

Sobre Wittgenstein, filosofía, religión y psiquiatría,
by M. O’C. Drury, translation and introduction
by María Aránzazu Novales Alquézar

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Drury, Maurice O’Connor: *Sobre Wittgenstein, filosofía, religión y psiquiatría*, traducción e introducción de María Aránzazu Novales Alquézar, edición de John Hayes, prólogo de Ray Monk. Madrid: Ápeiron Ediciones, 2023, 710 pp.

With the aim of bringing the work of Maurice O’Connor Drury closer to the Spanish-speaking world, Novales Alquézar has translated this excellent publication, which introduces us not only to an author valuable in his own right, but also to a deeper understanding of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s thought. This volume, carefully edited by Ápeiron Ediciones, with the financial support of Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, offers a deep and multidimensional exploration of Drury’s most prominent writings, including recollections of his conversations with Wittgenstein, his philosophical and religious reflections, and his studies in psychiatry. Through a combination of rigorous philosophical analysis and practical applications, Drury demonstrates how Wittgenstein’s ideas can enrich both our understanding of faith and the conception of psychiatric practice. This makes it an essential read for those interested in the intersection of philosophy, religion, and psychiatry, although it is especially suitable for readers already

familiar with Wittgenstein’s thought. For the first time, this book is now available in Spanish, a translation that was undoubtedly necessary given the book’s widespread reception, particularly in the academic sphere. The translation work appears to have been especially driven by the pursuit of clarity, avoiding confusion, ambiguities, and misunderstandings –something achieved thanks also to the wealth of explanatory notes provided by the translator. This motivation is a great success, as it aligns harmoniously with the intentions of both Wittgenstein and Drury.

The content of the book is preceded by an *Introduction to the Spanish Translation* by Novales and a *Foreword* by Ray Monk, the renowned biographer of Wittgenstein and one of the foremost experts on his thought. Both texts help us to better understand a work that, at first glance, might seem more accessible than it truly is, particularly when compared to other philosophical works we are accustomed to reading. This initial feeling of

easy access is due to Drury's own commitment to clarity, as he is capable of expressing thoughts with precision and simplicity, though they are by no means lacking depth. Particularly important is the section of the *Introduction* titled *The Relevance of this Work* (pp.13–20), where emphasis is placed on Drury's unique position to comprehend and appropriately address mental illness, given his extensive training in both psychiatry and philosophy.

The book is divided into six parts, following the structure established by John Hayes for the first edition in 2017. Its organization allows the reader to gain a comprehensive and multifaceted view of how Wittgenstein's ideas can have practical applications in areas that extend far beyond the realm of academic philosophy. Hayes is the author of the first part, titled *Drury and Wittgenstein: Kindred Spirits* (pp. 65–191). Perhaps, to offer a minor critical note, a more nuanced title could have been *Almas afines* (instead *Almas gemelas*), which would capture the closeness in feelings and views between the two philosophers, but also the inevitable tensions that arise between two individuals who consider authenticity and thought as imperatives. This section explores the deep relationship between both authors, highlighting how Drury absorbed much of Wittgenstein's philosophical thought and how this influenced his own career as a psychiatrist. This closeness is evident in Wittgenstein's own words, who once stated: "You can't talk to the soul of Moore. It's like talking to a

horse. Though a very *remarkable horse*. It's completely different when you're talking to Drury, for example. *You can talk to Drury's soul*" (p. 49). Through this relationship, Drury became a privileged witness to Wittgenstein's philosophical reflections, allowing him to preserve and disseminate the great philosopher's ideas through his writings. Thanks to John Hayes' skill, this first part establishes an important biographical context for understanding Drury's later philosophical and psychiatric reflections. Part II is dedicated, as expected, to Drury's recollections of Wittgenstein, including his contribution to a BBC symposium and two fundamental texts: *Conversations with Wittgenstein* and *Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein*. Through these conversations, widely cited by commentators and scholars of Wittgenstein's work, Drury provides an intimate view of the Austrian philosopher's thoughts on topics as diverse as religion, philosophy, and psychology, but also literature and music. The third part, *Drury's Philosophical Writings*, compiles some of his most significant philosophical texts. Among them are *The Method of Philosophy*, *Letters to a Student of Philosophy*, and *Six Reflections Shared with Rush Rhees*. Drury applies the philosophical method learned from Wittgenstein to a variety of topics, offering a unique perspective on the philosophical method itself and, once again, on its relevance to the field of psychiatry. The section *Drury on Religion* (Part IV) includes letters and reflections in which Drury, influenced by his continued contact with Witt-

Wittgenstein, explores the role of religion in personal and philosophical life. He examines how Wittgenstein's perspective on language and meaning can shed light on religious discourse, addressing issues of faith and reason, and showing the importance of avoiding traditional philosophical justifications for religious beliefs. He notes that Wittgenstein viewed religion not as a theory that explains the world, but as a form of life that also manifests itself in practices and rituals. This approach allows for a deeper, and more demanding, understanding of faith and spirituality, as it necessarily calls for "a change in the form of life".

One of the most outstanding sections of the book is Part V, which includes key texts in Drury's work, such as *The Danger of Words* (first published in 1973 and unpublished in Spanish until now) and introductory lectures on hypnosis. Drury discusses the importance of integrating philosophy with medical and psychiatric practice, challenging the reductionist tendencies of his time. He points out that the relationship between words and their meaning is crucial not only in the philosophy of language but also in the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. For this reason, this work has been described as one of the most faithful to the Wittgensteinian spirit, reinforcing the idea that Drury, through his psychiatric practice, contributed a unique perspective to the intersection of these two fields. It also includes letters and comments on psychiatric cases, which reflect his holistic and philosophical approach to

treating mental illnesses. This approach is evident in the way he used Wittgenstein's analogy of the "lock and key" (cf. CV, 2.1.1938) to describe how to approach mental illnesses: finding the right key for the right lock, that is, understanding the subtleties of the human mind and its complexity. The *Introductory Lectures on Hypnosis* reflect Drury's concern with attempting to reconcile emerging therapies with classical philosophical traditions, in an effort to maintain an integrative view of the human mind. Drury saw the treatment of mental illnesses not only as a matter of pharmacological or therapeutic intervention, but also as inextricably linked to the need to reflect on the depths of the human being. Finally, the last part, Part VI, consists of biographical and historical notes that contribute to clarifying the previous content.

In summary, Drury is not just a philosopher; he is a living example of how philosophical ideas can shape and enrich medical practice and everyday life. His insistence on maintaining the connection between philosophy and the practical world, especially in the field of psychiatry, makes him a relevant figure in both fields. This book is a celebration of that integrative and profound vision that remains relevant today, undoubtedly a highly recommended read for anyone interested in these matters.

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References

- Wittgenstein, L., 1998. *Culture and Value*. Ed. G.H. von Wright. 2nd rev. ed. by A. Pichler. Oxford: Blackwell. (CV)