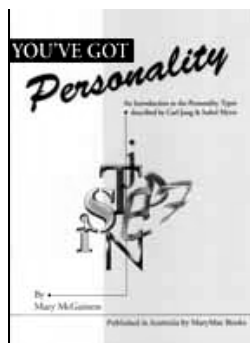


# Off *the* shelf

## A look at books



Mary McGuinness

### **You've got personality:**

*An introduction to the personality types described by Carl Jung and Isabel Myers*

Epping NSW: MaryMac, 2004

Reviewed by

Philip L Kerr

**Philip L Kerr** is an avid collector of type descriptions and consults them often when writing type profiles for the *Australian Psychological Type Review* and *TypeFace* (UK).

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I'm a sucker for type descriptions. In fact, it was a type description that first got me hooked on type: a roneoed transcript from Stephen Moss's *Introducing Type* (1988):

I am a deep creative thinker, possessed with a desire to understand the universe.

As I read that first sentence of the INTP description, I felt a shiver down my spine. How did they know *that*? Yes, I *do* desire to understand the universe, literally: for my 8th birthday I relished the gift of *The How and Why Wonder Book of the Stars*.

A good type description can demonstrate, powerfully and convincingly, the validity of personality type. And there are many good type descriptions around.

To start at the very beginning ('because that's a very good place to start'), Jung's *Psychological Types* offers incisive and comprehensive descriptions of his types—but these number just eight, being based on dominant function-attitudes only (so that, for example, the types we now call ISTJ and ISFJ are bracketed together as Jung's 'introverted sensing' type).

In *Gifts Differing* Isabel Myers draws on Jung with descriptions of his eight types, capped off with surprisingly brief narrative on her two variants of each Jungian type. Isabel was also the original author of the type descriptions in the MBTI report form, the *MBTI Manual*, and the *Introduction to Type* booklets from the MBTI's publisher, Consulting Psychologists Press.

Beyond those 'authorised versions' there are popular books such as David Keirsey's *Please Understand Me*, and Otto Kroeger and Janet Thuesen's *Type Talk*. Booklets, too, from Alan Brownsword, Linda Berens and Dario Nardi, Jenny Rogers and many others. You can also access descriptions online at [keirsey.com](http://keirsey.com), [bestfitype.com](http://bestfitype.com) and [personalitypage.com](http://personalitypage.com).

To that impressive array we can add one more set of type descriptions and framing explanatory material: Mary McGuinness's *You've Got Personality* (MaryMac, 2004).

A declaration of interest: I know Mary well. We were members of AusAPT's national committee together. But I'm also an INTP who (says the *MBTI Manual*) 'approach[es] almost everything with skepticism.' Maybe there's a balance of sorts there.

*You've Got Personality* is a 44-page A4 booklet. The title comes from Lloyd Price's 1959 hit—aptly, as Mary is a fan of 1950s rock'n'roll, sometimes seen at the annual Elvis Festival in Parkes.

The booklet comprises 9 pages of general introduction to type, plus descriptions of each of the 16 types (two pages each). The introductory section covers the MBTI dichotomies, Jung's function-attitudes and temperaments, from the perspectives of *differences*, *development*, *communication* and *stress*. Here, as in her subtitle, Mary gives shared credit to Jung and Myers.

The introductory section includes two self-typing checklists: a quick one on the first page, inviting the reader to tick E or I, S or N, etc, against one-sentence descriptions of each preference; then a longer version over the page, with lists of 10 behaviours related to each preference. This is useful in encouraging the reader to interpret and apply what they've read—and if (as often occurs) their self-assessed preferences match those indicated by the instrument, their confidence in the validity of type is boosted.

Some writers advise steering clear of type dynamics when introducing type, as it may be confusing. Mary, however, takes only three pages to get to type dynamics. In my view, she deserves to be commended for not shying away from this powerful deeper layer of type theory.

I like this book: it really has 'got personality'

Now, on to the 16 type descriptions. Mary says that these were compiled from the thousands of workshop participants she has trained over 16 years. Each type is presented on facing pages, starting with *strengths* and *potential difficulties*; moving on to *communication, relationships and learning*; then *work, careers, team roles and leadership style*.

Next *stress* is covered, then *leisure and recreation* (an interesting section, giving examples of the activities, books, films, etc that appeal to the type). A summary of the type's *development* through childhood, adolescence, early adulthood and midlife concludes each description.

In its style *You've Got Personality* steers a middle course between the colour and whimsy of Keirse's and Kroeger's type descriptions, and the 'type-by-numbers' bullet-pointed flatness of others that are plainly pitched at the corporate market. That's a sound tactic: these descriptions should appeal both to those who prefer a systematic sequence in the descriptions of each type, and those who want something a little more rounded and idiosyncratic.

For me, the acid test for any set of type descriptions is its description of *my* type. (The descriptions of *other* types may well be lucid and engaging, but I have no way of judging whether they are accurate.) So, what does Mary say about INTPs?

*INTPs are reserved, analytical, conceptual, lateral thinkers. That sounds like me. They like to spend a lot of time alone. True (not all of the time, though). They value truth and knowledge, and need autonomy and intellectual freedom. Yeah, the story of my life—and of a few job changes.*

And so it goes on, hitting mark after mark. *INTPs like listening to others discussing*—as in the Radio National series where Peter Porter picks a period in history and he and Clive James talk for 30 minutes non-stop, sparking off each other, scattering literary allusions like confetti, each implicitly aiming to impress with sheer bloody cleverness. *INTPs find small talk irrelevant. As author Nick Earls suggests, 'It shouldn't be called small talk, it should be called long talk.'*

In relationships, Mary suggests that INTPs want freedom, support and understanding. Understanding might be too much to hope for, as I've only ever met one person who understands INTPs, Meredith Fuller—and she's already spoken for (*hi, Brian*). So I'll settle for the love and acceptance I've enjoyed for 30 years now, as of this month.

The only element that doesn't work for me is the tertiary function. The experts are split on whether the tertiary is in the *same* attitude as the dominant (the 'in, out, in, out' model—which sounds more Freudian than Jungian) or the *opposite* attitude. Depending on which school you subscribe to, the INTP's tertiary is either *introverted sensing* (Si) or *extraverted sensing* (Se): two very different functions.

In my teens and twenties I developed a heightened awareness of sensations—colours, sounds and tastes (and no, this was not due to anything I was smoking). I took up photography and—after growing up oblivious to the sounds of the Sixties—music (listening and playing). This sounds to me like *extraverted sensing*. INTP Peter Geyer has similarly asserted, in this *Review* and elsewhere, that *his* tertiary is Se, too.

Mary, however, follows Harold Grant (and her mentor, Margaret Hartzler) by listing *introverted sensing* as the INTP's tertiary. Earlier, Mary notes that Myers believed that the tertiary develops in the same world as the auxiliary (Se for INTPs), but 'more recent research'—presumably Grant's unpublished work—suggests that it develops in the same world as the dominant (Si).

Apart from the contrary tertiary, the INTP description fits me to a T (and to an N). I'd rate *You've Got Personality's* descriptions 9 out of 10. Despite its quirks in the copy editing—the occasional 'greengrocer's apostrophe', for example—I like this book: it really *has* 'got personality.'

There are many type descriptions on the market, each with its pros and cons. The last time I ran an MBTI workshop I opted for a set of descriptions that speaks with an Australian accent, and handed out *You've Got Personality*. Why don't you consider doing that, too? ❖