



From Siberia to psychology

PROFESSOR Grygier's life has been an amazing journey – a journey that has taken him through Poland, Russia, Iran, England, France, Germany, USA and China, and finally to Canada, where, at the age of 89, he is Emeritus Professor of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa. His main career interest – terror, oppression and their effect on victims – is as relevant now as it has been throughout his life.

Tad, let's start with how you became a psychologist.

I was always interested in it... I devoured German psychiatric books and French analytical novels as a child, but always wanted to find out things by myself. I conducted my first experiment when I was 10. My subject was my favourite hen: some 120 other hens on our farm were the control group, and I tried to get more eggs by hypnosis! At 15, when my parents offered me their support in any discipline provided it was not their own – medicine – I chose criminology because it contains everything.

A good choice?

There wasn't any place to do it, so I read a wide range of disciplines. Then, at 21, I started practising law. I specialised in cases of 'insanity', as a junior partner of some famous criminal lawyers. But I truly appreciated the value of knowledge, especially psychology, when I was deported by the Soviets to Siberia. In the labour camp, squeezed at night between the prisoner above and the prisoner below, I planned my PhD thesis.

How was psychology helpful to you in this horrific situation?

It saved my life. My first reaction was an emotional shock and humiliation. Then, trying to regain sanity, I redefined myself not as a victim of injustice but as a lucky scientist able to observe and analyse the psychological effects of oppression. My thesis on it was published and reprinted five times, and I am listed in *Who's Who* in several fields, including medicine.

ROWAN BAYNE (*University of East London*) *hears of an extraordinary life in psychology.*

Like Victor Frankl, you somehow transcended the horrors of a labour camp. You outwitted your persecutors and seized the opportunity to study them and their victims.

Mainly victims of severe and prolonged oppression. They saw the world in the Thematic Apperception Test cards as hostile and overwhelming, and themselves as innocent, gentle and loving. But, on another projective test, oppressed men emphasised their frustration and ignored the suffering they inflicted on others; they denied any guilt in standard test situations and blamed others instead; and they expected others to solve their problems.

How do you see this relating to terrorism?

Terrorism is the word we apply to our enemies. The Americans never refer to oppression, they practise it. It is a harsh, cruel and intimidating political control. Terrorism is a recurring but sporadic use of force and fear, aimed at enforcing political demands and, ultimately, gaining control. Neither terrorists nor victims are rulers. Terrorists are like rich men without money: they give the impression of wealth to get credit, but have no funds to pay debts; they are rich in ideas of spectacular, cruel

revenge, but poor in having the power to rule. Victims of oppression, my PhD subjects, became strikingly similar to the guards of camps established by the Nazis in Norway and studied by Nils Christie. This created a vicious circle. One avoids this destructive process if one continues to practise one's art or profession. Most women also managed to avoid it.

Most women?

Of course there were exceptions... personally painful but statistically insignificant.

You were also tortured by the Soviet political police.

Only 13 hours, but by the man known as The Terror of Siberia. I had just been appointed to represent Poland in the area known as Gulag Archipelago, and got kidnapped the same day. To him, his method appeared to be successful. It took me a long time to recover from the initial shock, but I spent the last three hours of this deadly game planning a counterattack.

What did you do?

I guessed that the Terror's power was limited; my fate, as the only envoy of the West in Siberia, had to be decided in Moscow. I diagnosed his technique as



Tad Grygier working among his trophies

WEBLINK

Tadeusz Grygier's homepage: tinyurl.com/5ohm4

Pavlov's classical conditioning and defined myself not as a dog (he called me a 'dirty dog' at times, a 'trusted friend' at other times) but as a researcher, and my tormentor as a dog. I kept silent, ignored all insults, threats and sudden promises of friendship until, at dawn local time, and midnight Moscow time, when Stalin and his closest associates were still at their desks, I applied the shock, practised routinely on Stalin's former comrades. I slowly lowered my head but watched his face. Then, stuttering and trembling, I asked: 'How long...are you going...to keep me...here...?' He exclaimed: 'Aha, you have had enough!' I let him savour his triumph for a couple of minutes, then slowly sat up: 'Not at all, but I feel...that keeping me here may be dangerous...for you!' I was looking directly at his face and pointing my finger at it. He rushed out, and soon I heard Morse cable, presumably to Moscow. Then came the Soviet government's offer of diplomatic immunity.

You used psychology to win against massive odds again.

It took me several years to realise that my experiment had an element of threat, typical of oppression. Some well-known experiments have it too, such as those of Asch, Milgram and Zimbardo.

What are your conclusions on oppression?

Oppressors, terrorists, freedom fighters, scientists and victims play different roles, which depend on circumstances. We use different theories and try to apply them in practice. We can, as I tend to do, redefine every misfortune as an opportunity and a challenge. Sir Frederic Bartlett, my PhD supervisor, appreciated this quality and enhanced it. I change my MBTI [Myers-Briggs Type Indicator] personality type when I need to.

That skill suggests excellent type development! What is your main interest in personality?

I left oppression for a while and tried to quantify and verify the psychoanalytic model of personality. I developed a test known as DPI. It was used in research and practice in seven languages and even more countries, but no behavioural criteria corresponded to symbolic, theoretical scales. In fact, item analysis, correlations

and factor analysis contradicted the theoretical model. I turned to other work and only in 2002 omitted the symbolic scales and renamed other scales to represent reality rather than theory. A research manual was published in 2003, and its new version in 2004. It serves the Likes and Interests Test (LIT), for clinical use, counselling and research, and the Be Yourself (BY), for personnel selection, vocational guidance and research.

'squeezed at night between the prisoner above and below, I planned my PhD thesis'

I know you've recently discovered the MBTI and are impressed by it. Do your measures and the MBTI have a shared conception of personality?

I find the MBTI congenial to my approach and my two tests. No other test combines successfully objective, measurable results with clinical insight and common sense. The MBTI starts with Jung's bipolar intro- and extraversion, my tests started with Freud, but their current versions measure many aspects of Jung's dimension. MBTI has recently been used in team building and leadership training, which we planned in 1959 at Vickers Armstrong. But I received from Toronto an offer I couldn't refuse, and moved to Canada instead.

How do you see your tests in practice?

For excluding or redirecting candidates for a large organisation only the BY is suitable. It has also been useful for vocational advice, market research and advertising. Both my tests take 25–30 minutes to give and 10 minutes to score by hand. They are non-threatening, and don't require any choices or other effort, just spontaneous, quick reactions to test items. If participants introspect, which they did as an experiment, there are many blanks, and LIT is less valid. The same may apply to the MBTI, since it also relies on quite spontaneous responses. It is fantastic how penetrating the MBTI is.

Let me ask you finally about your tests and current view of applied personality theory and research.

My tests are theory-free, but item analysis,

factor analysis and intuition directed their development to many aspects of introversion and extraversion, somewhat different from the MBTI types, and very different from what Eysenck described as one dimension. They also measure other traits, almost unrelated to intro- or extraversion. So our tests converge, but don't replace each other. In many cases the LIT could introduce the MBTI and the process of which it is a part. We no longer rely on Freud and Jung, but on measurements, evidence and scientific imagination.

Selected bibliography

- Grygier, T. (1954). *Oppression: A study in social and criminal psychology*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Grygier, T. (1956). *The Dynamic Personality Inventory*. The National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales (NFER).
- Grygier, T. (2002). *Exile: The road to knowledge*. Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute.
- Grygier, T. (2003). *Personality defined: By likes and interests*. Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute.