

Beata Pastwa-Wojciechowska

University of Gdańsk

Professor Gościmierz Geras – Memory and Introduction to Understanding Issues in the Area of Correctional Psychology

*There are diverse human destinies, as diverse is the memory
about people who have passed.*

Józef Tischner

Abstract: The aim of this article is to promote Professor Gościmierz Geras' contribution to scientific research on correctional psychology and his impact on the further development of our general knowledge on human nature. Insights, concepts and theories developed, among others, by the Professor, should continue to be the source of inspiration for studies based on updated knowledge, but also respecting previous contributions. Finding out about man in extreme or unusual circumstances still seems to be a challenge if one does not look at human actions holistically. We perceive prisoners too often from the narrow context of tasks and functions without the broader knowledge of mechanisms which are at the root of their actions. Getting to know what we define as pathological, we also find the path to the healthy norm and even heroism.

Key words: memory, correctional psychology, imprisonment syndrome, temptation, dignity.

Introduction

I would like to dedicate this article to Professor Gościmierz Geras, a man with a great heart, a patriot and scientist. In this unconventional way, I would like

to restore the memory of the Professor in the field of correctional psychology. In writing this text, I realized how much has been accomplished by Polish scientists in Polish social rehabilitation, and their work has been ahead of what appeared after some time in foreign literature, affecting the development of knowledge about humans in extreme situations, including the situation of imprisonment. All the more, the Professor's role in building freedom, also scientific freedom, shows how important this struggle was. His life certainly proved that the ideas of freedom in life and science are not alien to him; he suffered the ultimate sacrifice in the form of loss of freedom and civil rights, but he guarded them firmly. Even in a difficult personal situation, science gave him the power to get through difficult times. It is not easy to write objectively about a person with whom I had the pleasure of working as a student and later a colleague. But I believe this working together, and the fact that I am the first PhD student of the Professor authorizes me to describe his scientific legacy in the field of correctional psychology. My reflections will be based not only on theoretical knowledge and that available in literature on the subject of research reports, but also on my own experience in working with people who violate legal norms. Under the influence of the Professor, I linked my professional life with relations taking place between psychology and law, in particular with the clinical determinants of human behavior.

When writing about Professor Geras, I tried to show the richness of psychological issues which are still current, expanding our knowledge of human nature, not only in terms of the "dark" side. I became well aware of how many discoveries in our field we owe to Polish science, but due to scientific isolation they did not have an opportunity to appear on the international arena. Since the Professor was famous for his unconventional behavior, I decided to commemorate him in an unconventional way.

A biography of Professor Gościmierz Geras

Professor Gościmierz Tadeusz Geras was born on March 15, 1932 in Lublin. His parents were Tadeusz Leonard Geras and Janina nee Ganowicz. His parents and the mood at home had a huge impact on his beliefs, respect and loyalty to the ideals and curiosity of getting to know people. The Professor said little about this period of his life. He recalled Nowy Targ, which he returned to happily in later years. There, he had his friends and places that were associated with the memory of past events. There, as a young man, he also realized the ideas of freedom. From an early age he was involved in political activity, which was associated with the values he took from his family home. Brought up in the spirit of independence, he continued the traditions implanted by his father, who was a member of Active Struggle Association and the Rifle Association, a legionnaire, an activist of the Polish Military Organization, an insurgent in Greater Poland, an officer

of the Infantry of the Polish Army, a decorated captain, among others, with the Order of the Rebirth of Poland V class, the Cross of Independence, the Cross of Valour, the Greater Poland Uprising Cross and the Medal of Grunwald. Romuald Ganowicz, his mother's brother, was a Knight of the War Order of *Virtuti Militari* for the heroic Uhlan charge in the Polish-Soviet War in 1920. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Professor was faithful to elevated values.

Professor Gościmierz Geras was the distributor of the Information Bulletin of the Main Command of the Home Army in Nowy Targ, while in 1948–1949, he was a member of the underground organization of independence. In 1956 he was one of the organizers of the opposition Union of Democratic Youth and was elected to the Board, as a student of psychology. His dynamic, international, scientific career was abruptly interrupted in 1967 by an arrest. By judgment of the Regional Court in Gdańsk, announced on January 20, 1968, he was sentenced to six and a half years of imprisonment and loss of public rights and honorary civil rights for a period of three years for signing the proposal of instituting the Council of Easter Europe Unity in Paris, and for possessing literature of exile (i.a. for the materials about Katyń, Parisian "Culture", Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact). Imprisonment took place in the system of heightened rigor in the prisons in Gdańsk, Sztum, Barczewo and Potulice. It should be noted that the Professor very clearly emphasized that in each prison a few percent of the officers showed a "humane" attitude towards prisoners. He personally emphasized that he experienced such an attitude in Sztum and Potulice (in Sztum they were lieutenant Kaczmarek and lieutenant Dragacz; in Potulice: Marian Stolzman, the warehouse manager, and Płowaś, the manager of the bakery). He was released from prison on February 16, 1970, in connection with the amnesty announced a year earlier, under which his penalty was reduced to 4 years and as a result of the repeal of the Little Penal Code of 1946. However, he continued to be victimized, for instance it was made difficult for him to continue his scientific career (in 1968 he was dismissed on disciplinary grounds from work at WSP (Regional Psychiatric Hospital) in Gdańsk), he was divested of his right to lecture at universities (until autumn 1980, when he was employed at the Pomeranian Medical University in Szczecin, and from 1981 at the University of Gdańsk), until 1980 the Professor was prevented from conducting his doctoral habilitation and prohibited from publishing; furthermore, his activities were constantly kept under surveillance (frequent apprehensions and searches), and in August 1980, he was unlawfully dismissed from work (during his holiday leave) at the Basic Vocational School in Gdańsk. Until 1980, to the creation of "Solidarity", the Science Departments of the Provincial Communist Party Committees prohibited the Professor to work at colleges and universities throughout the country. In 1981, along with lawyers from the University of Gdańsk, the Professor's court papers were analyzed by Lech Kaczyński, who stressed that the sentence the Professor received was the highest in the political affairs of the years 1956–1981. He was acquitted in 1991 by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Poland.

Professor Gościmierz Geras was a trained psychologist and an electrician, but he also studied physics and medicine. This education was reflected in the issues undertaken by him in electrodermal research. These issues interested the Professor since college, and he published his first article dedicated to electrodermal research in 1962. A year later, he defended his doctoral thesis. It should be noted that the Professor was well prepared for academic work, and one of his mentors was Prof. Mieczysław Kreutz, PhD hab., under whose guidance he studied and wrote his master's thesis at the University of Warsaw. Professor Geras' group of Mentors also included Prof. Antoni Kępiński, PhD, who consolidated in him the belief about well-chosen scientific issues. Since his master's thesis, he consequently continued electrodermal research, and like Prof. Kępiński, he decided in the 1960s on a habilitation thesis in the field of electrodermal measurements.

It is worth noting that Professor Geras' scientific research is interdisciplinary, covering the issues of medical psychology, psychopharmacology, and since the 70s also correctional psychology. Professor Geras' stay in prison helped him to undertake *a psychological analysis of the works of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn*. In 1992, together with the author of this text, Professor Geras published an article entitled *Anxiety as a factor determining the nature and degree of participation in prison subculture*, and in 1993 *Psychological Reflections of Solzhenitsyn in The Gulag Archipelago*, in which he subjected psychological observations and thoughts concerned with the analysis of human behavior in the system of Soviet camps and prisons to scientific discussion. Moreover he pointed out that Solzhenitsyn, during his incarceration, used the *method of paradoxical intention*, coming to this conclusion independently of Frankl and Kępiński. I shall describe this topic of the Professor's scientific studies a little later. It is impossible to bypass the fact that this area of scientific inquiry stems largely from the Professor's personal experience.

The Professor did internships, among others, at Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique under Prof. Dr S. Pacaud and Prof. Dr V. Bloch in Paris, in Moscow under Prof. Dr Luria, in Leningrad under Prof. Dr Miasiszczew. He also did internships in Rome, Berlin and Bratislava. In the 1980s, at the invitation of the German side, he twice proclaimed lectures on electrodermal diagnosis for psychologists and doctors at Nervenlinik in Rostock.

Finally, I would like to mention the previously unlisted places of work of Professor Geras. In the years 1959–1968, that is, until conviction, he worked in the Department of Psychology of the Higher Pedagogical School in Gdansk, in the years 1981–1997 at the University of Gdańsk in the Institute of Psychology (in 1990–1997 he served as Head of the Department of Experimental Psychology and Psychophysiology), while he was employed at the Academy of Catholic Theology (ATK) in Warsaw in 1991, where in 1993 he was appointed associate professor. In the years 1993–1998, he was the acting Head of the Department of Forensic and Correctional Psychology, and from 1998 its director. In 1999 ATK transformed into the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University (UKSW), where Professor Geras

worked probably until 2005. As head of this Department, he continued the works started by assistant professor Kazimierz Godorowski, PhD hab. and Krystyna Ostrowska, PhD hab.

On November 11, 2007, on National Independence Day, Polish President Lech Kaczynski, during a ceremony in the Presidential Palace, awarded Professor Geras the Commander's Cross of the Order of the Rebirth of Poland for outstanding contribution to the independence of the Republic of Poland, for activities for democratic transformation, for achievements in professional work and social activities undertaken for the benefit of the country. Through this act, the activities of the Professor taken to build a free and democratic Poland, for which he sacrificed his own freedom, gained official recognition.

The Professor was an honorary member of the Independence Association of Home Army Soldiers, a board member of the Warsaw district of the National Educational Association, a member of the Central Board of the Patronage Penitentiary Association in Warsaw.

Professor Gościmierz Geras died on February 10, 2016 in Gdańsk. He was buried in Srebrzysko cemetery with honorary assistance of Polish Army.

Contribution to correctional psychology

As I have previously indicated, the area of correctional psychology had a special place in the scientific work of the Professor. During his stay in prison, he illegally conducted studies on the perception of the penalty of imprisonment by prisoners, on the defensive reactions of prisoners and on psychotherapy methods of sensory deprivation processes. He detected in prisoners a mental process neglected by psychological-penitentiary literature and called it the process of **mental agglutination of the world of prisoners** (Geras et al. 2001). This concept is defined as a mental narrowing of the world to the world of prisons and the growing process of a kind of unreality of the outside world in long-term prisoners (Geras et al. 2001). To better understand the thinking of the Professor, one must refer to his earlier works referring to the situation of people living in concentration camps or gulags. Surely, such a fundamental work will be the text *Psychological reflections of Solzhenitsyn in The Gulag Archipelago* published in 1993, in which he discussed the psychological observations and reflections related to the analysis of human behavior in the system of Soviet prisons and camps. According to the Professor, the psychological observations and reflections made by Solzhenitsyn in *The Gulag Archipelago* deserved **scientific analysis**, not only because of the depth of reflections and their relevance but also due to the fact that it was made by a person without professional psychological or psychiatric training, attaining some generalizations formulated by such well-known psychiatrists like Victor E. Frankl (prisoner of the concentration camps Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, Dachau, founder

of psychological humanism) and Antoni Kępiński (imprisoned in the concentration camp Miranda de Ebro).

Professor Geras believed that Solzhenitsyn's work is rich in extremely valuable observations and psychological reflections on both the *prisoners* and their *supervisors (guards)*, as well as the entire population of the former USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) under the communist dictatorship. In other words, he not only alluded to the concept of a *totalitarian regime* but also *total institutions*, which include prisons. The term "total institution" was introduced by Erving Goffman in the publication *Asylums* (1962), which he used to analyze the institutions where entire human communities, isolated from normal life activities, are treated in a bureaucratic way. Analyzing the lives of residents and supervisors, Goffman (1962, 2006, 2011) stresses that we always encounter bureaucratic discipline and manipulation of people staying in them, in accordance with the interests of the personnel. By some simplification, we can say that Philip Zimbardo's *Stanford Prison Experiment* (SPE) conducted in 1971 refers precisely to the above-mentioned concept. Since the reference to the results of the Stanford experiment will be important for further considerations, I will refer to the description of supervisors (guards) and residents, i.e. prisoners. So, among the guards we could observe three basic types of behavior. The first group was stern, but fair, the second tried not to harm the prisoners and give them "small favors", while the remainder found satisfaction in abusing prisoners even though no personality test showed such tendencies in them. All the guards had one thing in common: they did not refuse to carry out any order. In contrast, the prisoners coped in different ways with the atmosphere of subordination and humiliation. Initially, for example, some of them resisted and fought with the guards. Four prisoners reacted by emotional breakdown, in one stress caused a psychosomatic rash. Some became "good prisoners" who executed all orders. The prisoners as a group were completely dispersed and dominated by the guards (Zimbardo 2008). I cited the Zimbardo experiment because I want to show, and perhaps prove that the earlier works and achievements of various researchers (Frankl, Kępiński, Geras) described the same observations made in *natural conditions*, not *experimental*. As aptly noted by Marek Kosewski (1985), it happens that when we subject the pathology of human activity to detailed analysis, we find the way to understanding what is commonly considered healthy and normal. Sometimes it allows to more accurately define the boundaries between pathology and norm, other times it shows how to prevent the emergence of pathological and undesired actions.

Professor Geras stressed that Solzhenitsyn gave many examples of individual human activities, unusual for the whole of behavior in extreme situations, while this uniqueness and rarity was particularly interesting for him from a psychological point of view. In *Psychological reflections...* he referred also to the views of Frankl, who "based on his experiences gained in the German camps, developed a psychotherapy method, which he called *the method of paradoxical intention*.

The essence of this method is find our way, through imagination, to the destination point which causes fear and aversion; to imagine that what we fear has already happened. Of course, in the conditions of concentration camps, such real, material pursuit would be tantamount to physical destruction, so we are dealing here with the double ‘accounting’, seen in schizophrenia, pursuit of the aversive end and imagining that what we are afraid of has occurred, must remain only in the realm of the imagination, without substantive action” (Geras 1993, p. 40). He stressed that he had made similar reflections as Frankl or Solzhenitsyn, because in the 1960s he was also a political prisoner. During the many months of investigation and stay in prisons, he came to the attitude that contributed to the fact that he stopped being afraid of real threats, which he was not spared. He realized that if he wants to survive, recognizing over all the primacy of the ideology in which he was raised, he must come to terms with the fact that the threats of his persecutors will be realized, but consistence with ideology and one’s own conscience is above this. The situation of imprisonment was analyzed in a similar way by Antoni Kępiński, who was engaged in studies of former prisoners of concentration camps. Based on the research, he described the so-called **KZ-syndrome** (concentration camp syndrome or survivor syndrome), which consists of mental disorders, the occurrence of somatic diseases, as well as profound changes in the personality structure (Kępiński 1972). One should also note the concept of **defensive autism** (lat. *autismus defensorius*), which Marek Jarosz introduced and explained its distinction (1982). It is a form of autism, which protects the body against the elements burdening the nervous system. In other words, he considers defensive autism against **psychological resistance**, so these terms it should be construed as defense mechanism of personality that facilitates the body to function in difficult conditions. Also Professor Kępiński, in relation to the situation of concentration camps, uses the term **camp autism**, understanding by this meaning, like Jarosz, an adaptive mechanism that protects a person from breakdown (2014). Kępiński (2014) defines camp autism as “defensive indifference”. In a paper published together with Maria Orwid (1962), based on a study of diaries written in prison by the commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Hoess, we find a reference to the classical idea in psychoanalysis of the formative period of early development. However, Kępiński emphasizes not concepts of early childhood trauma or the dissolution of a family affair but the ways of upbringing and the values passed on from the parent to the child. Yet he does not see this, as the closure of perspectives of individual development. In the same text we find the concept of the origin of mental breakdown in failures and a specific change in lifestyle under certain conditions. This is not it. Kępiński treats mental breakdown as a sign of the need to make such a change (Bomba 2012). I would like to draw attention to another issue, namely the postulate of Professor Kępiński to accept KZ-syndrome (1972) as a separate diagnostic category, with which he preceded by several decades the recognition of distinct *posttraumatic stress disorder* – PTSD.

An interesting problem is the mechanism of defensive autism occurring in prison-camp conditions, namely the extent to which its formation is an unconscious process and to what extent it is conscious. Probably, as indicated by Kępiński's considerations and Professor Geras' own observations in prison (1993), a certain degree depends on education.

Professor Geras also emphasized that functioning in dignity in such extreme burdens of the body, which prisoners of Soviet camps experienced, require a certain **mental toughness**, while it would be unreliable here to use the results of psychological tests carried out in laboratory or natural simulated conditions. It turns out that not everyone in these inhuman conditions are subject to moral collapse. Solzhenitsyn, reflecting on this problem, proposes a thesis which, according to the Professor, has important points of similarity with the concept of the so-called **trigger theory** in the etiology of mental illness. In the trigger theory, trauma is a trigger of pathological structure already inherent in the body. Similarly, extreme prison or camp conditions trigger a beast, which is dormant in humans under normal conditions. Another reason would be the lack of previous moral principles. Interesting views in this regard are expressed by Kosewski in the book *Ludzie w sytuacjach pokusy i upokorzenia* (*People in situations of temptation and humiliation*) (1985), in which he answers, among others, the question of how **appreciated value** is realized. And so, in his opinion, it takes place through activities that are consistent with it, because standards of values are used to assess own actions of the subject. In other words, the values lie neither in the object nor the subject, but in the action, which may be considered valuable. Kosewski stresses that the **moral value** of a human is the skill for valuable actions. During contact with others, a person learns how to meet his organic needs, i.e. achieve benefits and avoid losses. Ordered knowledge on the subject, according to Kosewski (1985), creates **standards of benefits** with which human actions are compared. This knowledge structured in a rational way allows to carry out the correct balance of benefits and losses when planning actions. In the case of the benefits standard, it is difficult to talk about the positive divergence of activity from the standard – one can therefore believe that in this respect the principle of suppressing diversity is valid. The subject strives to maintain compliance of behavior with what has brought the most favorable results for him. Therefore, Kosewski (1985) assumes that the regulatory ability of standards of values and benefits has its source in two different types of rewards with which they are associated, i.e. **“I” emotions** and **experiences**.

Professor Geras (1993) also drew attention to the two selected psychological processes occurring in prisoners who in his opinion had not been noticed in literature, or rarely reported. One of them is merely mentioned by Solzhenitsyn; moreover, in an intermediate form, and the other is rarely analyzed in literature, but also described in an intermediate form in *The Gulag Archipelago*. As he pointed out, he used the term “intermediate form” because Solzhenitsyn does

not name these processes, and only gave some of their features. “It is impossible when dealing with processes, which will be mentioned, not to refer to own prison experiences, because I found their occurrence both in myself and in other prisoners, and perhaps this is why I could see them in *The Gulag Archipelago*. I mean processes like: a) ***progressive process of unreality of going free*** b) ***narrowing of the world to the world of prisons or camps***. Both processes are closely linked, the latter partly due to the first, namely, in the situation of the free world being “pushed away”, the world of prisons or camps becomes closer and more realistic.” He pointed to the fact that the process of a sense of unreality of going free has a certain dynamics, it does not appear quickly, which is the opposite of the first period of imprisonment in which a person still “has one foot” on the outside. With the passage of time, generally no earlier than the third year in isolation, in prisoners with long sentences, thoughts of going free become unreal, vague, as if uncertain. Solzhenitsyn mentions the process briefly, limiting it to two sentences: “Starting from a certain moment, one begins to think about freedom as if out of obligation. This thought becomes artificial, alien” (*The Gulag Archipelago*). This process is undoubtedly connected with the phenomenon of derealization of the outside world, the world of freedom, so well described by Kępiński: “In this *anus mundi*, which the camp was, the former world with its values, ideologies, important and trivial matters fell apart to rubble. It became unrealistic, it returned in dreams, it seemed that this world can only exist on another planet” (Kępiński 2014).

The second process – narrowing down the whole world to prisons or concentration camps – is closely associated with the first, because it is as if both processes interpenetrate one another. It occurs in parallel with the first and is formed also through other factors, which include the lack of or serious restriction of the inflow of information from the outside world, which has furthermore started to become unreal, removed somewhere very far away. A “liberating” factor, giving rise to another process is information coming into the prison-camp world from the prison world in the form of more or less repeated meetings with people transferred from other facilities. The supply of this information, derived exclusively from the same world in which the prisoner remains a long time, begins to “strengthen” the sense of the narrowing world to the realities of prison. As Professor Geras claimed, based on his own prison experience and on the basis of analyses of the statements of other inmates, both the described processes fulfill an adaptive role, protection against trauma effects of long-term imprisonment.

One should know that the period of ***staying in the conditions of prison isolation is not uniform in terms of the problems and tasks that the prisoner must face***. At the time of arrest, strong mental tension appears in him, apprehension and fear, despair, restlessness, dementia, depression and indifference to the events taking place. They may not be aware of the changes taking place in their social situation and think in terms that are typical for a person not devoid

of freedom. Such a person is accompanied by thoughts of the past, not the un-specific and vague present and future. These changes, from the first days of isolation of the arrested person, depend on many circumstances, for instance, the understanding of the sense and necessity of imposed restrictions and the situation affecting the life and plans, searching for ways to alleviate the situation and the disclosure of circumstances mitigating guilt, as well as submission to the tactics of denial and rejection of one's own guilt inspired by other suspects, etc. Once all the possibilities to improve the situation are exhausted and imprisonment is real, the reaction changes. In the psyche of the convict the following come to the fore: psychodestructive impact of imprisonment, permanently analyzing the experience accompanying conviction, getting used to the fact of imprisonment and the new social status (Pastwa-Wojciechowska 1994; Ciosek, Pastwa-Wojciechowska 2016). It should be emphasized that imprisonment can cause the **disturbance of mental function** and **behavior disorders** in the form of: 1) **typical defensive behavior**, which eliminate unpleasant tension and allow short-term adaptation to a difficult situation, 2) **restitutionary behavior and rowdiness** most common in the form of requests, grievances, complaints and petitions addressed to various institutions and individuals, 3) **instrumental-enforcement behavior** (hunger strikes, self-harm, simulations, aggravation), 4) **breakdown behavior** (attempted suicide, depressive psychosis), 5) **apparent adaptation**, the aim of which is to acquire certain personal benefits. In other words, the reactions of people staying in prison isolation can be divided into: **adequate** and **inadequate with elements of pathology**. Adequate reactions include:

- 1) **Increased reactions**, under which attention is focused on the very fact of isolation, a realistic assessment of life prospects, attempting to find legal ways to improve one's situation.
- 2) **Reactions of a medium level** of adequacy manifested in a rational approach to the situation of isolation and the prospects of the emerging situation.
- 3) **Reduced reactions** characterizing convicts who give the impression of people referring to their situation rather not critically. Externally the present bravado, an arrogant approach to others, a poor understanding of the consequences of imprisonment. They live primarily in the present, they reject gloomy thoughts.
- 4) **Typical reactions** – isolation does not have a destructive character to the convict. They treat the prison like a home, rigors are not new to them, and they take on a conformist attitude towards educators.

In contrast, **inadequate reactions with elements of pathology** include claustrophobia, anxiety, depression, negative-hysterical attitudes (demonstrative drawing attention to oneself and regarding oneself to be a victim of the law) and a positive-hysterical attitude (bragging about the crime, treating it as a kind of boasting). **Behavioral disorders** of prisoners are divided into harmful **for the individual and for other inmates**. Behavioral disorders that are harmful to the individual include suicide, self-harm and starvation which are reactively and emo-

tionally motivated. Self-harm in prisoners is frequently combined with the following aspects: *ritual* (a sign of belonging to a criminal subculture), *purposefulness* (desire to achieve expediency, e.g. transfer to the prison hospital, to another cell), and demonstrativeness. In contrast, the factors that contribute to suicide include: 1) people with traditionally the highest risk of suicide staying in detention centers and prisons, e.g. young men, people with mental disorders, marginalized people, socially isolated, alcoholics and drug addicts, or also people with previous suicide attempts, 2) the psychological impact of arrest and imprisonment or the daily stress of prison life may exceed the ability to cope with stress in the case of vulnerable persons, or 3) no formal policies and procedures to identify suicidal inmates and proceedings in such cases. Abnormal behavior harmful to others are manifested in the form of aggressive behavior and rape against other prisoners. Destructive behavior of inmates is a kind of a reaction to a number of limitations and frustrations; they have their source in the standards of the “second life” (prison life) and are conditioned by disorders or mental illnesses (Pirożkow 1987; Ciosek 1993, 2001; Poklek 2010; Ciosek, Pastwa-Wojciechowska 2016).

Professor Geras also pointed to the fact that Solzhenitsyn attached great importance to the disappearance of the feeling of gratitude as a symptom of the degeneration of social life. It is worth noting that gratitude appearing towards a particular person is called personal gratitude, and towards non-personal factors – like God or fate – as transpersonal gratitude (Trzebińska 2008). I think that a good final addition to this thread of Solzhenitsyn and Geras’ considerations would be the concept of gratitude included in the Peterson and Seligman’s classification of virtues (source: Peterson, Park, 2007, p. 271), whose intention was to create a directory of mental health as a counterweight to the classification of mental disorders occurring in different editions of the DSM (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*). It should be noted that the classification was based on 6 universal virtues and 24 strengths of character. The strengths of character are distinguished ways of showing virtues, understood as being subject to gradation characteristics that describe individual differences (Peterson Park, 2007). Gratitude here belongs to the virtue of transcendence, alongside such strengths of character as the appreciation of beauty and excellence, humor, religiosity and hope (Peterson, Seligman 2004 source: Peterson, Park 2007, p. 271). In contrast, the strengths of character are described as ubiquitously recognized and appreciated, although the manifestation of them all by a given individual is unlikely, if at all possible (Peterson, Park 2007). This classification of virtues derives from the trend of positive psychology, which focuses on knowledge about happiness, joy of life and the strengths of the individual (Czapiński 2004; Seligman 2005; Gulla, Tucholska 2007; Trzebińska 2008). Responding with the emotion of gratitude for received goodness may increase the repertoire of behaviors that are conducive to achieving greater well-being. Gratitude as a positive emotion of moral character could, by increasing the repertoire of prosocial behavior, help foster social resource-

es, such as facilitating the use of social support. Positive emotions and the mental resources built through them can also mitigate the effects of negative emotions (Fredrickson 1998). It seems, therefore, that these concepts can significantly bring us closer to understanding the mechanisms underlying the behavior of people in extreme situations, which undoubtedly includes imprisonment.

I remember how I had discussions with the Professor on thoughts about Solzhenitsyn's works and its importance for correctional psychology. He told me to read three volumes of this bloated work, asking to note down my own thoughts, and to relate them to specific issues and psychological theories. I think to some degree I was able to present the abundance of issues which I came to face. Now, with hindsight, I can see just how valuable it was to learn and how it influenced my academic development and respect and humility towards own experience in working with people who violate legal norms.

The Professor towards students and colleagues

Professor Geras was famous for his unconventional teaching methods and how he carried out scientific research, which inscribed in the memory of everyone who had the pleasure to be his student or colleague. He surprised people with his ideas, erudition but also a broader wisdom of life. He could give attention to anyone, regardless of their social status or education, in an effort to help and give a sense of value. He loved to work at night but also to meet with friends at night. He usually visited us at 10 PM and we had long, interesting conversations. Of course, this was not always met with delight on our part, as the Professor slept longer (he claimed that he got up at about 1 PM) and we had to get up in the morning. However, we knew his habits, tolerated them and drew invaluable benefits from them, often realizing this fact as the years passed. The Professor treasured above all meeting in a small, intimate circle, because he claimed he did not like large gatherings since "the times of the SB" [SB – Służba Bezpieczeństwa was a Security Service during the Communist times in Poland]. Then he felt calm and safe, providing his interlocutor his vast knowledge, and the interlocutor knew that he was associating with an extraordinary person. There are so many stories circulating among us to this day. As a supervisor, he taught us the standards and respect for our tasks. Above all, mutual respect and sincerity in communicating mutual expectations. Professor Geras was regarded by many students as a unique specialist, and he was understanding and helpful. Students knew that they were listening to a former political prisoner, which meant that the words he spoke concerning the psychological aspects of prison isolation were received as a "living" and authentic. Invariably, at the University of Gdańsk and the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Professor Geras remains in living memory as a just and unconventional person.

Instead of a conclusion – what will we remember, what will we strive for?

To conclude, let me quote the words of Józef Tischner, an admirer and expert on the Polish Tatra mountains and Podhale, also beloved by Professor Geras. In my opinion they are a good punch line of my story about this extraordinary man. Professor Father Józef Tischner said that there are diverse human destinies, as diverse is the memory of those who have passed. He stressed that they are subject to two extremes – forgetting or premature sanctification. Often, those who pass are primarily remembered as noble people, great, saintly. It is a beautiful memory, but it too must be put to the test of time. The memory that will remain of us definitely depends on us, but also on those who are around us. It is difficult to predict the fate of the memory of the Professor, nevertheless I think that showing his contribution to the understanding of the mechanisms underlying the behavior of persons in prison isolation is important at least for two reasons. First, as a reminder of what he achieved, and second associated with showing all of us how much we still have to do.

The Professor's life was marked by difficulties. He lived in difficult times, but he steadfastly fought for the good of the country and science regardless of the circumstances. We are left to continue to develop these inspirations, sometimes passed on through ad hoc conversations, or works that remain, and look for this scientific truth thus preserving the memory of him.

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