

Claude-Hélène Mayer

The Life and Creative Works of Paulo Coelho

A Psychobiography from a Positive
Psychology Perspective

 Springer

The Life and Creative Works of Paulo Coelho

Claude-Hélène Mayer

The Life and Creative Works of Paulo Coelho

A Psychobiography from a Positive
Psychology Perspective

 Springer

Claude-Hélène Mayer
Institut für therapeutische
Kommunikation und Sprachgebrauch
Europa Universität Viadrina
Frankfurt (Oder), Germany

Department of Psychology
University of Pretoria
Pretoria, South Africa

Although the content of this book describes the life and work of the writer Paulo Coelho, Coelho did not have any availability to participate on this book or to provide approval for releasing the material. Therefore, the book is not reviewed or authorised by Paulo Coelho and based only on literature reviews.

ISBN 978-3-319-59637-2 ISBN 978-3-319-59638-9 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-59638-9

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017943103

© Springer International Publishing AG 2017

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

*To my parents
Klaus und Gerlinde Mayer*

Preface

This psychobiography focuses on the life and selected creative works of Paulo Coelho, one of the most read authors in the world. It uses two theoretical approaches: the holistic wellness model of Myers, Sweeney and Witmer and James Fowler's faith development theory. The study aims to explore the uniqueness of this exceptional individual and responds to the question: "How can the life of the writer Paulo Coelho be described in terms of holistic wellness and stages of faith development?"

This is a psychobiographical study of a single case, and its methodological frame is based on Dilthey's modern hermeneutics. Through purposeful sampling, Paulo Coelho was chosen as the subject of research. Selected first-person and third-person documents were used for data analysis. Ethical considerations were taken into account in this research study.

The findings show that, over the 70 years of his life, Paulo Coelho has a strong holistic wellness, which is primarily based on selected life tasks (spirituality, self-direction, love) and life forces (family, religion, partly community). His holistic wellness is influenced by integrating local events (focusing on the present moment) and holistic life activities (such as self-expression through writing).

Findings highlight that Coelho's life and creative works are connected to a strong faith development, a vocation, his relationship with God and the creation of meaningfulness through writing.

Finally, the theories and methodologies used in this study are revised, the role of the researcher is reflected, conclusions are provided and recommendations for future research and psychological practice are emphasised.

Pretoria, South Africa

Claude-Hélène Mayer

*But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art?
Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not your life?
Michel Foucault*

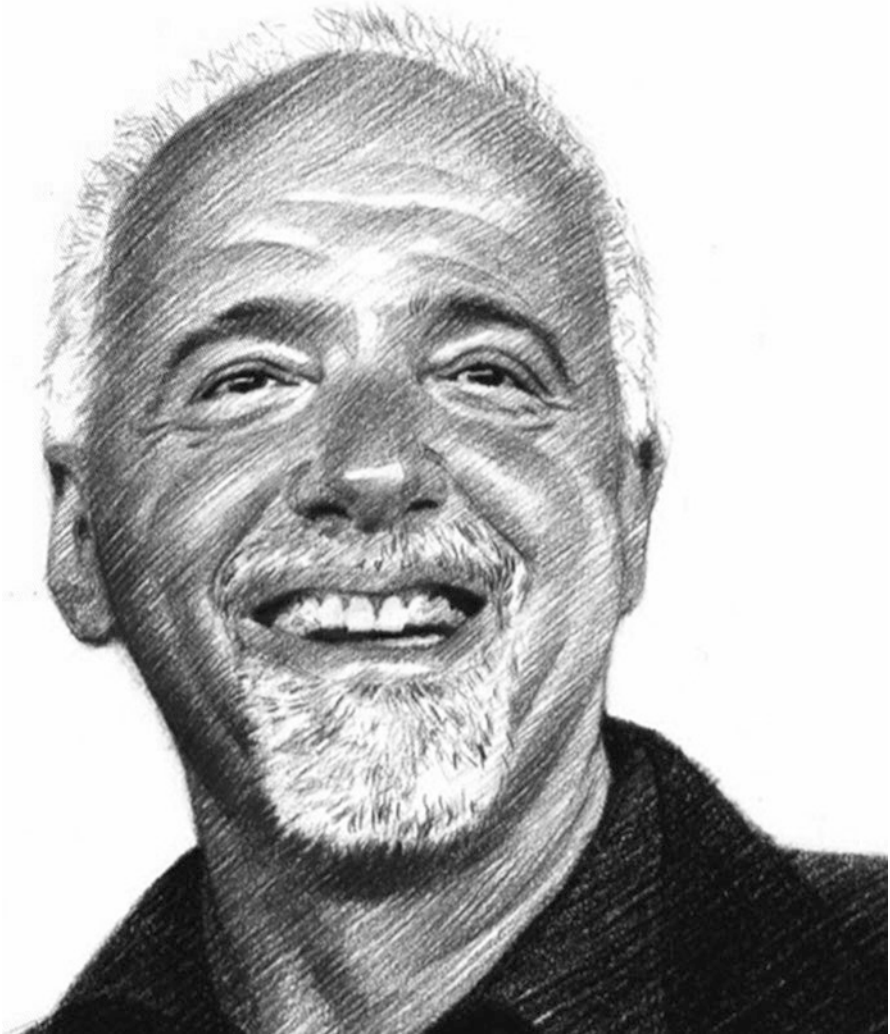


Fig. 1 Paulo Coelho portrait 2011–2013 (Source: Coelho, S.a.[b])

Acknowledgements

I hereby heartfully thank Prof David Maree for his deep interest and the collegial, professional, scientific and creative support and encouragement throughout the process of the writing of this book.

Thanks to both, Prof David Maree and to Prof Lourens Human for their support in submitting a previous unpublished version of this work as a PhD study at the Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

*On the path of life,
we will always find problems that are hard to resolve.
That is when you need to let your
creative imagination take over.*

Paulo Coelho, The Pilgrimage

I would like to thank Blanchie, Lolo and Ecee for their inspirational and creative potential manifesting in my life, showing me how creative imagination can take over in one or the other way.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Chapter Preview	1
1.2	General Orientation to the Study.....	1
1.3	A Short Introduction to the Life and Work of Paulo Coelho	2
1.4	The Theoretical Approaches to This Study	3
1.4.1	The Holistic Wellness Model.....	4
1.4.2	Stages of Faith Development.....	4
1.4.3	Combining the Holistic Wellness Model and the Faith Development Theory	5
1.5	Theoretical and Paradigmatic Point of Departure.....	6
1.6	Research Methodology.....	7
1.6.1	Research Design and Sampling	7
1.6.2	Data Collection and Analysis	7
1.7	Problem Statement and Justification for the Study	8
1.8	Purpose, Aims, and Contribution of the Research	10
1.9	Motivation for the Research Study.....	12
1.10	The Structure of the Research Study.....	13
1.11	Chapter Summary.....	14
2	Psychobiographical Research	15
2.1	Chapter Preview	15
2.2	Defining Psychobiography	15
2.3	Psychobiographical Research.....	17
2.4	Psychobiographies in the Realm of Creativity, Artists and Writers	19
2.5	Demarcation of Psychobiographical Research and Related Concepts.....	21
2.5.1	Psychobiography and Life History	22
2.5.2	Psychobiography and Life Narratives	23
2.5.3	Psychobiography and Autobiographies	23

2.5.4	Psychobiography and Psychohistory	24
2.5.5	Psychobiography and Case Study Research.....	24
2.6	Critical Views on Psychobiographical Research.....	25
2.7	The Value and Contribution of Psychobiographical Case Studies	28
2.8	Why a Psychobiography on Paulo Coelho?	29
2.9	Chapter Summary.....	33
3	The Life and Creative Works of Paulo Coelho:	
	A Chronological Overview	35
3.1	Chapter Preview	35
3.2	Paulo Coelho’s Early Childhood (1947–1953)	36
3.3	Childhood and Schooldays (1953–1961)	36
3.4	The Teenage Years (1962–1966)	38
3.4.1	Becoming a Writer	38
3.4.2	The Retreat at St Ignatius and Paulo Coelho’s Belief in God	39
3.4.3	Moving to Gávia and Rota 15.....	40
3.4.4	Transfer to Andrews College.....	40
3.4.5	The Dream, the Design of Life and the New Freedom	41
3.4.6	The First Mental Hospital Encounter in 1965	42
3.4.7	The Second Mental Hospital Encounter in 1966.....	43
3.5	The Twenties (1967–1976).....	45
3.5.1	Women, Theatre and the Third Mental Hospital Encounter	45
3.5.2	Drugs and the Occult	46
3.5.3	Kidnapped and Tortured	48
3.6	The Thirties (1977–1986)	48
3.6.1	Nhá Chica	48
3.6.2	Cristina and Christian Belief	49
3.6.3	Dachau and RAM Practices.....	49
3.6.4	Early Writings and Becoming Master of RAM.....	50
3.6.5	“I am a Magus”	51
3.6.6	The Road to Santiago – A Major Life Change	52
3.7	The Forties (1987–1996).....	52
3.7.1	The Pilgrimage (1987).....	52
3.7.2	The Alchemist (1988).....	54
3.7.3	Brida (1990).....	56
3.7.4	The Valkyries (1992)	57
3.7.5	By the River Piedro I Sat Down and Wept (1994).....	59
3.7.6	The Fifth Mountain (1995).....	61
3.8	The Fifties (1997–2006).....	62
3.8.1	Veronica Decides to Die (1998)	63

3.8.2	The Wanderer (2007)	64
3.8.3	The Devil and Miss Prym (2000)	70
3.8.4	Eleven Minutes (2003)	71
3.8.5	Warrior of the Light (2003)	72
3.8.6	The Zahir (2004).....	72
3.8.7	The Witch of Portobello (2006).....	75
3.8.8	God, Faith and Spirituality	76
3.8.9	Like a Flowing River	77
3.9	The Sixties (2007–2016).....	78
3.9.1	The Winner Stands Alone (2008)	80
3.9.2	“My Life” – Paulo Coelho in Documentary	81
3.9.3	Aleph (2011).....	83
3.9.4	Manuscript Found in Accra (2012)	85
3.9.5	Adultery (2014) and the Spy (2016).....	86
3.9.6	Paulo Coelho’s Achievements	87
3.9.7	Paulo Coelho’s Political Engagement.....	88
3.9.8	At the Peak of His Career	89
3.9.9	An Overview on Paulo Coelho’s Life and Creative Works.....	90
3.10	Chapter Summary.....	92
4	The Holistic Wellness Model	95
4.1	Chapter Preview	95
4.2	Introduction.....	95
4.3	Defining Wellness.....	96
4.4	Introducing the Holistic Wellness Model.....	97
4.5	The Holistic Wellness Model	98
4.5.1	Life Tasks.....	100
4.5.2	Life Forces.....	109
4.5.3	Global Events	112
4.6	The Indivisible Self	112
4.7	The Value of the Holistic Wellness Model in Psychobiographical Research	114
4.8	Criticism of the Holistic Wellness Model in Psychobiographical Research	116
4.9	Chapter Summary.....	117
5	Stages of Faith Development.....	119
5.1	Chapter Preview	119
5.2	Introduction.....	119
5.3	Defining Faith.....	120
5.4	The Birth of the Faith Development Theory of James Fowler	122
5.5	Basic Assumptions in Faith Development Theory	123

- 5.6 Influencing Constructive Dimensions of Faith Development Theory 125
- 5.7 Fowlers’ Stages of Faith Development Theory 126
 - 5.7.1 Stage 0 – Primal Faith 127
 - 5.7.2 Stage 1 – Intuitive-Projective Stage..... 127
 - 5.7.3 Stage 2 – Mythic-Literal Stage..... 128
 - 5.7.4 Stage 3 – Synthetic-Conventional Stage..... 129
 - 5.7.5 Stage 4 – Individuative–Reflexive Stage 130
 - 5.7.6 Stage 5 – Paradoxical-Conjunctive Stage..... 132
 - 5.7.7 Stage 6 – Universalising Faith..... 133
 - 5.7.8 Summarising Remarks on the Stages of Faith Development 134
- 5.8 Faith Development and Vocation in Life 135
 - 5.8.1 God’s Creation and Caring for Others and the Environment..... 136
 - 5.8.2 God’s Governance and His Justice and Lawfulness Within Societies (Fowler, 1987) 136
 - 5.8.3 God’s Liberation from Socio-economic and Political Ideologies and Boundaries (Fowler, 1987)..... 136
- 5.9 Empirical Research in Faith Development Theory 137
- 5.10 Faith Development Theory in Psychobiography and Writing..... 138
- 5.11 Critical Responses to Faith Development Theory..... 139
- 5.12 Chapter Summary..... 142
- 6 Research Design and Methodology 143**
 - 6.1 Chapter Preview 143
 - 6.2 Research Design and Methodology 143
 - 6.3 The Research Paradigm of Hermeneutics in Psychobiography 144
 - 6.4 The Research Approach: Psychobiography as a Case Study Method 148
 - 6.5 Quality Criteria in Qualitative Case Study Research..... 149
 - 6.5.1 Credibility and Subjectivity..... 150
 - 6.5.2 Generalisability and Transferability 151
 - 6.5.3 Dependability 152
 - 6.5.4 Confirmability..... 152
 - 6.5.5 Rigour, Creativity and Trustworthiness 152
 - 6.6 Markers of Psychobiographical Research..... 154
 - 6.7 The Research Process in Psychobiography..... 155
 - 6.8 Data Collection..... 155
 - 6.8.1 Sampling: The Choice of the Subject of Research 155

6.8.2	First- and Third-Person Documents in Psychobiographical Research.....	157
6.8.3	Psychological Theories Applied in This Research	158
6.9	Data Analysis and Interpretation.....	159
6.9.1	Content Analysis in First and Third-Person Data.....	160
6.10	Ethical Considerations	175
6.11	Methodological Limitations.....	177
6.12	Chapter Summary.....	178
7	Research Findings and Discussion on Paulo Coelho’s Life.....	181
7.1	Chapter Preview	181
7.2	Conceptual Outline of Presentation of Findings	181
7.3	Life Tasks, Forces and Global Events in Coelho’s Life	182
7.3.1	Life Task 1: Spirituality	182
7.3.2	Life Task 2: Self-Direction	203
7.3.3	Life Task 3: Work and Leisure.....	238
7.3.4	Life Task 4: Friendship.....	251
7.3.5	Life Task 5: Love.....	268
7.4	Integration and Conclusions of the Findings on Holistic Wellness.....	292
7.5	Sub-Chapter Summary on the Holistic Wellness Model.....	294
7.6	The Stages of Faith Development Throughout Coelho’s Life	295
7.6.1	Stage 0 – Primal Faith	295
7.6.2	Stage 1 – Intuitive-Projective Stage.....	296
7.6.3	Stage 2 – Mythic-Literal Stage.....	298
7.6.4	Stage 3 – Synthetic-Conventional Stage.....	301
7.6.5	Stage 4 – Individuative–Reflexive Stage	304
7.6.6	Stage 5 – Paradoxical-Conjunctive Stage.....	308
7.6.7	Stage 6 – Universalising Faith.....	314
7.6.8	Summary of Findings of Stages of Faith Development.....	315
7.6.9	Vocation in Paulo Coelho’s Life.....	317
7.6.10	Faith Development and Vocation in Coelho’s Life as a Writer.....	322
7.7	Integration and Conclusions on Findings in Faith Development Theory	324
7.8	Sub-Chapter Summary on Faith Development Theory	324
7.9	Chapter Summary.....	325
8	Holistic Wellness and Faith Development in Selected Creative Works of Paulo Coelho.....	327
8.1	Chapter Preview	327
8.2	Conceptual Outline of the Presentation of Findings on Selected Creative Works.....	327

8.3	Introduction to “The Pilgrimage” (1987).....	328
8.3.1	Alexander’s Indicators of Psychological Salience in “The Pilgrimage”	331
8.3.2	Schultz’s Prototypical Scenes in “The Pilgrimage”	334
8.3.3	Holistic Wellness in “The Pilgrimage”.....	336
8.3.4	Fowler’s Stages of Faith Development in “The Pilgrimage”.....	348
8.4	Introduction to “Aleph” (2011)	357
8.4.1	Alexander’s Indicators of Psychological Salience in “Aleph”	361
8.4.2	Schultz’s Prototypical Scenes in “Aleph”	366
8.4.3	Fowler’s Stages of Faith Development in “Aleph”	386
8.5	The Development of Coelho from “The Pilgrimage” to “Aleph”	400
8.5.1	“The Pilgrimage” in the Context of Coelho’s Life (1982–1987).....	400
8.5.2	“Aleph” in the Context of Paulo Coelho’s Life (2006–2011).....	406
8.5.3	Coelho’s Development in Terms of the Holistic Wellness Model from “The Pilgrimage” to “Aleph”	412
8.5.4	Coelho’s Development in Terms of the Stages of Faith Development from “The Pilgrimage” to “Aleph”	419
8.5.5	Narrative Peculiarities in Life and Selected Creative Works.....	420
8.6	Chapter Summary.....	426
9	Revisions, Conclusions and Recommendations	427
9.1	Chapter Preview	427
9.2	Problem Statement and Justification for the Study Revised	427
9.3	Purpose and Aims of the Research Study Revised	428
9.4	Preliminary Assumptions Revised	430
9.5	Summaries and Conclusions	431
9.5.1	Paulo Coelho’s Life and Creative Works in the Context of the Holistic Wellness Model.....	432
9.5.2	Paulo Coelho’s Life and Creative Works in the Context of Stages of Faith Development.....	435
9.5.3	The Reconstruction of Paulo Coelho’s Wellness and Faith	438
9.5.4	Holistic Wellness, Faith and Success.....	440
9.6	Reflections on Theoretical and Methodological Approaches used	441
9.6.1	Psychobiographical Research.....	441
9.6.2	The Holistic Wellness Model Re-Examined.....	446

- 9.6.3 Faith Development Theory Reconsidered 456
- 9.6.4 Combining Holistic Wellness Model
and Faith Development Theory in This Study 464
- 9.6.5 Methodological Paradigms and Approaches
Reconsidered for This Study 465
- 9.7 Contribution of the Study 470
- 9.8 Limitations of This Study..... 470
- 9.9 Reflections of the Researcher at the End of the Study 472
- 9.10 Recommendation for Future Psychobiographical
Research and Practice 475
 - 9.10.1 Psychobiographical Research..... 475
 - 9.10.2 Paulo Coelho..... 476
 - 9.10.3 Holistic Wellness Model and Faith
Development Theory 476
 - 9.10.4 Research Methodology 477
 - 9.10.5 Psychological Practice..... 478
- 9.11 Chapter Summary..... 480
- References..... 481**

Abbreviations

FDT	Faith development theory
HWM	Holistic wellness model
IS-WEL	The indivisible self
WOW	The wheel of wellness
Chap.	Chapter
Sect.	Section

List of Figures

Fig. 3.1	Manual of the warrior of light.....	73
Fig. 4.1	The wheel of wellness.....	99
Fig. 6.1	Overview research design and methodology	144
Fig. 9.1	The holistic wellness model in Paulo Coelho's life	433
Fig. 9.2	Reconstruction of holistic wellness across the life span	434
Fig. 9.3	Reconstruction of faith development across the life span	437
Fig. 9.4	Vocation in the life of Paulo Coelho	439
Fig. 9.5	Reconstruction of Paulo Coelho's life: Wellness and faith	439
Fig. 9.6	Paradigm shift in psychobiographical studies on writers	442
Fig. 9.7	Integration of biography and creative work analysis	444
Fig. 9.8	Psychobiography as cross-cultural research	445
Fig. 9.9	The holistic wellness model of Paulo Coelho.....	449
Fig. 9.10	Paulo Coelho's faithful mode of intuition.....	458

List of Tables

Table 6.1	Quality criteria.....	150
Table 6.2	Good and bad psychobiography markers	154
Table 6.3	Data analysis models	163
Table 6.4	Alexander’s indicators of psychological salience.....	164
Table 6.5	Schultz’s prototypical scenes.....	166
Table 6.6	Examples of Alexander’s indicators of psycho-salience in Paulo Coelho’s life	167
Table 6.7	Examples of Schultz’s prototypical scenes in Paulo Coelho’s life	171
Table 7.1	Life task spirituality in Coelho’s early childhood	183
Table 7.2	Life task spirituality in Coelho’s childhood and school days.....	185
Table 7.3	Life task spirituality in Coelho’s teenage years.....	187
Table 7.4	Life task spirituality in Coelho’s twenties.....	189
Table 7.5	Life task spirituality in Coelho’s thirties	192
Table 7.6	Life task spirituality in Coelho’s forties	194
Table 7.7	Life task spirituality in Coelho’s fifties	197
Table 7.8	Life task spirituality in Coelho’s sixties	200
Table 7.9	Overview of life task spirituality with all sub-categories	202
Table 7.10	Life task spirituality.....	204
Table 7.11	Self-direction in early childhood	208
Table 7.12	Self-direction in childhood and schooldays	210
Table 7.13	Self-direction in teenage years	213
Table 7.14	Self-direction in twenties.....	215
Table 7.15	Self-direction in thirties	218
Table 7.16	Self-direction in forties.....	223
Table 7.17	Self-direction in fifties	227
Table 7.18	Self-direction in sixties.....	231
Table 7.19	Overall life task self-direction with sub-categories	232
Table 7.20	Life task self-direction.....	234

Table 7.21	Life task, work and leisure	252
Table 7.22	Life task friendship.....	265
Table 7.23	Love in early childhood.....	269
Table 7.24	Love in childhood and schooldays	270
Table 7.25	Love in teenage years	273
Table 7.26	Love in the twenties.....	275
Table 7.27	Love in the thirties.....	277
Table 7.28	Love in the forties.....	280
Table 7.29	Love in the fifties.....	282
Table 7.30	Love in the sixties.....	284
Table 7.31	Overview: love and sub-categories.....	285
Table 7.32	Life task love	287
Table 7.33	Findings on stages of faith development in the life of Paulo Coelho	316
Table 7.34	Relationship with God across young, middle and late adulthood.....	323
Table 8.1	Selected indicators by Alexander of psychological salience in “The Pilgrimage” (1987).....	332
Table 8.2	Examples of Schultz’s prototypical scenes in “The Pilgrimage”.....	335
Table 8.3	Examples of Alexander’s indicators of psychological salience in “Aleph”	362
Table 8.4	Examples of Schultz’s prototypical scenes in “Aleph”	367
Table 8.5	Spirituality in life and “The Pilgrimage”.....	401
Table 8.6	Self-direction in life and “The Pilgrimage”.....	402
Table 8.7	Work and leisure in life and “The Pilgrimage”	403
Table 8.8	Friendship in life and “The Pilgrimage”	403
Table 8.9	Love in life and “The Pilgrimage”	404
Table 8.10	Stages of faith development (30s and 40s) of Coelho and in “The Pilgrimage”	405
Table 8.11	Spirituality in life and “Aleph”	407
Table 8.12	Self-Direction in life and “Aleph”	408
Table 8.13	Work and leisure in life and “Aleph”.....	409
Table 8.14	Friendship in life and “Aleph”	409
Table 8.15	Love in life and “Aleph”.....	410
Table 8.16	Stages of faith development (30s and 40s) of Paulo Coelho and in “Aleph	412
Table 8.17	The development of holistic wellness from “The Pilgrimage” to “Aleph”.....	416
Table 8.18	Stages of faith development – from “The Pilgrimage” to “Aleph”	420
Table 8.19	Overview of faith development and vocation “The Pilgrimage” to “Aleph”.....	421
Table 9.1	Revision of quality criteria in this study.....	466
Table 9.2	Psychobiography markers revised for this study	467
Table 9.3	Researcher’s abilities in this study	468

Chapter 1

Introduction

Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.

Carl Gustave Jung, 1973, p. 33

1.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter provides an introduction to the psychobiographical study on Paulo Coelho. It serves as an orientation that guides the reader through the study, giving insight into the life and work of Paulo Coelho, the content and structure of the entire work in terms of theories and methodology used. The chapter describes the problem of research, highlights its purpose, aims and contribution. It emphasises finally the researcher's motivation regarding the research study (the view inside) and provides an overview on the structure of the study (the view outside). The chapter closes with a chapter summary. In the following a general orientation to the study is given.

Each chapter in this study starts with a quotation that relates to the context of the chapter or a specific aspect described in each chapter. However, the quotations are hardly actively integrated or analysed within each of the chapters. They are rather seen as part of the artistic reconstruction of the study with regard to the life and creative works of the writer Paulo Coelho.

1.2 General Orientation to the Study

The study of the individual is one of the most fascinating, intriguing and illuminating subjects in psychology (Schachter, 2004). Generally, psychobiographies deal with the life of an extraordinary individual, focusing on the inside of the person, as far as on the outside of him/her. A psychobiography is defined as “the study of historically significant and extraordinary individuals over their entire life spans with the aim to uncover and reconstruct their lives psychologically” (Fouché & van Niekerk, 2010, p. 2).

Psychobiographies have gained international recognition in psychology during the past decades (Alexander, 1990; Fouché, 2015; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010;

Schultz, 2005a; Van Niekerk, 2007), including studies on famous politicians (McAdams, 2011; Sharma, 2011), actors, religious leaders, psychologists, artists and writers (Eliastram, 2011).

This study¹ focuses on the life of Paulo Coelho, one of the most famous and most published contemporary writers in the world. Paulo Coelho is a world-known and extraordinary individual, whose work is read by millions of readers across cultures, influencing their lives in his role as a novelist and writer. His writings, such as stories, thoughts and reflections, novels and autobiographic books have been published in more than 70 languages and have impacted on the life and mindset of many readers (Morais, 2009). Although Paulo Coelho's creative work has been studied extensively (Martin, 2012; Mertel, 2000), no psychobiography could be found that reconstructs his life and creative work systematically on the basis of psychological theories.

This study focuses on and explores the life and work of Paulo Coelho based on the holistic wellness model (Chap. 4) and the stages of faith development (Chap. 5).

In this chapter, an overview on the life, theories and research methodology is outlined to provide the reader with orientation to this psychobiographical study.

1.3 A Short Introduction to the Life and Work of Paulo Coelho

This psychobiographical study focuses on the extraordinary life of the Brazilian writer and novelist Paulo Coelho. He was born on 24 August 1947 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and was raised by devout Catholic parents, his father being an engineer with a very logical, reasonable and clear vision and world view (Morais, 2009). During adolescence Coelho was sent three times to a mental hospital by his parents because of his dream to become a writer. In his twenties, he was arrested and tortured in Brazil (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2013), but always kept dreaming his dream of becoming a writer. After his release he started studying, but dropped out to travel and to work for multimedia companies (Morais, 2009). He changed his life radically at the age of 36 years, after a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, when he experienced a spiritual awakening and felt inspired to write the book, "The pilgrimage" (Coelho, 1987). Only one year later, he wrote "The alchemist" (Coelho, 1988) in the course of a two-week spurt of creativity. "The alchemist" was Paulo Coelho's break-through as an international author. Since then he has published

¹Previously, this study was submitted as a PhD research study, Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa. This previous version of the manuscript remained unpublished.

books at a rate of about one every two years. In 2013, approximately 150 million copies of his books were published in at least 71 languages. Several of his books are autobiographic in nature (Shema, 2013)² and deal with spirituality and faith, societal impacts on individuals and love.

In this research, biographical facts as well as creative works of Paulo Coelho are analysed to write this psychobiography on the writer. The (autobiographical) creative works are particularly important to understand the writer's life and development and are therefore used for analysis (see particularly Chaps. 3, 7 and 8).

1.4 The Theoretical Approaches to This Study

This study uses two theoretical approaches within the context of personality psychology and psychobiographical research particularly: the holistic wellness model (HWM) (Myers & Sweeney, 2008; Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992), and the stages of faith development theory (FDT) (Fowler, 1981, 1984, 1987). Both selected theories are defined as theories based within the positive psychology context will shortly be introduced in the following section.

This study draws on various theoretical and methodological contexts, frameworks and theories that are situated within broader theoretical frameworks: The psychobiographical study is viewed as a methodological approach used in personality psychology. Personality psychology therefore builds the broader framework for this psychobiographical study. At the same time, the theoretical framework for the HWM and the FDT is viewed as the framework of positive psychology. The two theories, using positive psychology constructs, such as wellness and faith, are therefore anchored in the broader framework of positive psychology. The methodological design is based on an explanatory-interpretative psychobiographical case study design within the research paradigm of hermeneutics. The various frameworks/contexts used for the different theoretical and methodological approaches are part of the scientific and artistic reconstruction of the life of Paulo Coelho and define the inter-disciplinary, multi-layered approach to this study.

²In this work, referencing usage might differ from the APA style in that regard that references are used also within sentences, if only part of the sentences are reflected within the referenced source. They will appear at the end of the sentence if the sources used reflect the statement of the entire sentence.

1.4.1 The Holistic Wellness Model

Over the past decade, research on health, well-being and wellness has increased (Mayer, 2011) and the importance of positive psychology concepts has been emphasised (Seligman, 2011). Positive psychology is understood as by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) in terms of understanding and fostering the factors that allow societies, communities and individuals to flourish. One of the central concepts in the positive psychology movement is the neo-Adlerian HWM (Myers & Sweeney, 2008; Myers et al., 2000; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992) which is based on the principles of holism by Adler, defined by Myers and Sweeney (2004, pp. 334–336), based on the Adlerian theory as the indivisibility of the self, the focus on the whole rather than on the parts, the focus on the interaction of the parts towards the whole and the social context contributing to the whole.

In the HWM, the five life tasks of neo-Adlerian Individual Psychology are used as an organising principle of the various components of wellness (Myers, 2009). Wellness is defined as a “way of life orientation toward optimal health and well-being in which body, mind, and spirit are integrated by the individual to live more fully within the human and natural community” (Myers et al., 2000, p. 252).

In the model, spirituality is conceived as the core life task of the five life tasks which are spirituality, self-direction, work and leisure, friendship and love (Myers et al., 2000). These life tasks are viewed as dynamically interlinked with external life forces (family, religion, education, community, government, media, business/industry). These life forces are seen as impacting on the life tasks and vice versa. Finally, global events (such as disease, war, pollution, economic exploitation, poverty) are connected to life tasks and life forces (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992).

The HWM has been successfully applied in psychobiographical research (Burnell, 2013; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010; Nel, 2013) to reconstruct the lives of extraordinary individuals in a theoretically positive psychology framework. This model is used to reconstruct the life of Paulo Coelho in terms of a holistic wellness approach, integrating body, mind and spirit, life tasks, life forces and global events (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2001). The HWM will be described in-depth in Chap. 4.

1.4.2 Stages of Faith Development

The development of religious and spiritual faith has been of interest in psychology for several decades. James Fowler’s FDT has been the most influential framework relevant to religious and spiritual development during the past decades (Coyle, 2011). The FDT was first published by Fowler in 1981 in the book *Stages of faith*: (Fowler, 1981). It has since then attracted attention, inspired empirical research in the United States and worldwide (Streib, 2005), received highly critical responses

and consequently led the scientific discourse on faith and its development in human beings across disciplines (e.g. Ashdown & Gibbons, 2012; Coyle, 2011; Heywood, 2008; Hughes, 1997; Reich, 2005, 2008). FDT was viewed as a “framework for understanding the evolution of how human beings conceptualize God, or a Higher Being, and how the influence of the Higher Being has an impact on core values, beliefs, and meanings in their personal lives and in their relationships with others” (Fowler & Dell, 2004, p. 17).

The stages of FDT have been suggested for the use in qualitative studies (Streib, 2005) and psychobiographical research (Stroud, 2004). It has been used in psychobiographies before (e.g. Burnell, 2013) and was found to be suitable for the research. This study explores the life of Paulo Coelho in terms of the FDT throughout his life and in two selected creative works. The stages of FDT will be described extensively in Chap. 5.

1.4.3 Combining the Holistic Wellness Model and the Faith Development Theory

This sub-chapter briefly addresses the question why the theoretical approaches were chosen and combined in this psychobiography.

The wellness model has been successfully applied in psychobiographical research (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010) to reconstruct the lives of extraordinary individuals in a positive psychology frame. This model is used to reconstruct the life of Paulo Coelho to explore his holistic wellness in terms of integrating body, mind and spirit. Since several of Paulo Coelho’s autobiographical and creative works are based on descriptions of his personal spiritual life’s journey towards holistic wellness, the HWM seems to be an applicable theory to explore Paulo Coelho’s life topics in depth. During his life and in his creative work (e.g. Coelho, 2003b, 2011) the writer has integrated discourses on spirituality, meaningfulness in life, self-direction and love, which can be explored by the HWM that defines spirituality as the core of holistic wellness and that interlinks spirituality with the life tasks and life forces described (Myers et al., 2001).

Since spirituality and the spiritual development of the individual seem to be core issues in Paulo Coelho’s life and creative accounts (Coelho, 2003b, 2011), the development of his faith will be explored further. It is assumed that the application of faith development throughout his life span and with regard to selected creative works will provide further in-depth information of his faith development from childhood to 2015, including the concept of spirituality. Faith is of great interest in this research, because several of his autobiographical books deal with his personal faith development (e.g. Coelho, 2002b) and faith, holism and wellness in terms of spiritual wellness are important topics in Paulo Coelho’s biography (Morais, 2009) and in interviews (Arias, 2001).

Both theories are suitable for the theoretical background of the analysis of a single case study across a lifetime and have been used successfully in psychobiographical work before (Burnell, 2013). They have therefore been proven applicable to this psychobiographical study. They have been chosen for this research study due to these main reasons explained.

In the following, the theoretical and paradigmatic point of departure is explained.

1.5 Theoretical and Paradigmatic Point of Departure

The research is based on a psychobiographical study of a single case. Whilst the two theories are applied in the theoretical framework of positive psychology, the case study method is viewed in the broader methodological frame and research design of hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics defines human subjectivity as part of research and the research processes (Dilthey, 2002). Thereby, hermeneutic interpretation of a life requires an active, sophisticated subjectivity to comprehend subjective experiences and their expressions in life objectively. “Verstehen” (understanding), according to Dilthey, can only happen when a researcher applies a self-reflexive attitude to achieve valid interpretations of the text of lived experiences and their expressions (Ratner, 2002).

The concept of reflexivity is defined in this study as emphasised by Myerhoff and Ruby (1982, p. 6): “Being reflexive is structuring communicative products so that the audience assumes the producer, process and product are a coherent whole.” This means for the study, that reflexivity includes the communicative act of the structured analysis of the data, the process of data handling and research, the expression of the researched (through the data used) and the perception of the researcher. By reflecting on the assumptions and procedures, the reflexive researcher applies a scientific attitude (Myerhoff & Ruby, 1982, p. 28). The terms “reflexive” and “reflective” are used in this study according to the authors cited, whereby authors do use the terms “reflexive” and “reflective” synonymously. If this is not the case, the term “reflective” is defined according to the author cited.

Dilthey’s understanding of hermeneutics integrates the main aim of interpreting ideas, purposes and other mental states expressed in the world of human action (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Dilthey, 1976). It is therefore defined as a suitable research paradigm for this study.

Many of the psychobiographies of the late twentieth century use idiographic (single case explorations), hermeneutic perspectives, life story analysis and case study approaches. Currently, psychobiography falls into the hermeneutic traditions in which the author of a text is viewed as a “real phenomenon who can be explored and interpreted psychologically” (Kováry, 2011, p. 765). Psychobiography is viewed as a “method of idiographic approach in personality psychology”, which originally aimed at the analysis and understanding of “the dynamic and developmental determinants of artistic creativity” (Kováry, 2011, p. 764). According to this understanding of psychobiography as being a method of idiographic approach in

personality psychology, personality psychology is seen as one of the broader contexts of psychobiographical studies and their anchoring in the discipline of psychology. Personality psychology is therefore used as a theoretical frame for this psychobiographical study.

1.6 Research Methodology

The following sub-chapters provide a short overview on the research methodology used in this study.

1.6.1 Research Design and Sampling

The study uses a psychobiographical case study design (Elms, 2007) that is qualitative and concerned with the analysis of a single unit of analysis (Yin, 2009). The single, holistic case study offers the opportunity to study a unique phenomenon – here the individual’s life-in depth, to test a well-formulated theory while aiming to explore, understand and explain the complexities of a social phenomenon (Yin, 2009). The study is person-centred, focusing on Paulo Coelho’s uniqueness and providing a holistic description of the selected individual (Carlson, 1988; Stroud, 2004). Behavioural patterns and processes of an individual’s human development over a life continuum can be traced through psychobiographical case study research to provide a view of the whole person (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005a).

The subject of this research is Paulo Coelho who was chosen through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a form of “non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research” (Oliver, 2006, p. 245–246). The reasons why Paulo Coelho was purposefully chosen will be elaborated on in the study in Sect. 2.7 and in Sect. 6.8.1 from a sampling methodology perspective.

1.6.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process in this psychobiographical case study is based on the distinction of Allport (1961) who differentiates between first-person and third-person documents. The following first-person documents are used: autobiographical essays and scripts on the internet or in journals and newspapers, autobiographically based literature and novels written by Paulo Coelho, interview scripts and statements (e.g. from newspapers, journals, internet sources), film documentaries,

personal written and oral statements, as well as video statements from Paulo Coelho on the internet, selected literary products (novels, published short stories, books, films). For the analysis of his literary and creative works, two autobiographical novels are chosen as first-person documents for analysis. Firstly, “The pilgrimage” (Coelho, 2003b) is chosen, as it is Paulo Coelho’s first autobiographical novel. Secondly, the novel “Aleph” (Coelho, 2011) is chosen for in-depth analysis, as one of his recent autobiographical novels and one of his most personal manuscripts (Purwandoyo & Kurnia, 2013).

With regard to third-person documents, a biography (Morais, 2009), a biographic book in interview form (Arias, 2001), case studies and excerpts published by third persons in journals, newspapers or on the internet (e.g. Mihály, 2012) are analysed.

Content analysis is used in analysis to identify “key issues” in the data throughout the life span of Paulo Coelho and in his creative works. By analysing key issues with regard to holistic wellness and faith development stages within the data, content analysis will guide the process of analysis. Content analysis is defined as a subjective process between the researcher and the texts (Mayer, 2011). Yin (2009) emphasises that content analysis is conducted through inter- and intra-individual verification processes aimed at adhering to particular processes of analysis and regulations, thereby verifying the findings.

According to Streib (2005, p. 102), content analysis can either use pre-defined categories or alternatively inductive-analytical procedures. The psychobiography at hand uses pre-defined categories (as provided in the two theories applied) and inductive-analytical categories – which were developed through familiarisation with the texts analysed. The process of content analysis as described by Terre Blanche et al., (2006) is understood as an act of subjective involvement of the researcher and as a hermeneutic interpretation and reconstruction between the researcher and the researched. It has been defined as a systematic and replicable technique to create categories from large text databases (Mayring, 2014; Weber, 1990). The data analysis in this study is conducted through the five-step process of content analysis by Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006, p. 322–326). The process will be explained in depth in the study in Sect. 6.9.

1.7 Problem Statement and Justification for the Study

With regard to the growing literature on psychobiography, a research need has been identified to contribute to a new and complex psychological understanding of extraordinary individuals who act as outstanding universal and positive role models. These role models might have a positive impact on individuals and societies, bringing about reflection, new ideas and change. By using two positive psychology theories as the theoretical paradigm, this study emphasises holistic wellness and faith development in the life and selected creative works of Paulo Coelho to focus on

selected positive aspects within the individual and to contribute to a positive psychology perspective (Luthans, 2002; Mayer & Van Zyl, 2013) in psychobiography.

By using the HWM as well as the FDT, this study emphasises the positive aspects of the selected individual, based on the theoretical positive psychology paradigm. Burnell (2013, p. 2) highlights that the HWM as well as the FDT used in psychobiographical research “provide a eugraphic and holistic approach in contrast to the traditional pathographic approach with which to view an individual life”.

By using the described theoretical framework, the study contributes to a positive psychology perspective onto the wellness and spiritual development of the selected individual. The emphasise of the positive psychology perspective in psychology is urgently needed from a psychological, as well as from a societal perspective: new and positive role models are required to provide guidance in times of global changes, insecurity, disorientation and crises. Due to the global challenges individuals and societies are facing, the search for holistic well-being (Mayer, 2011), wellness and for spirituality increases (Powers, 2005). In times of global crisis, new worldly challenges across cultures, wars and increasing conflict potentials, universal leaders are requested to become role models to contribute to a peaceful, healthy and sustainable future (Leeder, Raymond, & Greenberg, 2007). Paulo Coelho is viewed as a highly influential writer who aims at contributing to a more just, peaceful and spiritual world (Morais, 2009).

Psychobiographers can learn from personality psychology, as a contextual framework of psychobiographical work, as explained by McAdams (2005), however, personality psychology can gain new insights and understanding from in-depth, single case psychobiographical research within the positive psychology paradigm to develop an understanding of life-long psychological processes to face life’s challenges in the context of holistic wellness and faith development. These new insights for personality psychology can derive from the application and rethinking of psychological theories within the context of a single psychobiographical case study and by explaining the motives behind the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of a person.

At the same time, according to Schultz (2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d), more research on artists and writers is needed which promotes a positive psychological view from a psychobiographical perspective and which do not create psychopathological artists and writers, as, for example, in the case of Van Gogh (Schultz, 2005c, 2005e). Research on exceptional writers and artists – who have generally rarely been studied in the past – should be studied from a positive psychology framework to contribute to an in-depth understanding of their wellness, their spirituality and faith, their resilience and their ability be that outstanding person they are.

This study serves as a first attempt to systematically review the life of Paulo Coelho under a positive psychology framework whilst focusing on holistic wellness and faith development throughout his life. It serves, further on, as an example of how a scientific psychobiographical study can be structured and anchored in a specific theoretical and methodological framework.

Data searches across various international search engines, conducted in English, German and French failed to reveal an existing research study that deals with the writer Paulo Coelho with the focus on his life and the theoretical and/or methodological approaches of this research study applied to his life. No psychobiography written on Paulo Coelho could be found. Therefore, this study contributes to new relevant scientific information on the writer Paulo Coelho, as well as on the HWM and qualitative FDT.

1.8 Purpose, Aims, and Contribution of the Research

Referring to the quote of Jung (1973) at the beginning of this chapter, the purpose, aim and contribution of the study are connected to gaining a view into the inside of the researched, the researcher and the subject of research.

The purpose of this research study is to uncover a selected individual's life scientifically, creatively and artistically by exploring the uniqueness of his life and selected autobiographical and creative works, using the theories described, applying an intuitive approach to reveal the data and creatively reconstructing the life and selected creative works based on the theories applied in new categories. The uncovering of the selected individual's life is primarily focused on from a scientifically sound and structured qualitative research approach. However, creative and artistic aspects are used within this structured approach in, for example, the creative and artistic implementation of quotes at the beginning of each chapter, the combination of analysis and interpretation of first- and third-data documents in terms of the life and the creative work of Paulo Coelho and the reconstruction of findings in Chap. 9. However, in Sect. 9.9 it is also explained why the scientific and structural reconstruction of data in this study is dominant to the creative and artistic side of it.

The study's purpose is further on to provide a new understanding and perspective on the writer in the context of the selected theories, as explained in the following section.

The HWM is used to reconstruct the life of Paulo Coelho to explore his holistic wellness in terms of integrating body, mind and spirit. Since several of Paulo Coelho's autobiographical and creative works are based on descriptions of his personal spiritual journey, the HWM seems to be an applicable theory to explore Paulo Coelho's life topics in depth. During his life and in his work, Coelho (2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2011) has integrated discourses on spirituality, meaningfulness in life, self-direction and love, which are explored through the HWM that defines spirituality as the core of holistic wellness and that interlinks spirituality with the life tasks and life forces described (Myers et al., 2001).

Since spirituality and the spiritual development of the individual seem to be core issues in Paulo Coelho's life (Coelho, 2003a, 2011), the development of his faith will be explored further. It is assumed that the application of faith development throughout his life span and with regard to selected creative works will provide further in-depth information of his faith development from birth to 2017. This is of