



# Remembering the Importance of Whole Type

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*and have found the experience constantly rewarding. It can be rewarding for society, too... Whatever the circumstances of your life, whatever your personal ties, work, and responsibilities, the understanding of type can make your perceptions clearer, your judgments sounder, and your life closer to your heart's desire." (Myers, Gifts Differing, 1980, pp. 201-202)*

## “Whole type is what is most important”

There has been a recent movement within the ranks of type practitioners to understand, clarify, and define Jung's functions (S, N, T and F) in their attitudes (Extraverted and Introverted Sensing, Intuition, Thinking and Feeling). For definitions of the eight Jungian mental processes, see Hartzler, M., McAlpine, R. & Haas, L. (2005) and Myers, K.D. & Kirby, L.K. (1994). Prior to this movement, practitioners who mostly came to Jung through the MBTI®, had very little understanding of what Myers called the “eight mental processes,” also referred to as the mental functions, the functions-in-attitude, the attitude functions, and the cognitive processes. In previous times, the only written definitions of the mental processes readily available to type practitioners, and more understandable than in Jung's original work, were the five pages written by Katharine Briggs in *Gifts Differing* (pp. 77-81).

Recent developments have been of great importance and have contributed to the richness and depth of understanding

**W**e begin this article with a pertinent quote from Isabel Myers on the positive impact of understanding type:

*I have looked at the world from the standpoint of type for more than fifty years*

of type, type dynamics, and type development. However, if we narrowly focus on these newly understood eight mental processes, we run the same danger of portraying type as having separate and disconnected parts as we would if we were to present the type code as separate and detached letters. Rather, type is a dynamic system of the interacting flow of psychic energy from preference to preference and from our conscious to our unconscious mind. As Angelo Spoto has said, “...this [examination of the attitude and function types] is to some degree setting up an artificial split of the material for the purposes of understanding typological theory. Eventually, the intention would be to put the attitudes and functions back together to generate a fuller and more dynamic picture of different psychological types as they manifest in everyday reality” (1989/1995, pp. 28-29). It is Myers' four-letter type codes that lead us to this understanding.

Katharine's telling of a meeting that Isabel Myers had with David Keirseay at the CAPT Philadelphia conference in 1979, conveys this point:

*David had been invited to give the*

keynote speech. The last words of Isabel to David at the end of their cordial conversation were, 'David, remember that whole type is what is most important.' I have no quote handy to explain the meaning of her statement, but Isabel believed whole type to be a dynamic system of energy and balance that can guide us like a compass through life. C.G. Jung believed psychological type was his compass in life-long development. Isabel created the JIP dichotomy to identify the dominant and the auxiliary. In doing so, the eight Jungian types became 16 whole types or as Isabel said '16 paths to excellence.' "

## What is "Whole Type"?

When people are given the MBTI and provided with the opportunity for self-selection, "...they are not only casting votes in regard to the four dichotomies; they are also providing information needed to understand their type dynamics leading to whole type." Each four-letter type is a code for the complex set of dynamic relationships among the functions (S, N, T and F) and the attitudes (E and I) and (J and P)" (MBTI Manual, p. 29). The four-letter code developed by Myers provides a doorway to understanding and appreciating individual differences and the dynamic interplay of the functions and attitudes. This interplay is what gives each of the 16 type systems their unique character, expressed through each type's theoretical hierarchy for use and development – the dominant, auxiliary, tertiary and inferior mental processes.

Whole type is also the door to Jung's model of ongoing growth and development which he called individuation. When we asked Angelo Spoto for his definition of "whole type", he responded:

*"The idea of 'whole type', as I understand it, is to provide an image of wholeness from a typological perspective. Therefore, "whole type" implies individuating, i.e. becoming more whole. From a typological perspective, that would mean experiencing all the dimensions of type in a conscious manner, regardless of what your superior function is. We would approach this*

*enlightened state over the course of a lifetime. Some people (mostly in the second half of life) seem to have it more than others, i.e., you experience them as more whole human beings, and not ego-bound or ego-driven."* (conversation with Spoto, June, 2009).

## Whole Type as the Container for the Eight Mental Processes

It is important to view Jung's eight mental processes within the context of whole type. As Myers said, "The effect of the interaction of the preferred processes is made apparent when the extraverted form of a particular process – thinking, feeling, sensing or intuition – is compared with the introverted form of the same process" (*Gifts Differing*, p. 77).

The type code hierarchy provides us with needed balance; this is where we can see the flow of psychic energy as we go in and out of the mental processes. A focus on the parts at the expense of whole type can compromise appreciation of type's richness and depth.

We need instead to portray two vital concepts when we speak about type: (1) the flow of energy of type dynamics which is unlocked through the code of the four-letters, and (2) the relatively new and rich knowledge of the four functions in both the introverted and extraverted attitudes. The first concept leads to an understanding of whole type, while the second greatly enriches our insight of the practical effects of the mental processes as we access them through our code. The authors have found the need for conveying both concepts in practice and have developed a way of including this new knowledge of the eight mental processes, within what we think of as the 'Myers model', in feedback sessions with individuals and groups (Paris, 2009).

Myers illustrates the significance of the dynamic nature of type through the metaphor of a ship maneuvering through the sea. She describes the dominant mental process as the Captain of the ship and the auxiliary mental process as his/her chief assistant to carry out orders and to provide a needed balancing perspective.

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The tertiary and inferior functions are the crew. At their best, they contribute to the smooth functioning of the ship. If under stress, irritated, or ignored, they are apt to erupt and disturb the collaborating teamwork aboard the ship. We certainly move in and out of all of the eight Jungian mental processes, even though we are only speaking here of the ordering of the first four through the type code hierarchy. There has been work done on the four mental processes not reflected in Myers' type code hierarchy (see Thomson, L. and Beebe, J.) However, as of this date, there does not seem to be agreement regarding where these mental functions reside in our psyche.

## Whole Type as a Guide for Individuation

The process of individuation is a natural process that seems to occur regardless of our level of awareness (see Jung, Spoto, Millner, and others). Armed with the appreciation of the dynamic nature of our own type, we can more consciously undertake the journey toward the complex process of individuation. Both Jung and Myers considered type development, or the conscious development of our mental processes, to be *the compass* for the journey. It is within this context that Spoto's statement regarding whole type as "an image of wholeness from a typological perspective" becomes important. If we are conscious of our whole type, we can assess our own path for development, making this difficult journey a bit easier.

Conveying the concept of one's type as the doorway to life-long development is an important part of whole type and one that is not often a priority for the practitioner. However, when it is included, clients often express excitement: "I didn't know that type had this kind of depth."

### The first half of life (Accommodation)

It is our task in the first part of life to establish a sense of identity and our place in the world. If we are supported through our environment, our psychic energy is focused on developing use and trust in our dominant and auxiliary mental processes, our most comfortable and natural

processes, to accomplish this task. According to the Jungian model, this focus provides the individual with a way of taking in information (perception) and making decisions (judging) and of functioning in both the inner (introverted) and outer (extraverted) worlds. We need to have a good command of our dominant mental process to lead the way, but we also need the corresponding balance of our auxiliary mental process. Lenore Thomson describes this as "an adequate relationship with reality" (p. 82). The development of the first two mental processes gives the personality, or ego, a sufficient degree of consistency, predictability, and effectiveness for facing the world.

### Mid-life: a shift of psychic energy (Re-evaluation)

Mid-life is a time for re-evaluation and setting up the foundation for the second half of life. As Jung said, "...we can not live the afternoon of life according to the programme of life's morning [first stage of life]; for what was great in the morning will be little at evening and what in the morning was true will at evening have become a lie." (in Millner, 2004, p. 35). From a type perspective, our psyche pulls us toward the development of our less preferred mental processes, those not represented in our four-letter type code. A focus on functions not previously used helps us to answer the often asked question during this part of life, "Is *this* all there is?" If we have not developed trust in, and use of, our innate dominant and/or auxiliary mental processes, it is important to claim them during this time of life. If we have developed these mental processes, it becomes more important for us to start to use our less developed functions, the tertiary and inferior functions that we have ignored or that have remained less under our conscious control.

Jung states that we will not be able to develop our secondary functions (auxiliary, tertiary, and inferior) like our dominant function (Jung, 1971/1990, para. 667-671). However, we can develop skills related to the functions and consciously call on them when appropriate (see Hartzler & Hartzler, 2005, for activities to develop the eight functions).

## The Second Half of Life (Re-integration)

Our job in the second half of life, from the perspective of type, is to work toward wholeness with increased consciousness. We now face the world with the new knowledge about ourselves that we gained through mid-life transition. Thus, we will be able to incorporate some of the skills associated with our less preferred functions into our consciousness; we have found that we are more than our four-letter type code. As Spoto described, we are growing toward wholeness and balance. Our energy is re-directed towards development and use of our less preferred mental processes.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been four fold:

- to acknowledge the valuable contribution of understanding more thoroughly the definitions of the eight Jungian mental processes
- to define whole type and the importance of understanding its dynamic nature imbedded in each of the 16 four-letter type codes
- to emphasize that Myers' work opens the door to exploring the individuation process, and
- to caution against over-emphasis on the eight mental processes without feedback within the framework of whole type, which could lead to a misconception that MBTI type is simply an addition of separate pieces.

Isabel Myers' mission was to give individuals access to the benefits of knowing their psychological type. Her addition of the J/P dichotomy enabled accurate identification of the auxiliary function and expanded Jung's eight types to 16 dynamic type systems. Her focus included accurate identification of type, the hierarchy of the mental processes within a type, type dynamics, and type development. She also provided us with a doorway into a deeper understanding of Jungian psychology, the psychology of individuation.

It is this dynamic and fluid nature of whole type, and its inherent map for

life-long development, that separates the MBTI from other behavior-based personality instruments that are quickly becoming popular. As practitioners, if we do nothing more than explain how we move in and out of the extraverted and introverted mental processes in our type code, and provide people with the corresponding definitions of the dominant and auxiliary mental processes, than we have done a lot to foster the notion that type does not limit us or put us into neat categorical boxes. We will have imparted what the MBTI was meant to do: to lead us to a better understanding of the holistic nature of our psychological type.

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