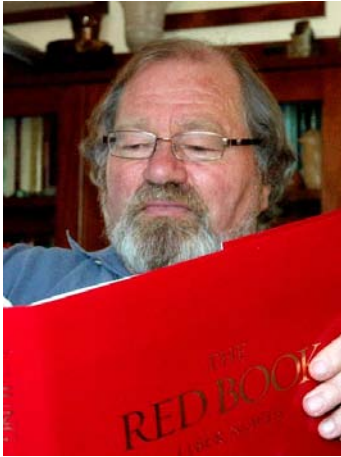


Getting there

Modelling life—some hints and structures



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Angelina Bennet

*The Shadows of Type:
Psychological type through
seven levels of development*

UK: Lulu, 2010

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Psychological type is a European idea—central European, to be precise. C G Jung was a thinker in the context of German culture.

Paradoxically, the development and prominence of the MBTI and other measurements has meant that the vast majority of type literature is North American, with the presumptions of that culture implicit, sometimes explicit—and this includes Jungian texts. My personal preference on Jungian ideas is for European texts.

Angelina Bennet is from England, which isn't exactly central Europe, but her cultural location alone makes her book worth investigating to see what she has to say and how she says it.

The Shadows of Type is a coaching text. By that, I mean that Bennet is presenting a model of development to assist coaches who use psychological type with clients. This assistance is in ascertaining a level of development, and providing suggestions and methods appropriate for each identified level. Naturally, it's presumed that reaching higher levels of development is desirable.

Bennet begins by identifying the MBTI as the psychometric instrument most used by coaches, and providing a brief history of its development and purpose. She points out that the MBTI has been criticised for its lack of something akin to a neuroticism scale, to help identify problems of that nature or when people aren't using their type effectively in what they are required to do in work and life.

Having read many articles that make this criticism, I think there are two aspects to consider. The first is that many critics have used this apparent deficit to suggest that the MBTI isn't a legitimate instrument.

By doing so they neglect part of its intent and purpose, which is to provide positively oriented information about psychological orientations which may otherwise be considered pathological. My personal view is that this attribution is good in itself, and I think the author would agree with that.

Included in that is a lack of awareness (for good reason—it has not really been made public) of Isabel Myers's items relating to impediments to type development, part of all MBTI forms from Form C to Form J. The latter, developed in the 1980s, provided a fifth scale, *Comfort—Discomfort*, using these kinds of items (Saunders 1987). Step III, however, is essentially the first real publication of these ideas, with a separate Manual and so on, and that's very recent.

One can also find in *Portraits of Type* (Gough, Thorne 1991/1999) correlations between the MBTI and other instruments that indicate or infer problems that may be associated with each of the 16 types.

Secondly, it has been argued that it's hard to know what to do to help people if all you have is something that says positive things about the person. This is what Bennet's project appears to be about—how this relates to people in positions where a particular level of development is sought or desired. It's also about providing what's called a 'vertical' model of development to the type construct.

She begins by identifying and describing, briefly but clearly, various models and ideas associated with psychological type. These include Naomi Quenk's *In the Grip* (1998), the John Beebe-oriented eight functions and their associated archetypes, and the Keirseyan temperament-based 'Survival Games', as presented by Eve Delunas (1993).

Bennet refers to all of these, including the MBTI, as ‘theories’, which I think is stretching it a little. For me, preferred words are ‘interpretations’ or ‘applications’—perhaps ‘models’, although I like to steer clear of that word, partly because saying something is a ‘model’ often appears to exclude the notion, by presenters or audience, that the idea under discussion has some truth or depth of content in it.

So, something can be ‘just a model’—economic models come readily to mind. Type can be ‘just a theory’ in the same way, and with the same implications.

A core point in this book is that Bennet thinks we’d be better off going back to Jung, to his broader ideas. This is an excellent idea, and by no means as mundane a suggestion as one might think. A glance at LinkedIn professional sites associated with the MBTI is enough to uncover a general lack of affinity or familiarity with Jung’s ideas.

Further, it provokes recognition that ‘personality types’ is something of a misnomer, given that Jung’s view of personality covers much more than psychological orientation, attitudes and functions.

What Bennet requires, though, is something more concrete and useful than just having a broad idea of Jung’s propositions in the back of your mind, as I might do.

Accordingly, she provides a brief description, together with diagram, of Jung’s idea of the self, and follows with the approach to the same subject (also with diagram) by Assagioli, the founder of *psychosynthesis*. These two are compared and contrasted so that Bennet is able to explain her reasons for preferring Assagioli’s interpretation.

To this is added relevant ideas on ego development from Loevinger and Cook-Greuter, and including Robert Kegan and Ken Wilber (popular for a while in some type circles, for good reason). These rather complex ideas are described with a great deal of facility. One senses a confidence in the way the author grasps and wields these complex ideas and constructs.

References are also made to direct contacts such as Angelo Spoto and Judith Cook-Greuter.

All this information leads to the core of the book, which is Bennet’s utilisation of these ideas in a developmental framework that is applied separately to each of the 16 types. These are called:

- power and control
- social identification
- personal identification
- determined action
- considerate individualism
- integration and authenticity
- magician

In doing so, Bennet consciously avoids making a link between developmental stage models and specific types or temperaments.

Some anthropologically-oriented models of this kind, for instance, suggest or imply a structure which has SPs at the bottom (hunter-gatherer), then SJs (farming and cities), and NF or NT at the top, depending on your view of the Renaissance and whether the future is about togetherness or cyborgs. Kohlberg’s postconventional stage of moral reasoning privileges intuition, among other things (Faucett et al 1995).

In Bennet’s book, the information on each type includes:

- hierarchy of functions
- main features and distortions
- conflicting functions
- core values
- developmental framework (i.e. the 7 categories referred to above)

The focus is the workplace, or issues that might arise for a person being coached in that context. The examples show a deep knowledge of those kinds of situations. The language of the descriptions is quite directive and more certain than I am comfortable with, which I suppose reflects a difference in type preferences and perhaps some avoidance on my part.

The 16 descriptions are followed by chapters on practical applications and suggested techniques for use, as well as a relevant



A confident grasp of complex constructs:
Angelina Bennet

glossary. These are very informative, and illustrate the level of knowledge and skill required for this kind of work using this kind of approach. The book is well-organised and purposeful, which is a bonus for any topic.

Being wary of multiple-model approaches to anything, I would have preferred a less accepting approach to the ideas discussed. This may have gone on in the mind of the author over a long period, but that would have been interesting to me, as I have reservations about ideas of ego development in particular, as well as some of the ideas presented specifically in the type arena.

The notion of what ‘development’ is and implies also has psychological, social and political presumptions and implications. I realise that’s not the purpose of this book.

I would also have liked a sentence or two on what an ‘archetype’ is considered to be, as well as a few clarifying words on ‘temperament’—a word that in non-type discourses, particularly in early childhood development, has nothing at all to do with David Keirse and his followers.

‘Individuation’ too seems to be identified as commencing at a particular place in the development schema, which confused me, but perhaps this has to do with my minimalist approach to the topic. For definitional reasons, I also disagree with the notion that type is a theory of cognition. I did not always hold that view.

On other matters, I’m reminded of Roger Pearman’s insightful comment on one of my recent papers:

Perhaps it goes without saying, but most histories are really the author’s journey through the intellectual path of ideas, trends, etc.

For me this means, in part, that you can only write about what you’ve found, or are seeking if you prefer to speculate—and that applies to many kinds of writing, including this book.

The history of type and the MBTI presented in this book contains several errors, which I gather may have come from the source consulted by the author, probably with the

reasonable assumption that, as that source has a vested interest, it would attend to facts about the MBTI’s origins. Whether that was the case, I don’t know. The success or failure of the core propositions in the book do not depend on this information.

So, I think it important to say that, while C G Jung’s typology is ‘based on the flow and balance of psychic energy within an individual’ (p 13), he did in fact observe behaviours and characteristics after the European empirical fashion and did claim to be an empirical scientist. This is not the empiricism claimed by psychometric discourse, but is probably analogous to the approach of William James, a man deeply admired by Jung.

What became the MBTI was commenced in 1942—stimulated by World War II, not following on from it. It was first published in 1943—not 1962 as given, which is the publication date of the first MBTI manual. The form associated with that manual, Form F, had been published a few years before, for research purposes. The MBTI was first made publicly available (i.e., mentioned in a catalogue) in 1976.

Isabel Briggs Myers (not a hyphenated name, as a few from the UK seem to think) should be considered at least as the prime author of MBTI writings, and perhaps the sole author. None of the material I possess, from the 1940s onwards, has Katharine Briggs as co-author. *Type as the Index to Personality* (1944), for instance, is a solo work. I think we should disabuse ourselves of the notion that MBTI production was a ‘team effort’ between mother and daughter, at least after the initial stages.

These are all minor points; the utility and intelligence of the book isn’t affected by them. I mention them here as part of what a review requires, as well as in an effort to get something concrete, factual and consistent about what people did, and did not do, in this field.

Conclusion

If you’re in the coaching field, particularly with senior executives and similar people, then this is a book you will find more than useful.

If you want to read a book by someone who thinks deeply about type in a particular way (by no means a crowded field), then *The Shadows of Type* will provide some insights and challenges.

I’ve learned things from it, anyway. ❖

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My thanks to Katherine Hirsh and Trudy McCutcheon for what they said at particular times.

The Shadows of Type
is available from
www.lulu.com and
other online retailers,
including Amazon
