

Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

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A portrait of one of the twentieth-century's most influential philosophers draws on previously unpublished letters and writings to describe Wittgenstein's youth, education, private life, and major works

Ray Monk is the author of *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, for which he was awarded the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize and the Duff Cooper Prize. He is also the author of *Robert Oppenheimer* and a two-volume biography of Bertrand Russell. He is a professor of philosophy at the University of Southampton. Wittgenstein the philosopher and Wittgenstein the man have generated two largely separate industries. In a full-scale biography of him, British philosopher Monk tries to show that this possibly acutest and most influential mind of the century and the obsessional personality were one, driven by spiritual as much as by intellectual concerns. Wittgenstein (1889-1951) was born into one of the wealthiest families in Austria but gave away his entire inheritance; he fought in WW I, was Bertrand Russell's protege and then his master, became a reluctant Cambridge don who exchanged academia for solitude whenever possible and was drawn to younger men with brilliant minds. With access to Wittgenstein's papers, as well as to his friends, Monk has done an excellent job of elucidating the twin journeys of an extraordinary mind and soul, though it's not likely his insights into *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations* will tempt many to do more than dip their feet in those decidedly choppy waters.

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Other Books

Modernist Fiction and Vagueness, *Modernist Fiction and Vagueness* examines the development of the modernist novel in relation to changing approaches to philosophy. It argues that the puzzle of vagueness challenged the great thinkers of the early twentieth century and led to dramatic changes in both fiction and philosophy. Building on recent interest in the connections among analytic philosophy, pragmatism, and modern literature, this book posits that literary vagueness should be read as a defining quality of modernist fiction.

¶ ¶ ¶ ¶ ¶ . 126 For Wittgenstein's complicated relationship to his Catholic and Jewish inheritance, see Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, 579-580 and 313-317. 127 Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 52e. 128 Ogden's translation of *The ...*"