

# CAREERS AND OCCUPATIONS

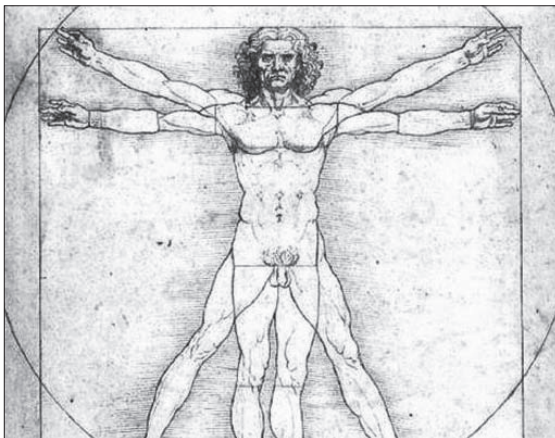
## TYPE AS PART OF THE WHOLE

### CHRISTINE RIGDEN (INFP)

#### Type as Part of the Whole

“The whole is greater than the sum of the parts” applies especially to humans. In all aspects of Coaching, I have found the model of ‘personality type’ hugely valuable.

Working with Type awakens a greater depth of awareness of the client’s source of psychological energy and how they interact with others. But it is not the only area on which to focus as one coaches, or even when helping a client to discover their best-fit Type. ‘Who we are’ is made up of many parts and influences, such as:



- Personality type
- Personal values
- Interests and motivators
- Natural gifts and aptitudes
- Personal strengths
- Environment (family, school, culture and life experiences)
- Learned skills

The first five aspects are within us. Next is the environment in which we grow – which of course influences the development of the inner aspects of who we are, as well

as our choices in life. Our skills are then built (consciously or unconsciously) on the opportunities offered by our environment and inner preferences.

#### Personality type

Personality type seems to me to be the underlying structure of ‘who we are’ as people, holding all the other aspects together. As with a seedling, Type will grow and develop. Our environment may influence our Type towards deformity or strength. But even a bonsai expert cannot turn an oak tree into a pine tree.

When I first do Type with a person, the client is usually astonished at the accuracy of the description – “spooky!” is a frequent comment. For some, finding their ‘best fit’ Type is more of a struggle. But though clarity takes longer for some to discover, the understanding it brings explains so much. When someone discovers, as it were, that they are tall and were trying to be short, or are like an apple tree that is required to grow grapes, then he or she can recognise and deal with issues and conflicts arising much more easily. It also brings insights to the challenges of working with others who have a totally different perspective.

#### Personal values

Personal values are what we consider important, what matters in our lives. It is at the heart of our identity as individuals, and should be an important part of the toolset in the foundation stages of coaching. Even those clients who don’t have Introverted Feeling (Fi) as one of their conscious functions, values are still a key factor shaping their choices. Some values may be universal or cultural, but each person will also have a set of personal values.

I recommend working with clients to discover their five most important values. Then explore with them the extent to which each value is present in the client’s life,



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which they should rate in terms of marks out of ten. Once current reality is established, have the client imagine how life would be different if this value were present 10 out of 10. From there, they can determine what small, specific changes could improve the present rating.

### Interests and motivators

Our interests and motivators influence the way in which we interact with the world around us. They are of key importance in exploring the direction we want in life. Someone may have a natural aptitude for engineering and be able to learn the necessary skills. But if that is not where her interest or values actually lie, she may find herself drained and de-motivated in an engineering job, as if suffocating. On the other hand, if she is really interested, then lack of natural aptitude need not stop her from pursuing it as a career. She may in that case have to find alternative routes and to work extra hard for what she wants.

### Gifts and aptitudes

Gifts and aptitudes are the things for which we seem to have a natural ‘knack’ and which may be basic or developed. The skills we choose to encourage are often (but not always) based on our natural aptitudes. Traditional ‘careers advice’, especially in school, seems to focus on aptitudes and skills – surface considerations. Gifted individuals, who can do many things, may easily end up in an unfulfilling career.

Natural aptitude perhaps has some relation to Type, but by no means a direct correlation. It may also be influenced by genetic factors and background. Understanding their personality type (along with values and motivators) can help a client discover what aptitudes and options they are drawn to, and what will be meaningful and fulfilling at a deeper level.

### Personal strengths

Our personal strengths are a central part of our character. Our inner strengths come from responding to challenges, growing stronger within ourselves, and learning to make better choices. I believe we have more control over our strengths than over any other aspect of who we are – which isn’t to say that development is easy!

All Types can develop their character strengths, although the best examples of each Type will vary from each other to some extent. Likewise all Types are susceptible to their own particular flaws and difficulties, resulting in different challenges for each Type.

### Environment (Family, School and Culture)

Environment is separate from who we are, but a major influence, as the environment is for our body or for any living thing. The person we are allowed to be as children – or have to be, to survive – influences our self perception and development.

An oak tree grown in a bonsai pot or on a windy hillside looks very different from one that grows in an ideal environment. What an ‘ideal environment’ is will vary for different trees as it does for different Types. But environment will never turn an oak tree into a pine tree, however much it distorts.



Coaching is more about future than past, but awareness of the impact of environment is important because of the huge role it plays in our sense of Self.

### Skills

As we know from training and experience, skills can be learned. Anyone can pretty much do anything they choose to work at. So I see skills as separate from our intrinsic personality.

The reasons we choose to work at a skill are varied. It may be that we learn a skill to try and please someone else, or because it’s fun, or a means to live out our values. Certain skills come more easily to some individuals than to others, and this is in part due to Type.

As with aptitudes, mere skill is not solid basis for choosing years in a particular career.

**Pulling it all together**

The client is given so much more power for self understanding and for making good choices, when they have a good grasp of the role that personality type has in their life. It also gives the coach insights for understanding the client, which in turn improves the ability of the conversation to be open.

Type gives a strong, coherent framework for making sense of and giving direction to all the other factors that make up who we are as individuals.

However, being more aware of the influence of values, motivators, strengths and environment will enable Type practitioners to be more astute when they help their clients clarify best-fit Type, even if that is the only contact the Type practitioner has with the individual client. If the Type is not a good fit, most of that potential value is lost.

**Resources:**

Craig, M & Edmonds, K. (2004) *Firework Career Coaching Programme*. Brighton, UK: Firework Coaching Company Ltd. [www.fireworkcoaching.com](http://www.fireworkcoaching.com)

Kise, J & Stark, D & Hirsh, S. (1996) *Lifekeys: Discovering who you are, why you're here, what you do best*. Minneapolis, MA: Bethany House Publishers.

Hartzler, G & Hartzler, M. (2005) *Functions of Type: Activities to develop the eight Jungian functions*. Huntington Beach, CA: Telos Publications.

**NETWORK FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPE  
AND CHRISTIAN FAITH CONFERENCE**

**NOVEMBER 9-10, 2009.**

*John Lloyd, Coordinator for Religion and Spirituality writes:* Readers may be interested to know of this Network, which organizes an annual two-day residential conference. The 2009 Conference will be at St Deiniol's Library, near Chester, November 9-10. This year's theme is *Psychological Type and Prayer*. For more information contact John at [lloydjb@btinternet.com](mailto:lloydjb@btinternet.com) or the Network convener, Tania ap Sion, at [tania.ap.sion@st-deiniols.org](mailto:tania.ap.sion@st-deiniols.org)