


9-4-2018

Personality, Psychological Profiling, and Philosophy of Science: The Insider Threat and Betrayers of Trust

IBPP Editor
bloomr@erau.edu

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Recommended Citation

Editor, IBPP (2018) "Personality, Psychological Profiling, and Philosophy of Science: The Insider Threat and Betrayers of Trust," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 18 : Iss. 4 , Article 1.
Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol18/iss4/1>

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Title: Personality, Psychological Profiling, and Philosophy of Science: The Insider Threat and Betrayers of Trust

Author: Editor

Theories of evolutionary psychology presume that differentiating and discriminating within one's experienced world is adaptive. The former activity denotes experiencing not a whole but degrees of parts and a whole. The latter activity denotes ascribing values to the whole and its parts. And as with evolutionary theories, being adaptive denotes that people who engage in such processes are more likely to beget progeny, as are the progeny and *their* progeny through subsequent generations. Another evolutionary presumption is that some differentiations and discriminations are more adaptive than others. One construct presumably arising from differentiation and discrimination and applied by each person to all other people is *personality*.

Personality usually denotes that all people have certain psychological regularities. They are all alike in some ways, like some but not others in other ways, and unique in yet other ways (1). But matters quickly become more complicated in that the regularities for each person vary across levels of analysis—e. g., similar and different aspects of central and autonomic nervous system, endocrine (hormonal secretion), and gut bacteria functioning; mental phenomena such as thoughts, feelings, and motives; behavior performed singly and with others; with all of these occurring within socio-cultural situations that may be momentary or encompassing ever larger temporal scales like epochs and eras. One other *personality* complication is that people differ in how consistent or inconsistent they may be in their regularities, as in the cases of the consistently inconsistent, inconsistently consistent, consistently consistent, and inconsistently inconsistent individuals (2).

Psychological profiling is the use of *personality* to *predict* who's more likely to act in some manner, to *post-dict* who *did* act in this manner, or *peri-dict* who *is* acting in this manner. When it comes to applying *psychological profiling* in the context of people who may be, have been, or are *betraying trust*—viz., the *insider threat* within intelligence, security, and law enforcement organizations—there have been many worthy attempts (3). But there are three huge challenges from the philosophy of science impeding successful application.

First, all the sub-constructs—e.g., suggestibility, narcissism, or psychopathy/sociopathy—encompassed by the *personality* construct are themselves constrained by an *episteme*, some overarching (some say underlying) conceptual and dynamic structure that grounds knowledge and define the conditions of possibility of all knowledge for all people in a specific socio-cultural context. So, as opposed to inevitably coming up with a sub-construct actually linked to the insider threat, we have to go with the possibilities actually or potentially available to us. We may get lucky, we may not. Also *episteme*, construct, sub-constructs and even *insider threat* and *betrayal of trust* are all historically contingent, i.e., they change through time in meanings, what

they may refer, and their use in a socio-cultural context, the latter also varying through time. This state of affairs has been best described by the late French philosopher Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things* (4).

Second, any construct and sub-constructs are enmeshed in what the Canadian philosopher Ian Hacking in *Rewriting the Soul* and related articles has called *looping phenomena* (5). Here's how this works with a sub-construct. Psychological and related experts, as well as their associated professional and social institutions and authorities, create and delineate the meaning of a sub-construct, as well as to what the latter refers and how it's used. The sub-construct—e.g., narcissism—is applied to specific people, viz., betrayers of trust representing the insider threat. Other relevant sub-constructs are as well and together constitute salient features of what it is to be betrayer of trust. The betrayers, in turn, learn the meanings, referents of the sub-constructs and their uses, then they introject, identify with, and emulate them. They become them, even more than they might have been before being so labelled, before being managed and adjudicated through them by the experts, institutions, and authorities. But often enough those who are labelled with the sub-constructs may drift, interpreting meanings, referents, and uses somewhat differently than the experts, institutions, and authorities intended. So they being looking and acting a bit differently. And these differences, in turn, lead the experts, institutions, and authorities to change the sub-constructs' meaning, referents, and uses, maybe even which sub-constructs apply and to whom. And the process repeats. In essence, experts, institutions, authorities, and betrayers are locked in a dance of looping with future steps up for grabs, until the dance ends and betrayers are no longer called betrayers but something else. So much for a progression of scientific knowledge ever closer to the truth.

Third, some constructs and sub-constructs are so precarious as to defy predictive, post-dictive, or pre-dictive linkage with any act. An example, would be the *precariat* described in the eponymous book by the British economist Guy Standing (6). *Precariat*s are, well, precarious. According to Standing, they are people who are unpredictable, without a stable socio-economic status, most significantly, without a sense of stable identity. One reading of Standing is that even *they* may not know what will happen next. We might term them with combinations of consistency and inconsistency or not. But this might be the most cardinal aspect of their *personality*. What to do about the insider threat? Does their precariousness render them at least as difficult to subvert as a presumed difficulty to comply with security regulations?

Personality and *psychological profiling* continue to have success and failures addressing betrayers of trust and the insider threat. But until the above challenges are resolved, scientific discourse may be no more than over whether we have a glass partially empty or full.

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Keywords: Psychology, Evolutionary Psychology, Personality, Psychological Profiling, Construct, Michel Foucault, Ian Hacking, Philosophy, Philosophy of Mind, Guy Standing, Personality

Abstract/Description: This article discusses personality as adaptive psychological construct.

Disciplines: Psychology, Other Psychology, Philosophy, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Science, Personality and Social Contexts

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