

On “Personality” C.G. Jung and the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®)

Peter Geyer

www.petergeyer.com.au

Every society is different from every other...all are, at the same time, variants of a universal human nature

W.G.Runciman

Personality

“Personality” is a term with a wide range of meanings. There are people who are described as “personalities” – actors, people in sport, television presenters, sometimes politicians or business executives – people seen in public in various ways.

Personality is also measured by observation and questionnaire, for observable traits, or behaviours. “Norms” of behaviour are arrived at in this way – how the “average” person acts. Extreme or pathological behaviours are also identified; people behaving at these extremes are considered to need help to adjust to the norm, usually through training, counselling, or medication.

C.G.Jung’s Psychological Types

The Swiss psychotherapist and thinker, C.G. Jung, was interested in individual variation or differences in people – types of people, rather than generalisations or averages. He followed a long tradition of thought in considering that people had different ways of approaching life according to their individual psychology, and that this was part of their nature, not something that they learned from parents, or peers, or society. For him, a type approach accounted for different ways of learning, living and working for people everywhere.

Jung researched and developed a theory of *psychological types*, part of his overall ideas about personality and the *Self*. He started by identifying and describing *Extraversion* and *Introversion* as opposite ways people directed their energy and followed this up with two mental functions he called *Perception* (information people pay attention to) and *Judgement* (decisions people prefer to make). Perception had two opposites in *Sensation* and *Intuition*, Judgement two opposites in *Thinking* and *Feeling*. Jung didn’t claim that people couldn’t use the other preference at all, but that they oriented their life, where possible, around one form of Perception and one form of Judgement.

Measuring Psychological Type

Two American women, Isabel Briggs Myers and Katharine Cook Briggs, adapted Jung’s typology into a questionnaire, the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), developing questions measured on independent scales to identify these preferences. They also added a set of questions on what they called *Judging* and *Perceiving*, based on Jung’s work. These related to whether people wanted to live a scheduled, organised life, or to be more casual and spontaneous. The term Sensation was also changed to *Sensing*. The MBTI identifies 16 personality types based on Jung’s ideas.

Myers and Briggs decided to make up a questionnaire for mostly cultural reasons – they thought it was the best method of helping people understand and appreciate the natural, individual differences Jung had identified. It was largely an American perspective. Jung himself wasn't interested in this kind of measurement, which wasn't part of his own cultural experience, although he acknowledged its usefulness.

The MBTI was developed following almost 20 years of observation, reading and writing, using Jung's typology. The initial questions, or items were tested on a sample group of successful people over 30, for whom the authors were certain of at least one preference. All questions used in the MBTI are about normal behaviour. Each of all four sets of opposites are considered desirable, and the questions are framed that way.

Core Principles of Type

The core principles of C.G.Jung's theory of psychological types are that:

- Type preferences are a result of interaction between nature and nurture
- People are born with a predisposition to a type preference
- Type preferences are developed through a response to individual experience
- Culture mediates the expression of type preferences
- Living according to type preferences defines psychological health
- True adaptability, necessary for health, is in the context of these preferences

The type preferences identified by Jung:

- Are expressed as sets of psychological opposites, much like the Yin/Yang of Taosim
- Are concerned with psychological orientation, rather than personality *per se*
- Are seen as fundamental psychological principles behind behaviours
- Helps explain why people can do the same thing, but for different reasons
- Are a component of his theory of the Self

Appendix I provides brief outlines of the four sets of preferences.

What the MBTI does, how it works

The MBTI has groupings of questions on four discrete bipolar scales, which means that there are no extremes, but two choices of orientation. It is a forced-choice questionnaire, meaning that completion is by selecting one of two choices given in each question. It sorts people into the four psychological type categories, one for each scale:

- Extraversion *or* Introversion [labelled E *or* I]
- Sensing *or* Intuition [labelled S *or* N]
- Thinking *or* Feeling [labelled T *or* F]
- Judging *or* Perceiving [labelled J *or* P]

The questions are either *phrase questions* e.g.

When you go somewhere for the day do you

(A) plan what you are going to do and when, or (B) just go

or *word pair* questions e.g.

(A) Enthusiastic (B) Quiet

Selection of answers is based on what is preferred , not what a person necessarily does – type preferences aren't literally behaviour. It is not compulsory to answer all the questions; Isabel Myers did not want people to answer something they didn't want to: she thought it was false data.

MBTI results are given individually for each scale e.g. E rather than I, then as a complete type code e.g. ESFP, comprising the results for each scale.

Appendix II provides brief student-oriented descriptions of the 16 Types.

In MBTI Form M there is one point given for each answer and the preference result is given as the largest number of questions answered for a particular preference e.g. a person who answers 12 questions for Extraversion and 9 for Introversion will have a result of a preference for Extraversion (E).

Equal results on any of the four scales are sorted according to the letter on the right hand side (I.N.F or P). This process is a response to the effect of social desirability on answering of questions.

There are levels of clarity for MBTI results which reflect a level of confidence about answering the questions, not a level of ability or skill, or even confusion. These levels are called *Slight*, *Moderate*, *Clear* and *Very Clear*.

A Slight result like the points for E and I above (12/9) doesn't mean that a person is able to use E or I more flexibly than a person who has points of 16 for E and 5 for I, nor that a person who has 0 points for E and 21 for I is unable to speak with others, or socialise.

Because the MBTI measures by sorting, results cannot be measured in amounts. It indicates a preference only. Having a preference doesn't imply that there is a level of skill in using it. These preferences are also not pure categories: there are many ways of being an introvert, for instance.

MBTI results are also not to be taken literally. They must be discussed with and verified by the person who has completed it. Usually, the results are 75-85% accurate, depending on clarity of preferences.

The results, expressed as stated earlier in a four-letter code e.g. ISTJ; ENFP, also indicate to Jung's broader theory, particularly type dynamics and development and consciousness.

Appendix III explains these aspects of Jung's theory and how the MBTI indicates to it.

When personality questionnaires work well, it is because they have the appropriate questions or items and an appropriate way of measuring the responses. For the MBTI, this includes *psychological opposites*. Isabel Myers found in her research that asking questions using words that were language opposites did not work much of the time and so she learned to ask people of various preferences to tell her what language made sense to them in the given context.

In translating the MBTI into languages other than American English, researchers also use entirely different questions that seem more relevant to the culture in which the translation will be used.

Because the idea of psychological type has been around for several decades, there are many similar questionnaires that will give you a type code; however, their questions are often not compatible with the theory and the descriptions are similarly written.

Appendix IV provides a guide to how to find the MBTI on the Internet, and what distinguishes it from similar questionnaires.

Using Psychological Type

The MBTI works because its researchers and developers studied Jung's typology and aimed at getting questions and a structure that would provide results easily interpreted by his theory.

This self-referential aspect of the MBTI is also common to all successful questionnaires, whether on personality or otherwise (e.g. intelligence), in that you set up a questionnaire to get the result you require. It doesn't necessarily mean that what the questionnaire identifies is true, but simply provides a method to more easily identify a mental construct. People can read a book to discover their IQ, for instance, or their type preferences, without completing a questionnaire. Verification of either of these constructs is through the conventional scientific means of observation.

Having said that, research with the MBTI has resulted in a number of discoveries: e.g.

- The types are not evenly distributed i.e. there are more of some than others
- Some gender differences can be better ascribed to type differences
- Different types predominate in different professions or activities
- Different types become stressed in different ways
- People learn and teach differently according to their type preferences

Psychological type is a theory that explains rather than predicts: it doesn't see people as being all the same. It is also generally compatible with current neuroscientific research about emotion, as well as the development and maturity of the brain.

These and other discoveries suggest that Jung's framework is a useful and helpful interpretive guide for a wide range of human behaviour, particularly as an alternative to the many generalisations about human beings derived from science and elsewhere.

Appendix V provides a concise reading list for reading inside and outside psychological types as a way of looking at human personality.

Appendix I

THE FOUR SETS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPE PREFERENCES

1. Extraversion–Introversion

Some core points:

- Orientation of personal energy – internal or external
- Introversion is not shyness; Extraversion is not sociability
- Extraversion in theory different to extroversion
- Introversion is not pathological
- Sometimes more extraverts in a society, sometimes not

E	I
External focus – people, things, action	Internal focus – concepts, ideas, thoughts
Gregarious, usually likes networking	Intimate, usually likes own space
Learns better through discussion	Learns better through observation, reading
Enthusiastic, emotionally expressive	Quiet, emotionally contained
Talks to think	Thinks, then talks

2. Sensing–Intuition

Some core points:

- Information of personal interest – what we pay attention to
- Sensing–facts and experience; practical
- Intuition_ interpretation and meaning; possibilities
- Usually 2–3 times more sensing people in a society
- Almost the reverse at universities etc.

S	N
Concrete: hear see, smell, touch	Abstract: patterns, big picture
Facts and the literal	Meanings and figurative/metaphorical
Precise, specific	General, global
Focus on the present, past	Focus on the future, timeless truths
Details, physical reality	6th Sense, hunch

3. Thinking–Feeling

Some core points:

- Making rational decisions
- Thinking objective : Feeling subjective
- Thinking not intellect : Feeling not emotion
- Males usually prefer Thinking (c55–60%)
- Females prefer Feeling (c55–60%)
- Successful females in business, politics, tend to prefer Thinking
- Some cultures prefer Thinking, others Feeling

T	F
Objective, analytical	Subjective, situational
Principles (what), non–personal	Principals (who), personal
Skeptical	Trusting
Cause and effect; focus on task, clarity	Focus on harmony; collaboration
Intention important	Actual behaviour important

4. Judging–Perceiving

Some core points:

- How people prefer to live their lives
- Judging–schedules, order, organisation
- Perceiving–Spontaneity, flow, casual
- Judging predominates in schools and workplaces
- Some cultures Judging, others Perceiving

J	P
Decisive, scheduled	Adaptable, flexible
Plan, goal oriented, results	More open–ended; see what happens
Systematic, orderly	Casual, spontaneous
Use lists, closure	Curious, options
Organisation, structure	Self directed, flow

Appendix II

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF THE 16 TYPES

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
Down-to-earth realists. Private. Happiest when things remain the same. Facts, logic appeal. Value hard work and learning practical skills. Enjoy work with clear and efficient procedures responsibly implemented. (7–10% Adult Pop.)	Down-to-earth realists. Private. Happiest when things remain the same. Interest is in facts about people and learning practical skills. Like to follow procedures and rules; work where they can help people in a tangible way. (7–10% Adult Pop.)	Insightful idealists who imagine life as it could be. Gentle and private. The arts, writing, are of interest. Prefer to have order, particularly at home and to work in an environment where their vision for people is encouraged (2–3% Adult Pop.)	Insightful, analytical people, who use theory, models to understand the world. Private. Like structure. Intellectually curious & independent. Enjoy study and work where they can develop their knowledge and competence. (2–3% Adult Pop.)
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
Resourceful, adaptable realists for whom talk is cheap and action has value. Private. Usually they prefer tools more than books; enjoy the physical and outdoors. Like to solve practical problems in their work. (4–7% Adult Pop.)	Gentle realists. Accept the world at face value. Private. Experience the world; don't imagine it. Hands-on, pragmatic in learning and work. Not concerned about order, time constraints. Won't be rushed or pushed. (5–7% Adult Pop.)	Individuals with deep feeling about life and how to live it. Music, art, psychology appeal in study and work. Can be dismissive of rules that don't fit in with their gentle but strong values. (3–4% Adult Pop.)	Complex thinkers who want to understand the underlying principles behind things. Private. Intellectually curious; Enjoy study and work where they can develop both their knowledge and competence. (3–4% Adult Pop.)
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
Pragmatic realists who trust action, not words. Don't dwell on past, or future. Physicality and humour. Everything is negotiable. Good with solving practical issues, and combining their play with their work. (6–8% Adult Pop.)	Social and enthusiastic realists, who live in the moment. Chatty, eager to please, flexible. They dislike conflict of any sort. Fun important part of both study and work, which revolves around helping people in need. (8–10% Adult Pop.)	Enthusiastic, sociable. Interested in the future; possibilities for people. Harmony important for them. Like to work and study in groups, discuss and generate new ideas in an entertaining way without constraints. (6–7% Adult Pop.)	Enthusiastic. sociable. Want to change and improve the world. Are natural entrepreneurs: adaptable, resourceful and entertaining. Like to work and study in groups, discussing and generating new ideas. (4–6% Adult Pop.)
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ
Practical realists who like to be in charge in study or work. Details and facts are important. Give, follow directions. Competition, winning. Like working hard and completing, finishing. Natural businesspeople. (12–15% Adult Pop.)	Sociable and traditional realists. Optimistic and positive. Like things to stay as they are; prefer structure, consistency. Like learning about the needs of people. Then look for relevant work where they can help. (7–10% Adult Pop.)	Sociable and insightful. Want social acceptance. Organised in a personal way. Like to study and work in an harmonious, friendly atmosphere to help them acquire skills and knowledge to help other people. (3–5% Adult Pop.)	Organised, pragmatic people who like to be in charge in study or work. Are persuasive, confident, logical and direct. Like discussion, vigorous debate. Lead with vision of future; direct others to it (3–5% Adult Pop.)

Appendix III

THE MBTI AND C.G. JUNG'S IDEAS ABOUT PERSONALITY

Although C.G. Jung thought that a person's type preferences didn't change, he didn't think of personality as static, unchangeable. He expected people naturally developed over time through life experience, although not at a regular rate and that this development was in the context of their natural preferences. For instance, a person preferring Thinking would need to see that it was logical to learn about and practice relevant aspects of Feeling.

Jung considered that people are born with an innate predisposition to type and that human life sees the interplay of type functions (S–N ; T–F) according to that predisposition. This idea is similar to how researchers talk about the unfolding of genes. Similarly, a person's environment must support and acknowledge their preferences.

Jung's theory presumes that initially all the functions are unconscious in a human being. Whether development of consciousness starts in the womb or occurs at birth is uncertain, but current scientific research would indicate that consciousness of some sort begins *in utero*. This is a potential activity: not everyone is conscious (in Jung's terms), nor is everyone a type.

The level of consciousness is determined by the exercising of the functions and their differentiation i.e the conscious preference for the use of one function (e.g. Sensing) over its opposite (Intuition). Jung considered this differentiation occurred in an hierarchical pattern across the life-span. It is a major explanation for mid-life crises or issues, a field in which Jung was a pioneer.

Jung thought that at some time in the first few years of life, a child expressed some consistency in its behaviour by selecting one function over the rest. This he called the *dominant* function (e.g. S rather than N). Following this, around adolescence, a child started to develop/use another function as a *balance* to this preference and he called this the *auxiliary* function. Balance for him did not mean 50/50, but that this function was less conscious, it was from the other function pair (e.g. F rather than T) and that one of these functions was used predominantly as extraverted and the other predominantly introverted, so that both worlds had input into the person's development.

The adequate development of dominant and auxiliary is another way of saying that a person has reasonable self-identity and maturity, comparable in some ways with mature brain development. (The age range is similar – between 18-28)

The non-preferred functions (e.g. T and N), now called the tertiary and inferior functions are used but relatively undeveloped in this period until a time in the 30s and 40s where Jung considered life experience would require their development, albeit in the context of their preferences. These preferences would always remain undeveloped but timing and use of them would become better with practice. The undeveloped preferences is where a person's consciousness is when under genuine stress of some sort. For Jung, these preferences will be introverted if the dominant is extraverted, and *vice versa*.

In this example, an ESFP has been identified. The order of development for all the 16 types is provided at the end of the next page.

HOW THE MBTI INDICATES TO JUNG'S IDEAS

Unlike psychological instruments in general, the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator is designed to indicate to a theory – C.G. Jung's theory of psychological types. This is a key reason why feedback is required as part of taking the MBTI. While its structure reflects core principles of Jung's theory e.g. scales with a mid-point; the ends of each scale being equally preferable opposites, not extremes, the core of his theory of types lays outside the MBTI itself.

The four letter codes or formulas devised by Isabel Myers report a person's preferences as recorded on the MBTI. They also interpret those results according to developmental aspects of type theory, based on the interaction of the functions (S–N;T–F) and the Jungian attitudes (E–I). J and P simply refer to which function is extraverted, or used in the outer world. Type dynamics is a core component of Jung's theory. It does not come from MBTI scores, but rather by inference from the results on each scale.

Isabel Myers emphasised the importance of Jung's theory by writing her type descriptions in the order of dominant to inferior preferences.

The order of the functions for all 16 types is:

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ	ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
D. Si	D. Si	D. Ni	D. Ni	D. Ti	D. Fi	D. Fi	D. Ti
A. Te	A. Fe	A. Fe	A. Te	A. Se	A. Se	A. Ne	A. Ne
T. F	T. T	T. T	T. F	T. N	T. N	T. S	T. S
I. Ne	I. Ne	I. Se	I. Se	I. Fe	I. Te	I. Te	I. Fe
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ	ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
D. Te	D. Fe	D. Fe	D. Te	D. Se	D. Se	D. Ne	D. Ne
A. Si	A. Si	A. Ni	A. Ni	A. Ti	A. Fi	A. Fi	A. Ti
T. N	T. N	T. S	T. S	T. F	T. T	T. T	T. F
I. Fi	I. Ti	I. Ti	I. Fi	I. Ni	I. Ni	I. Si	I. Si

i means function is introverted, e means function is extraverted
 D. = Dominant ; A. = Auxiliary ; T. = Tertiary ; I. = Inferior

Appendix IV

FINDING THE MBTI ON THE INTERNET

The MBTI is available only on controlled sites approved by the publisher CPP Inc.

For information, go to www.mbti.com, or www.capt.org

Some questionnaires advertise themselves on the Internet as MBTI-like or Jungian questionnaires that have 4 scales like the MBTI. These are not the MBTI, just questionnaires using the same idea, often without regard to key parts of Jung's ideas. Some will be good, others not so.

The MBTI has specific questions that are copyright, and so unable to be used in other instruments or questionnaires. The research associated with the MBTI relates only to those questions and legitimate MBTI Forms.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MBTI AND OTHER QUESTIONNAIRES

If a questionnaire is freely available, then that's a key indication that it's not the MBTI.

Other cues:

1. The MBTI doesn't have any questions that ask you to choose between:
 - Yes or No
 - True or False. or
 - 4, 5 or more points on a scale (usually called a Likert scale)
2. *Extroversion* is used instead of *Extraversion*
The word *emotion* is used in a question, or in accompanying descriptions almost interchangeably with Feeling.
In Jung's work, Feeling is decision making, and not emotions at all.
Emotion is associated with the unconscious.
3. Number of questions. The MBTI has a minimum of 93 questions.
4. The MBTI isn't available in card-sorts or as part of career development packages.

Appendix V

A READING GUIDE

1. Reading inside typology

Psychological Type

Jung, C.G. (1923/71) *Psychological Types* Princeton

Myers, Isabel B., with Myers, Peter B. (1980) *Gifts Differing* Davies Black

Von Franz, Marie Louise (1993) *Psychotherapy* Shambhala

Von Franz, Marie Louise and Hillman, James (1971) *Lectures on Jung's Typology* Spring

The MBTI and its developers

Geyer, Peter (1995) *Quantifying Jung, The origin and development of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*
www.petergeyer.com.au

Myers, Isabel B., McCaulley, Mary H, Quenk, Naomi L., Hammer, Allen H. (1998) *MBTI Manual* 3rd Ed. CPP

Myers, Isabel B (1993) *Conversations with Isabel* CAPT Video

Quenk, Naomi L.(200) *Essentials of Myers–Briggs Type Indicator Assessment* Wiley

Saunders, Francis Wright (1993) *Mother's light, Daughter's journey* Davies-Black

Thorne, Avril, and Gough, Harrison (1999) *Portraits of Type* CAPT

Jung: Biography and Interpretation

Bair, Deirdre (2003) *Jung: A Biography* Little, Brown

Bennet, E.A. (1966) *What Jung Really Said* Macdonald

Jacobi, Jolan (1944) *The Psychology of C.G.Jung* Kegan Paul 3rd Ed

(rec./ed. A.Jaffe) *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1963) Collins/Routledge

Rowland, Susan (2005) *Jung as a Writer* Routledge

Stevens, Anthony (1999) *On Jung* Princeton 2nd Edn

Jung's Words and Image

(ed. M.Fordham) *Contact with Jung* (1963) Tavistock

(ed. Wm McGuire and R.F.C.Hull) *C.G.Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters* (1978) Thames and Hudson

(ed. C.G. Jung and M.L. von Franz) *Man and His Symbols* (1964/1972) Aldus

Jung on Film: Carl Gustav Jung Interviewed by Dr Richard I. Evans (1957/1990) Public Media Video

Selections from Jung's Works

Symbols of Transformation CW5 (1952/1967) Princeton

The Development of Personality (1954) CW17 Princeton

2. Reading outside typology

Psychology: history and development

Ash, Mitchell G., Woodward, William R (eds.)(1987) *Psychology in 20th Cent thought and society* Cambridge
Danziger, Kurt (1997) *Naming the mind: How Psychology found its language* Sage

Tests and Measurement

Gould, Stephen Jay (1992) *The mismeasurement of man* Penguin
Hanson, F.Allan (1993) *Testing, Testing: social consequences of the examined life* California Berkeley
Kline, Paul (1993) *Personality, the psychometric view* Routledge
Porter, Theodore M. (1995) *Trust in Numbers: the pursuit of objectivity in science and public life* Princeton
Rogers, Tim B. (1996) *The Psychological Testing Enterprise* Brooks Cole

On Classification

Bowker, Geoffrey C., Star, Susan Leigh (2000) *Sorting things out: classification and its consequences* MIT
Eagleton, Terry (2006) *Have you seen my Dada Boss?* London Review of Books

On Consciousness

Dennett, Daniel (1996) *Kinds of Minds* Basic Books
Mithen, Steven (1996) *The prehistory of the mind* Thames and Hudson
Searle, John R. (2002) *Consciousness and Language* Cambridge

On early development

Kagan, Jerome (2002) *Surprise, uncertainty and mental structures* Harvard
Kagan, Jerome and Snidman, Nancy (2004) *The long shadow of temperament* Harvard

Culture

Doyle, Kenneth O. (1999) *The Social Meaning of Money and Property* Sage Thousand Oaks
Eagleton, Terry (2004) *After Theory* Penguin
Triandis, Harry C. (1995) *Individualism and Collectivism* Westview

Science

Carroll, Sean (2005) *Endless Forms most beautiful: the new science of evo devo* W.W. Norton
Elster, Jonathan *Alchemies of the Mind: rationality and the emotions* Cambridge
Goldberg, Elkhonon (2002) *The Executive Brain* Oxford
Latour, Bruno (1987) *Science in Action* Open University
LeDoux, Joseph (1998) *The Emotional Brain* Weidenfeld and Nicholson
Springer, Sally P., and Deutsch, Georg (1997) *Left brain, right brain* W.H.Freeman
Uttal, William R. (2001) *The New Phrenology: The limits of localizing Cognitive Processes in the Brain* MIT
Valenstein, Elliott S.(1998) *Blaming the Brain* Free Press

Other References

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Myers, I.B. (various dates) *Interviews and presentations* (private collection)
Runciman, W.G. (1998) *The Social Animal* Harper Collins