

Roots and Branches: Multiple Models of Type

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I believe type espouses a number of models which complement each other nicely. The "ethics quest" of type suggests that we should welcome into our home (at least as visitors) all models that further that quest. In looking at multiple models of type, it seems to me that there are five basic touch-points:

1. The ethics quest
2. The type family
3. The need for multiple models
4. Using multiple models
5. Philosophical roots

The Ethics Quest

What's the ethics quest? A *tree* metaphor provides a nice example.

a) The **trunk** of the tree is the 16 types. It's often what's most visible or obvious to us. The tree is not a tree without it. (It's a shrub.)

b) The **branches** are the various models that can be used to explore the 16 types. They reach out to people in various ways, producing various fruits. And they are hidden by the multitude of qualities of the 16 types (the tree's *leaves*.)

c) Finally, the tree's **roots** are the ethical imperatives that transport water and life to the tree. I believe that Hippocrates' original oath to 'do no harm' is one root. Isabel Myers' 'gifts differing' is another: that we bring different gifts into the world, and using our gifts brings peace and happiness. A third root is David Keirse's admonition against the "Pygmalion project" - we cannot and should not force other people to change.

There may be other roots. While I haven't read enough of Jung to know whether or not he ever stated a moral imperative, I suspect it has something to do with multiplicity and trust in the unconscious. Or perhaps not.

I believe these roots form the foundation of type. Without it, the type tree perishes.

Which models are qualified to join the ethics quest? Or which ones are on their way? I understand people use a number of models. I myself am not familiar with all the models people use, so I mention here only the ones I am familiar with.

Looking at the models we already use, I believe that a model can join the type family by:

- being presented in a way that is consistent with the ethics quest.
- being reframed to be compatible, at a theory level, with existing models in the type family.

The Type Family

I was first introduced to type via *Please Understand Me* and then again in *Gifts Differing* when I went for MBTI qualification. Thus, I think of type as a family that includes these separate models, in no particular order:

1. The four-letter code
2. The 16 *whole type* patterns
3. The 8 *Jungian functions* in their attitudes
4. The 4 *temperaments*
5. Over the past eight years, I have added some additional models, namely:
6. The 24 *survival games* (Eve Delunas; she groups them by temperament)
7. The 4 *interaction/social styles*
8. The 8 *archetypes*, as presented by John Beebe (and Linda Berens)
9. I've also devised two of my own models to better deal with aspects of personality not sufficiently explained to me:
10. Eight *life-themes* (to explain flavors within each type)
11. A theory of *temperament development* (people's attitudes and beliefs about universal human questions than transcend type.)

Some of these may not feel like different models to some of you. After all, for example, the 4-letter code was conceived from theories about the 8 Jungian functions! So there must be some criteria besides the ethics quest:

- Can the model be presented without referencing another model?
- Does the model use a different coding scheme? (That is, does it have unique categories)
- Does the model address or emphasize a different part of the personality?

Thus, temperament for example is not the same as the four-letter code because it meets the criteria for being a separate model - temperament can be presented by itself. (Whether it should or not is a different story.) It uses a different coding scheme and unique categories (4 names as opposed to eight letters) and it emphasizes a different part of the system of type (needs and values.)

However, temperament fits or interlocks with the four-letter code when both are presented in terms of the ethics quest; and, because both complement each other, there is a match or congruence between four groups of four types, and the four temperaments.

One interesting question: who's the head of the type family? If any?

The short answer is that the head of the family is the 16 types, and I believe that all the other models are elaboration. I say this because the level of 16 is the finest level of definitions before things get really murky.

Another answer is that the type family is like solving a Rubik's Cube. To 'find' the system that is type, we have to solve the cube, looking at all the models at once. This means that type is open to change and evolution, since there is no clear beginning or end (except in a historical sense), and that the 'head' of the type family is changeable or perhaps fuzzy.

The Need for Multiple Models

Why use more than one model? Why not just reference the 16 whole-type patterns and forget the rest? Here are some reasons:

- Each model addresses a different level, so we miss information. Even though 16 types might be the core model (or the closest to the type core), it doesn't explain everything about personality.
- People often need multiple perspectives in order to get at where they are, in even one model.

- It's good for business. (Being inclusive by allowing other perspectives means more people in the type community.)
- It's part of the ethics quest to honor multiple perspectives.

In doing research with students, I've observed some interesting statistics. For example, I administered the MBTI to students, then before they received feedback, I introduced temperament and I also separately did the four-letter code self-select.

Of more than 100 students, about half went on over the course of an academic year to discover their 'best-fit' type as part of a series of web-based extra-credit assignments. I then looked back to see how their initial responses to the MBTI, temperament and four-letter code self-select matched with their final best-fit type.

I repeated a similar process in a number of other smaller studies (15 to 20 students each) and saw the same patterns. I worked hard at helping the students get at their true types, because I saw the value if I was interested in understanding multiple models.

- An exact match between the initial fit with one model and the final best-fit type occurred maybe 45% of the time. (For example, an ENFP was still an ENFP.)
- There was a match in three of the four letters about 30% of the time. (For example, an INFP decided on ENFP.)
- There was a two out of four match 10% of the time. (For example, an ESTP claimed ENFP.)
- There was a one out of four match 10% of the time. (For example, an ISTP claimed ENFP.)
- 5% of the time the initial type and the final best-fit type were opposites.

Thus I came to the conclusion that a response to a particular model was one data point only. And that *multiple* data points were likely to be quite helpful. I borrowed from mathematics some ideas about 'reconstruction analysis'¹ and theorized that three data points are a good minimum, and that more are useful, although there may be a law of diminishing returns operating after some point. I also found that if I took the results from the initial data points (MBTI, temperament, 4-letter code self-select) and found a mathematical best fit, that I arrived at the students' final best-fit far more often than any one data point on its own.

¹ *Reconstruction analysis* is a framework from information theory and fuzzy mathematics, and is not a statistics method.

Using Multiple Models

So, we have many models to choose from - but which should we use in which situations, and how? One answer is to find a common 'soil' to explain all the models, so that people don't just sit there receiving a bunch of disjointed theories. The soil can be *explicit* (you tell the participants), or *implicit* (only you, the facilitator, know the soil.) I find several 'soils' flexible enough to accomplish this and meet the ethics quest.

NLP/Ericksonian methods

Without realizing it, many of us already use type at the NLP level. NLP is a way of getting at human behavior at a purely *behavioral* or *experiential* level. For example, it concerns itself with sensory modalities (ways we do seeing, hearing, touching) and internal strategies (patterns and paths for how we process sensory information.) Why NLP?

Most descriptions or explanations of type are *abstract*. We might, For example, talk about make decisions using 'personal values', or "being open-ended", or "using metaphor" or preferring 'concepts and theories.' But these are not behavioral. For example, what tangible evidence do you use to decide when someone is being 'open-ended?'

For some people, it feels like there are tangible clues to work with, and that's it. For example, when a person tells us something we hear words and tone of voice, and then a cognitive assessment process beings. So, for many people, referencing what's tangible is a nice way to teach observational skills and help them 'see' type. I suspect that this is a very extraverted sensing approach.

There are also those people who report they can 'see' patterns and processes at the informational level, directly. However, what we have available to us is still only the external evidence of the person's personality and evidence of inner life, not their core self or own private internal experience: NLP also provides words and concepts for handling this level of information. I suspect that this is a very extraverted intuiting approach.

NLP also tells us what we can *do* with type once it's learned. NLP discusses modeling, rapport, outcomes, leading and pacing, and similar action steps that can be taken. Of course, you don't ever have to say the word 'NLP.' It can be something only you, the facilitator, are aware of, running in the background.

Systems Thinking

Systems thinking is a rich soil. 'Systems' includes the notion of multiple models! Systems also talks about patterns, processes, structures, and purposes. Purpose connects to ethics: even a lot of NLP is systems based at a deep level, and every good model goes through the 'systems' checklist to make sure it is a good, solid, clear model. Systems is as conceptual as NLP is behavioral, so they work together very nicely as well. While systems thinking doesn't have the same kind of 'tool box' as NLP, it does provide ways to see systems such as group dynamics, team development, and so on. It also provides many mathematical tools (which, sadly, most non-technical systems people are unaware of.) These tools assist in modeling, simulating, and analyzing complex behavior.

For example, in my classes I do a number of group activities created with systems principles in mind. Those principles can be used by the students to debrief and improve upon their experience. (I repeat or 'iterate' many activities, if even briefly.) I also provide simple software such as a dolphin pod or art colony, which they can tweak and intervene in to see systems principles from the outside.

I believe that knowledge of systems is a good foundation for a facilitator to be artful in presenting multiple models. Even as different models are presented, participants hear the same words and ideas, which helps prevent stereotyping and bias. Of course, the sophistication of the group and the amount of time and leeway in what the audience is expecting you to talk about is important.

The ethics quest

You can also talk about the ethics quest directly. Generally NLP and systems thinking are foreign enough to the people I teach (students) that they don't even begin to put up very much resistance - it's just too novel. On the other hand, presenting type in the soil of ethics suggests to me that the audience will need to buy in to the ethics as a pre-requisite. I have not presented type in terms of the ethics quest, although I do mention ethics.

Ethics does show up in people's type preferences and how people receive type, however, and I have incorporated this into some presentations. I'll just explore two cognitive processes here as examples: *Extraverted feeling*: When I hear people talking about how they 'relate' (or don't relate) to a model, whether it 'speaks to them' or not, I am usually hearing engagement of Fe. Asking how someone relates can add a positive sense of personal connection to an otherwise cold theory: people are personally touched. However, desire for connectedness and 'support' may also hinder learning and use if a person feels he 'can't relate' or if the model 'offends' (even if the model is 'true!') Accordingly, our presentation of models must be ethical and as inclusive as possible.

This again supports the notion of multiple models in terms of how we present type, to be inclusive of all perspectives.

Extraverted thinking: In contrast to Fe, use of Te disposes of the notion of relating, instead directly examining and impersonally applying the model. In my experience, using Te also tends to emphasize looking at the parts and the value of empirical data. 'If the data doesn't fit, change the model!' This may lead to new discoveries and greater accuracy, including new categories; or an inconsistent model; or, more often, several patchwork models that don't fit well together. One solution is to variously test the model, to find out what actually works.

This suggests how important it is to test the models we are working with, and be open to modifying or expanding our family of models.

Other Soils

Finally, there may be other soils appropriate to your audience. For example, I have presented type in an artificial intelligence class: I use computer metaphors; frame type as important to modeling cognitive processes in a computer; and so on. This involves a lot of analogizing, and occasionally the creation new materials, and even new 'mini-models' to work from. But it is quite rewarding, as the focus is not on type directly, which can make it less intimidating for some people.

Philosophical Foundations

The notion of multiple models isn't new. It arose as a response to the feud between 'realism' and 'constructivism.' Let's look at an example: *When a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it-does it make a sound?* There are two simple answers: *yes*, or *no*.

The 'no' answer comes from a belief that truth and reality are relative; that the act of observation by a person changes reality; and that truth and reality are constructed as part of an on-going social process. Other ideals like justice, love, and beauty are also constructed.

The 'yes' answer comes from a belief that reality, truth and various ideals exist independently of human beings, that absolute truth exists even if we can't find it exactly, and that forces like evolution weed out 'false', or at least 'useless', truths in an on-going physical process.

The situation gets murkier when we replace 'tree' with 'person' and 'makes a noise' with 'has a true type.' In my experience, most supporters of constructivism are social scientists and mathematicians, and most supporters of realism are physical scientists and engineers. And needless to say, I have noticed a relationship between type and these philosophical stances as well.

To solve this 'problem', *complementary* was born.

Complementary suggests that the answer to the question above is 'both' and 'neither.' This keeps with the 'realism' that there are multiple positions and 'objectifying process' espoused by realism, and it keeps with the constructivist position that truth is relative and we are constructing models.

The principle of complementary leads to the idea of "multiple models." Alas, there are many academics who do not buy in to complementarity, and many people seem to have a hard time juggling multiple models at once. It has become the new 'nature versus nurture.'

From my reading, I believe that Jung was aware of both of these positions, in his way, and thus would have supported the notion of multiple models.

Multiple models of type interlock without limiting, fit without contradicting. They work empirically, getting us closer to best-fit type, and getting best-fit type closer to true type. And they do that while keeping with the ethics quest.

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