

# An INTP Profile

## A description of the INTP Personality Type

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INTP is one of the 16 personality types defined in the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). I will assume that visitors to this page already have a basic knowledge of the MBTI system for I wish to concentrate on describing the INTP type as best I can. The descriptions below are based on personal experience combined with knowledge derived from other MBTI sources and I hope that other INTPs and non-INTPs alike may find some of this material illuminating. This page may be updated and expanded when appropriate.

For a general introduction and overview of MBTI temperament analysis, visit Robert Winer's excellent resource at [Gesher](#).

INTPs are about 1% of the general population, making this one of the rarest of types. The basic dynamic of the INTP is illustrated in the following table:

<b>RANK of FUNCTION</b>	<b>FUNCTION</b>	<b>ORIENTATION</b>
Dominant	Thinking	Introverted ( <a href="#">Ti</a> )
Secondary	iNtuition	Extraverted ( <a href="#">Ne</a> )
Tertiary	Sensing	Introverted ( <a href="#">Si</a> )
Inferior	Feeling	Extraverted ( <a href="#">Fe</a> )

The consequences of the orientation and rank of each of the four functions for the INTP type is described in turn below.

### **Primary Axis: Introverted Thinking - Extraverted Intuition**

The INTP is above all a thinker and his inner (private) world is a place governed by a strong sense of logical structure. Every experience is to be rigorously analysed, the task of the INTP's mind is to fit each encountered idea or experience into a larger structure defined by logic. For here is the central goal of the INTP: to **understand** and seek **truth**. The experience of anything takes a back seat. The INTP is not interested in experiences themselves but is far

more fascinated by concepts. The drive to understand things that are not yet understood is a very powerful force in the life of an INTP. Where the Ti preference is strong, this drive can override the experiential element so strongly that the INTP will become quickly bored with anything that he has successfully analysed to the point of understanding it. Once understood, it has nothing left to offer, once the satisfaction which comes with achieving the goal of understanding diminishes. Indeed, most primary interests of an INTP are things which he cannot fully understand, usually because they are highly complex or have some exotic, mystical element that does not yield to analysis. This is the real reason why INTPs are drawn to complexity: anything simple is too quickly understood and cannot hold the fascination for long. Similarly, proficiency in any area (which requires continual practice after understanding) is **not** such a driving force as it might be for NTJs, for example. While a judging NT will often seek to become master of his field, an INTP is satisfied by analysing it alone. The latter is often more of a dabbler with ideas which leads me on to his second crucial aspect: detachment.

The Ti-Ne axis leads to a curious overriding desire to **observe** from a detached position, indicating the preference for intuitive perception with respect to external things. Since accurate analysis needs to avoid becoming hampered with details or being influenced by the actions of others, the INTP invariably seeks to withdraw, at least in spirit, from the situation being considered. This detachment can sometimes be so marked that he will readily see himself as a neutral observer having no personal association with that going on around him (unless forced to become directly involved through an attack on his principles). The INTP enjoys speculating about how a news item (for example) might be received by other people or how a point of view might offend certain types of people and be supported by yet other types; but to have a point of view of his own rarely seems relevant! This also indicates that Feeling is his least developed function. The argument may even be made that "points of view" and "opinions" are irrelevant since only objective truth counts. In reality, INTPs can often become far less objective than they think they ought to be: precisely at those times when the under-developed Feeling gnaws at his being.

### **Dominant Function: Introverted Thinking**

Now looking specifically at first the Ti, the principle of **detachment** even encompasses how an INTP views himself. He may analyse his own thought processes as if his mind and body were separate from his conscious self. In wanting to understand his reactions to things, he may treat himself, even his own thoughts, as subjects for experiment. At the extreme end of the scale, where Ti is very dominant, the ultimate goal of understanding the world with total clarity must be achieved through total detachment from everything. Fortunately, Ti never dominates over the other 3 preferences to such an extent that such an unhealthy state is reached.

Where detachment ceases is when someone makes an illogical statement or violates one of the INTPs principles. At such a point, the INTP feels the instant drive to provide for clarity. This is his Mission; to be the **provider of clarity**, and is often suspicious that he is the only person capable of this task. Here, the INTP risks being seen as over-critical, aloof and arrogant. On the whole, however, real arrogance is rare for INTPs for their desire is not to dominate others but simply to observe, analyse and clarify. Once the point has been clarified, the INTP withdraws quickly, for he prefers not to be in the limelight unless absolutely

necessary. Hence, for most of the time, INTPs are easy-going and will fit in to others' needs, taking up the role of observer again.

While proficiency may not be a central goal, competence always is. The difference here may be subtle, but it is important. If an INTP decides to learn a skill, then it is very important for him that he reaches a sufficient level so that basic errors can be avoided. Errors made by others are to be expected and can be criticised. But errors made by oneself attack the very root of the person, which is ultimately about rationality, logic and truth. INTPs hate to think of themselves being in any way inadequate, at least in areas that are important to them. So, as soon as he puts himself behind some task, then he must achieve competency. But that is as far as it goes. Refined competency requires too much effort and has little attraction. It would require practice and that usually bores an INTP. Hence, it is common to see INTPs dabbling at many things, achieving competency, just enough to prove to themselves that they **could** become more proficient if they wished, but rarely actually bothering to refine their skills further. This is a point at which we begin to get a feel for the workings of intuition backing up Thinking. The INTP has a whole set of skills which he knows that he would be proficient at, yet other people may know little of this. He is satisfied with the knowledge that he has these skills but often sees no requirement to demonstrate this to others, an indication of the strong Ti nature.

Related to this is the central aspect of **independence**. INTP's put great weight on being individuals and essentially different from other people, who they often view as being too alike and too interdependent. Independence touches on many aspects. One is the competency aspect above. When he is interested in something, then the INTP must be competent in it. But there are many things which don't interest him, and some of these will be things that others may be very competent in and where it may be assumed that everyone should be competent in them. The INTP usually applies the word "irrelevant" to such things: that is his excuse for any lack of competency in any field. And if he originally wished to achieve something, but failed, then it must be because was in fact irrelevant! The opinions of others are rarely given much weight in themselves. All opinions must get filtered through an analysis procedure to test for viability. No title or claim of being an "expert" carries any weight with an INTP. All people, big or small, are subject to an identical scrutiny. The INTP sees himself as the independent arbiter, whether a fair claim or not. However, when someone has proved his credentials through having sensible opinions, he will be afforded great respect by the INTP. Most respected of all are those who are not only sensible but also innovative. Intelligence is above all highly prized.

Independence, derived primarily from strongly introverted Thinking, leads to perhaps the most difficult aspect (for others) of the INTP, namely **stubbornness**. If an INTP is pushed into doing something he will **automatically resist**. The reason for the resistance is simply that any action must first be filtered by the Ti, guided by the Ne. He must be given the chance to reach an independent decision, approving or rejecting the action. Hence, he must withdraw to allow the analysis process to work. If withdrawal is not allowed then stubborn resistance is the inevitable result. However, others may not always find the INTP excessively stubborn, since the decision-making process can sometimes be rapidly accelerated when intuition takes the upper hand. The best way to get an INTP to do something is to suggest the idea as an option and let him sleep on it. Ultimately, the INTP must always believe that it is **his** decision. Once

he is satisfied that the decision was independently reached, then he is content.

A further result of the Ti function is the concept, lived out by many an INTP, that **knowledge** is everything. They tend to believe that information is the key to life. All mistakes can be avoided by having the right information at the right time. This has at least a certain logic about it. Where they differ from other temperaments (especially from SP types) is that a large gap may exist between knowing and doing. *To know* is everything, *to do* is a lower order necessity, if it is necessary at all. This breeds the potential for lazy aloofness. The INTP is often satisfied simply by knowing that he could do something if he wished. This also leads to the danger of overestimating one's capabilities and losing a grip on reality. Here is an aspect where INTP and ENTP types differ strongly. The latter, with dominant iNtuition, are much more driven by shaping the world according to their ideas, ie. thinking supports and subordinates doing. For the INTP, doing supports and subordinates thinking.

Finally, the dominant Ti function means that the INTP takes his interests and beliefs very **seriously**. Honesty and directness when explaining these interests are usually displayed. INTPs detest facades and particularly dislike people who exhibit them. Equally, those kind of people also dislike INTPs and avoid them at all cost, for they know that the INTP will see right through them. The INTP's serious nature also makes them almost immune to mockery and being made fun of, at least when face to face with their mocker. If someone attempts to make a sarcastic, mocking comment about an interest of an INTP, the latter will defend himself with a pure, almost naive seriousness, explaining his position with a severe exactness, wielding his words like swords. This almost always disarms the mocker who does not expect such a penetrating defence. The INTPs defence usually also contains a subtle but biting attack thrown back in the mocker's face, chiefly because the INTP cannot entirely hide the fact that he believes his opponent to be stupid. Such confrontations might develop rapidly into physical ones, a danger that the INTP should be aware of. This ability to wield words with cutting precision is one of the INTP's greatest assets, but equally one of his most deadly traits. He is capable of using words creatively to penetrate deep into the understanding of a subject, but if not checked and wielded carelessly, his words can become highly destructive, especially where the Feeling function is heavily suppressed.

### **Secondary Function: Extraverted Intuition**

Intuition is a mode of perception which focusses on the larger picture, the connections between objects, on the possibilities rather than the facts. When this is extraverted (Ne), the act of intuitive perception grapples with the world itself in order to understand it and its chief goal is to derive **meaning**. The INTP is sometimes referred to as the architect. The world is an object of study and possibilities for changing and shaping it according to the schemes assessed by the Ti core are derived from intuition. If his introversion is strong, however, then his schemes tend to remain private and speculative: the world remains an intellectual object of study but his architectural plans may not actually be put into practice. The constructor/inventor ENTP, on the other hand, with whom the Ne is dominant, aggressively grapples with and shapes the world, showing little reticence. The INTP is of the same spirit, but his constructive nature is likely to take shape within more private hobbies and less likely to directly involve others.

Where the extraversion of the iNtuition function becomes obvious is during discussions, especially heated ones. In contrast to INTJs, an INTP will often make controversial, speculative points of argument, often annoying the discussion-partner, and make them in such a way as to leave the impression that he is very serious about what he says. In reality, the INTP is not actually even certain himself whether he really stands by what he is saying, but his Ne strongly suggests that there must be a core of truth there. The purpose then of his outspoken style of argument is to sharpen his own intuitive understanding by testing the reaction of the listener, and indeed to examine the logic of his own arguments in real time while speaking them out. On occasion, INTPs may seem brash and tactless, but for themselves it is part of their way of getting closer to the truth. This is another aspect of the Ne grappling with the external world (in this case discussion with another) to understand it. The Ne provides the raw material for the Ti core to analyse. The INTJ, on the other hand, with Ni dominant and Te as secondary, tends to avoid letting uncertain speculative ideas out in the open: he presents a more considered structured viewpoint to the world while holding his private thoughts free for intuitive reasoning. The INTJ resembles a chess player, ruminating on the possibilities and then making decisive accurate moves. If the INTP played life as chess, he would keep wishing to modify the allowed-move-properties of his various pieces to optimise his strategy, find that that isn't allowed, and ask to start the game afresh! The ENTP chess player would indeed modify the rules to his advantage and complain that the standard rules were inadequate! The ENTJ would play by the standard rules but insist on making the moves for his opponent as well !

Extraverted iNtuition has a strong influence on how the INTP views his own interaction with others. It is the Ne above all that the INTP most loves to show others. He is therefore happy to be seen as somewhat eccentric, innovative and perceptive. In dreaming about what he would like to become or achieve, his goals are invariably highly individualistic. He must become the composer, the solo performer, the genius scientist who makes the unique discovery. If he is to be noticed at all, then he must be centre stage. If he can't be centre stage in an area of interest, then he must withdraw and resort to vitriolic criticism. But in all areas which interest him less he happily leaves to others and observes. With an INTP it is either all or nothing. Half-efforts he dislikes just as much as he dislikes the restrictions of teamwork and co-operation.

Humour is another aspect which marks out the INTP. He can readily dream up jokes about almost any situation. Taking things out of context is the chief source of humour and many an INTP is a Monty Pythonite. The Ne is the engine and source of this joke-generator. Needless to say, the humour of an INTP can be pretty zany and warped and may not be understood easily by others. The problem is that the Ne concepts for jokes are put into a structure only by the Ti. Hence, the humour can become black and tactless, having felt little Feeling input. Funnily enough, INTPs are dreadful tellers of jokes (which seems to be more the domain of those with Se), perhaps because they pay too little attention to detail when speaking spontaneously. If you see someone smirking and laughing at some private thought, without any obvious reason, he's probably an INTP. INTPs may however make good comedy writers, with the humour of Woody Allen being particularly liked.

The preference for intuitive perception means that INTPs dislike having their lives planned. They feel a distinct unease before most fixed appointments and cannot fully relax until the

scheduled event is over, or at least in progress. However, the dreaded event is usually far less of a problem than had been imagined and usually brings with it a sense of satisfaction. Action is therefore the saving grace of an INTP, for a sense of achievement usually outweighs the earlier apprehension. Social appointments can also be greatly enjoyed, once they are underway. But joyful anticipation is rarely experienced beforehand, unless the event is central to the INTP's fields of interest. The source of the unease is simply the feeling that a planned schedule inhibits and robs the INTP of freedom. It is also a subordination to the plans of others which the independent INTP resists. Faithfully helping others is not a problem, however, but he must feel in control of his decision to subordinate or not.

INTPs tend to be rather mistrusting of people and are rather sceptical. However, a lot of their trust is based on what the Ne function tells them about somebody. This can lead to a naivety and sometimes to prejudices based on intuitive perceptions of appearance and style. People can be a problem for INTPs: on the one hand they are fascinated by some types of people, especially more extraverted individuals, but a fear of irrational behaviour in others usually leads to caution. Friendship with INTPs develops at a pace which depends considerably on the temperament of the other person. INTPs dislike making the first move and tend to **mirror** the emotional content of the other person. A jolly person will quickly bring the INTP out of his shell, as much as that is possible, while a serious person will find a serious INTP looking back at him. In this sense, INTPs preference for intuitive perception (rather than action) with respect to people results in them resembling a **chameleon**. The INTP can fit into many different modes of behaviour, even contradictory ones, in order to get into the mindset of the other person. The goal is to gain enough intuitive data to analyse and assess the person. In doing this, the INTP remains somewhat reserved, never wholly identifying himself with his surroundings. As chameleons, INTPs are therefore approachable and open, unless the Ne tells the INTP that the other person is a type he doesn't like, in which case the reserved attitude may become too obvious. The chameleon behaviour can be particularly strong when discussing something. The INTP may even argue something that he doesn't really believe himself. Sometimes it is for the intellectual stimulation that comes with the challenge of arguing from a variety of standpoints. Otherwise, it may be to avoid early conflict before the situation has been fully assessed. Chameleons hide their true selves. INTPs do not do this cynically, or indeed all the time, but it is a result of the strong desire to remain detached and observe.

However, where friendship develops rapidly, almost instantly, is when an INTP meets another INTP or similar temperament. Communication between such people can become extremely intense, leaving outsiders baffled. When two INTPs get together, watch out! All forms of social graces and host-guest protocols become irrelevant. Both want only to share concepts and interests and absorb the intellectual stimulation of the other. Interruption of this process by any social necessity is undesired and annoying. Often the pair will become oblivious to everything around them and this may seem almost comical to an outsider. Introductory greetings such as "how are you?" may just be given and received with nonchalant disinterest. Conversations are more likely to open with something like: "Hi, I think I've worked out how changes in the Borg's command protocols can be routed through sub-space without compromising their universal teleconnectivity!", knowing that the other person knows exactly what he's on about. Later, the host may offer the guest a drink after an hour of discussing the latest developments in computer technology, and the guest may then notice that he is thirsty.

In most cases however, INTPs have been groomed by other types into accommodating themselves into the social world, so that even amongst themselves a minimal level of social niceties will be given. Favourite topics of discussion are science and science-fiction, music, computers and any abstract concept with which one is currently fascinated by.

One-to-one conversation is preferred in almost every situation. In a group situation, INTPs are sensitive to whether they believe they will be listened to or not. If a dominant (strongly extraverted and loud) person is present, the INTP will withdraw and sulk, believing the dominant person to be a brute. If an INTP speaks, he must be listened to, for he believes his spoken opinions to be important. If not, he withdraws (at least in spirit) and assumes that the people who do not listen lack intelligence. Hence, INTPs make very poor leaders, for they depend too much on the attitudes of others. This is one of the negative sides of the Ne function. INTPs tend to jump to intuitive conclusions, can be fatalistic and have little perseverance. On the other hand, they can make very good assistants to leaders, provided they and the leader are of one mind, for their perceptive analysis can give the leadership useful insights which they may overlook, being too busy with leading. Indeed, INTPs are often glad when someone else takes over the lead, again providing the leader is of the same mind. An INTP's ideal is to provide all the ideas for a project and have a charismatic leader, who agrees with him, carry them out. The only area in which an INTP will carry out his own ideas to completion is in his personal interest world, where other people are not involved. For this reason, INTPs are fascinated by computer technology as well as the Internet which gives him a voice that he would not otherwise have. Many of the most dedicated Computer Freaks are INTPs. Ultimately, INTPs tend to trust machines more than they trust people and may feel particularly at home in the realm of cybernetics.

The Ne-Ti axis is a particularly useful configuration for an interest in Science Fiction. The Ne provides a fascination for abstract ideas while the Ti loves analysing the scientific concepts presented. Many an INTP is a Trekkie, particularly because Star Trek pays a great deal of attention to logical detail. Unlike much of the general population, however, INTPs take such science fiction series extremely seriously, showing the great relative importance attached to the world of ideas. Examples of fictional characters who INTPs have a natural affinity for are Avon (Blake's Seven), Data (Star Trek: TNG) and Seven of Nine (Voyager).

General role models for INTPs are individualistic, creative and perhaps enigmatic people. Innovative free-thinkers who follow their own new paths are usually greatly respected. Famous historical figures who attract the INTP's greatest respect are scientists, composers, inventors and, in society, revolutionary leaders and noble visionaries who bring about major change. Above all, individualism is the key factor, while vision is the most highly prized asset.

The Ne-Ti axis also leads to a curious **duality** in the thinking of the INTP. The dominant Ti core tends to assume the role of a controller and organiser of his life, while the Ne behaves like a free spirit, almost childlike in its enthusiasm. The INTP tends to experience these two forces as an almost continuous tug-of-war, with neither ever quite gaining the upper hand. He is not disturbed by this duality and can view it with wistful humour. If he has been *free-spiriting* for any length of time, he soon feels duty bound to analyse his behaviour and systematise it. While if he has been in an analytical mode for a while, he will soon *decide* that he can *do what he wants freely* after all. It is a yo-yo situation. Generally, INTPs have a very

strong requirement to keep their external, social world as simple and as uncluttered as they can so that they can focus as much energy as possible on their internal world of system analysis and theoretizing. Hence, they tend to be amongst the least demanding and least complicated of all types when interacting with others. They prefer to let the world flow by: to observe the waves being made by others, but to make none themselves. When socializing, the Ne mode dominates, unless a discussion starts up involving the INTP in which case the Ti largely takes over. In their private world it is of course the Ti that dominates.

### **Tertiary Function: Introverted Sensing**

The Sensing function is the mode of perceiving which gathers information from facts, details and objects. When this function is strongly introverted, Si, the focus moves away from external details and is primarily concerned with personal, introspective detail. The experience of the present is not central in itself, as with Se. Rather the focus is on how the present evokes remembered earlier experiences. The key outworking of the Si function is then a concern with memories of the **past**. INTPs typically have an acute awareness of the passage of past times. Sequences of past events can assume a remarkable solidity in their thinking, while most INTPs have very good memories. Indeed, the sensing function is usually very well developed in its strongly Si mode and forms a strong partnership with the Ti core. Hence, the internal world of the INTP is a world of complex, detailed structure, well organized and methodically kept in order. When an INTP focusses on specific details then he has a very sharp eye for them and will not lose sight of them.

On the other hand, one of the more serious weaknesses of an INTP is that the sensing function makes little inroads out into the external world. INTPs are usually **oblivious** to external details unless something forces them to take notice. When an INTP goes into a new room, or walks through a city street, he is blind to much of the detail that people with an Se function would see immediately. The INTP always tries to get a feel for the big picture, using his Ne, and habitually ignores all detail. Of course, objects of interest will be seen as a matter of course and he can choose to concentrate and focus on them, but it is remarkable how much he still overlooks. And those objects he does happen to notice will belong to a small set of things that he is interested in anyway. Many other objects would only be noticed if another person points them out to him.

When an INTP lives alone, his home is usually spartan and utility-oriented. There will be little or no decorative objects, electronic equipment will be in abundance and the importance of any object will depend only on its usefulness. The general style of the home is largely irrelevant. When an object is put aside, not to be returned to for a while, it will lie fully ignored until used again. Objects which lie unmoved for more than about 48 hours usually become invisible to the INTP, until such time as he has a use for them again. For other temperaments whose need for tidiness and order in a house is strong, this lack of concern in this area may seem despairing. For the INTP, however, no problem exists. Corners of rooms, table tops and cupboards may become cluttered with objects, but while they don't move they remain effectively invisible and are unimportant. Indeed, less mature INTPs have a reluctance to move objects at all, for the desire to remain detached and not physically interact with the world can be strong. The one thing that will force an INTP to tidy his home radically, even when alone, is when the clutter eventually gets in his way and hinders some activity. Often,

however, the offending objects will merely be moved into another corner where they can spend some more weeks being invisible. When an INTP lives with a partner and perhaps has a family, he learns the necessity of focussing on the details of tidiness. This is not usually difficult, since tidying a house is an activity which can be clearly defined and, hence, the INTP can focus on it by treating it as systematic work.

Introverted Sensing often plays an important role in the private world of the INTP. When he visits a place, whether new or already known, his Si function gives an overriding concern for the **atmosphere** or mood of the place. In his subconscious, he connects the present experiences of his surroundings with memories of his past, sometimes deep past. A sense of history, of universality, is almost always invoked. When on holiday, the INTP wants to experience above all the **ambience** of each location. Specific details in the present are relatively unimportant and will not be well remembered. However, the atmosphere or mood will be remembered long after, as though it were a solid object. Since people encountered on a holiday usually count as details, unless more personal contact develops, the INTP tends to be drawn more to lonely, isolated places where atmosphere is less disturbed. Nevertheless, the presence of people does add its own ambience which can also be appreciated considerably. The net result of this concern for past experiences and of mood/atmosphere is that INTPs belong centrally to those types referred to as **melancolic**. The INTP melancolic is typically drawn to wild polar expanses, to mountain ranges and all places on the edges of civilisation. Whatever his particular yearning might actually be, it has a common root. The *homeland* of the INTP's psyche is a small and cosy community, isolated in the middle of a vast expanse of wilderness.

Because the present is inextricably linked to a sense of the past, INTPs tend to **hoard** items which help solidify the connection to the past. They find it very difficult to let go of anything they have collected (or indeed created) and which may have a nostalgic meaning. They assume that any object which is of interest now is bound to remain of interest for the rest of their lives. This emphasizes a strong sense of universality in the progression of time, just as it emphasizes the seriousness with which INTPs approach their interests. Frivolity is not in their vocabulary. INTPs often love keeping lists and databases in areas of interest, especially when the lists are associated with things of the past. Collecting periodical magazines or other media of interest is also a very common INTP trait. Such a collection is usually taken very seriously. Yet the collective whole, considered as a temporal rather than spatial object, always assumes more importance in the mind of the INTP than the objects forming the collection themselves. Hence, INTPs are **collectors**, but they are collectors for whom the objects themselves are only important in so far as they evoke a connection to past events, in so far as they yield a nostalgic mood. The curious problem with any collection of an INTP is that he typically fails to enjoy it in the here and now. Items are stored away so that they can evoke this time at some point in the future, but such a point often never occurs. It may never occur because INTPs are always so mentally active that they continually delve into new interests, and continue to hoard items relating to these, so that they rarely allow themselves enough time to reflect on the ever expanding library of their past. The interests of an INTP would be enough to occupy him for several lifetimes if that were possible.

**Photography** is a classic interest of the INTP, which depends strongly on the Si - Ne combination, as well as on Ti for attention to technical detail. Landscape photography, for

example, is the art of conveying a sense of mood/atmosphere to the viewer (Si). The correct employment of lenses, filters etc. brings out the Ti core, while the enjoyment of seeing the world as an fascinating varied object to be observed and captured in the best possible way brings out the Ne-Ti architect. Photos are also a way of capturing the present to evoke a sense of past in the future (Si). When involved in portrait or people photography, the INTP will also be primarily concerned with the mood conveyed by the person in the eye of the lens. Quality photographic skill, as well as an intrinsic feel for imagery, is usually second nature to the INTP and can make a good career choice. When viewing photographic images, say in magazines, the overriding concern is for how the photo is conveyed; its mood, its colour, contrast and shading usages, its perspectives and image quality. However, the actual subject of the image, which other types are likely to concentrate on first, takes a back seat unless it is unavoidably dramatic. Hence, INTPs may convey a very critical and impersonal approach in discussing images, which could lead to offence in some situations.

Another area of interest common to INTPs, where Si has a strong influence, is **Music**. INTPs are usually fascinated by music and may have deep and wide-ranging tastes. Indeed, each of their three main functions (Ti, Ne, Si) plays a role in the enjoyment of music, and indeed music is a key interest for bringing out the feeling shadow of the INTP. Si itself brings a fascination for mood and atmosphere in music as well as for a strong sense of personal nostalgia. INTPs are therefore often keen on melancholic minor-key music in which an introspective and/or esoteric mood is conveyed. Equally, INTPs enjoy hearing music that they heard and enjoyed when younger (provided they can still appreciate it now) and yearn for the sense of nostalgia that it yields. INTPs are also drawn to complexly structured music, thanks to their Ti core. An appreciation of modern classical music, as well as perhaps contemporary jazz, is therefore common with them. Such music types are usually too complex to be understood after a single hearing, which hence provides excellent material for analysis, exciting the INTP no end. Once the basic developmental structure of the music has been assessed, Ne provides the impetus to derive a general meaning of the piece. What does the composer wish to convey, for example? Why was that particular development chosen? Indeed, the Ne is usually hard at work during listening sessions, trying to grasp the meanings behind the often fascinating combinations of sound-world evocations, structural developments and nostalgic impressions.

When the Ti core dominates the choice of music to listen to, the need for intellectual stimulation derived from complex structures and sounds will override concerns for cultured harmony. Hence, INTPs are often drawn to **dissonance**. Indeed, they may even thoroughly strive for dissonant sound worlds. When in such moods, consonant harmonies, especially of the *three-chord-melody* variety, are dismissed as boring and uninspired. If an INTP is forced to listen to simple harmonic music for a while, he usually can't wait to feel the relief provided by a few minutes of pure dissonance. The ideal music for the Ti core might be typically a modern symphony, with a complex, but analysable structure, with a rich and varied sound world, predominantly dissonant but with sections of melodic motifs to provide solidity. Examples of modern classical composers who particularly speak to the Ti core might be Simpson, Arnold, Holmboe, Maxwell-Davies and Shostakovich.

However, feeding the Ti core alone with music will rarely satisfy an INTP for long. Where music really inspires in when the Si function is brought into the picture. Generally, INTPs are

fascinated by atmospheres evoked by music. Examples of modern classical composers whose music speaks more to the Si-melancoly through sound-world evocation might be Bax, Tavener, Pärt, Szymanowski and Rautavaara. Some elements of world-music also speak strongly to the Si-melancoly. INTPs may be interested in the Folk musics of eastern Europe and India, for example. The role played by the Si function is shared by SJ types, so that INTPs may find a common musical bond with some SJs in this area. Indeed, INTPs often feel at ease with SJs, especially their near-shadow xSFJ types. The SJ's guardian instincts usually help the INTP to feel at ease, while the tradition-based predictability of the SJ approach to life helps the INTP to know where he stands, giving him the space he needs to relax. Although the most intense communicative friendships may develop with fellow NTs, some extraverted intuitive types may overstress the INTP by being too dominant and unpredictable, extracting too much energy from the Ti core.

Ultimately, however, music forms a vital, central role in awaking the underdeveloped Fe shadow in the life of an INTP. It is undoubtedly Fe that gives the INTP the life-spark to introduce a genuine sense of joy that music is experienced with. To the INTP, the role of Fe in music appreciation remains mysterious. Music forms which may be useful for awakening the shadow are expressive forms of jazz, where extraverted Feeling is central to the music-making process, as well as some expressive Folk styles (Irish for example). Examples of modern classical composers whose music may appeal to the Fe shadow of INTPs are Messiaen, Copland, Schnittke, Bartok, Vaughan-Williams and, again, Shostakovich (Noting that Fe can be expressing a range of positive or negative feelings). The music of Shostakovich is a particular favourite because, alongside its developmental structure, it also yields an immense sense of passionate tragedy which awakes the Fe-shadow together with the Si-melancoly.

### **Inferior Function: Extraverted Feeling**

Extraverted Feeling judgement, Fe, is the shadow function of the INTP, being by far the least developed of his faculties. Indeed, mature use of Fe typically doesn't begin to take shape until well into middle age. Feelings and emotions are regarded with suspicion and perhaps fear by the INTP and he may be keen to avoid considering or showing them. At the same time, he may experience a certain fascination for the emotional world, but he is desperate to de-personalize any thoughts on that area. He is compelled to subject his emotions to continual analysis, the Ti core literally suppressing the Fe shadow, attacking Fe with accusations of irrationality. He resists letting his feelings go, fearing that to do so would be to relinquish control to an unknown force. He believes emotions to be of a lesser substance than logic and his natural goal would be to conquer his emotions with pure rationality.

Much of the above demonstrates the immature and underdeveloped approach with which the INTP meets his emotional side. In reality, the extraverted nature of the INTP's feeling judgement means that his emotions, when visible, are pretty direct and easy to assess. Since the INTP normally wishes to hide his emotions; when they do come out, they do so in outbursts with an almost childlike innocence. There is a sense of all-or-nothing and, when visible, there is nothing enigmatic about the feelings of an INTP: indeed, shadow functions always seem pretty raw and basic.

When making on the spot decisions while extraverting with another person, the shadow Fe is

often temporally exposed on the front line. Its immature nature may then result in an inadequate decision being made. The INTP may regret this later when the Ti core has analysed the events. Hence, INTPs tend to resist being forced to make quick decisions, for they know that their Fe judgement is their achilles heel. However, the resistance is sometimes weakened when Ne jumps in to back up the Fe. The accuracy of the intuitive insight then becomes crucial if the INTP is to avoid fatal errors. It is interesting to observe that the external world of the INTP involves a very free-spirited Ne-Fe partnership, while the internal world is a very clinical detail-structure-analysis Ti-Si combination. Hence, the outward behaviour of an INTP can contrast strongly with his introspective world.

For the INTP, emotions are seen as something mysterious and as uncontrollable as they are unalterable. Hence, the root of the fear of emotions is the fear that they cannot be controlled. Hence, when an INTP does finally respond emotionally to something, his emotions are indeed left uncontrolled, raw and open. However, when witnessing the emotional response of another person, the INTP intensely resists any similar emotion of his own. An example of this is when watching a 'weepy' cinema film in which some heart-wrenching scene is being shown. The INTP despises the attempt by the filmmaker to influence his emotions and is more likely to sneer than cry. This response has nothing to do with arrogance, however. Rather it is the INTP defensively avoiding exposing what he knows to be his weak point. Where an INTP may experience his own emotional response during a film is when he has had the chance to consider consequences of a element of the film. Hence, emotional response to media input usually occurs with a certain independence of will, which could appear enigmatic to others.

The mystery of emotion is also evidence in the INTP's use of music. He always chooses to listen to music which suits his current emotional state, be it aggression, warmth, excitement, relaxation or whatever. Hence, the emotional state is assumed to be an unchangeable, mysterious property of himself. It is easier to choose appropriate music than to attempt to influence this. People with introverted Feeling, Fi, however, will deliberately choose to listen to music which helps them change and improve their mood. INTPs could never do that. They feel an unpleasant sense of disharmony whenever a music style clashes with their emotional state. Indeed, it is remarkable how much attention they pay to their emotions when music is involved.

Sexuality is another important area which brings out the Fe shadow of the INTP. Sexuality fascinates INTPs in a similar way to music. Both have an emotional core which does not entirely yield to analysis. Sexual feelings often clash with the INTPs desire to control and understand his universe. They also clash with the desire for detachment and keeping a distance. But sexuality is the one thing who's natural power can break through any type dynamics. Hence, sexuality can play a big role in balancing the INTP's functionality. However, the INTP's natural approach to sexuality will still have true-to-type elements. He will be keen to understand and categorise his sexual responses. He will be keen to see first the generalities of male- and femaleness before any personal references are made. Nevertheless, in an intimate relationship, the extraverted nature of the feeling judgement leads to a beneficial openness and empathic directness in responding to the partner's needs, providing the healthy development of the Fe function is encouraged. Indeed, for many INTPs, an intimate relationship is the only place where the Fe shadow can really develop fruitfully.

The inferior nature of the Fe shadow shows itself, otherwise, in the lack of ability to show active empathy with people undergoing strong emotions. If he wishes to encourage the emotional person, the INTP tends to resort to giving T-based solutions to the problems involved. Often, the INTP does not really know how to empathize and may feel discomfort and helplessness, especially when he understands the rational basis for the emotions. He may become frustrated that the person remains unhappy in spite of hearing his T-based solutions. Much worse is when the emotional person appears to be being irrational. INTPs detest irrational emotion above all things. INTPs must take a very wide berth around people who appear to be irrationally, outwardly emotional. INTPs are very sensitive to such a trait and fear the potential excesses of the emotional attacks which do not yield to a defence based on logic.

In a similar way, INTPs dislike being in an atmosphere of emotional disharmony. If they need to say something unpleasant to someone close to them, they would prefer to avoid this task for fear of the disharmony that may result. This results from the INTP's fear that he does not have the emotional competence to deal with disharmony. INTPs never like doing something until they know they can do it. The best cure for this reticence is experience: to express his feelings, to live through disharmony and come out the other side with greater experience of his emotional side.

The feeling shadow is the fear centre of the INTP. He rarely fears any factual thing in the outside world, at least not things that will be encountered in normal day-to-day living. Logic stipulates that external objects or people which threaten can always potentially be dealt with by instigating an active defence strategy. Of course, the possibility of being left truly helpless leaves the INTP cold, for once the Ti core is defeated, the inferior Fe can offer little comfort. Resigned acceptance of the unacceptable is an anathema for INTPs. His typical response to helplessness is to hate the world which has produced it. However, the greatest fears of an INTP are usually ideas generated within his own mind. The problem is that the Ti-Ne axis is capable of conceiving very unpleasant ideas, which may be far from reality and even irrational. Ideas and possibilities assume so much importance in the mind of an INTP that they can override a common sense factual grasp on reality. Since the emotional response to an unpleasant idea is based on an underdeveloped function, it may also fail to bring a return to common sense. The net result is the fear that ideas alone may lead to self-destruction. This fear is irrational and is a cry of help from the feeling shadow when being overdominated by the Ti-Ne axis. This problem can be overcome when more balanced type dynamics result from increasing maturity.

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## Concluding Words

With this essay I have attempted to describe the INTP personality type in as comprehensive a way as I can. For fellow INTPs, I hope that the ideas presented here may add some new perspectives on aspects of our behaviour, both the well-known and the less-often-considered. For other types, I hope that this may have provided new insights into a relatively rare and enigmatic temperament.

Comments and opinions on this essay are welcome and can be emailed to me via the following

link:

