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ROMAN TSCHÄPPELER

THE TEST BOOK

64 TOOLS TO LEAD YOU TO SUCCESS

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

Put to the test

WHAT IT'S ABOUT

Never before have humans had to undergo as many tests as today. There's a test before it all starts (a pregnancy test) and one when it's all over (a test to determine the cause of death). And in between? From the cradle to the grave, from head to toe, we're subjected to a barrage of evaluations, standardisations and formulae: prenatal diagnostics, PISA, GCSEs, driving test, army physical, IQ, EQ, fitness test, depression test, dementia test – life is one long test, and we are just the candidates.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS BOOK

We have compiled sixty-four tests – famous and obscure ones, historical and brand-new ones – that interpret your life. You can do some of the tests right away (Am I in the right job? How well do I know my partner? Do I drink too much?). Others give you a taster and tips on what to do if push comes to shove (polygraph, Rorschach test, GMAT). In every case you will find out about the test's origins, how

it is evaluated and what the result reveals about you.

Don't expect any tests that assess machines, products or methods – the tests in this book are to do with you and your life. And don't expect any gossip-magazine horoscopes; the tests are (on the whole) reliable and based on scientific testing methods. What you can look forward to is tests that are fun and quick to do, and that might produce some surprising – or thought-provoking – results.

WHAT IS A TEST

A test is a measurement method. A basic distinction can be made between binary, quantitative and qualitative tests. Binary tests divide results into two categories: positive–negative, right–wrong, pregnant–not pregnant. Quantitative tests locate your result on a scale and compare it to other people's results, for example IQ tests or sport tests. Qualitative tests produce descriptive, typological results, like the MBTI®. But tests are also powerful instruments. They decide who

belongs and who doesn't. They draw the line between normal and crazy, between us and others, between below and above average.

Where do I stand in comparison to others? Only when you know where you stand, can you find out where you want to go.

2 HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

You can open this book at any page and dip in and out as you please. Test yourself, your friends, colleagues or family members. *The Test Book* is written for anyone who is curious. Because tests don't only serve the purpose of compartmentalising, they also provide orientation: Who am I? What can I do?

GETTING STARTED

If you are more practically minded and want to start by evaluating your own life, then go straight to the first test on page 10. Or if you want to first find out about the origins of testing, begin overleaf with the prologue, 'A brief history of the test.'



PROLOGUE

A brief history of the test

3

Tests are as old as humanity, and there are four fundamental questions that we have never stopped asking: 'Are you guilty?', 'Are you able?', 'Who am I?' and 'Am I sick?'

We all know the guilt question from the Bible. In the guise of a wily snake, God tested whether Adam and Eve could resist the temptation of the apple. They couldn't. In the Book of Numbers we find the famous infidelity test: a wife whose husband suspects her of adultery is made to drink a potion of bitter water. Her 'belly swelling and thigh falling' was proof of her guilt. A psychologically convincing lie test can be traced back to early India. The suspected liar is led into a dark tent. Inside there is a donkey, whose tail has been coated in lamp oil. The man is told to pull on the donkey's tail. If he is a liar, the man is told, pulling the donkey's tail will cause it to scream, because it is clairvoyant. The man is left alone with the animal and after a while brought back out of the tent. It doesn't matter if the donkey screamed or not, the evidence is on the man's hands. If they are clean it proves his

guilt as he didn't touch the donkey's tail, and according to the inventors of this test, you can tell a liar by his fear of being found out. Modern lie detector tests are based on the same principle (→ Polygraph Test and Reid® Method, p. 30)

DIVINE JUDGEMENT

The very first documented test in human history also dealt with the question of guilt. Divine judgement was a well-known method for establishing guilt in ancient China, India and Asia Minor. To establish the accused person's guilt, he had to 'go before God'. One of the oldest written records, the Code of Ur-Nammu (2100 BC) describes such divine judgements. For example, in the 'ordeal by water' the accused is thrown into water; if he drowned, he was guilty. This method continued to be used for thousands of years, albeit in many variations. In the witch trials in the Middle Ages in Europe, for example, the 'trial by water' was interpreted the other way round. If the woman didn't drown, she was guilty, if she did drown she was innocent (but unfortunately dead).

INITIATION AND ASSESSMENT

'Are you guilty?' is the first question that tests have dealt with since time immemorial. The second is 'Are you able?' We know from early documentation of initiation rites, trials of courage and inauguration ceremonies that joining a community often involved passing a test. Before being accepted into a group, the aspirant, or novice, first had to prove himself to the community. Little has changed: from religious communities to fraternities, indigenous tribes to street gangs, becoming a member involves passing a test. In the USA, if you want to join one of the powerful frats (fraternities), you have to go through a 'hazing' ritual, the unofficial admission test. In Dartmouth College, for example, candidates have to eat a 'vomelet' (an omelette made of vomit). And those who want to join the white supremacist prison gang the Aryan Brotherhood, have to kill a fellow prison inmate. After being circumcised, Maasai boys have to set up a camp deep in the bush and live there for ten years with other freshly circumcised boys before returning to the community. And those who want a Christian baptism have to first spend a year proving their faith.

The idea of judging humans based on merit rather than heredity originated in China. Around AD 600, the Sui dynasty established the *kēju*, or imperial examinations, for recruiting bureaucrats – a mixture

of army physical, rote learning and little puzzles. For example, in the final exam, candidates had to drink strong liquor and then compose a poem – which isn't hard to imagine as a creative exercise in some modern assessment centres.

THE PSYCHOTECHNICIANS

In the western world, the idea that a young person would choose a career based on a job-oriented test rather than on family tradition or personal inclination, is a relatively new phenomenon. It started at the beginning of the 20th century and was inspired by machine efficiency testing. The American Frederick Winslow Taylor ('Taylorism') searched for the optimal working process that eliminated every imprecision, every inefficiency, every unnecessary motion. Because it worked so well with machines, in the 1920s the 'psychotechnician' asked himself: Why not do the same with humans? It was assumed that particular skills were necessary for particular working processes, but that these could not be learned. Instead, they were ascertained in an aptitude test, the results of which allocated candidates a particular job. The 900-page standard reference work *Handbuch Psychotechnischer Eignungsprüfungen* (*Handbook of Psychotechnical Aptitude Tests*) by Fritz Giese from 1925 reveals the breadth of these kinds of tests. The job aptitudes range from

'female hand coordination skills' to the 'suitcase test', in which you had to pack a case with clothes and 'unwieldy objects'.

In the mid-1950s such aptitude tests were replaced by the kind of testing we are familiar with today. Nowadays, a person is hired not because she can prove that she is able to carry out a particular work process, but because she is the best person for the job.

MODERN ORACLE

The third big test question is 'Who am I?' When you were at your wit's end in Ancient Greece, you would consult an oracle. The most famous and popular oracle was the one in Delphi – despite or because of the fact that instead of giving clear answers, it would recite enigmatic verses that usually only made sense once the future had come to pass. Over the entrance to the temple of Delphi where the oracle lived, there was an inscription: *Gnothi seauthon* ('Know Thyself').

This maxim is important. It is the leitmotif running through all attempts to measure a person's soul, personality and temperament. The entire history of tests can be seen as an attempt to give scientific credence to the ancient oracle.

The first attempt at describing a person based on his personality (and not on his physical features or his heredity), was made in ancient Greece. The result was the four

temperaments: choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic and sanguine (→ Temperament Test, p. 10).

It would be another 2,000 years until the next serious attempt was made to quantify the personality of a human being. The Swiss pastor Johann Caspar Lavater developed an idea already suggested by Aristotle, that it was possible to judge a person's character and intelligence based on hair colour, brain size, bone structure or nose shape. Physiognomy enjoyed its heyday in the 19th and early 20th centuries and served as a basis for eugenics and racist ideology.

These kinds of interpretations were countered by Sigmund Freud's exploration of the psyche. According to his revolutionary theory, our personality is not just innate, but is also shaped by our culture. In 1921, Freud's former pupil Carl Gustav Jung published his work *Psychological Types*, creating a classification system that is still used today. In his book, Jung defined two 'attitudes': extroverted and introverted. People show their true selves in their behaviour towards the outside world: extroverts focus on other people and the outside world, introverts focus inwards on their own thoughts and feelings. Your personality type is determined by the combination of these attitudes with four 'functions' – thinking, feeling, sensing and intuition – which each individual uses with a varying

amount of success and frequency. Jung used historic figures to illustrate his types, so for example, Goethe was 'extrovert and intuitive', somebody 'who always sees new possibilities and who in his eternal striving for change tears down what he has only just built'. However, Jung was aware of the limitations of such sketchy classifications. The true complexity of a person can never be fully described.

WHO AM I? AND HOW GOOD AM I?

Personality classifications were originally conceived as clinical instruments, but by the mid-20th century, human resources had discovered the possibilities of using typologies during the recruitment process. One example of this is the scientifically controversial yet still widely used MBTI® (→ Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, p. 42). This test judges a person in the Jungian tradition according to how he presents himself to the outside world. This involves questions such as: Are you more of a practical or effusive person? Is it more important for you to stick to your principles or to listen to your feelings? It is usually easy to answer spontaneously, but if you take time to think about it, you will usually come to the conclusion that the only real answer is 'It depends'. Because in some situations you might be goal-oriented and pragmatic, in others dreamy

and distracted. Which brings us to one of the most frequent criticisms of such methods: their binary nature. You have to be either introverted or extroverted, thinking or feeling. There are no grey areas and therefore no ambivalence.

And yet it would be a mistake to write off these kinds of tests completely. The business journalist Malcolm Gladwell showed how they are both banal *and* very clever. As a student he developed his own test with a friend, asking the following questions:

1. In a romantic relationship are you more canine or feline? (In other words: are you the pursuer, who runs happily to the door, tail wagging? Or are you the pursued?)
2. Information: Do you need a lot of or specific information? (In other words: Do you want to know everything there is to know about something, or are you satisfied with vague information to stimulate your imagination?)
3. Are you an insider or an outsider? (In other words: Do you have a good relationship with your parents, or do you define yourself outside of the relationship to your parents?)
4. Are you a nibbler or a gobbler? (Do you work steadily, in small increments, or do everything at once, in a big gulp?)

The four questions cover the areas

of relationships, cognition, family and work habits. The test is of course nonsense. Yet you immediately recognise yourself – and others.

In modern psychology, the 'Big Five' model is the standard means of categorising personality types (→ Big Five Test, p. 18). This test is also criticised for asking too little with too many questions. But at least its five personality types are not exclusively binary, but scaled. You are both one thing and another, not one or the other. But progress is being made here, too: The 2.0 version of the Big Five Test is the 'One-Click-Personality', software developed by David Stillwell and Michal Kosinski at Cambridge University, which registers all pages, comments and posts that you 'like' on your Facebook page. Based on this data it produces a Big Five personality profile and compares it with a 'norm group', your Facebook friends. If it's true that our private lives are increasingly taking place online through social media, this kind of typing could supersede traditional psychological questionnaires in terms of accuracy. Websites like youarewhatyoulike.com or labs.five.com already work with this theory.

THE SCREW-UP THAT I AM

Modern personality tests reveal an important shift in testing: aptitude tests or psychological assessments were prescribed by the powers that be, but nowadays we usually carry

out personality and performance tests off our own bat. The willingness with which we evaluate our talent, our work-life balance, our sex life, our spiritual potential or our risk tolerance using tests, questionnaires and checklists on the Internet, in magazines or in books like this one, is not only an expression of the old longing to know oneself. Above all, it points to our deep-rooted insecurity. Could I have done better in life? To take it to the extreme, you could say that the question 'Who am I?' has been replaced with the self-optimising question 'Am I good enough?' We assess ourselves and compare ourselves to others, we conceal our weaknesses and emphasise our strengths. At their core, most tests are about inferring future performance, risks, intentions or possibilities from the past (career, medical history, buying behaviour) and from comparisons with others (norm group, target group, circle of friends). It is this 'prognostic validity', i.e. the promise of an alleged predictability of events, which make tests so attractive.

THE FUTURE OF THE TEST

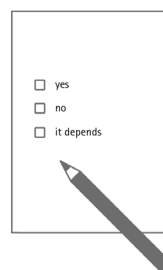
Our obsession with analysing ourselves is not just restricted to our personalities or careers, but is increasingly also extending to our physical performance. Self tracking, i.e. recording every kind of imaginable personal data – from calorie consumption to blood pressure to

the number of steps we take a day – is an indication of how we have come to concentrate obsessively on ourselves. The writer Juli Zeh wrote that biocentric is egocentric.

8 The human is nothing more than a constantly self-evaluating and judging candidate; the norm that we compare ourselves to is our Facebook friends. At the same time, self-tracking apps represent a shift towards the fourth big test question: Am I healthy? The decisive question is no longer 'How good am I?' but 'How am I?' Of course, health has always been an important issue, as we know from the ancient Egyptian 'Smith Papyrus' (approx. 1500 BC), probably the world's first medical text. But historically, knowing if you were healthy or ill was a question that could only be answered by experts. Today, apps facilitate self-diagnosis.

The next generation of self-tracking apps not only collates specific values, but also analyses our

metadata: Where am I, with whom, since when, for how long? Our every movement, what we eat and drink, our feelings and reactions, are measured, compared and evaluated. And one day, apps will also be able to tell us what we have gained – financially, emotionally and in terms of our health – from our contacts, jobs and activities. Some people believe that 'life tracking' is just a step behind gene tracking (→ Gene Test, p. 82). But we don't just test ourselves and our offspring; we are constantly passing judgement on everything and everyone around us: a professor's lecture, the book we bought on Amazon, the service in the hotel, the advice of a financial advisor, the candidates on a talent show, the posts of our friends. And we immediately publish our 'score' in the form of online comments. We live in a data dictatorship, our ideology is measurability. And tests are the oracle of the modern world.



Personality & character



Am I a choleric?

WHAT IT'S ABOUT

When it comes down to it, people care about two things: understanding themselves and being understood by others. We strive for self-awareness and long for people to see us as we really are.

THE TEST

The first person to try and explain 'who we really are' was the philosopher Empedocles (490–430 BC). He compared the temperaments of different people with the characteristics of the four elements – fire, water, earth and air. Some people are hot-headed like fire, others as gentle as water. The four elements also corresponded to particular gods: Earth (Hera) is phlegmatic but constant, water (Persephone) gentle but deep, air (Hermes) exuberant but volatile, and fire (Zeus) determined but choleric. Galen of Pergamon linked this approach to Hippocrates'

humoral pathology and coined the terms choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic and sanguine.

HOW IT'S EVALUATED

The four designations are still in common use today, and although it is hard to pin down their precise meaning, we can usually intuitively find an example of each among our colleagues. The choleric, whose fire flares up and abates without providing warmth; the sanguine one, who is vivacious but jumps erratically from one thing to another; the melancholic, who is a burden to himself; and the phlegmatic, who is a burden to others. Seen in the light of modern psychology, the four temperaments and their hybrid forms have become obsolete. And yet they form the historic foundation for the way in which we define human characteristics, and are deeply rooted in popular culture.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your temperament comes to the fore when you feel like you have been treated unfairly. Your character is revealed in the way you treat people from whom you have nothing to gain.