

EXISTENTIALISM AND MOTIVATION IN PAULO COELHO'S *BRIDA* AND *ADULTERY*

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Abstract :

*The fiction of Paulo Coelho is often concerned with issues related to individual meaning, spiritual awakening, and the quest for identity. These are the issues that dovetail strongly with existentialist philosophy. This article discusses existentialism and motivation in some of Coelho's novels such as *Brida* (1990) and *Adultery* (2014). In both novels, the protagonists face existential dilemmas of identity, freedom and finding meaning. Through the quests for spiritual fulfillment by his youthful characters *Brida* and *Linda*, respectively a woman in search of her own inner world and a journalist struggling to come to terms with life's hypocrisies. Even Coelho dramatizes the tension between conformity and authenticity. Citing existentialist principles of philosophers Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Viktor Frankl, the paper claims that Coelho's fiction envisions motivation according to self-realization and individual freedom. From these develops a network of responsibilities and escape. In the end, Coelho recasts existential crises not as negative agents but provocations to personal change. His heroes get not by doing but by choosing, communing, facing the unknown. By reading *Brida* and *Adultery* with existential perspective, we seek to point out Coelho's relevance to contemporary motivational literature. Along with that how existentialist the Brazilian writer is when it comes to his literary explorations of freedom, authenticity and human will to meaning.*

Keywords : Existentialism, motivation, emotional emptiness, never-ending quest

Introduction :

Existentialism is a philosophy about the struggle to find meaning in an uncaring or ambiguous universe, and unless the stories are set in cold, hostile vacuum of space, there's no reason it won't apply. It encourages self-fashioning through choice, celebrates freedom and responsibility, and foregrounds subjective experience as the basis of identity. The novels of Paulo Coelho provide a rich field for an analysis of these ideas, as his protagonists are frequently forced to deal with existential crises which demand they redefine themselves. *Brida* and *Adultery* are memorable for their portrayals of characters struggling with questions of life, love and infidelity. And that end up bringing them closer to the little bits of themselves.

In *Brida*, the eponymous character is in search of occult wisdom and experimentation of where she belongs to on the "Tradition of the Moon" or on the "Tradition of the Sun." Her spiritual quest mirrors a very existential one: that for authenticity. *Adultery*, meanwhile,



follows Linda whose outwardly idyllic life is a veneer behind which lies the hollow core of ennui, emotional sterility and a desperate desire to still feel passion or purpose. Both novels reflect on how a crisis of meaning can be an opening to personal awakening.

This article advances the position that Coelho's experiential and philosophical perspectives are revealed in existentialist terms of motivation. Through the characters of Linda and Brida, Coelho demonstrates that motivation does not come from rewards but rather in struggling with freedom, obligation and choice. The article compares the novels with existentialist thought -namely the theories of Sartre, Kierkegaard and Frankl- claiming that Coelho's literature can be read as a millennium form of existential-motivational writing.

Existentialism as a Framework for Motivation :

Meaning must be created by human beings through intentional action, say existentialist philosophers. In every condition, however hard it may be, one can find meaning and that is the true spirit (Frankl). Sartre wrote that "existence precedes essence", which means that a human being makes himself or herself by making choices without any predetermined nature or character within him or her at birth. Kierkegaard sees despair as an impetus for authenticity, and he stresses the importance of having both subjective experience and suffering from freedom (Kierkegaard). Frankl, however focuses on the "will to meaning," asserting that motivation is derived from a search for significance even as one confronts suffering (Frankl).

These epiphanies of existence are experienced by Coelho's characters. Far from weakening them, their predicaments teed up an opportunity for transformation. Coelho's fable-type technique (direct, symbolic and soul-searching) encourages readers to confront their own reasons and point them in that direction. The inner landscapes of Brida and Linda show how existential loneliness might be an inducement to action if we are prepared to face it, rather than avoid it.

Existentialism and Inspiration in *Brida* :

1) Brida's Pursuit of Genuineness :

When she sets out on her quest, Brida is a nervy, antsy young woman. Despite her own lack of confidence and everyone else's expectations, she cannot help but feel the pull toward the spiritual realm. Early in the book she says that "I want to find my path," (Brida), echoing Kierkegaard's emphasis on an individual's inner pilgrimage for self.

One way to read her venturing into the mystical traditions is as a metaphor for existential self-creation. Her two spiritual guides, Magus and Wicca, represent opposite paths of being — knowledge and wisdom, masculine and feminine, reason and intuition. Sartre theorizes that man has to juggle conflicting desires and uncertainties in order to invent himself, as well does Brida.

What drives her is huge existential dissatisfaction," Obie told Vulture in a recent interview with Buckley — her questioning something she can't quite put her finger on, or a sense that she's yet to discover something essential about herself. Whether terrified or



confused, in the midst of emotional turmoil, this is what keeps her going. She will not live in "bad faith," an existentialist name for the state of self-deception that results from bowing to peer pressure rather than deciding for herself (Sartre).

2) Fear, Freedom, and the Power of Choice :

The confrontation with the terror of her initiation is a life-altering event for Brida. As Coelho said, "even if pain is your teacher, you have to learn from your experience" (Brida). This demonstrates the theory of Viktor Frankl that if we view pain positively it can produce meaning. Brida's existential courage can be seen in her willingness to endure hardship.

Brida has to decide a lot in the book -between the Magus and the Lorens, between Tradition of The Sun and Tradition of The Moon, eventually between Knowledge and Love. The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre's formulation that we are "condemned to be free" — i.e., unable to escape responsibility for choices ourselves make — underlines these decisions.

It is that very freedom which motivates Brida. Brida becomes stronger and more determined the more she embraces her free will. She realizes that meaning is made, rather than "found."

3) Love as Existential Awakening :

Coelho situates love as a central aspect of the existential sense. Brida in the Magus is a "Soul Mate," which help us to understand this concept, even from different lifetimes. But in the end she chooses Lorens, realizing that love cannot exist other than in earthly form rather than some esoteric spiritual yearning.

This insight unleashes a central existential truth: true significance comes from living life, not in some abstract ideal. Brida realizes that it is not enough to simply receive a mystical knowledge, identity or purpose – this must be worked in the physical life. Coelho uses love as a symbol of the relation between spirit and mundanity that is necessary for existential completeness.

Motivation and Existentialism in *Adultery* :

Adultery investigates existentialism on an emotional and psychological level, while Brida addresses spiritual existentialism. The main character, Linda, appears to lead a prosperous existence with a well-respected work, an affluent spouse, and kids. However, she experiences "nothing"—a deep emotional emptiness that is consistent with Kierkegaard's idea of existential dread.

1) Linda's Meaning Crisis :

The lack of enthusiasm and boredom set off Linda's existential crisis. She expresses this concern by saying that she lives "without joy" and that her life is passing her by meaninglessly (*Adultery*). This emotional numbness is consistent with what existentialists refer to as the "absurd"—the conflict between the seeming meaninglessness of daily routines and the

human yearning for significance (Camus).

In an effort to fill this existential void, Linda's first impulse is to have an affair with her ex-lover Jacob. But instead of romanticizing or exalting this decision, Coelho portrays it as a foolish attempt to regain vitality without addressing more fundamental problems.

2) Self-Deception and Bad Faith :

Linda might have acted in “bad faith” by having an affair. She deludes herself that she can find meaning in extrinsic qualities such as passion, attention, and social recognition instead of embracing her freedom and responsibility. This self-deception, Sartre claims, arises as people flee from the fear of freedom.

But Linda's descent into obsession is a game changer. Her mesmeric disturbance forces her to search for the reasons for her despair. Coelho leverages her crises to show that conscious self-examination (as opposed to flight) leads to freedom.

3) Regaining Independence via Accountability :

This revelation, that Linda must confront her inner void instead of stuffing it with cheap thrills is what saves Adultery. She develops new habits of self-reflection, thankfulness and getting in touch with her spouse again. As Coelho puts it “love is an act of will” (Adultery), accordingly, love is something created through intentional thinking not going with the flow.

Now that she has taken the reins of her life, she's inspired. She realizes that desire is not the opposite of security but rather something emergent from an authentic relationship with one's own values and relationships. This is consistent with Frankl's idea that meaning comes through dedication and responsibility.

4) Spiritual Reawakening :

But while “Adultery” is more about psychological awakening than mysticism, it does share a theme of spiritual rebirth with Brida. Linda's journey toward being with herself and her family again is first a recognition of her emotional and spiritual malnourishment. She transcends her previous quest for pleasure through reflection, and learns to find meaning in love, gratitude, and presence.

Coelho proposes that meaning comes to exist, not from great experiences or happenings but by recapturing depth in everyday life.

Coelho's Existential Motifs: A Comparative Analysis :

1. Crisis as Catalyst :

Both Brida and Linda experience a crisis that disrupts their understanding of themselves. For existentialists, such crises are essential because they strip away illusions and force individuals to confront their authentic desires.

- 1.1 Brida faces spiritual uncertainty.
- 1.2 Linda faces emotional emptiness.

In both cases, the crisis becomes an opportunity for growth.

2. Freedom and Responsibility :

Coelho consistently emphasizes that meaning requires choice and accountability.

- 2.1 Brida must choose between two spiritual traditions and two loves.
- 2.2 Linda must choose between escapism and responsibility.

These choices define their identities.

3. The Role of Love :

Love in Coelho's fiction functions as an existential force.

- 3.1 For Brida, love grounds her spiritual identity.
- 3.2 For Linda, love reconnects her with emotional reality.

Coelho suggests that human connection is inseparable from the search for meaning.

4. Motivation as Self-Discovery :

Both novels, *Brida* and *Adultery*, depict motivation not as external stimulus factor but as internal though process awakening. Coelho's protagonists, in the both novels, do not seek wealth or conventional success; they seek understanding, connection and authenticity. The factors of motivation arise through:

- 1) embracing freedom,
- 2) confronting fear,
- 3) accepting responsibility,
- 4) and choosing love.

This aligns Coelho's work with existential traditions while offering a uniquely spiritual and optimistic perspective.

In conclusion:

Brida and *Adultery* by Paulo Coelho provides in-depth examinations of existential concepts, especially those pertaining to freedom, authenticity, and the pursuit of meaning. The existential search for identity via decision-making, risk-taking, and self-discovery is best illustrated by Brida's journey into spiritual traditions. Linda's emotional crisis demonstrates the psychological aspects of existentialism and shows how boredom and hopelessness may inspire life-changing reflection.

According to Coelho's fiction, motivation is essentially existential and results from a



person's struggle with freedom and the obligations that go along with it. Both protagonists learn that significance is created inwardly via deliberate, brave deeds rather than being bestowed externally. Coelho presents a comprehensive theory of human motivation by fusing existential philosophy with spiritual and emotional knowledge.

Ultimately, *Brida* and *Adultery* show that existential crises are moments that force people to awaken, make a decision, and build a new version of themselves rather than endings. Coelho adds a deep analysis of the human condition and the never-ending quest for meaning to modern writing with these tales.

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