

Merve Emre, The Personality Brokers: The Strange History of Myers-Briggs and the Birth of Personality Testing (Random House, 2018).

Introduction: Speaking Type

-“To investigate the history of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the most popular personality inventory in the world, is to court a kind of low-level paranoia. Files disappear. Tapes are erased. People begin to watch you.”

-details being seven months pregnant in the fall of 2015 and trying to get at the archives of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton

-the long-time publisher of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) was also the first publisher of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the first institution to try to determine its scientific validity in the 1960s

-details all of the road blocks she's come across attempting to research this book, particularly from the Center for Applications of Psychological Type (CAPT), a non-profit that Isabel Briggs Myers started just before she died, and from the University of Florida just down the road that held her papers and maintained a requirement of permission from CAPT to access

-after nine months of waiting to hear about her application to access the papers at the university, the author was told she had to prove her commitment to Myers-Briggs by undergoing a nearly two-thousand-dollar, four-day Myers-Briggs accreditation ('re-education') program

-the leader of the session said her goal was to get the group to "speak type fluently" which meant that you could discuss who people really are according to a questionnaire that assessed one's personality along four dimensions of ordinary human behavior: extraversion (E) and introversion (I); sensing (S) and intuition (N); thinking (T) and feeling (F); and judging (J) and perceiving (P)

-the questionnaire contained ninety-three items and would lead to one of sixteen possible four-letter combinations that would reveal your true self

-these categories are said to be based on Carl Jung's work, particularly his 1921 book *Psychological Types*

-it was stressed that one must never refer to the type indicator as a 'test' -it was a 'self-reporting instrument' or an 'indicator'

“The final rule of speaking type was, to my mind, the most important and the most unsettling: you had to conceive of personality as an innate characteristic, something fixed since birth and immutable, like blue eyes or left-handedness.... There was a certain narcissistic beauty to the idea, a certain luminance to the promise that, by learning to speak type, we could learn to compress the gestures of our messy, complicated lives into a coherent life story, one capable of expressing both to ourselves and to others not just who we were but who we had been all along. What type offered us was a vision of individual identity in its most transcendent and transparent form.”

-at the end of the four-day workshop the CAPT informed the author that based on her performance there they had decided not to allow her into the archives

-as to what they had to hide, describes how it is well-known that the type indicator is not scientifically valid and for some time critics of typological thinking have said it promotes "liquidation of the individual," convincing people of their status as rounded and exceptional being but doing so by flattening human behavior into a static, predetermined set of traits

-this flattening people into simplified types is why it is so popular with powerful institutions, which use type to hire, fire, and promote employees

-“Under the rule of type, the labeling of live human beings emerged as one technique for annihilating individuality—for treating people as interchangeable, and sometimes disposable, parts of an unforgiving social whole. Type was, in short, one of the bluntest and best-disguised tools of modernity: a wolf in sheep's clothing.”

-Myers-Briggs continues to be incredibly popular and many people credit it with changing their lives

-Katherine Cook Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, were among the first to perceive how hungry the masses were for simple, self-affirming answers to the problem of self-knowledge. As proud wives, mothers, and homemakers with no formal training in psychology or psychiatry, they believed they could craft a language of

the self that was free from judgment and malice; free from the coldness and impassivity that, in their minds, characterized the attitudes of professional clinicians.”

-“As I have pieced together the strange, bewitching lives of Katharine and Isabel, I have come to see that, implicit in the story of their lives, is an answer to my question about why we might speak the language of type with such a strong sense of purpose. Type, to borrow a phrase from French philosopher Michel Foucault, is a **modern technology of the self: a system of personal interrogation that is as committed to self-discovery as it is to self-care**. Learning one’s type is a portal to an elaborate practice of talking and thinking about who you are, a discourse of self-understanding in which words like “extravert” and “introvert,” “thinker” and “feeler” forge a common language for reflection and for acceptance of both yourself—the true you—and others.”

-“As a technology of the self, the language of type does not just liquidate the individual. It liberates her too. Armed with a powerful vocabulary of self-consciousness, unshackled from conventions and inertia, she begins to understand herself—her personality—as the master and the arbiter of her destiny.”

-to learn how to speak type is to harness the ability to know and minister to people, an inward gaze that people once looked to religious institutions and religious authorities to provide

-type sought to converge the mystical and the modern, finding what Jung called a 'more perfect type of man' -a man whose knowledge of himself directly serves the ends of society and its institutions

-author says that she struggled throughout the book to not use the language of type, especially as she saw her baby develop personality, and she found that it hard to maintain the skeptic stance she had started with, she had found a will to believe inside of her that she had not thought possible at the beginning

PART ONE

Chapter One: The Cosmic Laboratory of Baby Training

-Katharine Elizabeth Cook, co-creator of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, was born on January 3, 1875 in East Lansing, Michigan

-her father, Albert J. Cook, was a professor of zoology and entomology and one of the first educators in the US to embrace the theory of evolution while her mother was deeply religious and cared little for the science of man

-during her education at Michigan Agricultural College, Katharine confessed "I think science may lack the data that the soul possesses" adding "Being impersonal and objective, science cannot be expected to bring matters home to us"

-Katharine strongly believed that the salvation of man came in cultivating the personality to mimic a high order, that the lower order of humans without cultivation of their personality were closer to the higher animal than to higher orders of men

-details her marriage and birth of her children, a girl in 1897 and a boy in 1899, with the second one dying at the age of one year old and then another boy dying in very early infancy in 1901

-after these two deaths Katharine began her experiments in personality with Isabel, her only remaining child

-Katharine believed that children needed to be directed towards specialization as well as learn to submit to necessary authority and discipline of ambition in order to become civilized adults

-discusses the question of the impact of nature versus nurture in child raising, whether a child comes as a blank slate and the parent can mold them into who they become or if natural talents, penchants, tendencies or abilities play a role

-the early 1900s saw a rise in the argument that children are conditioned into what they become and that mothers had a particular power over the development of a child

-Katharine was determined to be a leader among the twentieth century's new class of professional mothers, running psychological experiments on raising properly developed children both on Isabel and the children of neighbors whose parents sought her advice

- Katharine would send a monthly questionnaire to the mothers of the children she had as test subjects, asking them to gauge where their child was developing along the Obedience-Curiosity scale, with Obedience being the ultimate goal
- points out of how Katharine's views were in the spirit of the era, with Social Darwinism beliefs spreading that a society's path to perfectibility depended on modifying its offspring's personalities so that they had the strongest and the fittest individuals
- while Katharine believed that traits could be developed, she also believed that children had some natural tendencies, saying that just as every child could use their left and right hand, they had better ability in one over the other
- Katharine's theories and practices gained the attention of a writer at *McClure's Magazine*, who gave her a recurring column to write about her Obedience-Curiosity training method and the remarkable accomplishments she had with raising Isabel, a column that was picked up by many women's magazines of the day
- Katharine stopped the column when Isabel left for college, changing their relationship from trainer and trainee to collaborators, "an intimate ally in her pursuit of a better, more specialized social order"

Chapter Two: Women's Work

- details Isabel going to college and meeting her husband
- in the first summer of their marriage, as Isabel's husband was stationed at a nearby military flight camp for the final year of WWI, the personality types were used by her to discuss finding the ideal work position for an individual based on "different gifts" in their personality and abilities
- after a brief period of time flirting with the philosophy of socialism, Isabel returned to her mother's ideology of human progress and the need to cultivate the abilities of the elite and exceptional, and that the most urgent task facing society was to design the tools that would identify who these men were

Chapter Three: Meet Yourself

- describes Katharine's discovery of Carl Jung's work
- prior to getting into Jung, Katharine had already decided that mankind could be divided into four mutually exclusive categories of people: meditative, critical, sociable, and spontaneous and she had already spent some months drafting a book that explained her theory of types
- Jung argued in *Psychological Types* that the "souls of men" could be classified along three binaries: extraverted and introverted types, intuitive and sensing types, and thinking and feeling types
- Jung did not believe that empirical methods could help much in giving an adequate picture of the human soul, instead believing that literary, philosophical, and religious texts provided the best examples for his theories
- discusses how Katharine saw Jung as describing the soul of man and felt that God had led her to discover him in order to gain greater understanding of the mysteries of God's creation of man
- points out that introvert and extrovert in Jung's work meant things very different from what they have come to mean: an extrovert willing to accept objective conditions (like the fact it is cold outside) and take measures to deal with them (like put on a coat) while an introvert wishes to harden themselves to be able to endure any situation with their own resources, toughing the very fiber of their being
- extroverts were also very good at playing different roles as society demanded and paid little attention to their inner world whereas the introvert is constantly searching and perfecting true self
- Katharine's first article on the topic of types came out in the important decade after the English publication of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, a time when the public demand for psychological counsel far outstripped the resources available to feed it
- the article introduced the reader to Jung's 16 personality types and encouraged them to self assess which ones they most related to, giving them each a shade and encouraging readers to discover their own personal shades that represented them

-Katharine encouraged her readers to not see the unearthing of one's personality as some sort of strenuous science but rather to learn the types and use them to figure how they, their family and their friends have mixed the colours

-“Katharine’s personality paint box was literalized in the figure of a 2 × 2 box—the first and simplest type table, a precursor to the now famous 4 × 4 grid of the sixteen Myers-Briggs types. “One need not be a psychologist in order to collect and identify types any more than one needs to be a botanist to collect and identify plants,” Katharine comforted her readers, lest they felt intimidated by the specialized language she had used to populate her type table. One had only to learn to recognize the different characteristics of extraverted and introverted sensation, intuition, feeling, and thinking to determine which function served as “master” over one’s personality.”

-Katharine was obsessed with Jung, writing him several letters, penning fantasy novellas in which Jung played the hero to the lost and distraught, and rewriting the popular tunes "Song of the Vagabonds" into a hymn titled "Hail, Dr. Jung!"

Chapter Four: An Unbroken Series of Successful Gestures

-discusses the message of *The Great Gatsby* that showed personality to be malleable and something someone curated and presented to the world

-“In the early decades of the twentieth century, most psychologists drew a sharp distinction between character and personality, wherein the former connoted a stable, unified, and interior self and the latter the mutable expression of that self across different social circumstances....But in the fiction of the time, the very concept of having a personality was deeply, irretrievably entangled with the art of inventing and reinventing yourself as a compelling character—a quintessentially American art. ”

-Isabel used type to write her own novels, building a talent in creative writing that foreshadowed the character-building exercises she would direct people on after they learned their Myers-Briggs type, using the types they discovered to both build self-discovery and create self

-details Isabel winning a 1929 mystery writing competition that gave her a substantial cash prize, a publishing contract, and the admiration of her husband and the general public

-describes Isabel's pull between writing and the feeling that it was a woman's place to make a marriage successful and care for her husband and children full time so that they can make their own lives successful in business and education

-Isabel felt that all women naturally had the type within the feminine mind to be able to understand emotions better than logic and that the division between women and men was the division between creators of life and creators of civilization

-in the end she wrote one more book but had already decided to pour herself into her role as a wife and mother before it was even published to very poor reviews

Chapter Five: Desperate Amateurs

-discusses how Katharine turned her investigation into type to the task of amateur dream interpretation

-“Ethical concerns did not enter her mind, and there is no reason they should have; her ambitions predated the emergence of licensing and certification programs for psychologists by two decades. Even if she had wanted to remake herself as a professional, there was no way for her to do so. All Katharine thought about was the ease with which she could transform her cosmic laboratory of baby training into an institution of psychoanalytic care: the “Maker’s Cosmic Laboratory,” as she called it, differentiating her newer and loftier aspirations as a psychoanalyst from her more immediate goals as a mother.”

-Katharine felt that personality typing was more intuitive than Jung made it out to be, that you can start with an interpretation and use it as a working hypothesis until it is proven or disproven

- she soon grew tired of testing type on her family and neighbours and decided that she needed people whose souls were more crippled and more mysterious, a mystery for her to solve in order to drag them from their lives among "the primitive scum" of modernity and into an enlightened state
- describes a relationship, bordering on obsession, that Katharine formed with the daughter of one of her husband's co-workers, saying that her work with her in defining and trying to work on type was exactly what the American Psychological Association sought to prevent two decades later by laying out that no person should work in psychology beyond where they are qualified to and those who are working in psychology need to be very aware of the inadequacies of their own personality which may bias their appraisals of others or distort their relationship
- after many letters to Jung for advice on this matter he rebuked her for her intrusion in the young lady's life, saying that she shouldn't want to help, that she should only provide something that others can take or reject
- she defended herself by saying that it was a matter of Christian zeal and that with the aid of prayer she can know what is best for the other person because she is being guided by the Spirit
- however, Katharine did retreat from the young woman, from Jung and from the practice of analytical psychology altogether, retreating back to studying and writing on type

PART TWO

Chapter Six: The Science of Man

- discusses Jung's three week visit to Harvard as a part of the school's three-hundred-year anniversary and Katharine's determination to meet him, arranging ahead of time to have a private session to go over both her work and her dreams
- details the life of Henry Murray, director of the Harvard Psychological Clinic, Jung's friend, disciple, and former patient, whose work at the clinic had become the bedrock of American personality psychology that would bring Myers and Briggs the entry into the public realm of politics, business, and higher education that they needed to get as far as they did
- discusses Murray's relationship with Jung and how they both felt that they shouldn't be confined by the morals of the days and that truly knowing ones type allowed one to understand their own desires when it came to women and to open themselves up to having lovers and to entering into "adoration, adulation" of female patients and the female sex more generally
- details the work that Murray did with one of his lovers to create a theory of type, administering a Jungian questionnaire that was far more complicated than Katharine's to their friend group consisting of some of the East coast's whose who
- "Murray found his Jungian questionnaire to be as hit-or-miss as any of the questionnaires that had surfaced in the 1930s, many of them designed to identify subjects with neurotic or otherwise abnormal personalities: the Bernreuter Personality Inventory, the Thurstone Personality Schedule, the Woodworth Psychoneurotic Inventory. Murray's experiments led him to the dispiriting conclusion that all "questionnaires are always unreliable." "Subjects may intentionally misrepresent themselves," he reasoned. "They may be ashamed of what they consider their weaknesses, or they may want to ingratiate themselves with the experimenter. Or perhaps a subject has half-willfully dramatized himself as a certain kind of person, and he wants others to believe in the reality of his masquerade. But whatever the motive, the fact is he does not tell the whole truth as he knows it." Both he and Katharine had spent many years in the 1910s and 1920s designing questionnaires—he at his desk in Cambridge, she in her kitchen; he for New York's social and scientific elite, she for the mothers of children she trained; he with a man's easy access to elite institutions, she with a woman's awareness of her limited station in life. Now he sought an alternate approach to the standardized version of the soul generated by questionnaires."
- in order to get over this block, Murray and his lover Christiana Morgan went to see Jung and Jung told Morgan that women were divided into two types, those who create children and those who create men, and that it was her destiny to be the woman who helps Murray recognize the full extent of his abilities

- Morgan then created nineteen sketches of different dramatic scenes to show test subjects, asking them to name the lead character of the scene and then give a description of what is happening in the scene, and Murray would assume the test subject is seeing themselves as the lead character and the story they create an extension of themselves, testifying to the subject's personality in the form of an unconscious disclosure of self
- points out that this is very similar to a system that Katharine created to test the young subjects of her child care laboratory that the first started off with
- when Jung visited Harvard for the Tercentenary in 1936, Murray had become suspicious of the way he shamelessly flirted with women and made tactless and embarrassing overtures to his female patients as well as the rumors that Jung had visit Germany and consulted with Hitler
- Jung had to break his appointment with Katharine at the Harvard event but invited her to come seem him in New York, a meeting Katharine requested that Isabel come along to for moral support
- Katharine was inspired by her meeting with Jung and she decided that it was time to use type to understand someone bigger, more powerful, more important to the arc of history -turning her attention to Hitler

Chapter Seven: The Personality Is Political

- for Katharine, Hitler was a political go-getter, an excessive and unmitigated thinker who had a passion for both modernity and planning, which was fine so long as it was done under the control of morality based on Christian tradition but became a problem when modernity crowded out Christianity
- Murray, on the other hand, saw Hitler as feminine, weak, prone to womanly shrieks with a ladylike walk and awkward effeminate movements, totally unhinged with his emotions; it was a personal challenge of Murray's to try to understand how such a man rose to such power
- for Murray, Hitler's psychological profile was seen as essential to the war effort and he came to the conclusion that there were many different Hitlers, that he became the incarnation of the needs and cravings of which ever audience he was addressing and Hitler then used this ability to wield his personality to make the world over in his image
- “For both Katharine and Murray, then, the personality of Adolf Hitler had come to stand in for more properly political concerns about fascism: the centralization of authority, the rising tides of nationalism and ethnocentrism, the programs of mass deportation and genocide. In the cold light of historical retrospect, the easy slippage from the personal to the political might seem surprising. Or it might not. For even today, politics remains chained to discourses of personality in ways that are as crude as, if not cruder than, Murray’s assessment of Hitler. Most people want to like their democratically elected leaders or want them to be likable or, at the very least, presentable and polite—the kind of man you could invite over for a beer, the kind of woman who might read sweet stories to your children. Sometimes it seems that we are more shocked by violations of common courtesy than we are by unfair or oppressive policies. The politicization of personality is not wrong in any moral sense. It is simply the inevitable result of a modern democratic process that invites the people to imagine their elected officials as extensions of themselves—their representatives in a very literal sense. The body that Germans saw on display at dozens of rallies and speeches—the flabby muscles, the hollow chest, the ladylike walk—stood in not only for the nation’s public preferences but for its people’s private lives: their feelings of impotence, their discriminatory states of mind, the stories they had invented to explain the injustice of their place in the world.”
- the mission then became to break this connection, rob Hitler as his place as an icon of the German nation
- Murray hoped that the international bodies would pronounce Hitler was mentally unbalance and he could be forcibly confined in a psychiatric ward
- Murray also hoped that his study of Hitler would improve the psychiatric community's predictive abilities, to be able to diagnose personality and guide it to less destructive ends
- throughout the war, the allies used Murray's psychological assessment to wage a covert propaganda war against Hitler to try to get him to surrender

-Katharine Briggs felt that the only man more dangerous than Hitler was U.S. president Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who she felt had a weak personality that did not stand up to the tasks of war, an opinion that caused family tension as her husband was appointed as the government's liaison to the physicists working on the atomic bomb

-discusses Isabel being torn between wishing to be a good housewife and mother and her wish to use her intellectual abilities, particularly to aid the war effort.

-“Isabel wondered if Katharine’s alignment of self-knowledge and self-mastery with spiritual conviction had hurt her cause, making it too philosophical and esoteric for the average person to grasp for any practical purpose. Now books with commanding titles like *Wake Up and Live!* (1936), *Think and Grow Rich* (1937), and *How Never to Be Tired* (1944) had hooked readers with the explicit promise that attending to the self could be useful—that it could make you richer and happier, more attractive, more productive, and more popular, but only if you were willing to change who you were.”

-in the days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Isabel appropriated her mother's preliminary materials for Jungian questionnaire to design a prototype for a test that could match people of differing gifts to different professions

-“Her mother’s ideas about specialization had primed her for the task long ago, but it was a recent article in *Reader’s Digest* on personality testing that showed her how to execute it. From reading it, she learned that there were hundreds of personality tests that promised to classify workers as normal or abnormal, so that employers could avoid assigning an overly anxious or depressive man to a high-pressure job. At the same time, there were hundreds of psychological consulting firms that had created an industry out of administering these tests—a logistical convenience, to be sure, but also a means of protecting the employers from whatever hostility might develop as a result of demoting or firing people based on the test results. But what if she could design a test that generated only positive results? It would not be a test at all but an “indicator”—a device that provided information about one’s personality free from judgment or opprobrium.”

-she called her device "Form A: of the "Briggs-Myers Type Indicator" -putting her mother's name first to express her indebtedness to her mother's life's work

Chapter Eight: Sheep and Buck

-discusses the work of Edward N. Hay, an east coast human resources guru who developed workplace aptitude tests that quantified a worker's achievements, his intelligence, and his personality to match him to the service job that best suited his profile

-Hay had many various tests to please the managers and midlevel executives of large corporations like General Electric and Standard Oil

-Hay lived with his family in the suburbs of Swarthmore, PA, where he met Isabel Briggs Myers through their children being in the same class and then she wrote him in January 1942 stating that she was interested in "people-sorting instruments" and devices to "place the worker in the proper niche, keep him happy, and increase production"

-Myers had read an article in *Reader's Digest* about the very popular Humm-Wadsworth Temperament Scale, a questionnaire that placed people into one of five groups (normal, antisocial, manic-depressive, paranoid schizophrenic, and obsessive compulsive), developed to try to help treat workers but actually used to weed out union sympathizers or communist ideologues during the hiring process

-the Humm-Wadsworth Temperament Scale drew on many of the themes of nineteenth-century literature and psychology, but it was not valid in any scientific way

-Hay used this questionnaire as the basis for his own work

-Myers, trying to reinvent herself and find a place in the HR world, offered to work for free, apprentice in the work of "people sorting" but Hay offered to pay her a good wage for thirty hours a week

-“While she shared none of her mother’s messianic attachment to Jung or her belief in the profound and inviolable sanctity of the self, she did believe that personality assessment could initiate workers and their

employers into a practical ethos of self-knowledge, one that she believed was essential to the expanding size and energy of the American workplace. "It is the fashion to say that the individual is unique," she explained in her first draft of what would become her manual of type. "He is the product of his own heredity and environment; therefore, he is different from everybody else. But the doctrine of uniqueness is not useful from a practical standpoint, unless we are prepared to make an exhaustive case study on every person whom we educate or counsel or hire. On the other hand, it is not practical to expect uniformity." What was needed was a theory that could honor the "specific personality differences in specific people" while also reducing human behavior to a "few, basic, observable differences." What was also needed was a way of instrumentalizing that theory—of making it both useful and accessible."

-her first job was to try to validate the Humm-Wadsworth Temperament Scale, which she instead rejected as both scientifically invalid and useless, believing that it was more important to make every worker feel as if he was needed somewhere and to set up the ideological conditions under which one would bind oneself to it freely and gladly, as a point of pride and a source of self-validation

-while there were those who were using type to understand Hitler and the psychology of the abnormal and the depraved, Isabel wanted to use it to help people return to a state of normalcy and happiness after suffering through the war

-Theodor Adorno, German social theorist who fled to the US when the Nazi took power, strongly disagreed with this use of type, writing in *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) that "the critique of psychological types expresses a truly humane impulse directed against that kind of subsumption of individuals against pre-established classes which has been consummated in Nazi Germany, where the labeling of live human beings, independent of their specific qualities, resulted in decisions about their life and death. The desire to construct types was itself indicative of the potentially fascist character"

"For Adorno, type and its people-sorting instruments had not created this state of affairs. They were merely a symptom of a more invasive psychological disease: social modernity. The rise of industrial capitalism and the division of people into classes -owners versus workers, white collar versus blue collar -had left an indelible imprint on the souls of men and women, stamping certain predictable ways of thinking and feeling onto their psyches."

-Adorno did think that the talk of type did provide some value in that it gave people a feeling that they were individuals, even though that was a falsehood, it was at least something that could safeguard the mind from fascism

-details how Isabel worked on her type theory in her years as a mother and wife, wanting to simplify Jung to be reachable by asking about everyday things and giving them two preferences to choose from

-she eventually convinced the principal of her daughter's school to give her access to student records and to administer her test to the students, mapping the results onto a set of initials she had derived from Jung's writings: introversion (I) and extraversion (E); intuition (also I in the initial versions of the test) and sensing (S); and feeling (F) and thinking (T) and to Jung's original scheme, she added a fourth category: the judging (J) function and the perceptive (P) function

-Isabel faced criticism from her husband for taking such time to develop this questionnaire and neglecting her role as wife and homemaker and her mother for trivializing type into simple yes and no questions

-Isabel's response to her mother's criticism was that for revelation to be valuable, it had to be useful and demonstrable to the world at large, not just to one woman sitting at her kitchen table with her religious devotion to her idol

-Isabel was determined to make a test that was quite a bit different from the ones that ended in psychological judgment, instead emphasizing that each type had its own special advantages and that the test was just to make sure that an individual was placed in a position that would make the best use of their particular type

-Isabel's first test, Form C, showed that it was clearly for middle class suburbanites and it was divided into a test of "Men & Boys" and one for "Women & Girls" because, as Isabel argued, questions for women would not be suitable for men as women feel everything more acutely than men

- Isabel developed for Hay a lengthy questionnaire, answer sheets, personality profiles for the 16 types that can result, and a user's manual
- the first client to buy it was the government's Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which funded a team of wartime psychologists, led by the former director of the Harvard Psychological Clinic Henry Murray, interested in matching covert operatives to the secret missions best suited to their personalities

Chapter Nine: A Perfect Spy

- describes the operation that started up the OSS, which eventually became the CIA, and their creation of the nation's first personality assessment center for covert operatives
- since the war was still in full swing, the OSS did not have the time to fully investigate a candidate's personality or to interview them extensively to dig into the fine details of the individual, so Isabel's test among others was a perfect way to simplify matters
- details quite a bit about the search for a "perfect spy" as someone who was able to overcome or hide the true self that the personality testing revealed
- in order to do this, candidates would be put into a situation that testers did not believe they could easily handle based on his or her personality type and then monitored to see how they perform under stress
- discusses what this center found out about the role of authority and people's use and abuse of it as well as people's willingness to submit to it, mentioning again the work of Adorno
- Adorno argued that the only thing that can stop fascism is the belief within people that they can move in a different direction, to break out of the capitalist corporate world

Chapter Ten: People's Capitalism

- describes Isabel's success with selling her test and her investments in the stock market, "learning how to manage the wellsprings of feeling -disappointment, desire, glee, insecurity, regret -that came with being a capitalist, a proud and partial owner of the corporations that once made America great"
- the Briggs-Myers Type Indicator and its promise that one could find great personal fulfillment in their job, aided the propaganda of the Cold War that boasted capitalism as the true path to freedom
- "According to sociologist William H. Whyte's 1956 best seller, *The Organization Man*, 60 percent of American corporations were using personality tests in 1956, not only to screen potential employees but also to "check up on people" already employed by the company—to ensure that their employees were content and carefree and still believed in the inherent goodness of work."
- "By the mid-1950s, at companies like General Electric, Standard Oil, Bell Telephone, the Washington Gas Light Company, the Pennsylvania Company, and the National Bureau of Statistics, the language of type had helped give rise to a new spirit of capitalism: one in which the worker would be matched to the job that was divinely right for him: the job that would permit him to do his best and most creative work, afford him the greatest sense of personal satisfaction, endear him to his bosses and colleagues, and thus encourage him to lodge his sense of self ever deeper into his nine-to-five occupation."
- "The mass testing of personality was partially responsible for the birth of the liberal-humanist figure that Whyte dubbed "the organization man": the worker who had "left home, spiritually as well as physically, to take the vows of organization life," believing that work could make him whole. The organization men were the "mind and soul" of the post-World War II workplace, prophets of a secular faith in the goodness of rationalized, hierarchical labor. They were nice, normal, hardworking individuals. More important, they were loyal subjects—the type of employee a manager today might describe as a "good team player." They had heard the voice of the organization, echoing loud and clear in the tests they had taken, and they had answered it with a promise of their own: on our backs the fortunes of corporate America will rise and fall."
- Isabel worked for Hay for seven years then step out on her own, counting as her clients some of the largest utilities and insurance companies in the US

- one insurance company used the book both to determine ideal candidates and to calculate where a life insurance applicant should pay a larger premium on his insurance
- General Electric asked Isabel to type their highest-ranking executives in order to develop a theory of managerial success, to which Isabel pointed out that, while some traits make one better suited to manage than others, there is no perfect executive type, that no individual could be endowed with all that is needed in that role
- instead of finding certain types better than others, Isabel developed exercises to help individuals overcome their weaknesses, expanding her business from testing to counseling
- “Her strongest conceptual ally was a client Hay introduced her to named Oliver Arthur Ohmann, assistant to the vice president of the Standard Oil Company and head of its industrial relations department. Ohmann was also one of the first management theorists to formulate the now ubiquitous and overdetermined idea of a “work-life balance,” although this meant something very different to him from what it does to workers today. What Ohmann saw when he cast his eyes upon Standard Oil’s managers and workers, and upon the working class in general, was the spiritual impoverishment of the human psyche. “Our economy has been abundantly productive, our standard of living is at an all-time peak, and yet we are a tense, frustrated, and insecure people full of hostilities and anxieties,” he lamented in the Harvard Business Review. The problem was not “the division of the spoils as organized labor would have us believe,” Ohmann assured his readers, lest they think he was sympathetic to union leaders or socialists.... The conflict between work and life was not a matter of simple time allocation. It required preserving one’s spiritual and psychological integrity across the domains of labor and leisure, the workplace and the home. Ohmann was on a quest to find a new religion to address the old capitalist problem of alienated labor: the estrangement of the worker’s psyche from the act of production.”
- Ohmann saw the Briggs-Myers Type Indicator as a way of introducing people to their true selves and convincing them that the work they were doing was a natural extension of how God had created them
- Isabel performed an experiment on 550 test subjects from the Washington Gas Light Company and found that those individuals who were in "type-favored jobs" were far more likely to stay with the company and to not be subject to disciplinary measures
- discusses Isabel's discovery of the phenomenon of people getting two different results on the test and how individuals could be cheating on it to try to get the result that is thought to be desired (rather than saying that type can change or that the test is not able to reveal anything)
- in his book *The Organization Man*, Whyte said that people taking tests should always be looking for the answer that would present them as conservative, affable, and blank, with no thought in their collective head but to work hard and to work dutifully alongside others
- “Whyte’s irony was, at every turn, opposed to Isabel’s earnestness. She never doubted that people were telling the truth when she administered the indicator to them, even when they knew their employers would make promotion and firing decisions based on their type preferences, even when their types changed after they had dodged the executioner’s axe. Nor did she ever entertain the idea that the values enshrined in the indicator’s questions were anything but her values, as she had inherited them from her mother and Jung.”
- in the mid-1950s she took on the testing of medical school applicants and students and this brought her the idea that what she needed was legitimacy: access to the professional credentials that would make organizations like the AMA and its doctors take her seriously
- “Studies with the indicator suggest that [admission of candidates based purely on the MCAT scores, rather than on a combination of MCAT scores and types] is a mistake,” Isabel concluded in a letter she later addressed to the American Medical Association (AMA). She encouraged them to issue new guidelines for medical school admissions: to eliminate timed test taking and to stack admissions committees with more sensing types. That way, like could recognize like. “These are needed to help ease the shortage of physicians in primary patient care and in the smaller communities.”
- help to achieve this new goal came in the form of an old friend: Donald MacKinnon, who had worked on the OSS testing project and was now a professor at the University of California, Berkeley and was using type in a series of studies he was conducting on higher education and creative people

Chapter Eleven: The House-Party Approach to Testing

- MacKinnon's goal was to study the highly creative in society to try to understand what made them that way, with the ultimate end of discovering traits that can stand up against the abuse of authority
- those who agreed to participate in his long weekend reality-show type of house generally came to it hating the word personality, which had by the mid-1950s come to be a common refrain in American culture, one tied to the corporate world, so the concept of personality came with a price attached to it -it was a commodity
- MacKinnon's testing house, the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (IPAR), had a lot of support from those at the cultural forefront and was generously funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, which hoped to support the growth of social psychology and move the focus away from the abnormal personalities of neurotics and fascist and instead "identify the personality characteristics which made for a successful and happy adjustment to modern industrial society"
- the testing house started off with testing promising students from Berkley, selected by their advisor
- "Despite the innovativeness of IPAR's methods, there was something eerily retrograde about the house-party approach to testing. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham introduced the Western world to the idea of the Panopticon, or the "inspection house." Its purpose was precisely that: to keep people under inspection at all times or, seeing as this was literally impossible, to make people feel as if they were under inspection at all times. Prisons, factories, madhouses, hospitals, schools—all these institutions could, in principle, accommodate the dense and impenetrable atmosphere of surveillance that Bentham imagined. Writing nearly two hundred years later, Michel Foucault, the great French theorist of social control, would describe the Panopticon in ruthlessly scientific terms as a "laboratory of power." It was a "privileged place for experiments on men"—experiments so intense, so exhaustive in nature that they possessed "the ability to penetrate into men's behavior." By this, Foucault meant something quite astonishing: the inspection house was not just a space of observation but a system that, through its observational techniques, imposed a particular language of self-understanding on its subjects. Through the specter of constant vigilance, the incarcerated would learn to think of themselves as prisoners; schoolchildren would come to see themselves as disciples; and the boys at 2240 would understand themselves as coherent and classifiable types."
- "For two days, he is moved from one room to the next, taking test after test, reflecting on who he is. With every flick of his answer sheet, he considers and reconsiders himself, trying on the different vocabularies of personality that the institute has placed before him. *Am I too cold or too emotional? Deliberate or disorderly? An introvert or an extravert?* When a questionnaire like the Briggs-Myers Type Indicator forces him to pick between two options, he takes it at its word that such character traits are mutually exclusive, that he must embody one or the other. On the rare occasion when he is not taking tests, he is discussing his personality with others. Words like "introvert" and "extravert" roll off his tongue with the eagerness of a stranger who speaks, for the first time yet fluently, in a foreign language. The more tests he takes, the more he talks to other test takers, the more the idea of his individual self takes on an invisible heft and weight, becoming as incontrovertibly real to him as the wooden bunks on the sleeping porch. He inhabits it, and it, in turn, inhabits him."
- with the shock of Soviet advancements into space in the mid-1950s, the focus moved from making sure Americans were the more well-adjusted citizens to finding the "creative spark" as America's secret weapon and arguing that only in the environment of liberal individualism could unshackled brilliance flourish
- while this was a decade when research into the self was booming in higher education, it was also a decade in which institutions that sponsored this research were also fighting hard to suppress the typical traits of the creative individual: conviction complexity, nonconformity
- discusses the work of Ravenna Helson at IPAR and her look into women's creativity and her being told that within a relationship any expression of female creative drive took away from a man's ability to find his
- MacKinnon encouraged Helson to study women's creativity and she eventually opened her own version of IPAR on the campus of a nearby women's college
- she mainly found that there was a decided lack of confidence among all the women she studied

-her testing of promising students both at the school and then ten years later, showed that women who married and had children scored lower on tests of creativity and higher on tests of "femininity": a measure of sympathy combined with fearfulness, dependence, and vulnerability, while women who remained single or who had left their husbands reported feeling bad about themselves

-when she retested them at the after of forty-five, all of them had doubt about the direction their life had taken

-Helson concluded that a woman's position in society had a serious impact on their personality, limiting the person they could be

Chapter Twelve: That Horrible Woman

-“The first national conference on personality measurement, which was held at the Princeton headquarters of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in October 1960, was a call for America’s rival schools of personality research to assemble in peace. In attendance was a familiar cast of characters from the East Coast and the West, philosophers and practitioners alike. There was Donald MacKinnon, representing the “house-party” approach to personality assessment that he had originated at OSS Station S and refined at IPAR. There was his Station S partner, Henry Murray, invited to speak on behalf of projective tests like the TAT, which groped after the unconscious in the inner world of fantasy and narrative. There was Silvan Tomkins, ETS fellow and founder of affect theory: the study of the nine hardwired, genetically transmitted emotional responses—joy, excitement, surprise, rage, disgust, distaste, distress, fear, and shame—that he believed existed in all human personalities. Further from the pure theorists was a team of physiology researchers, who seemed to read in every bodily motion, from the slightest tilt of one’s chin to the most exaggerated wave of one’s hand, a veiled psychological desire. There was Henry Chauncey, president and founder of ETS, who, despite the incommensurability of all these methods and all these men, was determined to bring them together to advance the science of the self. Finally, there was the woman whom the ETS staff described as Chauncey’s “pet project”: sixty-three-year-old Isabel Briggs Myers. To her face, they addressed her with apparent disdain as “Mrs. Myers.” In their letters to one another, they called her “the little old lady in tennis shoes” or, more to the point, “that horrible woman.”

-Chauncey had developed the SAT for college admissions and then moved his interested to personality testing

-as a part of Chauncey's mission to get the most scientifically accurate measurement of personality, he created the Personality Research Center to encourage researchers to work together rather than fracturing and specializing into cliques that would follow their own lead into ideas that are currently glamorous in the public mind but would pass when the next fad came along

-in the years leading up to the conference searching for homegrown instruments of personality assessment and inviting their creator to ETS, where his team of statisticians, psychometricians, and psychologists would vet the amateur designs and methods with scientific rigor

-“By sifting these tests and others, Chauncey believed that ETS would find one that would do for personality assessment what the SAT had done for cognitive testing, a test that would reconstitute basic practices of child-rearing and education, usher in a new and more democratic process for access to jobs and government offices, and of course, turn a tidy profit for the ETS board of directors.”

-Chauncey's favorite test was the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, better known as the MBTI, after he had convinced Isabel to switch the last names of mother and daughter because the first version could too easily be called the BM indicator, a short form they wished to avoid

-prior to the conference, the MBTI, Chauncey's statisticians had been testing and refining the indicator for three years, replacing questions and recalibrating answer keys, breaking the questionnaire up and cobbling it back together so that it might meet ETS's standards for scientific validity

-the new indicator was revealed at the conference after three major rounds of revision based on the test results from more than twenty thousand subjects

-Isabel had been a late addition to the conference, invited almost as an afterthought with her name scribbled in pencil in the program

- partnering with ETS with its statisticians and computer processing helped Isabel to spread her test from coast to coast, with new clients that included the Protestant Episcopal Church, Public School Districts, Department of Corrections, and large technical schools
- “Those who worshipped at the altar of facts and figures, of t-tests and p-values, had little patience for Isabel’s kitchen table experiments, the imprecise, if enthusiastic, attempts at validation that had accompanied Forms A, B, C, and D....Although Isabel had taught herself some basic statistics when she was working for Hay during the war, the ETS staff dismissed her autodidacticism with quiet contempt. Her sense of enterprise seemed an affront to their hard-won institutional authority; they took her ambitions personally.”
- it didn't help that the main reasons that Chauncey presented for liking the MBTI was its commercial viability and proven success in the corporate world
- Isabel believed that all of the testing and retesting of the MBTI was a waste of time, that its popularity and use by scientists in the past already proved its worth and validity
- the statisticians were sick of Isabel's demands that they stop when they are working on and attend to her workplace needs and Isabel believe they were conspiring against her, that they were keeping the indicator from succeeding by holding it to unreasonably high standards
- many scientists were frustrated with Isabel's unwillingness to evaluate her Type Indicator and her insistence that Type is not chosen and that it never changed
- of particular concern was her insistence, based on Jung's theories, that people fell in one camp or the other, the theory of bimodality, whereas testing showed that most people in fact seemed to hover somewhere in the middle, their personalities lost in the no-man's-land between Isabel's two platonic peaks
- details Isabel's particular battle against Lawrence Stricker, the young scholar who Chauncey had tasked with drafting the MBTI manual
- as a part of preparing the manual, Isabel worked with Stricker for six months, allowing him access to much of her own material that she had not shared with anyone else, while Stricker all the while was preparing a separate document about the indicator outlining the major problems with it
- “His position, he claimed, was one of utmost objectivity, untainted by any personal frustration or dislike for Mrs. Myers; his was the voice of reason, cutting through all the irrational clamor that surrounded the indicator, both positive and negative. “I am making an attempt to be, neither pro nor con, simply the dispassionate and impartial evaluator,” he insisted. “I am also making the attempt to sift the positively enthusiastic and the hostile statements made about the test from the actual claims made about its virtues and the critical points advanced against it.” To that end, his memo posed three simple questions. How good was the theory behind the indicator? How good was the indicator as a device for measuring this theory? How useful was the indicator at predicting human behavior, quite apart from its virtue as a device for measuring Jung’s theoretical personality types?”
- “Point by point, Stricker dismantled the indicator, destroying whatever claims it had made to either theoretical insight or empirical validity. The theory was “Jungian in character,” he noted, “but much of it is novel”—spun from Isabel and Katharine’s mythological imagination of how human nature was or ought to be.”
- Isabel was very shocked and taken back by Stricker's analysis and it served to curtail her involvement in and enthusiasm for ETS
- Chauncey refused to give up on the Indicator though, pointing out to Stricker that people, after learning just a little bit about the theory, find the way that it describes people as to be quite natural and comprehensible
- “Scientific or not, the indicator had always managed to spark a sudden and ecstatic perception of self-knowledge in its subjects, no matter their age, sex, education, occupation, or political leanings, no matter their initial skepticism toward its operations. “The proof of the pudding is in the eating,” Chauncey rhapsodized to Stricker. ”
- “It was on the back of faith, not science, that Isabel’s work at ETS continued. But she was unwilling to accept its diminished status, its fall from grace. “She tends to fight her battles on the most difficult and dubious grounds,” Chauncey worried. Nor could she free herself from Stricker’s criticisms. It was one thing to question the

indicator—the technical aspects of its design, the individual items—but it was another to dismiss the theory behind it, which had stirred the souls of those she loved with the promise of self-discovery. With deliberate and destructive cruelty, he had used his memo to invalidate her sense of who she was and what she had spent her life doing. He had attempted “to cut off the dog’s tail behind its ears,” she wrote in the only angry letter she sent to him. But he should watch his step, she warned. “The dog might turn out to be a champion.”

-Isabel faced her father's death, becoming the caretaker for her mother who was then suffering with dementia, then the divorce of both her children and the sagging profitability of the MBTI which led to her dismissal as a consultant at ETS

-by this time, Isabel had travelled to many places for ETS and “she had met people who, unburdened by computers and algorithms, had embraced a more open-minded approach to Jung. Out west, she had heard the siren song of self-care: the keen cry for physical and mental growth that sounded up and down the California shoreline, reverberating through meditation retreats and wellness institutes where people indulged in special diets, exercise regimes, purges, and tests of self-discovery. Out west, she had seen the future of type, and now it called her away from the East with a persistence she could not shake.”

-“She did not want to assess the fatal blow ETS had struck her. Without evidence to support its theory or its findings, the type indicator was, in the eyes of psychometricians, little better than a horoscope; she was nothing more than an old, unrelenting charlatan. But she knew there was more to the business of type than numbers and distributions; there was a faith in the theory and its promise of self-discovery that one could not reduce to statistical significance. She did not want to look back. She only wanted to look forward, awaiting the indicator’s resurgence among people who shared her intuition for its truth.”

PART THREE

Chapter Thirteen: The Synchronicity of Life and Death

-Katharine Briggs died in 1968 and in for the next twelve years Isabel feverishly worked to resurrect their type indicator

-these were also the years in which Isabel would grow close to May Hawley McCaulley, a psychologist at the University of Florida who would revive the type indicator and launch CAPT -the Center for Applications of Psychological Type where all of the materials that led up to the all the drafts of the type indicator from "A" to "M" would be archived to this day

-Mary's first use of the type indicator was to reveal what she already believed to be true: that black people had inherent irresponsibility and laziness

-discusses the collaboration between Isabel and Mary, how they refused to take grants or other monies from those who wouldn't understand or perhaps even approve of what they were doing

-because Mary worked in a hospital that provided care to pregnant women and young couples, the research that the two women did together soon shifted to family therapy, making marital discord all about conflicting types

-discusses the life of Isabel's daughter Ann and her death when Isabel was seventy-five from an embolism the day after having a tummy tuck and the overwhelming grief that plunged Isabel into writing long religious tracts, playing solitaire through out the night and turning to Mary's dedication to type to give her a reason to live even as she fought severe cancer that invaded every vital organ in her body

-shortly after her diagnosis she received the news that ETS was no longer going to publish and distribute the MBTI, which led Mary to worry that without a reputable publisher the indicator would disappear from the annals of personality psychology forever

-Isabel called the cancer and the possible disappearance of her life's work her two enemies looking to ensure her total erasure from the world

-Isabel found aid in the person of Harrison Gough, whose California Psychological Inventory (CPI) had been rejected by the statisticians at ETS as too rudimentary and who had partnered with clinical psychologist John

Black who became the head of Stanford University's student counseling center and had started a test publication company called the Consulting Psychologists Press (CPP)

-Black told Mary and Isabel he would consent to publishing the indicator on several conditions: "She had to shorten the questionnaire so it would not bore its subjects; Form F, which ETS had "lengthened and strengthened" at the behest of its psychometricians, would become Form G, a 126-item questionnaire that would pick from the best of the forced-choice questions ("Do you prefer (a) or (b)?") and word pairs ("Select the word in each pair that appeals to you more"). She had to edit her descriptions of the types so that they were "less dogmatic," ensuring that people could self-identify with any given type. She had to give Black full control over the aesthetics of her answer sheets and test booklets, which he wanted to make "more attractive and easier to read." When she balked at his cosmetic choices, he responded with a stern and condescending letter. "I would like to suggest that in an enterprise of this kind, it seems to me that the parties involved have to respect one another's competencies," he wrote. "Your unique and irreplaceable contribution lies in your intuitive ability to devise items with high potential for defining types...I think we know more about design, format, type selection, layout, paper and ink selection than you do. Furthermore, you have to remind yourself that I have as much interest as you in broadening the market for MBTI and I do not intend to produce materials that jeopardize that goal."

-in order to make sure that her creation lived on, Isabel agreed to the changes

-“CPP exercised little of ETS’s restraint in distributing the indicator; Black and Gough were only too happy to market their wares to anyone who asked, so long as they were willing to pay: psychologists, physicians, spiritual leaders, high school teachers, college career counselors, human resources managers, industry executives, astrologers, artists, writers. And pay they did, for the shorter, unverified Form G test booklet, which came in pretty pale shades of green and blue, bearing a three-dimensional type table on the front. To do away with the time and tedium of sending in answer sheets to CPP to be scored by a computer or hiring a trained psychologist to interpret the results, Black and Gough soon introduced a self-scoring version of Form G. This made the consumer—or “client,” as they preferred to call the buyer—solely responsible for assessment and interpretation. “It might be argued that a self-scoring version of Form G. This made the consumer—or “client,” as they preferred to call the buyer—solely responsible for assessment and interpretation.”

-three years after starting to publish the MBTI, by the end of 1979, CPP had sold more than a million

-Isabel died May 5, 1980 (very shortly after correcting a misquote that her grandchild had made of one of her poems while offering a prayer of sorts as her family stood over her death bed)

Chapter Fourteen: One in a Million

"Some people start to live only when they die; others stay unrecognized, their labors lost to time. In the case of Isabel Briggs Myers, both posthumous states held true. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator became the most popular personality inventory in the world; Isabel's names—maiden and married, forever conjoined—were shorthand for the whole strange business of personality testing. But only the smallest fraction of those who encountered the indicator knew anything about Isabel, Katharine, or the origins of type. If asked about the indicator's provenance, most people would have assumed that Myers and Briggs were the last names of two collaborating psychologists—two men, naturally—who had built their long, lucrative careers within the same institutions that had supported Henry Murray, Donald MacKinnon, Edward N. Hay, Henry Chauncey, and Harrison Gough."

-“Imagine the million people who, according to John Black, had learned about type by 1980. A million was a large, happy number, of course, but it was also an abstraction, free from any sense of consequence. Where did they encounter the indicator? What did learning one’s type do for each one of these million people? No doubt it did different, incommensurable things from person to person. (“You are not one of sixteen. You are one in a million,” declared CAPT in a 1990 marketing campaign.) But one could apprehend in ten, twenty, a hundred separate accounts of learning one’s type the emergence of certain undeniable patterns: the first rush of self-discovery, the cheerful lull of self-acceptance, the comfort of solidarity. You may have been one in a million, but

part of the appeal of type was imagining that there were others out there like you: people whose lives had arced toward type at different moments but who had all come away from it with understanding and affirmation.”

- in 1982, affluent school districts across the nation launched the Social Thinking and Reasoning (STAR) program, which they used the language of type and sock puppets to teach children to understand who they are and accept others for their differences in type
- middle schools had programs like Work and Family Studies and Family and Consumer Sciences that distributed the MBTI questionnaire, telling students that knowing one's type will help them navigate difficult decisions around drug use and premarital sex
- colleges used the MBTI to match incoming students to their freshman-year roommates as well as to help them choose a suitable major and, eventually, a career path
- when looking for a job, the best candidates master the MBTI to market themselves
- quoting a columnist from the *Wall Street Journal*: “Insights provided by the MBTI are so extraordinarily useful that the test should be routinely administered to adults as they enter the workforce,” he gushes. His sentiments are echoed by human relations teams in nearly every Fortune 100 company as well as CPP, recently the subject of some harsh criticism after studies by psychologists showed that people who take the test more than once, even just a few weeks apart, get classified as a different type more than 50 percent of the time. The MBTI’s test-retest validity is well below acceptable levels of statistical significance. “Four of the 16 Myers-Briggs types account for 80% of managers,” shoots back CPP executive Lorin Letendre, citing “extensive studies” conducted by CPP. “That’s extremely statistically significant.”
- “After Isabel’s death, there no longer existed one beating heart, one tireless and exacting intellect to regulate the MBTI’s emergence as a mass cultural phenomenon in the 1980s and 1990s. Unleashed by CPP on an eager and largely untutored public, the indicator traversed thousands of primary and secondary schools, colleges, workplaces, hospitals, and churches, as well as a vast network of Jungian enthusiasts; people who, after Isabel and her mother, started referring to themselves as “type watchers.” Type watchers congregated in certification and training programs around the world, some sanctioned by CAPT, others homegrown affairs that took place in basements and backyard barbeques. They shook hands at health-care and education conferences, where they exchanged tips on how best to care for feeling types, how to motivate students who were introverts in classrooms dominated by extraverts. They embraced one another at wellness and healing seminars, where they discussed the sexual, emotional, and spiritual compatibilities of S’s and N’s, J’s and P’s.”
- “The marriage of self-insight to self-management was a highly profitable union, tapping right into the ethic of entrepreneurialism that posited personality as a product that could be inventoried, refined, marketed, and sold across multiple domains: the church, the state, the workplace, the marriage market.”
- discusses the growth of experts on type and the flourish of books that appeared in the 1980s and 90s, promising to help both the individual and the entire corporate world, particularly coming from the Lutheran minister Otto Kroeger's consulting firm Otto Kroeger Associates (OKA)
- “Personality testing and training was more than just a worthwhile investment in people; it was good public relations in workplaces increasingly committed to showcasing diversity and tolerance as profitable skills.”
- “A 1997 guide for dealing with sexual harassment issued by Equal Opportunities recommended hiring a personnel consultant to assess employees’ types so that they might learn “to appreciate the variety of communication styles” in the workplace, thereby avoiding embarrassing misinterpretations (or lawsuits) concerning sexist or racist “jokes” or “light hearted fun.” OKA’s offerings included articles and workshops with titles like “The Anatomy of Misunderstanding: Sexual Harassment & Type,” “The Changing Face of Banking,” “Bringing the Feeling Function into Top Management,” and “Uncle Sam Wants All Types.”
- all of this popularity led to the inevitable kitschy goods, also manufactured by CAPT, CPP and OKA, such as type T-shirts, lapel pins, mouse pads and playing cards
- today’s young adults, the Millennial crowd, grew up seeing that personality is manufactured, that it is a product to be advertised on social media, has been immersed in BuzzFeed quizzes that claim to be able to discover inner personality from the type of topping they like on their pizza a

-“It is one of the small ironies of history that Isabel died before she could see the extent to which mass culture hollowed out her creation, a sad irony or a merciful one, depending on one’s perspective. There was always a danger that this was where type would end up, among the silliest, shallowest cultural products of late capitalism. After all, the logical extension of typological thinking was that type itself would stiffen and standardize in its bid for universality. The more rapidly type circulated through knockoff tests and advice columns, the more its descriptions of people’s personalities would reduce to one-word caricatures. ”

-“The distortion of type was the first inevitable consequence of its dramatic decontextualization. Only a decade into the twenty-first century, it was no longer possible for an early adopter of type like Mardy Ireland, OKA client and psychologist at George Washington University’s counseling center, to claim of the MBTI, “The more you use it, the richer it becomes. It never goes flat.”

-“Here is one thing about which there can be no doubt. She would have been heartened by the testimonials of the thousands of people who, upon discovering type, claimed that it had helped them clarify not just who they were but who they wanted to be, the people who seemed untouched by irony even today. “I have run into people who have been pressured by their parents and family and tried to conform to being a particular sort of person, and then they run into the indicator and decide that this is a liberation and they are absolutely not going to be repressed anymore and they go ahead and be their own person,” she said in one of the last talks she gave at the University of Florida. It was to these people that she would have turned when faith in the indicator ebbed, when sales declined, when knockoffs circulated, when the membership of APT dropped, as it began to do in the twenty-first century. Had she lived to see the days when type watchers began to peel away from the MBTI’s guardian institutions, when the indicator became a parody of itself, she would have immersed herself in the people who had sustained her throughout the life of type: the true believers.”

Conclusion: True Believers

“To obtain a hard copy of Form M of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the latest iteration of the questionnaire, one must spend \$2,095 on a weeklong certification program run by the Myers & Briggs Foundation—the sister organization to CAPT. In 2015, there were close to one hundred certification sessions in cities ranging from New York to Pasadena, Minneapolis, Portland, Houston, and CAPT’s hometown of Gainesville, where participants could get a \$300 discount for making their way south to the belly of the beast. It was not unusual for sessions to sell out months in advance. People came from all over the world to get certified.”

-“Beyond all the pseudoscientific talk of “indicators” and “instruments” was a simple but subtle truth: the questionnaire reflected whatever version of yourself you wanted it to reflect, whether consciously or unconsciously. You could quickly become attuned to the pattern of the questions, their basic idiom of sociability, creativity, rationality, impulsivity. If you wanted to see yourself as odd and original or factual and direct, it required only a little bit of imagination to nudge the answers in the right direction.”

-“People wanted to answer in earnest, for to lie outright would have been to derail the practice of self-discovery the indicator promised. But to succeed, the indicator had to introduce the test subject to the preferred version of herself and to claim this self as the “true you”—unchanging and whole. This was the only way to link its simple, sometimes hackneyed, questions (“*Are you inclined to: (a) value sentiment more than logic; or (b) logic more than sentiment?*”) to the experience of meeting your unified and purified self.”

-“What also became apparent throughout the training was that the impulse to treat personality as complete and innate was, in no small part, a convenient way of slotting people into their designated niches in a high-functioning and productive social order. This was another fiction—a dystopian fiction, to my mind—that most contemporary personality tests continued to trade in: the fantasy of the rational organization of labor.”

-goes on to discuss her own experience in the certification program and how everything she said or drew, no matter how ridiculous, could always be interpreted according to her type by the leader and other participants

-“Is the test a joke? A scam? Every six months or so a reputable news source publishes what it takes to be a devastating critique of the type indicator. Consider such recent titles as “The Mysterious Popularity of the Meaningless Myers-Briggs,” “Nothing Personal: The Questionable Myers-Briggs Test,” and “Goodbye to MBTI,

the Fad That Won't Die." The skeptics who write these pieces tend to repeat the same arguments. They say the instrument is unreliable, that people often get different results when they take it from one week to the next. They say the type descriptions are loose enough to fit anyone, a flagrant example of circus man P. T. Barnum's observation that the best hoaxes are the ones that have "got something for everybody." They deride the test's origins as the hobby of two untrained women, even though they seem to have only the faintest sense for what its history really is. Their total skepticism makes it impossible for them to account for the astonishing effects that learning one's type has on people."

-examples of the effect from her training group: "On the last day of my training session, the room filled with true believers, I witnessed flashes of epiphany that were not, in any sense, untrue; I saw things fall into place for people. The Department of Defense representative confided in me that the training had helped her make sense of her divorce, the pain of it lingering nearly five years after her husband left their home. Geoff, a kind and quiet IT executive who had come with two of his boisterous colleagues, whispered that type had given him the language to justify to his coworkers why he avoided office gossip; they are E's, he is an I, and he would prefer to keep to himself. The blond astrologist and I chatted about Jung while we waited for the bathroom. "Jung is my boy!" she exclaimed before inviting me to coffee so that we could continue to "network" as "strong E's." When we met up later that week, she would tell me that the training had given her the confidence to start looking for new jobs. She now knew that she belonged in customer relations, not product management. A consultant named Sarah (an S) told the room that she suddenly understood why she and her mother (an N) fought so much. "When I ask my mom for a recipe, she says, 'Just a dash of this, just a dash of that,'" Sarah said. "But I'm like—Ma, how much is that? Give me a real measurement." When the subject of marriage came up, which it inevitably did, many J type women in the room had stories about planning trips with their P husbands. "I just got back from Disney World and I really realized the difference between me and my husband," said Jody, who sat across the table from me. "When we're there, he plans it all out—the way I plan out the kids' schedules at home." Someone else chimed in, "When we went to Disney World, I forced myself to act as J as possible. That's just what you need to do to survive there." Everyone laughed, even me. In this moment, we were all believers."

- "For many of my fellow trainees, the five days we spent learning the language of type presented a rare opportunity to confront themselves, to speak their truths in a strange but useful tongue. For others, type offered a framework for justifying who they were, and who they would forever be, to others: the decisions they had or had not made, the fights they had or had not resolved, the careers and lovers and dreams they had pursued or abandoned. Despite all the challenges to its validity and reliability, despite all the criticism of its origins and its uses, despite its silly, ironic appropriations, the indicator continued to operate as a powerful technology of the self even in its twenty-first century incarnation."

-in the end, type promises to build a more perfect you and, in turn, a more perfect world