

# New Trends in Psychobiography

Claude-Hélène Mayer · Zoltan Kovary  
Editors

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 Springer

*Editors*

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ISBN 978-3-030-16952-7      ISBN 978-3-030-16953-4 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16953-4>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019936289

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

# Foreword

I am delighted to celebrate the publication of *New Trends in Psychobiography*. The life historical investigation of creative people—exceeding the Cartesian split between subject and object—represents the unity of life and thought, the principle of all psychobiographical researches. I've been interested in psychobiography for more than a half century. When I began my graduate work at Harvard in 1965, Harvard was the first and last stronghold of a traditional academic personality psychology known as personology. This was a tradition established by Henry Murray in the 1930s. Its basic principle was that academic knowledge of human personality can be achieved by the systematic in-depth study of the individual person, this is a claim that is odd with academic psychology going back to then, and it is still the case. In 1972, when I joined the faculty of Rutgers University, we tried to re-establish the tradition of personology at Rutgers. Our effort failed, but the one concrete result of those efforts that George Atwood and I (George was on the faculty at that time) was that we embarked to plan a series of psychobiographical studies of the personal subjective origins of the theoretical systems of Freud, Jung, Wilhelm Reich, and Otto Rank. These studies formed the basis of our first book, "Faces in a cloud. Subjectivity in personality theory," published in 1979 but actually completed in 1976. In the conclusion of that book, we surmised that since theories of personality can be shown to be shaped by the subjective world of the theorist, what psychoanalysis needed was a theory of subjectivity itself. We laid down the principles of such a theory that we called psychoanalytic phenomenology. Since then, we have done psychobiographical studies of philosophers like Sartre, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and lastly Heidegger. Our study of Heidegger, especially Heidegger's descent into Nazism, was published in different volumes in recent years, for example in a book edited by Zoltan Kovary, one of the editors of this current volume. So, I am very grateful to him and Claude-Hélène

Mayer, and all the other authors of this book for expanding and enriching the tradition of psychobiography—psychobiography by the way as an instance of personology. So, I wish them all the best with this wonderful volume.

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# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our authors for developing “New Perspectives in Psychobiography” and for publishing them with us. Special thanks to James Anderson and William McKinley Runyan, for their encouragement, ideas, and conversations around the topic of psychobiography. We also would like to thank Robert D. Stolorow, who wrote this book’s foreword and who is the pioneer of modern-day psychobiography along with his longtime fellow and co-author George E. Atwood. We are delighted to have them among the authors of this volume, too. We would also like to thank Elisabeth Vanderheiden for formatting the manuscript for us with lots of enthusiasm, love for detail, and engagement. We further would like to thank our publisher Springer International—and particularly Hendrikje Tuerlings—for the support in publishing the book.

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