

# MEMOIR ETHICS



*Good Lives and the Virtues*

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Memoir Ethics  
*Good Lives and the Virtues*  
Mike W. Martin

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## Memor Ethics

*For Shannon, who made everything possible.  
And for Nicole, Rafa, Sonia, Gus, Jesse and Dylan.*

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# ONE

## Morality in Memoir

Autobiographers try to tell a good story about a good life. They express values, reveal character, and argue for perspectives on how to live well. They explore the generic dimensions of good lives: moral goodness, authenticity, meaning, happiness, health, and self-fulfillment. They illuminate how the virtues interact with non-moral values, including the values of everything from sports and sex to sculpture and spirituality. Taken together, they reveal the dazzling variety of good lives. In all these ways, memoirs are relevant to philosophy, and philosophy to memoirs, especially when philosophy is rooted in a Socratic search for self-understanding and a life worth living.

This chapter provides an overview of my themes and locates philosophical inquiry within the interdisciplinary field of memoir ethics. Memoir ethics is usually understood narrowly as the responsibilities of authors to be truthful and to show respect in how they write about other persons. I understand it more expansively to include the study of moral themes conveyed in memoirs.

### ASPECTS OF GOOD LIVES

Sonia Sotomayor published *My Beloved World* in 2013, four years after being appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In it she recounts a life for which she is grateful and which might provide a “hopeful example” to others.<sup>1</sup> Virtues are salient throughout. They include love and generosity instilled by her family; ambition and rigor fostered by her teachers; and fairness and empathy cultivated throughout her career in law. In discussing these virtues she touches on themes about good lives that I explore in this book.

Sotomayor's world is beloved despite its challenges, sometimes because of them. Her parents, who emigrated from Puerto Rico, are poor, speak heavily-accented English, and fight frequently and bitterly. They are not reliably present when she is growing up, and she must learn self-reliance early. Her father is an alcoholic and dies when she is nine. Her mother works long hours as a nurse, favoring shifts that keep her away when her husband is home. At age seven she is diagnosed with childhood diabetes, and for the rest of her life she needs to carefully monitor her health. She develops a fierce determination to improve, compete, and achieve. Yet she also acquires a sense of empathy that later proves helpful in resolving legal disputes. Her record of achievement earns her scholarships to attend Princeton, where she graduates Phi Beta Kappa and wins the Pyne Prize, Princeton's highest honor. Next she attends Yale Law School and earns a place on the *Yale Law Journal*. She begins her career as an assistant district attorney, then joins a law firm. In 1992 she is appointed as a federal judge in the U.S. District Court in New York, in 1998 to the U.S. Court of Appeals, and in 2009 to Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Law attracts her because of its intellectual challenge and moral core: "I understood the lawyer's job as being to help people. I understood the law as a force for good, for protecting community, for upholding order against the threat of chaos, and for resolving conflict."<sup>2</sup>

Memoirists have myriad motives in writing about their lives, including curiosity, self-understanding, gratitude, vanity, money, love, settling scores, political ambition, conveying anecdotes and advice to family members, and preempting unauthorized biographers. Whatever their specific motives, they typically imply, express, and even defend a value perspective, offering their experience as evidence. Typically their value perspectives interweave moral with additional types of values, such as those of law and legal ambition in the case of Sotomayor. In chapter 2 I clarify how life-based arguments work, or rather some of the ways they work, for they can take many forms. The remaining chapters explore generic features of good lives: moral goodness, authenticity, meaning, happiness, health, and self-fulfillment. Each feature is wide-scoped and sometimes mistaken for the entirety of a good life. I regard them as distinct but overlapping aspects of good lives.

Chapter 3 explores selected topics concerning morally good lives. I draw on Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* to highlight two dimensions of moral goodness: good character and contributions to community.<sup>3</sup> Both Franklin and Sotomayor illustrate how good character and community service often combine in careers. Both of them understand the virtues as moral strengths that contribute to, and partly define, desirable ways of engaging the world. To be sure, good character and contributions to community are not always found together. Persons of good character might impact the world only modestly, perhaps owing to limited opportunities or bad luck. Conversely, a corrupt person might contribute



dramatically to humanity, as when an entrepreneur of unsavory character creates valuable jobs and products. Even by themselves the virtues generate moral complexity due to their multiplicity and hence possible tensions, their contribution to both moral and non-moral goods in lives, their nuanced relationship to rules of right conduct, and how they contribute to the enormous diversity of good persons and good lives.

Chapter 4 develops a conception of authenticity as exercising personal autonomy with self-honesty and self-respect. This conception sheds light on the complexities surrounding authenticity that arise in connection with identity politics. It also avoids the romantic notion that there is one true or essential identity for each of us. Sotomayor was not destined to be an attorney and judge. Instead, she chose her career autonomously, truthfully, and with respect for her talents and interests. Self-understanding emerged gradually through her experiences and circumstances. Her attraction to law began early. As a child watching the television series *Perry Mason*, she was fascinated by attorneys and judges who personify power in advancing justice. She was then encouraged by her high school teachers and successes in the Forensics Club. Although her competitiveness and intellectual drive suited her for many careers, her choice of law was a natural fit for her talents and interests.

Authenticity is sometimes associated with ethical subjectivism, the view that anything goes so long as we are true to our strongest desires. Sotomayor rejects ethical subjectivism, though she appreciates the extensive differences among reasonable persons. Chapter 5 criticizes the drift toward ethical subjectivism in four thinkers who develop influential conceptions of authenticity: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Each thinker makes authenticity prominent, even paramount in good lives. Each grafts it to their controversial views about persons worthy of respect, about the self-knowledge that honesty fosters, and about the desirable goals in exercising autonomy. And each writes a masterful memoir in which authenticity is a central theme.

Throughout her life Sotomayor asks, "What am I accomplishing? Is my life meaningful?"<sup>4</sup> Most memoirists ask similar questions about their lives, in retrospect. Meaningful lives make sense in terms of their values, both moral and non-moral values. Chapter 6 discusses how a sense of meaning motivates, explains, and justifies actions. Chapter 7 extends the discussion of meaning to the unity of a life in terms of values. Sotomayor keeps moral values center stage, both with regard to law and her family. Yet non-moral goods are equally essential in her career, especially desirable skills of writing, public speaking, social networking, and successful competition. She also discusses cultural values she cherishes, especially those of family, culture, and leadership.

Sotomayor is much concerned with happiness. Although unhappy as a child, she discovers in herself "sources of deep happiness, and these

bred in me an optimism that proved stronger than any adversity.”<sup>5</sup> Chapter 8 understands happiness as loving one’s life, valuing it in ways combining ample enjoyments and a robust sense of meaning. As such, happiness is not the entirety of a good life, though it interacts extensively with all the other features of good lives. Its value depends in part on its sources and ingredients. I contrast three strategies for pursuing happiness in relation to moral goods: indirectly (John Stuart Mill), directly (Gretchen Rubin), and in tandem (Henry David Thoreau).

Chapter 9 explores connections between health and the virtues, focusing on living a good life despite serious illness and disability. Today health is the common currency in discussing all aspects of good lives, including happiness, morality, authenticity, and meaning, not to mention religion and education. Sotomayor’s happiness and sense of meaning involved a vivid sense of mortality, a sense linked to the early death of her father from alcohol-related disease, and a sense linked to the challenge of juvenile diabetes, which at the time was more life threatening than today. This health challenge contributed to her self-discipline, as she had to carefully monitor what she ate, as well as her mental state in response to glucose fluctuations. Her condition added to the intensity with which she lives.

As understood in chapter 10, self-fulfillment is the process and outcome of unfolding deep aspirations and valuable capacities over a normal lifetime. It is a normative ideal that interweaves morality, meaning, authenticity, health, and happiness. As such it is the most inclusive aspect of good lives, and it allows me to draw together my themes in this book. The core idea of fulfillment is development and expression of our nature by engaging the world in ways that fit, focus, and balance strong desires and valuable capacities. It is also an ideal traditionally connected with relatedness to other people and engagement in worthwhile activities. Sotomayor endorses such an ideal, a vision of self-fulfillment through service to others, and service to others as a form of self-expression. This fusion of self-expression and service prevents her book from being preachy and self-preening.

In each chapter I discuss *philosophical memoirs*: memoirs rich in ideas about good lives and other philosophical topics. Some of these memoirs are written by philosophers, others are not. Chapter 11 asks whether there is anything distinctive about philosophers’ memoirs, taken as a group. Compared to other writers, are philosophers distinctive in the topics they explore in their memoirs? Yes, in that philosophers naturally tend to discuss philosophy and apply philosophical ideas to their lives. Do they tend to manifest a higher degree of wisdom about how to live good lives? Doubtful. Does writing a memoir encourage a different, more personal way of doing philosophy than other forums for doing philosophy, such as journal articles and monographs? Yes and no—it’s complicated.

Memoirs tell stories about lives. Stories and lives are not the same thing, of course, any more than memoirs and memoirists are identical. Yet some features of good lives seem to be features of good stories as well. In particular, both lives and stories can be meaningful and coherent (or not). Again, persons and memoirs can be authentic (or not). And persons and memoirs can be wise and courageous, and manifest additional virtues (or vices). Chapter 12 takes note of some parallels and differences between memoirists and memoirs.

## MEMOIR ETHICS AND THE VIRTUES

*Memoir ethics* is the study of moral aspects of memoirs. Narrowly conceived, it studies the responsibilities of authors, publishers, and readers of memoirs, together with the social impacts of writing and reading memoirs. Broadly conceived, it includes those studies but above all it is the study of moral themes expressed in memoirs. That is my interest. In particular, drawing on a wide variety of memoirs, I explore moral virtues in good lives, especially as they interact with additional categories of (non-moral) values in good lives. I do not undertake a comprehensive analysis of good lives, whatever that would look like. Instead, I explore selected themes concerning each of the generic features of good lives.

What are memoirs? I understand them as non-fiction narratives written by oneself about oneself. They are non-fiction in that they are *presented* as truthful and as true. (Whether they are truthful and true is another matter.) Co-authors, ghostwriters, and editors might contribute substantially to a memoir, but the person who the book is about must be substantially involved in the writing, otherwise the book is more biography than autobiography. To be sure, a memoir need not be primarily about the author. It might be largely about other people and places the author knew, or events in which the author participated, with the author kept in the background. Although I focus on books, memoirs can take a variety of additional forms such as essays, journals, diaries, blogs, travelogues, and screenplays.<sup>6</sup> Narratives are stories that depict experiences and events, structured as parts of a whole and with some internal dynamic.<sup>7</sup> Stories might or might not employ literary devices such as building suspense and leading to a denouement.<sup>8</sup> Structuring is often chronological and thematic, but not always, and numerous experimental structures are possible.

I use “memoir” and “autobiography” synonymously. Not everyone does.<sup>9</sup> Some scholars stipulate that autobiographies are full-life narratives, with a temporal span from birth to the time of writing, whereas memoirs focus on periods or aspects of a life such as childhood, a marriage, a creative discovery, or a trip to Tibet. Other scholars stipulate that autobiography—literally *self-life-writing*—is the generic term for all

writing by oneself about oneself. Still other scholars define autobiographies as mainly about oneself and memoirs as mainly about other people and events. Frequently the phrase "writing one's memoirs" (with an "s") suggests reminiscences of a life in politics or public service. And to some ears, the term "memoir" sounds more prestigious and literary, redolent with memory and remembering.<sup>10</sup> Although these distinctions are useful in some contexts, for my purposes they can be set aside.

What is morality? It includes respect for, caring about, and valuing other people, and it includes respecting, caring about, and properly valuing oneself. It also includes properly valuing sentient animals and the environment, valuable institutions and practices, and perhaps additional things. Without offering a full definition, I take note of a few ambiguities in the words "morality" and "ethics." In one sense "ethics" names the study of morality, whether the study is thought of as an activity, an area of inquiry, or a discipline. Accordingly, memoir ethics is the study of moral matters concerning memoirs. I understand memoir ethics as an interdisciplinary area of inquiry pursued by literary critics, psychologists, anthropologists, historians, religious scholars, and philosophers. In another sense, "ethics" and "morality" are synonyms referring to a particular category of values (as distinct from the study of those values). Using this sense, memoir ethics comprises moral/ethical topics, themes, and issues concerning memoirs.

Moral/ethical values include the virtues, as well as obligations, rights, and ideals of conduct and community, both other-directed ideals (such as gratitude and justice) and self-directed ideals (such as self-respect and authenticity). I focus on the virtues (and ideals of character associated with them), understanding the virtues as morally desirable features of character, as manifested in habits of conduct, feeling, reasoning, and ways of relating to other people, to animals and the environment, and to oneself. Aristotle drew a technical distinction between moral virtues, such as justice and courage, and intellectual virtues such as intelligence and creativity. I avoid his distinction.<sup>11</sup> I do, however, work with a rough contrast between moral and non-moral types of values, such as beauty and athletic prowess. I also avoid Bernard Williams's distinction between ordinary morality which is blame-and-guilt oriented and ethics which is virtue-and-aspiration oriented.<sup>12</sup> Williams introduces that distinction as part of his Nietzsche-inspired attack on traditional moral outlooks, but outside that context it causes confusion—"morality" and "ethical" are too closely synonymous in ordinary language to pry them apart. In general, moral/ethical values constitute a broad and ill-defined category, enriched by millennia of moral experience, philosophical reflection, and religious communities.

As an applied ethicist, I do not rely on any one ethical theory, but instead draw on many of them. Overall, I most strongly identify with American pragmatism (at least in some version).<sup>13</sup> I do, however, pay

special attention to the virtues, as they interact with additional categories of values.<sup>14</sup> The virtues are explicitly dealt with in many of the memoirs I discuss, for example those of Sonia Sotomayor (above), Frederick Douglass and Albert Schweitzer (chapter 2), Benjamin Franklin (chapter 3), Jill Ker Conway (chapter 4), Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (chapter 5), Leo Tolstoy (chapter 6), John Stuart Mill and Henry David Thoreau (chapter 8), Arthur Frank and Havi Carel (chapter 9), and Hazel Barnes (chapter 10).

The virtues provide a natural emphasis in memoir ethics. After all, most memoirs center on personal identity—our sense of who we are. In turn, personal identity usually includes a sense of our morally desirable and undesirable features. Vivian Gornick writes: “The question clearly being asked in an exemplary memoir is ‘Who am I?’ Who exactly is this ‘I’ upon whom turns the significance of this story-taken-directly-from-life? On that question the writer of memoir must deliver. Not with an answer but with depth of inquiry.”<sup>15</sup> Gornick exaggerates. Not all successful memoirs put the author center stage; they might instead focus on other persons, places, or events. She is correct, however, that personal identity is the most frequent emphasis in memoirs. In turn, self-conceptions are invariably value-laden, permeated by attitudes of self-worth and moral identity. And moral identity is naturally cast in terms of the virtues. To a significant extent, character just is the pattern of virtues (desirable character traits) and vices (undesirable character traits) in an individual. That formulation, however, is a bit abstract and limited to moral values. Character is better understood as what a person cares about, when that caring is normatively conceived in terms of moral and additional (non-moral) values.

Virtues pertain as well to persons-as-writers and, with interesting parallels, to memoirs themselves. Thus, both memoirists and memoirs can be wise, honest, courageous, and so forth. Most memoir involves an effort to discover and convey important truths about oneself. That effort requires a degree of *self-understanding* and perhaps a degree of *wisdom* in grasping the values that make life worth living. It requires *honesty*, which combines *truthfulness* and *trustworthiness*. In turn, honesty requires *courage*, including psychological courage in confronting fears about oneself and social courage in confronting judgment by others. There are truths about other people which should be revealed in *gratitude*, *fairness*, and a spirit of *generosity*, and others that should be withheld in *respect for privacy*, *friendship*, *love*, or *prudence* (given risks of lawsuits). Hopefully memoirists try to express who they genuinely are, versus a phony simulacrum of themselves, and that requires *authenticity* and a modicum of *wisdom*. *Humility* is a tricky virtue in writing memoirs, as authors try to write with proper *self-respect* without lapsing into cloying false modesty or offensive arrogance.

The virtues enrich memoir ethics beyond any narrow focus on responsibilities and rules. That narrow focus is present, for example, in G. Thomas Couser's recent *Memoir: An Introduction*. Couser depicts memoir ethics, or what he calls "memoir's ethics," in terms of role-responsibilities—the duties attached to the role of writing a memoir. He highlights and insightfully discusses two obligations: "first, to the biographical and historical record; second, to people they collaborate with or represent in their memoirs."<sup>16</sup> An emphasis on responsibilities, for example, might have us scrutinize Sotomayor's memoir for deceptions, whether in the form of omissions and exaggerations about herself, or unfairness to people she writes about.<sup>17</sup> Suspicious, we might ask whether her financial incentives—including over three million dollars in advance payments from her publisher—influenced the inspiring upbeat tone in order to maximize sales. Again, we might question how much of the writing is actually hers, for she acknowledges help from Zara Houshmand, an Iranian-American poet.<sup>18</sup> My sense is that such help and incentives are well within the norms of contemporary publishing of memoirs by public figures, but others might raise objections deserving attention—certainly ghost writing raise general moral questions about authenticity and veracity in writing memoirs.

Recast in the language of the virtues, Couser focuses on truthfulness and fairness, together with conscientious in meeting obligations. To his credit, however, he opens the door to a broader consideration of the virtues. For one thing, he appreciates the tension between truthfulness and fairness, and the need for morally good judgment in navigating that tension. Of particular interest, elsewhere in his book he expresses interest in the most inclusive moral virtue, wisdom: "what I value in memoir is a kind of wisdom, understanding of the formation of the self, the nature of one's identity—or of a significant other."<sup>19</sup> He does not explicitly include wisdom in his characterization of memoir ethics, but he easily could.

Although I focus on moral themes in memoirs, memoir ethics has additional areas I occasionally touch on. They include moral issues concerning publishers, readers, and social impacts of memoirs. *Publishers' ethics* includes responsibilities, virtues, and ideals in publishing significant and quality work, in addition to making money for employees, authors, and investors. In varying degrees, publishers have responsibilities to check facts and promote quality. Without at least minimal fact checking publishers become complicit in distortions, perhaps even fraud. A notorious example is James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces*.<sup>20</sup> Frey originally sought to publish his book as a novel. When he could not obtain a publisher, he submitted his manuscript as a memoir of addiction, without bothering to correct some basic inaccuracies. For example, he claimed that he spent months in prison, when in fact it was only a few hours. Arguably, Frey's publishers were morally negligent in failing to uncover such distortions.

*Readers' ethics* concerns responsibilities and virtues in how memoirs are read. There is no general responsibility to read memoirs, of course, let alone any particular memoir. But readers do have responsibilities not to plagiarize, and not to republish parts of a memoir in violation of copyright law. When the reader is a student, scholar, or book reviewer, there are responsibilities to read with care, intelligence, and fairness to the author and concerning people discussed in the memoir. Furthermore, in chapter 4 I briefly discuss the charge that readers are superficial, and authors inauthentic, when they lapse into sentimentalism about childhood (or about life in general). In addition, readers' ethics concerns the good and bad effects of reading particular memoirs. Depictions of character and defenses of value perspectives influence readers, for better or worse. Some memoirs have the power to reshape lives, as they did for John Stuart Mill (chapter 8) and Charles Darwin (chapter 10).

*Social impacts ethics* are macro moral issues about the writing and reading of memoirs in general. Some critics, for example, explore desirable and undesirable societal obsessions with status and fame, as reflected in celebrity memoirs. Other critics question the desirability of mass consumption of narratives of illness, disability, and poverty. In chapter 9 I mention Lauren Berlant's charge that unsavory motives are often hidden beneath the empathy and compassion of readers. These motives include leering, self-elevation, and moral apathy—the private experience of reading about suffering functions in support of avoiding social activism in combating injustice.<sup>21</sup> Ann Jurecic, in replying to Berlant, argues that “reading to connect” with an author is compatible with critical reading of texts and even self-reflection on one's responses.<sup>22</sup> She adds that reading memoirs can influence our concern for social issues, especially when we are fortunate enough to be guided by a good teacher.

## PHILOSOPHICAL LITERARY CRITICISM

This book is a work in ethics, as a branch of philosophy: the philosophical study of morality. It is also a work in philosophy in literature, as focused on philosophy in memoir: the study of philosophical themes contained in autobiographical writing. And it is a work in philosophical literary criticism: the application of philosophical tools and approaches in studying literature. I do not attempt to define philosophy, beyond indicating that I pursue it in a Socratic spirit of seeking clarity about key concepts, reasonableness in value perspectives, and moral understanding of oneself and others. I also adopt an interdisciplinary approach, mindful that philosophical ideas have wide human interest.

My philosophical study of moral issues in memoir is somewhat akin to William James's psychological study of religious values in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. James assembles a cornucopia of first-hand

accounts of religious experience, in an ecumenical spirit. He is convinced that "a large acquaintance with particulars often makes us wiser than the possession of abstract formulas, however deep," and that "we may very likely find no one essence [to religion], but many characters which may alternatively be equally important to religion."<sup>23</sup> He brings order to his topic with philosophical clarifications, distinctions, and appraisals in light of general value perspectives. For example, he contrasts healthy-minded temperaments, which are optimistic and focused on appreciating the good, with the temperaments of "sick souls" who are preoccupied with suffering and evil. Finding value in both temperaments, he argues that sick souls provide essential truths about life's significance.<sup>24</sup> He also pursues philosophical and psychological themes about religious conversion, saintliness, and mysticism, giving emphasis to unconventional experiences rather than institutional religion. Throughout he celebrates the enormous variety of spiritual experience, while bringing a critical edge in identifying insights, confusions, and dangers. I try to do something similar regarding moral experience conveyed in memoirs.

Literature and the critique of literature are not the exclusive domain for literary critics, any more than money is an exclusive domain for economists. Members of all disciplines engage and critique works of literature. Conversely, some professors of literature engage in philosophical literary criticism with great insight. Couser is an example. Another is David Parker, who writes in *The Self in Moral Space: Life Narrative and the Good*:

behind any autobiographical act is a self for whom certain things matter and are given priority over others. Some of these things are not merely objects of desire or interest, but command the writer's admiration or respect. They are the key "goods" the writer lives by, shaping her acts of ethical deliberation and choice. Such goods may include ideals of self-realization, social justice, equality of respect, or care for certain others.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike me, Parker follows Bernard Williams's lead in using the term "ethics" to include all types of values pertinent to good lives, not just moral values.<sup>26</sup> Like me, he explores the interaction of moral values with other types of values in good lives.<sup>27</sup>

Religious scholars might also engage in philosophical literary criticism. John D. Barbour's *The Conscience of the Autobiographer: Ethical and Religious Dimensions of Autobiography* is especially rewarding. Barbour writes, "Autobiography is not simply a description of how conscience operated in the past, but a searching assessment of the writer's character in both the past and the present."<sup>28</sup> By conscience he means the activity of morally assessing oneself and others (rather than a mental faculty.) He sets himself against the waves of moral skepticism still dominant in much



literary criticism, under such headings as deconstruction, poststructuralism, and postmodernism. So do Couser and Parker, and so do I.

Writing a memoir containing moral themes is not, of course, a morally-neutral enterprise. Nor is reading and responding to such memoirs. Memoir ethics invites moral interpretation, reflection, expression, and dialogue. It invites us listen to, learn from, and appreciate, as well as to assess, critique, and to reason for or against the author's value perspective. Moral engagement with memoirs is an interdisciplinary activity in which philosophers, literary critics, religious thinkers, and many others attempt to make mutually-enriching contributions.

## NOTES

1. Sonia Sotomayor, *My Beloved World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), Preface (unpaginated).
2. Sotomayor, *My Beloved World*, 324–325.
3. Charles Guignon distinguishes good lives and good persons in the Introduction to *The Good Life*, ed. Charles Guignon (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), vii.
4. Sotomayor, *My Beloved World*, 348.
5. Sotomayor, *My Beloved World*, Preface.
6. I discuss written memoirs, but of course a life might be depicted autobiographically using pictures or film, for example Ross McElwee's *Time Indefinite* and Sarah Polley's *Stories We Tell*.
7. See Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 43. Bruner emphasizes "sequencing," which includes thematic, structural, and temporal ordering.
8. See Roy Schafer, *Retelling a Life: Narration and Dialogue in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), xv.
9. See Sven Birkerts, *The Art of Time in Memoir: Then Again* (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 2008), 51–53; Ben Yagoda, *Memoir: A History* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009), 1.
10. G. Thomas Couser, *Memoir: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 18.
11. See Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski who argues against Aristotle's dichotomy in *Virtues of the Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
12. Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 5–6, 174–177. Williams's distinction between ethics and morality has been adopted by thinkers who do not share his Nietzschean sympathies, in particular by Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 53; and David Parker, *The Self in Moral Space: Life Narrative and the Good* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 45.
13. See my *Everyday Morality: An Introduction to Applied Ethics*, fourth edition (Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Education, 2007), 29–32.
14. This emphasis on the virtues does not make me a "virtue ethicist" who regards the virtues as more important and fundamental than duties, rights, and utilitarian demands to maximize good consequences.
15. Vivian Gornick, *The Situation and the Story: The Art of Personal Narrative* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 92.
16. G. Thomas Couser, *Memoir: An Introduction*, 80. See also his *Vulnerable Subjects: Ethics and Life Writing* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).
17. Biographers frequently scrutinize memoirs in this way. For example, Joan Biskupic, *Breaking In: The Rise of Sonia Sotomayor and the Politics of Justice* (New York: