Philosophical Autobiographies

Compiled by Alexander B. Joy

Introduction

This document represents an ongoing effort to catalogue the world's philosophical autobiographies.

For the purposes of this project, a "philosophical autobiography" means either:

1. An autobiography or memoir by a philosopher.
2. An autobiography or memoir by someone whose work is largely recognized as philosophy.
3. A work of philosophy that either contains or is predicated upon strong autobiographical components.

Works that do not quite fit these definitions, but come close or are aligned in spirit, are filed under "Edge Cases."

Usage Notes

Texts are listed alphabetically by author. However, where an author has published multiple autobiographical works, these texts are arranged chronologically by original publication date.

Each top-level entry in the list is meant to be a recent English-language version. Original language versions or older editions/translations are listed as subordinate entries. Works without suitable English translations are listed under "Works Unavailable in English."

Hyperlinks to print and online versions are included where possible, noting whether the online version deviates from the linked printed version.

This document allows suggestions via comments. Additions or corrections are welcomed, but are subject to review.

A read-only copy of the most up-to-date version of this document is available on my website.

List of Texts

- Abelard, Peter. *The Story of My Misfortunes*. Trans. Henry Adams Bellows. New York: Macmillan, 1972. (Originally published c. 1132.) [Print | Online]
- Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. Henry Chadwick. Oxford University Press, 2009. (Originally published c. 400.) [Print | Online]
- Ayer, A. J. *Part of My Life*. London: Collins, 1977. [Print | Online]
- Ayer, A. J. *More of My Life*. London: Collins, 1984. [Print | Online]
- Barnes, Hazel E. *The Story I Tell Myself: A Venture in Existentialist Autobiography*. University of Chicago Press, 1997 [Print | Online]
- Berdyaev, Nikolai. *Self-Knowledge: An Essay in Autobiography*. Trans. Boris Jakim. San Rafael, CA: Semantron Press, 2009. (Originally published in 1949.) [Print | Online]
- Cavell, Stanley. *Little Did I Know: Excerpts from Memory*. Stanford University Press, 2010. [Print | Online]
- Cohen, G. A. *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001. [Print | Online]
- Collingwood, R. G. *An Autobiography*. Oxford University Press, 1983. (Originally published in 1939.) [Print | Online]
- Davis, Angela Y. *An Autobiography*. Chicago: Haymarket, 2023. (Originally published in 1974.) [Print | Online]
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *All Said and Done*. Trans. Patrick O'Brian. New York: Paragon House, 1993. [Print | Online]
- Dennett, Daniel C. *I've Been Thinking*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2023. [Print | Online]
- Descartes, René. "Discourse on the Method." *Selected Philosophical Writings*. Trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988. 20-56. [Print | Online (different translation)]
- Feyerabend, Paul. *Killing Time: The Autobiography of Paul Feyerabend*. University of Chicago Press, 1996. [Print | Online]
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Reflections on My Philosophical Journey." Trans. Richard E. Palmer. *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Library of Living Philosophers XXIV*. Chicago: Open Court, 1997. 3-63. [Print | Online]

- Heller, Ágnes. *A Short History of My Philosophy*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010. [Print | Online]
- Honderich, Ted. *Philosopher: A Kind of Life*. London: Routledge, 2001. [Print | Online]
- Hume, David. "My Own Life." (Originally published in 1777.) [Print | Online]
- Llull, Ramon. *A Contemporary Life*. Trans. Anthony Bonner. New York: Barcino-Temesis, 2010. (Originally published in 1311.) [Print | Online]
- Magee, Bryan. *Confessions of a Philosopher: A Personal Journey Through Western Philosophy from Plato to Popper*. New York: Random House, 1999. [Print | Online]
- McGinn, Colin. *The Making of a Philosopher: My Journey Through Twentieth-Century Philosophy*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2003. [Print | Online]
- Midgley, Mary. *Owl of Minerva: A Memoir*. London: Routledge, 2007. (Originally published in 2005.) [Print | Online]
- Mill, J. S. *Autobiography*. Oxford University Press, 2018. (Originally published in 1873.) [Print | Online]
- Montaigne, Michel de. *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*. Trans. Donald M. Frame. Stanford UP, 1958. (Originally published in 1580.) [Print | Online (different translation)]
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Ecce Homo*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Penguin, 1992. (Originally published in 1908.) [Print | Online (different translation)]
- Popper, Karl. *Unended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography*. London: Routledge, 2002. (Originally published in 1976.) [Print | Online]
- Rescher, Nicholas. *Autobiography*. Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2010. (Originally published in 2007.) [Print | Online]
- Rorty, Richard. "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids." *Philosophy and Social Hope*. New York: Penguin, 2000. (Originally published in 1992.) [Print | Online]
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*. Trans. Judith R. Bush, Christopher Kelly, and Roger D. Masters. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1990. (Originally published in 1780?) [Print | Online]
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Confessions*. Trans. Angela Scholar. Oxford University Press, 2008. (Originally published in 1782.) [Print | Online (different translation)]

- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. Trans. Russell Goulbourne. Oxford University Press, 2011. (Originally published in 1782.) [Print | Online (different translation)]
- Russell, Bertrand. *Autobiography*. London: Routledge, 2000. (Originally published in 1967/1968/1969.) [Print | Online]
- Santayana, George. *Persons and Places*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987. [Print | Online]
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *The Words: The Autobiography of Jean-Paul Sartre*. Trans. Bernard Frechtman. New York: Vintage, 1981. (Originally published in 1963.) [Print | Online]
- Quine, W. V. O. *The Time of My Life*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985. [Print | Online]
- Vico, Giambattista. *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*. Trans. Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975. (Originally published in 1731?) [Print | Online]
- Voegelin, Eric. *Autobiographical Reflections*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2011. (Originally published in 1989?) [Print | Online]
- Warnock, Mary. *A Memoir: People and Places*. London: Duckworth, 2002. [Print | Online]
- White, Morton. *A Philosopher's Story*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1999. [Print | Online]

Edge Cases

- Franklin, Benjamin. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. (Originally published in 1791.) [Print | Online]
- Freud, Sigmund. *An Autobiographical Study*. Trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press, 1946. (Originally published in 1925.) [Print | Online]
- Herzen, Alexander. *My Past and Thoughts*. (Originally published in 1870.) [Print | Online]
- Mishima, Yukio. *Sun and Steel*. Trans. John Bester. New York: Kodansha, 1970. [Print | Online]
- Sacks, Oliver. *On the Move: A Life*. New York: Vintage, 2015. [Print | Online]

Works Unavailable in English

- Stepun, Fyodor. *Vergangenes und Unvergängliches*. [Print | Online]