

Type Descriptions

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C.G. Jung's book *Psychological Types* ([1923]; 1990) is the foundation for the study of the types by Katharine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers, and their development of the MBTI

In this book, Jung wrote lengthy descriptions of type preferences and of the types themselves. He made it clear that the processes underpinning type – functions and attitudes – have no specific content. Cultural or personal experience is what makes much of the difference between people with the same type preferences. Jung's descriptions were often related specifically to clinical examples: after all, he developed the theory from studying his patients and others. So some of his comments are more about the pathology of the types rather than from a normal perspective, notwithstanding that he considered it important for psychological health for people to operate according to their type preferences.

Later on in his work, Jung stated

" *Thinking* tells you what things mean...

Feeling tells you what they are worth...

Sensation tells you what they really are...

Intuition tells you the possibilities of a situation "

By necessity, type descriptions are of traits, or the way people act in the world: what they do. They are contingent on things like culture, experience, gender, as well as type development.

No one type description can describe a type completely accurately, or the individual who has those preferences. The best type descriptions provide a suitably broad picture for the person to identify their preferences without them needing to be in total agreement with the picture. 75% or thereabouts is the usual benchmark. Unlike other instruments or personality ideas, the MBTI focuses on the idea that "it's good to be you", and so descriptions of the types reflect that approach.

When Isabel Briggs Myers produced her 16 type descriptions, she arranged them according to Jung's typology (i.e. in 8 groups of 2), and presented her data on each type in function order – dominant to inferior – so readers could pick up this type dynamic.

A prime intention for her was also to concentrate on the gifts of the types. She was well aware of the downsides of the types, but believed psychologists were only too ready to pathologise people *i.e.* tell them what was wrong with them, and yet avoid telling them what it was that was good about them. The positive nature of the type preferences is a principle at the core of the MBTI and its application and interpretation.

Consequently, the brief type descriptions at the back of MBTI Report Forms are of normal, healthy people. Longer descriptions are found in booklets like *Introduction to Type*, *Introduction to Type in Organisations*, *The Looking at Type Series*, and books such as *Type Talk* and *Gifts Differing*.

The MBTI and Psychological Type promotes the view that there is a broad spectrum of normality, and the 16 types illustrate the varieties of being normal.

SOME REFERENCES

C.G. Jung: *Psychological Types* (Princeton 1976, 1990)

C.G. Jung: *Dream Analysis: Notes of the seminars given in 1928–30* [ed. William. McGuire] (Princeton 1984)