



The Philosopher's "I": Autobiography and the Search for the Self

J. Lenore Wright

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Using works written over the course of 1,500 years, considers philosophers' autobiographies as a genre of philosophical writing.

This book examines philosophers' autobiographies as a genre of philosophical writing. Author J. Lenore Wright focuses her attention on five philosophical autobiographies: Augustine's *Confessions*, Descartes' *Meditations*, Rousseau's *The Confessions*, Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, and Hazel Barnes's *The Story I Tell Myself*. In the context of first-person narration, she shows how the philosophers in question turn their attention inward and unleash their analytical rigor on themselves.

Wright argues that philosophical autobiography makes philosophical analysis necessary and that one cannot unfold without the other. Her distinction between the ontological and rhetorical dimensions of the self creates a rich middle ground in which questions of essence and identity bear upon existence.

“There is much to admire in this book. The idea of using philosophical autobiography as a means of investigating the nature of self and self-examination is a fruitful one. Wright identifies an interesting and important set of issues, and picks a wonderful group of texts through which to address them. In addition to the five philosophical autobiographies that form the core of her investigation, she also makes reference to an astonishingly wide array of philosophers and literary theorists, providing an enormously multifaceted investigation into the philosophy of self.” — *Biography*

“Prof. Wright[’s] intellect possesses all the vigor and fervor of youth, and her subject is timely and interesting.” — *Metapsychology Online Reviews*

“Wright’s book is a thorough, sophisticated, and illuminating exploration. She draws on substantial contemporary philosophical and literary sources in developing her own distinctive and creative dialectical interpretation centered in the polarities of ontological/rhetorical, inner/outer self, and author-subject/writer-self.” — James Woelfel, University of Kansas

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