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Individual Differences And Personal Effectiveness

Cecil Williams

My purpose in being here is to present an approach to thinking about people which may be useful to you in your interaction with students, with other faculty and staff, and in thinking about yourselves. The approach that I want to talk about is a theory that has not been known widely in the United States. It was developed by a Swiss psychiatrist whose name was Carl Jung. I won't bore you with a lot of detail, but it is important to know a little bit about him if this approach is going to make sense to you.

One of the things that Jung believed was that people never finish growing, that we continue to grow and change in our personalities throughout all of our lives. As I say that, you may be thinking, "well, that's so obvious, why would he bother to insult me by saying that?" While I believe it is obvious, most of us in the U.S. do not allow ourselves to grow and change. Most of us get to the place where we are 18 years of age and each says, "I'm grown. I'm an adult now. I can get married without my parents' permission. I can contract debts on my own." We make the assumption that we're grown and that we are going to stay that way forever. Most of us, then, spend the rest of our lives feeling as if we are coasting, personality-wise, from age 18 on. (Or, if you notice on your insurance policy, for instance, your rates go down after age 25, so that the insurance companies then are making the assumption that you grow up until age 25, and then you stop and you don't change any beyond that. You're a good, safe driver, and they don't need to keep raising your insurance.) Another example, when you were a child, you probably had to take an intelligence test, probably in the second or third grade. The score you got on that intelligence test stayed in your records all the way through school, again based upon the assumption that you didn't change much in your head over the years that you were in school. You stayed just as smart or just as dumb as you were in the second, third, fourth grade. Well, we now know that isn't true; people's intelligence changes over the years and our ability as adults continues to grow, and we continue to add ability as adults continues to grow, and we continue to add to our ability. There are some things that we lose. For instance, the speed with which we can do things intellectually decreases some with age, but our ability to understand words and ideas actually increases so that intelligence scores are going to change. The point I'm wanting to make as we think about personality today (and ourselves today), we really must remember that we are thinking about a continuous process of growth, recognizing that we establish a base and then build our individual uniqueness from there. Dr. Jung believed that we make

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some important changes during the middle years of our lives, during which our personalities develop "unused" parts of themselves. We will talk particularly about this very crucial period in the middle of your lives from ages 35-45 that we refer to as the "mid-life crisis." But, again, the point I want to leave with you is that we are continuing to grow and change, and I don't want you to believe that once you have identified a set of personality characteristics you will forever have only those characteristics to the exclusion of others. It serves as a base for all future developments. This is simply a starting point for how we can begin to understand your own individual differences and how you relate to the other people that you work with.

Pairs of Opposites

The second thing you need to know to understand this approach is that Dr. Jung believed that personality characteristics exist in pairs. They are "tied" to each other and each set consists of opposite characteristics. It works very much like these cartoon characters that I have here. This little character is holding two balloons and in one balloon is written the word "Introversion" and the opposite balloon is for "Extroversion." His dilemma in the cartoon is to decide, "am I an introvert or am I an extrovert?" That is the same kind of dilemma that I want to present to you today. I want you to be thinking, "am I more introverted or am I more extroverted?" These two attributes, according to Jung, are connected in our personalities in such a way that when we develop one of these, there is a tug on the other one to develop its self. Each of us will be developing both introverted and extroverted behaviors but we always will want to use one more than we will use the other one. In other words, during the first part of our lives, we will feel more comfortable using one characteristic most of the time rather than if we tried to use them interchangeably. The experience that is common to all which will help us understand this arrangement is the manner in which we use our hands. All of us were born with the tendency to be either right-handed or left-handed. And as children, we very early began to use one hand or the other. I'm making the assumption that your parents didn't tie one hand behind you and make you use the other one because that is possible, but usually we are given the freedom to develop which hand we want to use most. In my case, I use my right hand so as a child I learned that I could grab things. I could throw things, and I could hit with my right hand. Only gradually then, did I realize that my left hand could do the same kinds of things. And so then I started doing more things with that left hand. I could pick up things with my left hand, but in an emergency (that is if the left hand failed me) I would always use the dominant right hand to do whatever I needed to do. Then, probably by the time I got to be 18 mos. or so, I learned that you could actually use both hands interchangeably. You could use one, then you could use the other like in stacking blocks, for instance. One can use them together **BUT** they always exist in such a

way that each will still prefer to use one hand over the other one, just as I'm sure all of you either use your left hand in preference to the right or the right over the left. The personality style works exactly the same way as the hand business. One is born with the tendency to be one or the other and one develops that innate tendency first of all. Then after learning how to do that one really well, one develops the other half - the opposite of the dominant attribute. So, according to this theory, then, all of us are packages of opposites, if you will. We have four sets of conflicting personality traits inside of us, and that's one of the reasons we find ourselves being inconsistent sometimes - that you do some things but find yourselves doing the opposite things just two days later and some people worry about that because they feel that somehow they are "losing their marbles" or something because they are not consistent. All you are doing is using those various parts of your personality. One of the things that we want to do today is to understand which one of each of the pairs of things you prefer to use most of the time, and then how that's going to affect how you relate to the people you work with or your students or whomever.

Introversion and Extroversion

The first pair of opposites we want to talk about, as you probably guessed, is introversion and extroversion. The first thing I'd like to have you begin thinking about then is whether you tend to be introverted or extroverted according to this theory. Now, the reason why I added "according to this theory" is that I think most of us have picked up some kind of definition of introversion/extroversion. Most of us tend to believe that introverts like to be by themselves and extroverts like to be out with other people. Well, in general, that is true, but that's not all of the definition. I will expand on that a bit now. Let us first think about the individual as being represented by a circle. The first illustration shows the attention of the extrovert. The second shows the attention of the introvert. You'll notice the arrows go out away from the circle on illustration No. 1 while the arrows point inward into the circle with illustration no. 2. What that means, then, is that for the extrovert, his/her attention always gets focused outside himself/herself into the world of people, objects, machines, anything outside (external) himself. The introvert's attention, on the other hand, primarily is directed inside into the realm of ideas, hunches, thoughts, feelings, all of those things that go on inside a person so that the attention then is going to be inside as opposed to outside. Now, let me see if I can give you a behavioral example. The extrovert is much more likely to go into a group of strangers and walk up and start talking to people. He'll introduce himself and say "hi" "who are you," "what do you do," "where do you come from" — all of these things in which the attention is directed outside himself. On the other hand, the introvert is likely to go into a group where he or she is unknown,

and will sort of look around and begin to feel, "gee, this makes me feel uncomfortable," "I don't know these people," "I don't know how I'm supposed to act," "I wonder if I'm in the right place," "what should I do now," "what time does the meeting start" — all of these internal kinds of things. In this case, the attention is inside rather than outside the way it is with the first illustration. The introvert then, in terms of behavior, is going to be someone who is not nearly as involved in interactions with the outside. He or she is much more likely to be a cautious kind of individual. Introverts will wait until they know you fairly well before they tell you very much about themselves. The extrovert on the other hand, is the person who enjoys talking to other people. They enjoy telling you a lot about themselves; and they spin yarns about their childhood, about things that are going on in their own families, and they will tell you their life histories at the drop of a hat if you will give them an opportunity.

In contrast again, the introverts need some time with you, in order to get acquainted. After they get well acquainted with you, and know who you are, where you come from, what it is that you do, whether you are going to be critical of them, all of those kinds of things, only at that point, then, will they begin to tell you certain kinds of things. The introvert is usually someone who does not adjust to new situations all that easily. The example I'm thinking about is when students first come to MSU, for instance, in the fall and start into school. The introverts are the ones who come in, unpack their stuff, and stay in their rooms and say, "gee, this is a big place, it's a scary place, I never will get to know all of these people that are here." "There are 44,000 students and I'm just one isolated soul, I'll never know anyone, I'm only going to be here four years anyway, why make a big deal out of it?" The point is that they are very cautious in moving out into the new situation. By contrast, when extroverts come to the University in the fall, they usually set their bags down and realize that there are 50 other people living in the corridor and they will say, "gees, I've got four years to unpack, why worry about that now." They want to find out who lives across the hall so that they walk across the hall, introduce themselves and before long they are involved in a big conversation about what they've done and what sports they lettered in (or whatever interests them). Once they get acquainted, they go down the hall and meet the people who live in the next room, then the next room; and before long they know everyone on the floor. Within two or three days they can call everybody by name because their attention has gone out to the world around them. The person who prefers introversion, by contrast, is much more likely, even at the end of several weeks, to know the names of only a very few people. They recognize the people but are not nearly so comfortable moving out and being with people or in spending time with them. In the cafeterias, for instance, the introverts are much more likely to want to eat alone or with one person rather than with a large group of people. Another characteristic of the introvert is that the introvert usually tends to have

just one or two very close friends. They tend not to have a lot of people around them all the time; whereas, the extrovert is someone who likes lots and lots of friends and they will tend to run with a group of people rather than with just one or two persons. An extrovert would be much more likely to want to be in two or three different bowling leagues because they like a lot of interaction with people. The introvert is likely to have a smaller group and might like always to stay with just one league of relatively few people simply because they do not like the extensive interaction the way the extrovert does. There is a personality test that measures these combinations of preferences. It is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and is available from Consulting Psychologists Press. Since it takes about 30 minutes to administer and is not easy to score in large groups such as this conference, I elected to dispense with the testing in order just to present the ideas behind this approach to personality.

Therefore, can all of you guess now between introversion and extroversion — which one is most descriptive of you? I can go on and on giving examples, but there is no point in over doing it if you believe you now understand the differences between the "outside" focus of the extrovert and the "inside" focus of the introvert.

Sensing and Intuition

The next pair of opposites consists of "sensing" and "intuition." When we talked about introversion-extroversion, we talked about where your attention is focused; either internally or externally. Now, the thing we want to look at is "how does it look to you?" Does it appear in a "sensing" way or in a "intuitive" way? Is it factually specific or is it general and impressionistic? What I mean is that the sensing person is one who takes things directly into his/her sensory receptors — sight, hearing, taste, touch. The things that are heard, seen, smelled, are registered almost exactly inside them the way it is occurring in the environment. Also, these people who attend to details are very present-oriented. They are very aware of what's going on around them. By contrast, the other way of looking at the world is through intuition. The person who is an intuitive-type is the person who also, obviously, has got to use sight, hearing, taste, and touch, but this person tends to get a hunch about how things really are and develops an "impression" of many possibilities. They also tend to look into the future. They tend to get a general idea about how things are, rather than the details of the environment the way the sensing oriented person does. Again, an example would be that the intuitive type person is someone who would always concentrate on the "big picture." Whereas the sensing type person is much more aware of the individual pieces that go to make up the big picture. The intuitive will focus on the forest itself — the total object. The sensing type person is going to be looking at the individual trees and will pay little attention to the forest or the big picture. In spite of the fact that we hear the phrase "women's intuition," the men in the audience need to know that women do not have a corner

on "intuition." There are just as many men in society in general that use intuition as there are women. And there are just as many women who use sensing as there are men. The sensing type individual is very aware of what's going on right now and in needing to deal with the world as he/she finds it. The intuitive individual tends to be looking forever into "tomorrow" and in thinking about what the world "could be" like. One of the things that I always find interesting is the different ways that we find sensing people talking as opposed to the way we hear intuitive people talking. I would encourage you to ask people to give you directions someplace and listen to the way they give you those directions. If you ask a sensing person to tell you how to get someplace, the sensing person will tell you every single step along the way. They'll say, "go three miles due north and then turn right and go a mile and a half and then turn left and a hundred yards on your right will be . . ." On the other hand, if you ask an intuitively-oriented person to give you directions someplace, they'll usually give it in very general terms and say, "Well, it's in that general direction. What you have to do is get on that main road out there and go a little ways and then take off to the left. Then it would be a good idea to stop and ask somebody exactly where you are." The whole "intuitive" orientation is a very general approach. When you ask an intuitor to give you directions, you are going to have to remember, if you are a sensing type, that you must ask each time to get them to be concrete and even then they are going to have trouble being really concrete because they tend to think about the world in very general kinds of ways. We do need to be aware that there are differences because we open up lots of possibilities for miscommunication among people when sensing people take things at face value and intuitives approach everything through approximations. Sensing types tend to follow explicit directions. Intuitives usually listen only to the first part of a direction, figuring the rest will become obvious as he/she goes along. One of the things that we have to be aware of is that there is this great possibility for miscommunication. One of the places that we are likely to find it is in marriages. We do tend to attract people who are complementary to or opposite of us. So it would not surprise me to find that in your interpersonal relationships you notice that one of you is taking a very concrete, present orientation to everything and the other one is taking a very global, generalized orientation, and you really must compensate for that or you are going to end up being angry with each other a good share of the time.

Another example of that very same variable is the kinds of things that happen when people go into these very large shopping centers which are surrounded by acres and acres of cars. Sensing types tend to remember where they parked, and they will park and go into one of the shopping malls, do their shopping, walk out (they will walk out the right entrance), walk directly to their cars, because they know that they have parked on the south entrance, over about four rows, down about eight cars,

next to a red Cutlass. But there's another group of people that you'll see come out of the shopping centers. They will come out, will look around, and appear as if they have no recollection of where they parked. They seem to be saying, "let's see, did I drive the pick-up today or do I have my wife's car or . . ." Then they will say, "well, maybe I'm parked on the other side." You'll see them walk over toward that side and then finally they just take off, wander around, hopefully, find it. That's really what I mean by intuition. Let me give you another example. Let's say for example that this is an object (pointing to a chair). If I say to a sensing person, "please describe this object for me," that person might say, "it is brown; it is artificial leather; it is shiny; and is made of wood; it stands about 18 inches from the floor, the back of it is about 40 inches high." All of the descriptive things said about this object would be real, factual things. On the other hand, if I asked an intuitive person to describe this object, the first thing that person would say is "Well, it's a chair." "As a chair, it looks like it's fairly comfortable, it's made with a fairly big seat, so you wouldn't have to squirm around. It looks relatively comfortable but I would sure hate to spend a whole evening sitting in it. It looks like it is very durable, the kind of thing you might see around a conference center at some time." Then they start to think of uses. The person might say it could be used to stack plants on. "If you put three of them together you could lie down and take a nap and you could get away from the rest of the conference." They start thinking about all the possibilities for the particular object. I hope you can see that is a very different way that these "intuitive" people have of talking about the world than the "sensing" people use. In music sensing people tend to remember the words of songs. If they are musicians, they are also likely to remember the music and can sing, play, and can remember it accurately. I have never yet known an intuitive who is sure about all the words of a song because intuitives get a general idea about things, and you'll hear them sing a few words, then forget a few words, and then pick up again. The idea is that they get a general sense of the song, but they tend not to remember all of the notes and the words the way the sensors do. Can all of you now guess between sensing and intuition? Are you the kind of person who tends to focus on the present, the factual kinds of things, or do you look at the big picture with all its possibilities? Do you describe things in terms of generalities or in terms of concrete kinds of things?

Thinking and Feeling

The next thing we want to look at is the third pair of opposites. This pair presents the two opposite ways of decision-making. The word we use for decision-making is the word "judging" so we are talking about how you go about making judgments about the world that you know about. The two ways of making these judgments are by "Thinking" and "Feeling." First, let me say a word about the word "feeling." That is a word that causes confusion in our present day society because most of us use

the word feeling as being equal to emotion. That's not what this theory says. This theory states that feeling is the making of decisions on the basis of personal values rather than logic. The "Thinking" person makes decisions on the basis of logic and does not let his/her values enter in. Values for the Feeling Types are the common ones like honesty, fair play, the value of wanting to have high status in the community, or you want to be liked or you value your family — all of those kinds of values that we all have to some varying degree. When a decision is made in a feeling way, it means that our decisions are made on the basis of our value system — what's important to us, what's not important. The person who makes a decision on the basis of thinking is the person who makes the decision on the basis of the logical evidence available to them. The way I conceptualize that is the way I was taught to do geometry in high school. In geometry, you are given a set of facts at the beginning of a problem, and then you are told what to prove. You take the facts that you have, and you use those facts to prove a portion of the problem. Then you state why that's true. You then do the same again, taking it step by step by step until you have proved all of the conditions that you need. Then you say, "therefore . . ." and state your conclusion. The thinking type makes decisions in a very logical way. The feeling type person is going to say, "well, I don't know whether I want to do this because it is going to make my wife unhappy, and one of my goals in life is keeping my wife happy so I will go ahead and pass up having a beer tonite because she wants me to play bridge with her." The decision, then, is made on the basis of personal value. If one of your values is "being enjoyed by your friends" and when you get off work, somebody says, "hey, let's stop for a beer" and you really value that friendship more than you value your domestic tranquility then you will stop and have that beer. But if you value that home situation and something that your spouse wants you to do, then you will say, "Well, I really can't do that tonite because I promised my spouse that I would be home and we would . . ." The decision is based not upon logic, but upon whatever is important to us at that particular time. The example that I usually use is the example about changing jobs. The thinking types, when considering another job will look at all of the possibilities about the job and say "this offers another \$3,500 per year; the community that I would have to move to has a slightly higher standard of living. If I have to spend more for a house, how many months would I have to work at the extra money to make that pay off? My kids would have to change schools, and the school they would have to go to is a little higher economic community. They are going to need more money for clothes. How much more money?" The thinking type would look at everything that is going to be related to that decision. The decision then would actually be made on the analysis of the answers to all of those questions. Now, the person who makes the decisions on the basis of feeling is the person who is going to say, "there is that job over there and I'm going to be

making \$7,000 more a year than I am right now but my kids are right in the middle of high school, my wife is really happy here, it's going to be really disruptive — I've got six years already paid off on this mortgage, I like the people in the community. Yeah, I'm pretty satisfied where I am. I think I'll stay here." The decision then is made on all the values that are important to that person and not anything to do with logic. Logic sometimes would dictate that you do something even though you might not want to do it on the basis of your personal values. This is the one variable in which there are measured differences between males and females. When this is tested (as by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator), there are twice as many men who score toward the thinking end as there are women. And there are twice as many women who score toward the feeling end as men. There are both men and women, obviously, at both ends. But there are many more women who make decisions on the basis of values and many more men who make decisions on the basis of thinking. Thinking types are people who really like arguments, and one of the characteristics of thinking types is they like to challenge you by saying, "what is the opposite point of view" or, "let me take the opposite point of view just for the sake of argument." What they really like to do is to knock heads with you. They feel as if they have really had an interaction with you **only** when you have been able to argue something through. Once you have argued it through, then these people feel really satisfied and they will come away saying they had a really good conversation with the person or, "we really worked this through." The opposite side is that the feeling type person values harmony and hates arguments worse than anything. They will try to keep everything smooth and calm, and so when someone says to them, "Let me challenge you," they say, "Well, there really isn't any argument here at all." "We're really saying the same thing." They value harmony.

Judging and Perceiving

The last pair of opposites is based upon the general approach that each of us takes in dealing with our daily worlds — our realities. We want to look at how a person deals with the "outside" world. What do you do to deal with the daily challenges? The two words that symbolize the two opposite approaches are "Judging" and "Perceiving." As you remember, we have used these words before. We just discussed the "judging" process. The one before that was the "perceiving" process. What we find is that people deal with the outside world in one of these two different styles. In the "judging" style, people make decisions because the judging mode was the process people use to come to conclusions. They differ only in the way they arrive at decisions. The perceiving way of dealing with the world is a way of bringing in information. They differ only in the manner in which the information is "brought into the organism." When we talk about dealing with the outside world in a perceiving way, we are saying that you deal with the world out there by

collecting information about it and in knowing about the world. Whereas, if you deal with the world in a judging way, you make decisions about the world and you are most comfortable when you can decide something and move on to make another decision. These two approaches to the world, then, result in two very different ways of behaving. The judging person is likely to wake up in the morning when the alarm goes off, immediately shut the alarm off, get up and get dressed. They know they have 15 minutes to brush their teeth and wash their faces because breakfast is served at 6:30, and they have to be to work at 7:50 and so on. The whole day is planned out — that's the way judging people like to have their days go. When perceiving people first wake up in the morning their first thought is, "Could I catch a few more winks of sleep?" Usually, they will fumble with the alarm and hit the snooze control or reset the alarm. The first thought is, "I wonder what's going to happen today?" This is in contrast to the judging people who know what's going to happen because they set the world up. The perceiving people wonder what's going to happen because they like to be free to respond to anything that comes along. They like to be able to go to work and be told at that point what major things need to be done during that day. They like to have the freedom to organize their day and respond to it as it happens. They do not like to have their day organized for them. Some of you who are lucky enough to have secretaries, for instance, can see the difference if a judging type goes into work and the secretary says here's what you've got to do here, here, and here. The first thing that you are going to do is to be angry about that because you want to be able to organize your own day, not have someone else do that for you. Perceiving types like to be able to come into the office, have a cup of coffee, read the morning news. If somebody calls, they can decide at the moment whether to respond to that. If they feel the urge to go do some job that's been hanging fire for two weeks, they want to be free to do that. They do not like to feel that they are controlled by their days. They like to be free to respond. It is a very different way of dealing with the outside world. In the work that we have done in marriage counseling using this scheme, it is on this dimension that we find a lot of hassles in marriages. It occurs when the couple is trying to decide upon the family vacation. The judging types like to decide on the summer vacation in January. They want to decide where they are going to go, what they are going to see, where they are going to stay. They want to get the whole thing set up so that when vacation comes, it all just happens. The perceiving types do not like to plan that far ahead because their logic is, "I don't know how I am going to feel this summer." "How can I say in January what I want to do in June?" They like to wait until the night before vacation begins, throw some things in the back of the car, and take off and drive 50 miles and take things as they come. They do not like to have every thing planned out in detail. As you can see, there are enormous problems in families where you have one of each type.

Judging people like to live in a world where decisions are made, where they know what is happening at all times; and once a decision has been acted upon, they want to move on to the next problem and solution. If that one doesn't work out, then you make a subsequent one. The perceiving types are people who would like to leave things open and unstructured most of the time. They tend to procrastinate, thinking that something will come up that will change the condition. They don't want to do something which will have to be changed. Their belief is that once they make a decision, it should last forever. When you paint the dining room once, you should never ever have to paint it again. Decision-oriented people say, "Yes, I painted the dining room last year; but I think it is ugly now, and I want to paint it a new color." The perceiving people have agonized so much over the color to paint the dining room that if anybody suggests they repaint it, they break out in a rash because it upsets them so much. Another thing that happens is that decision-oriented people (the Judging types) are likely to gravitate toward managerial types of occupations because they like to get into situations where they make decisions. They have control of their lives and basically are in control of the lives around them. The data-oriented people, on the other hand, are much more comfortable in being in control only of their own lives and the response they can make to the world rather than have to decide and structure the world in some way.

Four Sets of Opposites

What we have now are the four sets of opposites that we have talked about. Either internal or external focus; sensing or intuition; making decisions on the basis of logic as opposed to values, and lastly, decision-oriented or data-oriented types of people. When you put those all together, then, you should come up with something that looks like the grid I have before me. There are 16 possible combinations of these four sets of opposites. You should be able to come up with one set of four letters. Let's see how you did in choosing your personality type on the basis of our brief discussions about them.

Persons differ in these fundamental ways. The basic personality type leads us to develop characteristic ways of behaving in the world. Since each of us interacts with a unique world in a unique manner, each of us will vary in some significant ways. Also, our students will differ from us in some very significant ways. The reason for presenting this information to you is to invite your attention to consider the ways you can account for some of these individual differences in your classroom and in the relationships you have with colleagues.