

Psychological Type and Individuation

Our main task is to give birth to ourselves, to become what we potentially are. The most important product of our effort is our own personality.

-- Erich Fromm

I like this quote for a reason, and it is not because it carries the common implication “be all that you can be.” I like it because it says that personal work yields results that are not to be measured merely in ostensible terms. I work on myself to understand people. I work on myself to become more conscious of myself and my orientation to the world. C.G. Jung says much the same thing when he refers to the “opus” or, as the Greeks call it the “ergon,” as the goal of a lifetime. One’s life can be seen as a project to develop greater consciousness.

Even though Jung spent a large part of his life plumbing the depths of mankind’s unconscious, it was not because he was more committed to the undercarriage of psychic life. He knew that the strange thing about consciousness is that it is not created out of thin air, as many seem to think; it wells up from unknown depths. After his break from Freud, he had an extended opportunity to examine this question because he knew from his own experience how easy it is to lose one’s grip. He said that for a while he thought he knew nothing, and he feared that the force of the unconscious would overwhelm him to the point of making him impotent as an original thinker.

Jung maintained his courage during this difficult period of introspection, and he gathered about him people who helped him build a new theory of consciousness. He realized that the aim of human existence is to be conscious and that the unconscious is the seedbed for a rich mental life, full of individual freedom and choice. Jung emerged from this struggle in the dark with the publication of a major work, called Psychological Types in 1921. H.G. Baynes, who added the subtitle, *The Psychology of Individuation*, translated it into English. Individuation is a term referring to a process of differentiation that is central to Jungian thought, having for its goal the development of one’s personality.

Psychological type is a theory that explains some of the seemingly random differences in people’s orientation to the world. What was important to Jung was to perceive the elementary determinants of consciousness, and he arrived at his conclusions based on his work with the Association Experiment, his private consultations, and his extensive knowledge of classical and medieval philosophy. His theory provides a common language and a clear conceptual framework for working with differing patterns of psychic activity.

The theory’s usefulness was greatly expanded by the dedicated work of Katherine Briggs and Isabel Myers who designed a self-report questionnaire, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®. After more than fifty years of research and development, the MBTI® is the most widely used instrument in the world for measuring natural preferences and for understanding normal personality differences. It is a tool commonly used in business, industry and education to improve organizational performance. More than three million Indicators are administered annually in the U.S.

Who is Isabel Briggs Myers?

Isabel Briggs Myers was a woman with a first class mind who devoted the second half of her life to interpreting and adapting Jung’s theory of personality type. She with help from her mother, Katherine Briggs developed the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®) to help people understand themselves better and to achieve personal growth. Personal growth is lighter way of referring to the individuation process. Although she was neither a trained psychologist nor an academic, she apprenticed with an expert to learn about test construction, question design, scoring, validation and statistics. As a result of her dedication to her work, the MBTI® now stands as a recognized and reliable way of measuring natural personality preferences.

What Does the Myers Briggs Type Indicator® Measure?

The MBTI® measures the way we prefer to use our minds in two basic mental respects: taking in or becoming aware of new information (perception); and deciding or coming to a conclusion about that information (judgment). The instrument reflects Jung's observation from his clinical work that while everyone has the same mental processes available to them, there is a noticeable difference in how individuals display their preferred tendencies. How we direct our psychic energy is a matter of natural inclination that may be observable to the trained eye. However, the MBTI report eliminates a lot of the guesswork by giving us more specific evidence. Isabel Briggs Myers viewed her instrument as a way to identify preferences as if they were "straws in the wind, enabling a keen observer to make sound inferences about "the force and direction of the wind."

Consciousness:

At the surface of the psyche, there is the conscious level, which is, Jung says, the thinnest and the most friable layer of topsoil. It contains the "Attitude" (introvert/extrovert) referring to the direction of the flow of psychic energy. There are two directions: moving inward, into the person's inner-world of ideas and impressions, and moving outward to focus on the external world of people and things. Attitude contains the basic orientation of the individual, and it gives him/her a starting point for rational and logical analysis.

Introverted Attitude:

Introverted attitude means an inward turning of psychic energy away from the object into the subject. An introverted person relates to objects in the world by creating an inner reality that captures psychic energy and conserves it for his/her own position. This approach leads to holding on to ideas and thinking them through. Introverts get their stimulation from the interior or subjective world. Theoretically, introverts may seem lost in thought, reserved and somewhat inaccessible. The introvert may feel pushed by the world and resists it by valuing quiet, privacy and solitude.

Extraverted Attitude:

Extraverted attitude means more of an outgoing approach to the outside world. To an extravert, the object is fascinating and valuable, making the relationship to the world open, sociable, and active. Extraverts gain psychic energy from the connection they make with others. They do not hesitate to "think out loud," and they are not so sensitive to noise and interruption. They are open to influence from others, and they also expect to be influential. They feel naturally pulled into the world where they are at home, and they stomp around in it so as to be noticed.

The Four Functions

An active mind is involved in one of two activities:

- Taking in information, Perceiving; or
- Organizing information and coming to conclusions, Judging

Jung said there are four mental faculties that are essential to fully apprehend a phenomenon. Every individual develops a style of consciousness and an orientation to inner and outer worlds. A person will first develop a dominant mode of functioning to establish an advantage in the world, and the other three functions will be arranged in a hierarchy from strongest to weakest in terms of their relation to the ego, the subject of consciousness. The functions also represent bearings, points on a compass, directing one along an often-unmarked path toward greater self-awareness.

As the person matures and gains more access to his/her less differentiated functions, awareness of everything in the world increases and more balance in lifestyle is achievable. In fact, individuation is defined by some Jungians, such as C.A. Meier, as a mature mental state in which the four functions are brought into harmonious balance. It is, however, not an easy task to integrate all of the functions, and its not at all unusual for crises to occur in the process.

Jung developed sophisticated definitions of the components of consciousness in *Psychological Types*, but I am using abbreviated sketches to introduce the distinguishing features of these basic functions.

- **Sensing** (S) tells us something exists, what it looks like, how it is made.
- **Intuition** (N) tells about possibilities, unseen connections, and unfolding patterns.
- **Thinking** (T) tells us what to call something and what it means.
- **Feeling** (F) tells us what its value is to me.

This is how Isabel Briggs Myers refers to the distinct tasks of the four functions:

- **Sensing:** To face the facts, to be realistic, to find out exactly what the situation is and what is being done about it. Sensing helps you avoid wishful thinking or sentiment that may obscure the realities. To activate your sensing process, consider how the situation would appear to a wise, impartial bystander. The “here and now” is the spatial and temporal aspect of the sensing function.
- **Intuition:** To discover all the possibilities or all the ways in which you might change the situation, your approach or other people’s attitudes. Try to put aside your natural assumption that you have been doing the right thing, obviously all along. The temporal aspect of the intuiting function is the future.
- **Thinking:** To impersonally analyze cause and effect, including all the consequences of the alternative solutions, pleasant and unpleasant, those that weigh for and those that weigh against your preferred solution. Consider the full costs involved and examine misgivings you may have suppressed because of your loyalty to someone, liking for something, or reluctance to change your stand. The thinking function considers the past, present and the future in temporal sequence.
- **Feeling:** To weigh how deeply you care about the things that will be gained or lost by each of the alternatives. In making a fresh appraisal, try not to let the temporary outweigh the permanent, however agreeable or disagreeable the immediate prospect might be. Consider as well other people’s feelings, reasonable and unreasonable, about the various outcomes, and include your feelings and theirs among the facts to be considering in deciding which solution will work best. The primary temporal aspect of the feeling function is the past.

Attitude and Function Combined: When attitude and function are combined, an interaction is created that yields a definite character to the mental process that is most differentiated, the dominant function.

Extraverted Sensing: Perceiving sensory data from the environment, “the outer world”, purely and directly and suppressing the subjective element as far as possible. Seeing things photographically and registering an accurate impression of the way details appear in the here and now. Observant at the expense of imagination, the sensing function is seeking “true” knowledge which is always concrete and usually a product of first hand experience. Individuals with this preference are intensely aware of the external environment, and they exhibit a sense of confidence in being able to find a way to solve a problem. Good natured, but sensitive; revel in pleasure. Ex. George W. Bush, Michael Cain in the movie *Alfie* and Oscar Schindler of Spielberg’s *Schindler List*.

Introverted Sensing: Perceiving concrete and specific details, colored by the subjective factor so that outer world of detail matches an internal order, organized around carefully accumulated evidence and time tested, personal experience. Attention to be guided by inner interests, the subjective impression and oriented instinctively to the physical world. Careful, calm, steady and believe in an economy of effort. George Washington, Katherine Hepburn, Artemis, the twin sister of Apollo, goddess associated with wildlife.

Extraverted Intuition: Using an inner understanding to interpret ideas and experiences within a context. Intuition draws our attention to the whole, not specifically to the object itself, so that we are able to see new relationships and to recognize not so obvious patterns in the arrangement of sensory data. Once the pattern is seized, intuition helps to create a more complete idea of the “big picture” and what it’s future possibilities might be. People of this type possess imagination and an ability to stimulate others, but they often ignore structural considerations and drop out factual details. Bill Clinton.

Introverted Intuition: Focusing an inner eye on the center of an issue and stimulating the flow of psychic energy inward to establish a connecting link with an archetypal theme; finding a story, a myth, an image that best matches the essential experience of the person and serves to deepen inner understanding. Introverted intuitives change the world by changing their minds as their intelligence is fed indirectly from an unconscious source.

Many seers, prophets, poets, artists, and computer wizards are tuned in on this wavelength. They are inspired by problems no one else wants to tackle, and they are not deterred by counterforces standing in their way. Ex. Lawrence of Arabia, Richard Nixon, C.G. Jung, or William S. Cohen, former U.S. Senator from Maine.

Extraverted Thinking: Naming and organizing information, consistent with classification standards set by the outer world. Performing critical analysis fed by objective data and shaped by rigorous external standards which bear greater weight in terms of soundness and value than the thinking process itself. Consider the Constitution of the United States, Webster’s Dictionary, Thomas Jefferson, or Hillary Clinton.

Introverted Thinking: Naming and organizing information in relation to archetypal images -- an inner thought process which is tied to subjective and unconscious roots. Often relies on the thinker’s powers of observation and appreciation of an inner wealth of experience to identify core principles. The more complex the problem, the more curious and detached they become in their search for an original answer. Ex. former Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate, George Mitchell, Ben Kingsley’s characterization of Oscar Schindler’s business manager in the tin factory, *Schindler’s List*.

Extraverted Feeling: Valuation, the placing of value on something by reference to collective values, not individual values, and the flow of feeling energy outward to evaluate others, to interact and draw them out, and to motivate. Extraverted feeling types contribute to civilized social life by their adjustment to objective criteria of what is considered to be “right”, “beautiful” and “good.” Ex. Ronald Reagan, Winston Churchill, Toni Morrison, or Henry V.

Introverted Feeling: Valuation determined by the subjective factor -- serving as a guide to the emotional acceptance or rejection of aspects of life. I like this, I don’t like that, this experience is worth the trouble, this isn’t. Has as its goal the outer fulfillment and realization of an inner ideal or an archetypal norm, such as harmony, justice and inner peace. Introverted feeling types exhibit an enigmatic air of self-containment as they scan the outside world for a meaningful image which has no existence in reality. “Still waters run deep.” Ex. Joan of Arc, Dr. Zhivago, Sigmund Freud, or the Greek poet George Seferis.

More about the Theoretical Underpinnings of Jung's Theory

There is no consciousness without discrimination of opposites.

-- C.G. Jung, CW 9i, par. 178

A fundamental law in Jung's theory states that the functions stand in opposition to each other and obey the principle of exclusion.

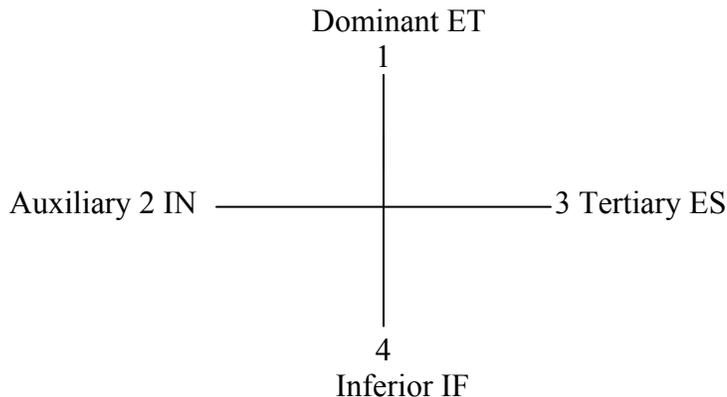
Two irrational functions: {Sensing/Intuition} Perceiving

Two rational functions: {Thinking/Feeling} Judging

The dominant function, which is the most differentiated, always begets its opposite, the inferior function. For a function to be differentiated means that it is available and subject to conscious control, more or less. The inferior function, on the other hand, operates quite autonomously, that is to say, unconsciously and arbitrarily, and is often viewed by the bearer as a disturbance in the flow of psychic energy.

The inferior function is the least differentiated function in the personality. It is the last function to develop, and it is the function that is least subject to conscious control. The direction of the flow of one's psychic energy is opposite to the dominant attitude. Energy will be introverted if the person's dominant function is extraverted, and energy will be extraverted if the person's dominant function is introverted.

Here is an illustration of the personality configuration of an ENTJ. Extraverted Thinking (ET) is the dominant mode; Introverted Feeling (IF) is in the inferior position. At the end of the arms of this cross are the auxiliary function, Introverted Intuition (IN) and in the third spot is Extraverted Sensing (ES). The auxiliary function and tertiary functions are seen as complementary agents, helping to shape consciousness.



The inferior function appears in a similar guise resembling the qualities that would describe a person who has the dominant function, but compared to the dominant form of the function, the inferior expression will be:

- Exaggerated or extreme: it will have too much undifferentiated psychic energy attached to it, making it appear more forceful than necessary, perhaps. If it is noticeably expressed, it will appear as caricature of the dominant mode.
- Inexperienced or immature: the person will come across as childish, touchy, easily angered; and
- Undifferentiated or categorical: perceptions and judgments will be black and white, all or none, my way or the highway.

The following table shows the pattern of type development for the four functions of each type and the preferred direction (introverted or extraverted) for each of the 16 Personality Types identified by Isabel Briggs Myers.

Type Development Sequence Table

I S T J	I S F J	I N F J	I N T J
S _i T _e F _i N _e	S _i F _e T _i N _e	N _i F _e T _i S _e	N _i T _e F _i S _e
I S T P	I S F P	I N F P	I N T P
T _i S _e N _i F _e	F _i S _e N _i T _e	F _i N _e S _i T _e	T _i N _e S _i F _e
E S T P	E S F P	E N F P	E N T P
S _e T _i F _e N _i	S _e F _i T _e N _i	N _e F _i T _e S _i	N _e T _i F _e S _i
E S T J	E S F J	E N F J	E N T J
T _e S _i N _e F _i	F _e S _i N _e T _i	F _e N _i S _e T _i	T _e N _i S _e F _i

Instead of being at the mercy of wild beasts, earthquakes, landslides, and inundations, modern man is battered by the elemental forces of his own psyche. This is the World Power that vastly exceeds all other powers on earth. The Age of Enlightenment, which stripped nature and human institutions of gods, overlooked the God of Terror who dwells in the human soul.

-- Carl Jung- The Development of Personality -Collected Works, vol. 17, para.302.

I have addressed most of the underpinnings of Jung's theory in relation to Psychological Type. There is one more important very important thought to communicate, and it is contained in his seventh fundamental law. He says that in the course of life there is a usually a shift of emphasis among the functions, which can produce a total reconfiguration of one's typological perspective. Jung adapted Heraclitus' view of the play of opposites to identify the process by which everything turns into its opposite. The Greek term "enantiodromia", which means runs counter to, refers to the emergence of the unconscious opposite. It is at midlife that the prevailing pattern of psychic energy begins to shift within the individual.

This remarkable psychic change is one that usually occurs after the midpoint of life has been crossed, and it might be described as a reversal of psychic current. Only rarely does this subtle change of direction appear clearly on the surface; in most people it takes place, like all important things in life, beneath the threshold of consciousness.

-- C.G. Jung: CW Vol. 15, para. 8.

As a person matures, the habit of mind loses its power source. This is the psychic formulation that linked the dominant and auxiliary functions into an effective relationship to help the individual achieve an identity and accomplish something in the world. Jung calls this a job to manage in the first half of life for its purpose is instinctive. While the secret to success for both the individual and the organization is being one-sided, the problem with that strategy is that it works so well that the natural urge to grow, to move on and discover a new way of being is resisted. Jung knew that the way out of this trap is to align one's life with the regulating center of the psyche, the self.

I have frequently seen people become neurotic when they content themselves with inadequate or wrong answers to the questions of life. They seek position, marriage, reputation, outward success or money, and remain unhappy and neurotic even when they have attained what they were seeking. Such people are

usually confined within too narrow a spiritual horizon. Their life has not sufficient content, sufficient meaning. If they are enabled to develop more spacious personalities, the neurosis generally disappears. For that reason the idea of development was always of the highest importance to me.

-- C.G. Jung (MDR pg. 140)

What is needed to achieve wholeness is an alteration in the person's way of being so that the inferior and recessive features of one's personality can make a contribution to the person's development. At a certain pivot point in the life cycle, it is dangerous to rigidly hold on to the main function and attitude. The psychic current is moving in a different direction to deliver more life force energy that will afford the individual an opportunity to attend to unfinished business. To a person in the second half of life the neglected pieces of the unconscious carry the prospect of renewal, as well as the opportunity to achieve one's life purpose. No doubt, there is danger and pain involved in making the fateful transition, but the world is also full of stories of successful, well-adjusted people who fell into deep dissatisfaction because they clung to old ways.

Myth Has a Role to Play in the Individuation Process

Our destinies are as a rule the outcome of our psychological tendencies.

-- CG Jung, CW 4, paragraph 309

The understanding of psychological type enables one to live as a more released individual, who has the "know how" to play various roles in life without obscuring one's unique standing and without compromising one's integrity. The work of individuation allows for a certain degree of freedom in putting on and taking off masks to suit the purpose of the encounter and to further one's interest without displaying a false face or speaking a false word. Odysseus, for example, is referred to as the man "skilled in all ways of contending." Homer refers to Odysseus as the polytropos hero, a man of many shifts, who has not allowed adversity and obscurity to alter his vision and defeat his purpose. This strength that he has developed to make good on word and deed, despite suffering great losses, emanates from the full depth of his personality, informing him so that he can change his customary approach when dealing with difficult situations.

I am Odysseus, Laertes'son, known before all men. My craft is on every lip, and my fame reaches the sky.

-- The Odyssey (9.19-20)

Essentially, the Odyssey is really an intellectual adventure in which the hero displays multiple intelligences to make it back home so that he can assume his rightful place as a king. Individuation fosters the creative power of the individual because it is closely connected to what Jung calls the transcendent function. Jung is talking about the avenues that are opened up in one's development by being able to draw on deep personal strength, a state of being which could never be reached by keeping to the path prescribed by the collective. He is also referring to the power of the mind to contain and embrace the tension of opposing forces, generating a new synthesis that would not be established if the destructive tendency of one-sidedness were followed. The transcendent function not only mediates the conflict between opposites, it facilitates transitions from one attitude to another, resembling the ability of Odysseus to "think gold thoughts in a golden mind," a phrase Wallace Stevens, the poet, uses as a tribute to the creative power of the individual.

The whole, the great enterprise of life, of the world, the great enterprise of our race, is our penetration into matter, deeper and deeper, carrying the spirit into matter.

-- Robert Frost: A Living Voice by Reginald L Cook

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In addition, you will find these references of use to you in studying *Myth*.

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