paul J. (1886–1965): *My Search for Absolutes*, Tocqueville, Alexis, Comte de (1805–1859): *Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville*, Tolstoy, Count Leo Nikolayevich (1828–1910): *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*, Trotsky, Leon (1879–1940): *My Life*, van der Post, Sir Laurens (1906–1996): *The Admiral's Baby*, Vasconcelos, José (1882–1959): *A Mexican Ulysses*, Vico, Giambattista (1668–1744): *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, Vital, Rabbi Hayyim (1542–1620): *Book of Visions*, Voltaire, Francois Marie Arouet de (1694–1778): *Philosophical Letters*, Warnock, Baroness Mary (1924–): *Mary Warnock, a Memoir*, Watts, Alan W. (1915–1973): *In My Own Way: An Autobiography*, Weil, Simone (1909–1943): *Spiritual Autobiography*, White, Morton G. (1917–): *A Philosopher's Story*.

A variant of the philosophical autobiography is its pseudo form. For example, Socrates's *Apology* was written by Plato, and *The Life of Avicenna* by Jorjani (Sorsanus), a disciple of Ibn Sina (Avicenna). More recently, Kenneth Laine Ketner produced *His Glassy Essence: An Autobiography of Charles Sanders Pierce*.

Another subgenre is the philosophical quasi autobiography, in which the ideas, or the life of the author, are concealed but still expressed through a fictional or another actual person. Such are Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, Montaigne's *Apologie de Raimond Sebond*, Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh*, and Santayana's *The Last Puritan: A Memoir in the Form of a Novel*. Albert Camus's posthumously published *The First Man* is also such an autobiographical novel. In contrast with Sartre's *Words*—also an autobiographical novel—Camus does not present us with names of significant persons in his childhood, such as his mother and his teacher. But Catherine, Camus's daughter, finds *The First Man* “completely autobiographical. The mother he describes is the woman I knew, and she was exactly as he describes her. And this teacher [Monsieur Germain] really existed.”¹⁹

Ben-Ami Scharfstein considers the writings of some psychotics to resemble those of philosophers. He even suggests that psychotics “can be philosophers.” Examples of “philosophical psychotic” autobiographies are D. P. Schreber's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* and M. Sechahaya's *Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl*.²⁰

In addition to these subgenres is the sheer fictional form of philosophical autobiography—or in critics' jargon, philosophical autofiction—such as found in Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*.

Although the listing here may appear encyclopedic, it is not an all-inclusive or conclusive listing. Since writing philosophical autobiog-

ographies is obviously a universal and perennial activity, I regret the absence of examples from African, Asian, American, and Australian traditional cultures. Although the influence of traditional cultures may not have been encouraging to self-disclosure, examples of uncommon self-descriptions are likely to be found. For example, the lack of autobiographies in the ancient and medieval Judaic tradition originates in a striving for personal humility; self-narration and idolization apparently were considered synonyms.²¹ Two twentieth-century Asian autobiographies that became part of the Western philosophical autobiographic tradition are Mahatma Gandhi's *An Autobiography: The Story of my Experiments with Truth* and Paramahansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

My range of expertise and inquiry is confined to the Western realm of influence. Moreover, my listing is selective. In spite of today's trend to regard Freud's autobiography as philosophical, I did not include his autobiography or those of two other great psychoanalysts, Carl Jung and R. D. Laing. On the other hand, I include some metaphysically, literary, and politically inspired accounts. Though these seem to me to be philosophical texts, others may consider these autobiographies as just being on the fringes of philosophy, or as literary, spiritual, political, or theoretically informed texts only (e.g., Gide's *If It Die*, Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain*, or Luxemburg's *Letters*). Likewise, some may judge the greatness of an autobiography—meaning its “right” to be indexed here—by standards of the greatness of the philosopher. Yet my intention with this listing is not to evaluate or rank these texts as the best available, but to show how broadly life-writing is practiced by philosophers of diverse traditions and nationalities.

Then there is the “end-of-philosophy” trend: Only the term “ethics” remains relevant and functional, and in postmodern self-narratives the words “critic” and “intellectual” supersede the term “philosopher.”²² Richard Freadman, for example, uses the term “reflective autobiography” in *Threads of Life: Autobiography and the Will*. Freadman's definition of the reflective autobiography would fit quite a few instances of philosophical autobiography as well:

Autobiography in which there is a significant and sophisticated component of reflection on the meaning and larger implications of the life being written, and of life in general; and in which there is a significant sense of reflective, critical distance between the attitudes and assumptions of the autobiographer, and the attitudes and assumptions that were/are prevalent in her or his cultural-ideological milieu.²³

It is not surprising that some of the reflective autobiographies about the condition of the human will that Freadman examines are written

by philosophers (e.g., Louis Althusser, Simone de Beauvoir, and Arthur Koestler).

It remains to be said that with so many worthy philosophical autobiographies available, one can only marvel at the fact that very few researchers have discovered this genre so far.

As the subtitle of this book indicates, I propose not a quantitative but a qualitative study. Nevertheless, I find it appropriate to present a profile of the genre showing it as numerous as well: In this chapter I indexed more than a hundred and fifty autobiographic writings by philosophers. With the purpose of showing this genre also as a field of inquiry, I comprehensively survey some recent research entailing several of these autobiographies.

Until now most researchers scrutinizing the autobiographies of philosophers—mainly the well-known ones of Augustine, Mill, Rousseau, Nietzsche, and Sartre—neglected the importance of the fact that these authors were philosophers. These narratives have seldom been analyzed within the context of the authors' work or as philosophical texts. Moreover, quite a few academic philosophers are doubtful about the value of their colleagues' autobiographies as a contribution to the discipline of philosophy. Most research done in this field is found in other disciplines, such as language studies and comparative literature.

Though some philosophers maintain that all philosophizing emanates from the philosopher's life, in general the philosopher's autobiography is not given an equal status to other philosophical writings. A regular exception seems to have been made for Augustine's *Confessions*, Descartes's *Discourse on Method and Meditations*, and Sartre's *Words*; these autobiographical works are frequently found in philosophy course bibliographies.²⁴ If these autobiographies are acknowledged as philosophy, why not canonize so many other excellent philosophical autobiographies?

Michael Davis turns my question around by showing philosophy to be autobiography. Nevertheless, he does not find that "every philosopher is, perhaps without realizing it, simply rendering his idiosyncratic view of the world in a universal form . . . [but] rather that it is not really possible to philosophize without making the conditions for the possibility of one's own activity the deepest concern of this activity."²⁵ Davis's central theme in *The Autobiography of Philosophy* is the connection between the nature of philosophy and the nature of the human soul. He observes that the autobiographical character of philosophy is most obviously found in Greek philosophy, in Nietzsche and in Heidegger.

Though Plato and Nietzsche also wrote conventional autobiographic texts, it is not to these texts that Davis turns to show that by being

authentically in the world, Plato, Aristotle, Nietzsche, and Heidegger stand autobiographical in the world. He demonstrates at length that Heidegger's "Introduction" to *Being and Time*, Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Book I, and Plato's *Lysis* are appropriate texts to show philosophy as autobiography.

These texts are contrasted with the conventional autobiographical texts of Rousseau and, in particular, with *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. Davis's strategy for showing this last text as philosophy is by demonstrating that *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker* "amounts to a philosophical account of the human soul and of philosophy that places Rousseau firmly in a tradition beginning at least with Plato and Aristotle and still present in Nietzsche and Heidegger."²⁶

Donald P. Verene and Anton Donoso uphold similar claims as Davis concerning "philosophy as autobiography."²⁷ Peter Suber's course, *Philosophy as Autobiography: Psychologistic, Reductive & Non-Immanent Readings of Philosophy*, seems to accentuate a corresponding angle of the philosophy–autobiography complex.²⁸

Susan Sontag observes in "'Thinking against Oneself': Reflections on Cioran" that one of the responses to the breakdown of the philosophical system making of the nineteenth century was "a new kind of philosophizing: personal (even autobiographical), aphoristic, lyrical, anti-systematic. Its foremost exemplars: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein." She finds Cioran "the most distinguished figure in this tradition."²⁹

In a different manner, Jo-Ann Pilardi argues for philosophy to have become autobiography in *Simone de Beauvoir Writing the Self: Philosophy becomes Autobiography*. Pilardi analyzes the concepts of "self" and "other" in Beauvoir's early writings and major work (*The Second Sex*), and compares these with Beauvoir's self-descriptions in her autobiography. She finds that the philosophical analysis of self in Beauvoir's autobiography has greater significance.³⁰

I quote Jacques Derrida's position on understanding autobiographical work as follows: "You cannot think the name or names of Friedrich Nietzsche, you cannot *hear* them before the reaffirmation of the hymen, before the alliance or wedding ring of the eternal return. You will not understand anything of his life, nor of his life and works, until you hear the thought of the 'yes, yes.'³¹ This leads Derrida to a particular kind of logic, a grammar of thinking, a language of biography we must learn before we can understand a life. In "The Logic of Living Feminine," the opening section of *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, Derrida says no to the logic of biographical novels, psychobiographies, and the "autos" of autobiographies as the signature par excellence on the life and work of authors. He proposes a new type of analysis for the biography of philosophers and exempli-

fies it with his reading of Nietzsche's work. This analysis is not only concerned with understanding *Ecce Homo*, but is also a reflection on biography and autobiography in general.

Reading Derrida made me wonder if one can read autobiography only as biography, with the exception perhaps of the autobiographer himself or herself. And, likewise, in the process of writing this book it appeared to me that writing about philosophical autobiographies is sometimes akin to writing philosophical biography. Lois W. Banner presents a different, psychologically informed argument when she considers that through empathizing with the biographical subject, the biographer cannot "keep his or her own autobiography distinct from the biography being written."³²

The genre of philosophical biography seems as little researched as its autobiographical consort, but interest in it is increasing. Notable articles on philosophers and biography are Danny Postel's "The Life and the Mind," Timothy Madigan's "Philosophical Biographies," and Richard Freadman's "Genius and the Dutiful Life: Ray Monk's *Wittgenstein* and the Biography of the Philosopher as Sub-genre." An early paper on philosophical biography was published in 1992. Its authors, Edward H. Madden and Marian C. Madden, describe this genre as a flourishing practice in the United States, from the colonial days onward. Yet a critical appraisal of the genre is lacking: "Philosophers have given insufficient attention to conflicting views about what should count as legitimate philosophical biography; in contention we find the classical view, psychobiography, and milieu analysis, all having diametrically opposed presuppositions from which they start."³³

The aim of the Maddens is to structure systematically selected American biographies into the three subgenres mentioned earlier. They prefer among these types a golden mean, and locate the exemplary blend of philosophical biography in Gerald Myers's *William James: His Life and Thought*.

In another article, "The Biographers: Can We Learn Anything Important from the Biographies of the Great Philosophers?" Julian Baggini interviews three biographers of philosophers. He uncovers some definitions and insights on this neighboring and sometimes overlapping field to philosophical autobiography. Ray Monk, the biographer of Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein, considers philosophical biography a special kind of life narrative. He believes that "a philosophical biography is one which takes as its task the understanding of a person's thought through, so to speak, getting inside their mind. This approach can be taken with regard to anyone whose thought seems interesting, whether that thought is expressed in philosophy, poetry, fiction, music or whatever." Margaret Gullan-Whur, biographer of Baruch Spinoza, holds the unorthodox view that biography's so-praised

objectivity actually proves the biographer to be an unreflecting and nonanalytical narrator. She finds that "paradoxically, the more philosophically a biography is written, the more we encounter meddling, author-centered material." Ben Roger, biographer of A. J. Ayer, indicates a difficulty that seems to be particularly ignored by most psychoanalytically inclined biographers. Rogers agrees that understanding texts in the context of a life creates a better understanding of the texts, at least if one does not commit the so-called genetic fallacy. The biographer should know to differentiate "between what motivates a writer and the arguments that he or she presents, which stand on their own ground."³⁴

In a biographical essay on Walter Benjamin, "Under the Sign of Saturn," Susan Sontag states, "One cannot use the life to interpret the work. But one can use the work to interpret the life."³⁵ Apparently Benjamin was absorbed with this matter in his polemic essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities*.

A book I cite as a philosophical biography is Alan Sheridan's *André Gide: A Life in the Present*. Sheridan claims to have lost faith in theories that explain a life, finding theories such as theology, psychoanalysis, Marxism, or their more sophisticated contemporary incarnations all fictions. "This abandonment of general explanations does not preclude, of course, the holding of all manner of views about human activities, but these should arise out of the particular, indeed, perhaps, be confined to the particular." This would create a more complex view of the subject of biography, "just as one gets to know, or not to know, a friend."³⁶

Similar to the autobiography researchers surveyed so far, Toril Moi, in *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman*, finds it necessary to take the philosophy of Beauvoir seriously in understanding her autobiography. Moi's critique of some of the biographies on Beauvoir published so far precisely pertains to their lack of philosophical contexts, although she considers that usually traditional biography comes closer than literary criticism to showing the significance of its subject. She finds "critical biography" not the right term for her analysis and description of Beauvoir, which she names a personal genealogy: "Personal genealogy assumes that every phenomenon may be read as a text, that is to say as a complex network of signifying structures." According to this approach, "There can be no methodological distinction between 'life' and 'text.'"³⁷ It is clear that Moi's interest in Beauvoir is not primarily as the subject of autobiography, but in Beauvoir as intellectual woman.

Last but not least, Amélie Oksenberg Rorty seems to have developed a skeptical understanding of our subject. She finds that

Philosophers' autobiographies help demystify claims to a special access to truthful insight. They express hesitations, uncertainties, appeals for help,