

Inconvenient Observations: Questions on the Role and Attitude of the Third Function

The role of the third, or tertiary, function in type dynamics is pivotal for a number of reasons in the working of the psyche. Myers initial formulation, for example, proposes that if an individual's auxiliary is a perceiving function then so is the Third function, or if the auxiliary is a judging function so is the third mental function. This is to say that the perceiving or judgment dominant function may need a little extra psychological energy from the auxiliary and tertiary functions to effectively *serve* the dominant function (per Jung's suggestion, 1921/1971, paragraph 668). To give a specific illustration: an ENFP has a dominant Extraverted Intuiting function with the aid of an auxiliary Introverted Feeling, and according to Myer's type theory the third function would be Introverted Thinking, and fourth function is Introverted Sensing. Myers proposed that the third function was also in the attitude (Extraversion or Introversion) of the auxiliary (Myers and McCaulley, 1985, p.18). Note that Myers and McCaulley's theoretical perspective should not be seen as the final answer, as this model and its relation to Jungian personality type has *many* empirical and theoretical problems (which cannot be reviewed in this article as these far exceed the purposes of this exploration).

In recent years, a number of writers--Berens, Beebe, Nardi, and others-- have argued that the third function (S, N, T, F) is in the order as Myers proposed *with the exception* that it is in the same attitude (E or I) as the dominant function. In the case of the illustration above for the ENFP, the third function would be Extraverted Thinking. These writers have suggested that their conclusion flows from clinical observation of others and personal reflection on their own types. The proponents of this alternate model have been prolific and highly invested in their proposition to the point that many of their readers and listeners have adopted the model as a fact *without recognition* of this being a theoretical perspective (Berens, 2005; Beebe, 2007; Nardi, 2007).

The goal of this article is to explore the nature of the third function, which Jungian principles may be relevant, how Myers conclusions were reached, and several empirical considerations given some evidence on the nature of the tertiary function and its attitude. At the risk of upsetting those who may feel that these issues are settled, I propose that we have more questions than answers, and the questions are worth pursuing.

Why it matters

Practitioners who use personality type at deep levels (e.g., Leadership Coaching) are appropriately concerned about the nature of the third function for the simple reason that in their work with managers, these individuals are typically in a life-phase when the third and fourth functions are critical to their adaptation and effectiveness. For example, the ISTJ manager who was praised for efficiency (Si) and drive (Te) earlier in her career is likely to find these qualities less mission-critical for the role of executive where strategic perspectives (Ni), scenario thinking (Ni), and authenticity (Fi) as a leader are essential. The assignment of mental functions to these qualities is neither accidental nor taken lightly; how an individual may access these energies at different points in the life journey of an individual is very much at stake, depending on your view of type dynamics and the role the functions play in conscious and unconscious domains.

Jungian perspectives

Jung gives specifics regarding the attitude of all functions and the energy direction of the third and fourth functions. He wrote: “Apart from the qualities I have mentioned, the undeveloped functions possess the further peculiarity that, when the conscious attitude is introverted, they are extraverted and vice versa” (Jung, 1932, paragraph 908). The “they” of this quote is very much in question. Some Jungians feel that the dominant and auxiliary are in the same attitude and the tertiary and inferior in opposite attitudes (Gray and Wheelwright, 1946; Whitmont, 1969). Jung makes it clear that the four functions (S,N,T,F) are always present and at work within the psyche of the individual, and that a “superior” function is aided by a “complimentary” auxiliary function. The paragraph in which we explain this structure in the psyche is both essential to grasp and paradoxical, given Myer’s (and now the widely used form of) type dynamics. Jung wrote:

“Experience shows that the secondary function is always one whose nature is different from, though not antagonistic to, the primary function. Thus thinking as the primary function can readily pair with intuition as the auxiliary, or indeed equally well with sensation but never with feeling.....The auxiliary function is usefully only in so far as it serves the dominant function....the unconscious functions likewise group themselves in patterns correlated with the conscious ones. Thus, the correlative of conscious, practical thinking may be an unconscious intuitive-feeling attitude, with feeling under a stronger inhibition than intuition.” (Jung, 1971, 406-407) (Underlining for emphasis is mine.)

The importance of these principles for the third and fourth functions is multilayered. Jung specifically notes that a judging function is paired with a perceiving function and that this similar pairing is repeated in unconsciousness. He notes that the auxiliary serves the dominant and by parallel it would make sense that the third serves the fourth function, as the fourth is the most unconscious of functions and therefore the dominant energy force in the unconscious. Notice the speculative and tentative assertions as suggested by “may be” comments. We can speculate that he either didn’t want to say or simply wasn’t too interested in this exploration at that time. Nonetheless, he comments that there is a correlative structure in the unconscious self, and how that correlation is interpreted is very much at stake in understanding the third function. As will be suggested later, Jung leaves room for numerous interpretations of these principles, and did so throughout the course of his writings in his career.

Because it reflects on the complexity in the psyche that Jung repeatedly noted, it is important that he acknowledges that there are more “types” than those he has categorized with his system of attitudes and functions (Jung, 1923, paragraph 914). Jung references the “structure” of the functions in the unconscious, which we will explore later (Jung, 1971, p.405-407). These Jungian references are quite important as Myers’ extensive quoting of Jung’s writings indicates that she intended to look at psychological type within the context of Jung’s system as a whole (Myers, 1980). When we consider this proposition, all of Myers’ assumptions need to be viewed in light of the available evidence of Jung’s perspective.

Jung declares that an individual’s “habit” for Extraversion and Introversion permeates all of conscious awareness (Jung, 1971, p.540). This raises the perspective that in balancing

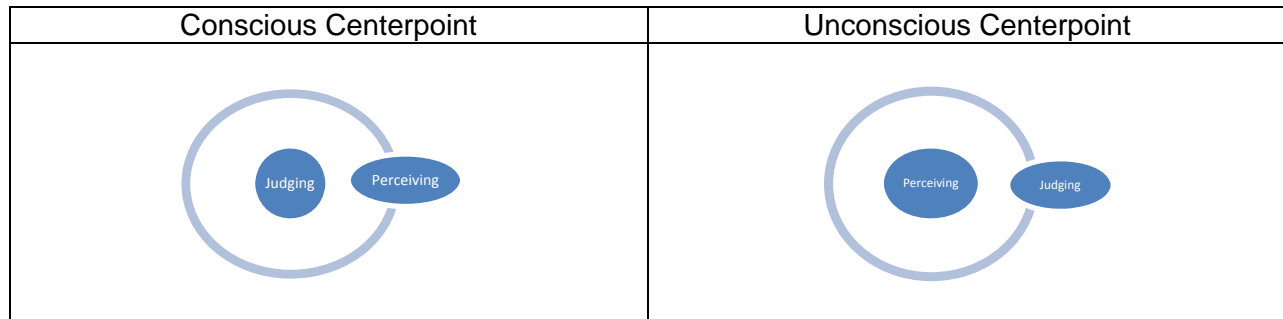
conscious and unconscious energy, the dominant function and its attitude are a huge weight on one side of the scale of conscious awareness and to achieve energy balance with the unconscious, a good deal would have to be going on in the un-(or semi) conscious processes of the individual. The energy requirements of a balancing psychic system led Myers to propose, in accordance with Jung's perspective as noted above, that the three functions differ from the dominant in the opposite attitude (Myers and McCaulley, 1985).

Because of the outcomes on the whole of type theory, a more subtle consideration in Jung's theory is the nature and role of psychological opposites, in which he clearly posits consciousness-unconsciousness, perceiving (S/N) and judging (T/F), but not Sensing as opposite Intuiting or Thinking as opposite Feeling. In fact, Jung sees Sensing/Intuiting as *irrational* ways of perceiving which are opposite Thinking/Feeling as *rational* ways of judging as psychological processes (Jung, 1971, p. 459). Jung goes to great lengths to define the four functions and when contrasting them, he does not refer to them as opposites but as different sides of two coins, one coin for perceiving and another coin for judging life experiences. This raises interesting possibilities for how we present and think about type dynamics. If for example, the fourth function is "opposite" (in Jungian terms) the dominant, consider that he really meant psychologically opposite functions and rather than an ENFP having an Introverted Sensing fourth function, it is a judgment function (Introverted Thinking) that is in the fourth position? Let me quickly add that Jung makes a passing conditional, non-committal statement that it is likely that the *most* inferior function of a Thinking type would be Feeling, but he quickly admits that while there is structure to the energy in the unconscious, this is to be explored territory.

Jung points out that the auxiliary is "always one whose nature is different from, though not antagonistic to, the leading function: thus, for example, thinking, as a primary function, can readily pair with intuition as auxiliary or equally well with sensation but never with feeling" (Jung 1971, p.515). Though it goes against convention in the way users of MBTI® tool approach type today, one could argue that if the fourth function is psychologically opposite in Jungian terms, then the third function would be closer to the dominant function's nature as irrational or rational processes. For example, as suggested earlier in Jungian terms the ENFP (as sorted by the MBTI® tool) might actually look as follows: Extraverted Intuition aided with Introverted Feeling, followed with Introverted Sensing and a fourth function of Introverted Thinking. All of this is central to the developing individuals, as Jung noted, "...the differentiation of the four orienting functions is, especially, an empirical consequence of typical differences in the functional attitude." Jung's observation is that the attitude of the function is of consequence within the psyche, and perhaps the attitude of the function is more important than its position order after the dominant function.

Jung's balancing psyche is a mixture of energies, conscious and unconscious, which have different centers of gravity. For the conscious energy, the ego is the center and for the unconscious, the shadow is the center of energy. Jung has given a structure of the conscious use of functions with the "superior" (dominant) and auxiliary functions. As noted above, he pointedly notes that, "The unconscious functions likewise group themselves in patterns correlated with the conscious ones" (Jung, 1971, p. 407). It is not a hard stretch to consider that if the superior function is judging aided with a perceiving function, and if the fourth function is

psychologically opposite the dominant in every way, then the primary unconscious function is perceiving and it would be aided with a judging process. If I take the language of opposites and balancing energies in the conscious and unconscious realms at face value, imagine the following as a structure:



To borrow an even older icon, consider the ying-yang in which the following is more representative of Jung's overall perspective of the psyche:

Unconscious "field" with a dominant energy which contains and is related to the opposite.



Conscious "field" with a dominant energy which contains the opposite.

Reflect on this in terms of a balanced energy system in which a dominant perceiving (larger white "field") needs an auxiliary judging (smaller circle) in consciousness while the dark part reflects the unconscious dominant judging function that needs a supportive perceiving function, or vice versa. This is more representative of the energy dance Jung proposes is at work within the psyche. In this framework we would need an entirely new lens on type dynamics in terms of what is third and inferior.

Given these basic principles, a reordering of the functions from the conventional way the functions play out is an entirely reasonable given Jung's propositions noted above. For clarity's sake, consider the following table and note that the fifth through eight are provided only in deference to current literature. Let us make no mistake that Jung felt there are four functions which are variously associated with two energy attitudes and not eight functions in quite the same way it is used today:

Type	Dominant	Auxiliary	Tertiary	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth
ISTJ	Si	Te	Ne	Fe	Se	Ti	Ni	Fi
ISTP	Ti	Se	Fe	Ne	Te	Si	Fi	Ni
ESTP	Se	Ti	Ni	Fi	Si	Te	Ne	Fe
ESTJ	Te	Si	Fi	Ni	Ti	Se	Fe	Ne
ISFJ	Si	Fe	Ne	Te	Se	Fi	Ni	Ti

ISFP	Fi	Se	Te	Ne	Fe	Si	Ti	Ni
ESFP	Se	Fi	Ni	Ti	Si	Fe	Ne	Te
ESFJ	Fe	Si	Ti	Ni	Fi	Se	Te	Ne
INFJ	Ni	Fe	Se	Te	Ne	Fi	Si	Ti
INFP	Fi	Ne	Te	Se	Fe	Ni	Ti	Si
ENFP	Ne	Fi	Si	Ti	Ni	Te	Se	Te
ENFJ	Fe	Ni	Ti	Si	Fi	Ne	Te	Se
INTJ	Ni	Te	Se	Fe	Ne	Ti	Si	Fi
INTP	Ti	Ne	Fe	Se	Te	Ni	Fi	Si
ENTP	Ne	Ti	Fi	Si	Ni	Fe	Fe	Se
ENTJ	Te	Ni	Fi	Si	Ti	Ne	Fe	Se

I can think of many cases of each of the sixteen types when this model is a better structure to understand their world view and intrapsychic descriptions than the traditional model which borders on dogma. For example, the ESTJ who describes dark, complex, negative scenarios (Ne) when in the whirl of considerable stress or INFPs who share that when stressed to the max their senses feel as though they will explode from hyper-stimulation (Se). The ENFP who develops a deep sense of incompetence and profound personal questioning (Ti) when ideas and possibilities have been rejected so consistently that they feel utterly bereft of making a contribution.

No less than the propositions I've outlined above (which will startle some readers), Myers entire system is built on a series of deductions and extractions of Jungian observations in combination with her data related to patterns and ways individuals behave in the world. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that her work is an amalgamation of concepts and ideas open to considerable discussion. A reasonable case can be made that Jung would see the fourth function as opposite the dominant in distinctive ways, meaning that judgment is opposite perceiving and what is conscious is opposite an unconscious attitude. Further, Jung seems to suggest that the unconscious functions do not serve the "superior" or dominant function but have more important matters to attend to in the unconscious arena of the psyche. He noted that the "...inferior functions are found in service of"...the *opposite attitude* of the superior function (Jung, 1973, p.426). In addition, users of type often forget that inferior or unconscious functions are inferior to consciousness ***not in inferior in strength*** in the psyche (Jung, 1971 p.450).

Jung sees that it is important for differentiation to occur among the functions or else we would not have types. He wrote that it is the habitual use of a function that sets a "definitive stamp on the character of the individual" (Jung, 1971, p.482). What is critical to understand is that the mental function used in a habitual attitude in consciousness is the source of the type; thus, the other functions work in the un-(or semi) conscious world of psychological energy.

And to this final theoretical point Jung suggests that a differentiating function is more likely to do so in the energy field (E or I) in which it resides (Jung, 1971, 405). Thus, if an individual is an extraverted type, then the other functions would be working in the introverted energy field, or vice versa. This would again suggest Myers formulation is closer to Jung's reflections on the importance of the balancing extraverted and introverted energies in the psyche.

Jung presents a complex system which looks at the whole of an individual's personality within the context of an individual's life-long journey. Too many "hard and fast" rules about how this system works would negate the Jungian insight that the psyche is about the dance of the unique Self to life's improvisational music. There are many points of view regarding Jung's intentions and underlying principles of how the psyche regulates itself. We are left with a variety of propositions and among them is the possibility that Myers was "right" on a number of key aspects of Jung's system and "wrong" on others. The codification of type functions and their order may run counter to the perspective of an evolving Self which is increasingly complex and transfunctional through learning from life experience. Jung concludes at one point that "...we could compare typology to a trigonometric set or better still, a crystallographic axial system..." (Jung, 1971, p. 555). Type is complex and profoundly connected to the whole person.

All of this matters, of course, when you reflect on assisting an individual with gaining type clarity and exploring how the developing psyche is dealing with life's challenges. For example, if a strategy to help an individual gain type clarity includes asking about times when prolonged stress leads to an eruption of the inferior function—thus by default revealing the dominant function—it matters if Myers formulation is correct or if the system has more variation than is explored in the literature.

Myers' Model

Isabel Myers was a studious and careful observer of behavior. Her tool was intended to tap into deeper psychological insights. She plainly stated that the purpose of the tool is to help people learn how to understand their psychological type as Jung proposed it existed. She evolved her model over time and spent the last twenty years of her life looking at the evidence of how the types were related to health patterns, career choices, and other human endeavors. Myers' formulation that development is contingent on confidence, stamina, low anxiety and low compensatory strain reflect that she knew that dynamics are complex and full of variation.

From an empirical perspective there is very little solid evidence to support the whole of her model or system (or Jung's model for that matter). There are abundant studies (9,000) that lend evidence to the presence of the preferences E, I, S, N, T, F, J, and P. The few studies that look at whole type are compelling, but even these can be reasonably argued as providing evidence for the blending of characteristics and at best the utility of the roles of the dominant and auxiliary processes as she proposed. Intellectual honesty requires that we remain open as to the need for more convincing evidence of the psychological system rather than about the preferences per se. There are studies that have shown adequate interpretations of MBTI® data that do not include Myers' dynamic perspective (Reynierse, J.H. and Harker, J.B., 2000, 2001).

Myers' system is compelling and provides a rich and efficient way to organize complex psychological processes. She appears to have relied on Jung's notion that the preferred attitude was pervasive in consciousness and the other functions worked within the unconscious (and therefore the opposite attitude of the dominant) realm of the psyche. The 1985 manual simply lists the mental functions and processes in order for the sixteen types and in her book *Gifts Differing* (1980) she states all four processes are used with the "two least-used processes remain relatively childish..."(p.183). From these observations and data she painstakingly

collected, Myers' descriptions of the types provide clues to the role of the third function in the same attitude as the auxiliary and fourth functions.

Using two contrasting type descriptions is informative. The following table summarizes both Myers' perspective and some current potential considerations for ENFP and ISTJ.

Type	Myers' Description	If 3 rd function in <u>same attitude</u> as dominant:	Consideration or Question
ENFP	Warm, imaginative, rely on ability to improvise, can find compelling reasons, attracted to counseling but may be inspired scientists	Warm, imaginative, improvise, decides by values, <i>demonstrates keen interest in objective data and likes to provide criticism in problem solving</i>	Myers descriptions of this type consistently suggest that ENFPs demonstrate an eagerness for possibilities, improvisation, energy in novelty and innovation and no mention of Extraverted Thinking behavior. If the Third is in the same Extraverted attitude, it is reasonable to expect some aspects of the function to be evident.
ISTJ	Dependable, solid accumulation of facts, thoroughness, orderly, logical, realistic, systematic, hard-working, patient with detail, focuses on finding pragmatic solutions.	Dependable, solid accumulation of facts, thoroughness, orderly, logical, realistic, systematic, hard-working, patient with detail, focuses on finding pragmatic solutions, <i>ignores the unacceptable, value upon the individual rather than the facts of a situation, adapts to the individual.</i>	Myers descriptions of this type consistently suggest that ISTJs demonstrate a passion for factual and logical problem-solving and concrete details and no mention of Introverted Feeling related perspectives or behaviors. Feeling is about ideals and values. In the Extraverted mode, Feeling focuses on achieving the ideal in the outer world while in the Introverted mode the focus is on authentic alignment.

In short, we can't have it both ways. We can't argue that the functions have (a) distinctive qualities with associated attitudes and when integrated in the dynamics of the type these are (b) indecipherable aspects of the type. While reviewing descriptions by multiple writers whose works have been published over the last thirty years there is nothing in the descriptions that suggests that the third function creates the kind of distinction suggested by those proponents of the same attitude as the dominant for the third function. This fact, however, is not sufficient to reject the proposition as many of the writers have adopted assumptions and propositions as presented by Myers.

Myers had good reason to propose her system given the data she had collected over decades of type watching. Jung's model had proposed a way of categorizing preferences for energy (E-I), information (S-N), decision-making (T-F), and the idea of a dominant and supporting dynamic among the perception-judgment processes which she set out to measure. To achieve an understanding of the dynamic of the type processes as *she understood Jung intended*, she created a measurement of orientation (J-P). Jung's more complex propositions about the role of unconscious forces exceeded the boundaries of Myers' tool. And it is precisely the importance of the third and fourth, and in time, all "eight type processes" which have evolved into the current perspectives on type development. The notion that we can gain clarity about our type and how we can appropriately use all type processes (Si, Se, Ni, Ne, Ti, Te, Fi, Fe) has become common place in the way type practitioners think of personality type.

It is important to make note that it is unlikely that Jung would approve of the notion that we can gain full conscious control over those aspects of our psychology which are inherently attending to unconscious energies. There is reason to believe that Jung saw that a shift from the ego—the seat of consciousness—to the Self—the unity of the personality as a whole in which there is integration of the opposites so that you become the true, authentic creative person you are capable of being as the driving force within the psyche (Jung, 1971, p.460). Anything that interferes with this shift and redirects attention to conscious ego control would be viewed as unhealthy. But to understand the importance of this proposition, you need to consider for what purpose all of this psychological energy is being expended, and with Jung, the goal is *individuation* and not conscious control over unconscious content (Jung, 1959, p.281), which is so ardently encouraged by many type practitioners when they argue that the functions can be brought into more conscious control and managed more deliberately.

For the reasons noted above, the third function and its essential nature is of vital importance to the user of personality type, and how it affects an individual's overall psychology is of no small importance.

One Slice of Evidence

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), headquartered in Greensboro, North Carolina, is the largest not-for-profit training center for managers and executives in the world. As a consequence of its status, CCL collects more data on managers than any institution world-wide. CCL is generous with providing data for research and analysis. CCL allowed a study that sampled 150 of each of the sixteen types from the CCL database in which all associated multi-rater ratings, personality tools, interpersonal style assessments, and other demographic variables were analyzed (Pearman and Fleenor, 1996).

While the analyses revealed statistical differences among the sixteen types that are as Myers' type theory would suggest, additional analyses were computed but not published at that time. For example, the California Personality Inventory was used in the study and among the many findings, two are illustrative. INTJs scored the highest on Independence and ISTJs scored the highest on Self-Control of all the sixteen types. A reasonable proposition is that the scores on these two scales, if ordered from highest to lowest scores, would be reflected in the order that these functions occur in each of the types. For example, INTJ and INFJ types would have Ni

first and have the highest scores on Independence. ENTJ and ENFJs would use Ni in a secondary position and their scores on Independence would be next, and so forth. A parallel proposition is proposed for Self-Control scores and the placement of Introverted Sensing (Si) for each of the types.

Those who know type dynamics as Myers has proposed would not be surprised by these findings (as well as others about which any comprehensive report exceeds the length of this article by hundreds of pages.) Due to page limitations, one independent variable (Self-Control scores from the CPI 434) are summarized in the following table. Interestingly, when you line up the types from Highest to Lowest on Self-Control, the order shows the relationship of the dominant function of these two types to the hypothesized dynamic of the type. The types with their mean scores on the CPI 434 scales are listed in order:

Self-Control Scores by type	Associated Function Position with Traditional Type Dynamics Formula
ISTJ (54.1)	Si -- Dominant
ISFJ (53.1)	Si – Dominant
ESFJ (51.7)	Si -- Auxiliary
INFJ (51.4)	Si -- Eighth Position
ESTJ (51.3)	Si – Auxiliary
INTJ (50.8)	Si – Eighth Position
ISFP (50.7)	Si – Sixth Position
ISTP (50.1)	Si – Sixth Position
ENTJ (50.1)	Si – Tertiary
INTP (49.4)	Si – Seventh Position
ENFJ (48.79)	Si – Tertiary
INFP (48.6)	Si – Seventh Position
ESTP (48.1)	Si – Fifth Position
ESFP (47.8)	Si – Fifth Position
ENFP (46.52)	Si – Fourth Position
ENTP (45.9)	Si – Fourth Position

A similar table can be generated for a number of other variables and the mean score of the types on those scales. This pattern seems to suggest that an independent variable (e.g. Self-Control) is reported in a pattern similar to Myers' perspectives on the dominant and auxiliary of type dynamics but shaky evidence related to the nature of the third and fourth functions. One data analysis does not make a proof; however, it raises the possibility from an empirical perspective that Myers observed patterns and proposed dynamics is close to what is working within the individual.

What to do

As users of psychological type our best strategy is to observe, explore, collect data and share rigorous analysis on those data. We may never be able to get comfortable that a definitive answer is evident regarding the third and fourth functions (much less the sixth through eight

functions embedded in the psyche of each of us if current literature is to be taken seriously). I am confident that the question remains open and we must be careful not to codify and accept dogma about a slippery set of propositions, especially if this would direct attention away from the primary importance of type as a step toward understanding the integrity of the individual and unleashing the full creative potential of individual psychology. From a practitioner's perspective, our healthiest approach to understanding type dynamics is to begin with a simple hypothesis about the dominant and auxiliary working within an individual and to invite exploring the rest as a discovery of Self.

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