



What's In a Face? Introduction

by Michael J. Lincoln, Ph.D.

This is a “face reading dictionary.” It describes what the cumulative human wisdom has discerned are the meanings of various aspects of long-standing facial structures, in terms of their psychological and destiny implications.

The ancient Chinese system for doing this is called “Mien Shiang” (pronounced MEE-un SEE-ahng), which means, “investigating spirit.” The contents of this dictionary include the utilizable contents of Mien Shiang, plus the best of the West and the author’s own experiences over the last 40 years of study of this subject. The references at the back of this “dictionary” are some of the sources of data for this resource. There were many other very old books, which are not listed.

However, it is crucial to be aware that while this “dictionary” contains information that extends back thousands of years, and that is based upon millions of people’s lives, the fact of the matter is that it is only a relatively small part of the process that has been aptly titled “Wholistic Facial Analysis” (Rosetree, 1988).

For the reality is that on the physical level, the real information residing in the face is composed of the CONFIGURATION of the facial features, and most of the information lies in the fine-grained characteristics of the face and their interrelationships, not in the large facial structures per se. It is also true, though, that the large structural features do provide their own information. And it is to these structures that this “dictionary” will be devoted.

In the meantime, though, it is important to realize that the primary underlying foundation of the physical cues is the organization of the individual’s consciousness or the “thought form” of who the person is, along with his or her underlying soul structure.

The other underlying foundational factor behind facial structure, other than the broad strokes of the person’s genetic heritage, is the individual’s entire experiential history, starting at conception.

What happens here is that there is a thing that could be called the “Schwarzenegger effect.” This refers to the fact that when you exercise the biceps muscles a lot, it will produce a predictable physical outcome in the form of the structure of that muscle and its appearance.

Now it is true that all emotional-interpretational reactions to what happens to and within us activate the 43 facial muscles in the form of evolutionarily built-in facial emotion responses. It is also true that there are only eight such facial emotions, namely happiness, disgust, fear, surprise, grief, anger, contentment and contempt. But the reality is that all facial expressions are *blends* of various kinds of these eight facial emotions.

Now when an event occurs that activates a meaning-interpretation and its associated emotional response facial configuration, it has the same effect on all the facial muscles involved in that configuration as does a contraction of the biceps muscle.

And that, in turn, means that we exercise the muscles in our face via emotional reaction configurations quadrillions of times over a lifetime. And that, in turn, means that the muscular shapes form up a configuration of the face that reflects the impacts on our face of all of those experiences.

This is a direct effect on the structure of the facial features. So in effect, what we see in the nature of the facial structure is the cumulative outcome of the individual's entire life history in the form of the impacts of the particular patterns of the muscular configurations for all the emotional reactions we have ever experienced. It is that, which is actually being read when you look at the structure of the facial features.

The value of looking at these features is that their physical cues are our way of keeping us from running off half-cocked on our own fantasies about the person. They keep us grounded in practical reality, and they draw our attention to things we might be overlooking with our intuitive understanding of who we are seeing.

Another critical factor to keep in mind is that while the information on facial features has a long and illustrious history, the reality is that it IS history - based upon the patterns of the past.

And because there is a very pronounced tendency for us to want to believe that anything that is printed is "God's Gospel Truth," there is a danger that we might become caught up in the meaning of what the emotional reactions of the past have created on the face. The fact is they do *not* mean the same thing in the present day as they did long ago.

It is vitally important that when you are reading a given individual's face and something you read in here does not jibe with what you already know or strongly sense about the person, THE DICTIONARY IS WRONG in such cases. The final arbiter in any facial analysis is the person themselves. THE PERSON is the truth in this matter, not what the faces of the past *usually* meant back then.

The purpose of this "dictionary" is to assist you in coming to a thorough understanding of who a unique human being is by providing the collective experiences of those who have studied this matter as guidelines. But they are no more than that - guidelines.

They are NOT the "be all to end all" in regard to who a person is. The complete compilation of everything you learn about the person in front of you is the final answer. The material in this book is just further useful information in your search for a true understanding of the person.

To complicate the matter further, the face has several layers of information contained in it. At the deepest level, there is the "soul" and "destiny" layer, in which the nature of the entity inside and the pre-designed general nature of the events the person will have that are intended to elevate the consciousness of the inner being are reflected.

Then there are the deep-seated unconscious, subconscious, pre-conscious and conscious long-lasting and self-fulfilling prophesy-based continuing internal influencing processes of the individual's functioning. Much of what is contained in these underlying parameters are based on pain and damage to the individual's ego resources, which distort the individual's manifestation and deflect the individual's potentials.

Then there are the roles that society, groups and individuals impose on the person for overriding reasons, such as collective cohesion, conflict-avoidance and neurotic needs. And finally, of course, there are both idiosyncratic and situationally specific "games" that people play, which have a lot of impact on who the individual becomes over the years. These and other factors like them make face reading a vastly complex process.

There is another matter that is of importance here. This is the role of "archetypes" in this process. "Archetypes" are a combination of what could be characterized as "underlying Cosmic

forms” or “Platonic Ideals,” if you will, with the cumulative experiences of the human race as genetically transmitted structures reflected in its “collective unconscious.”

In other words, there are what could be characterized as “ideal” or “normative” forms for faces and for facial features that reflect both Cosmic templates and all of the uniformities of human experience throughout our evolution.

These “ideal forms” and evolutionary results are the “schemata” to which we compare a given face or facial feature in our deepest subconscious. Any deviation from these “archetypic” facial characteristics are very noticeable and at a subtle level rather unsettling - and fascinating. They are one of the major bases of our being able to distinguish and read other people. Of course, any large deviations create a great deal of discomfort - and a considerable amount of useful information about the person.

These “ideal form” evolutionary results or “archetypes” provide us with an “automatic pilot” meaning-reading mechanism by telling us what is a deviation from the “ideal” norm, i.e., what is unique about this individual.

In other words, we know intuitively what is “significantly different” about any face or face part. It is this “measuring device,” along with the other parameters involved, which allows all of us to “read” faces. Our evolutionary history was based upon face reading, so we are all “naturals” at it. We just need to “relearn the language.”

This brings us to another major factor in the interpretation of the meaning of facial features, namely the evolutionary environments in which we developed. All of our human characteristics were formed in the physical ecologies to which we adapted.

Characteristics that “succeeded” in those ecologies are the ones that we transmit genetically now. Some of these are universally operative throughout the human race, and others are more specific to subgroups in the human family.

One universal human quality is the differences between the genders. It might seem that this is a quality that doesn’t need explanation, but since sexual reproduction generates a “division of labor” pattern of functioning, it is a prime factor in determining what role a person will play in the world, and how they therefore are likely to be constituted characteristically.

It also results in highly predictable and meaningful facial qualities (along with the other bodily differences) in the genders. For instance, males’ jaws, chins and necks are dark (bearded). As a result, in clean-shaven cultures, men will often wear dark-necked clothes to replace this “gender-marker.”

At the same time, women will lighten up their faces with makeup and/or jewelry to emphasize their facial lightness. Meanwhile, darkening around the eyes, the stillness of facial activity, and “juvenile/youthful” structure (turned up nose, large eyes, etc.) are femininity markers. Flowing hair and moving earrings emphasize facial stillness and serenity.

Large hairdos and hats in effect emphasize the smallness of the face in a woman, while they enhance apparent head size (and the thinking function and power) of the male. Both these individual gender-based choices and the genetically transmitted qualities make a BIG difference in the meanings of facial characteristics when such “enhancers” are used.

In the meantime, at a different level, the “gender differences” thing operates in still another manner. Namely, the right side of the face reflects more the “masculine” functions, processes and influences, while the left side of the face reflects more the “feminine” qualities, ways of being and inputs.

These, too, have a major impact on how the individual is going to relate to these “division of labor” issues, and they interact complexly with the other types of influences in this area.

It goes without saying that in addition to these universal physical, ecological and general functional adaptive factors, there are a wide variety of physical ecologies in which humans have evolved, and to which they have adapted.

The result is what we characterize as “ethnic” qualities, like the large lips of some African-Americans, the larger noses of the Caucasians, and the “epicanthal fold” (the characteristic eye structure) of the Orientals.

When encountering these qualities, all you learn is that the individual’s ancestors lived in certain kinds of physical ecologies. You move on to other facial characteristics for information that is unique to the individual in order to read who they are.

However, there are some other qualities that could be considered variations within an ethnic group, which CAN be read for their structural meanings. Unfortunately, at this time, we only have significant amounts of information on a few such qualities in the Caucasian ethnic group.

While this limits the usefulness of these within-group differences in interpreting non-Caucasian faces, they do serve to give us a sort of prototype of the processes that probably underlie some of the structural meanings that have been found for the various ethnic groups.

In other words, these intragroup structural difference characteristics either directly influenced selective survival or indirectly reflected other factors that covaried with them genetically.

An example of the latter is things such as hair qualities like thickness, which seem to have been correlated with ecological things that did directly affect survival, but which did not directly affect individual survival in and of themselves.

The environment was experienced as a highly palpable presence, and its ever-stable characteristics resulted in an emphasis on sameness and/or caution, lest survival be threatened by challenging the status quo. “Leave well enough alone” and “Why change horses in mid-stream?” became the prime philosophy, along with a warmly appreciative and cooperative relationship with their rather benign environment were the results.

It is these physical ecology-based universalities or sub variety-inducing processes that are assumed to be the genetically transmitted physical parameters that lie at the base of much of the meaning of various ethnic structural characteristics. And something similar seems to have happened on the more individual genetic compositions.

The particulars of how these facial features came to be associated with, or reflective of, underlying characterological structure are often not known. However, it can be safely assumed that they do make some sort of biophysical sense at some level.

It is just this characteristic that makes them potentially *unreliable* indicators of who a person is. For as we have evolved, we have moved further and further away from the physical ecological determinants of our functioning in our early evolutionary history. Migration has been a huge factor in human distribution, for instance.

Both our cultures and our cumulative collective consciousness have come a long way over the eons. As we move into the “New World” where heart-centered consciousness is the evolutionarily successful manifestation, many of these genetically transmitted “character-markers” will lose their predictive and comprehension-enhancing function.

The other major parameter creating structural information is what could be characterized as the “life history processes” of individuals. These include nutritional and environmental influences, along with the muscular exercise effects and “thought form” energy field moldings of facial structure.

As was pointed out, the muscular exercise effects are generated by repeated facial expressions arising from the meanings placed by the individual on their experiences. The common thread of often-experienced meanings will literally “body build” the face structure of the individual.

In the meantime, a much more subtle “thought form” emanation process has the same effect, in the form of direct energy field impacts of the inner being on the person’s facial structure.

The combined genetic/archetypic and life history “character-markers” in this “dictionary” are highly useful guidelines, even though they will be changing their nature as we evolve.

The dual “corrective orientations” of the awareness of the fact that individuals will at times deviate from the genetic/archetypic meanings of various facial characteristics, and the awareness that the individual’s unique “thought forms” are ultimately the final determinants of what the person’s facial structure means will suffice to prevent overly rigid or literalistic utilization of this information.

The history of the human race has been a rather hostile one. Fear, distrust and anger have been the adaptive approach for the most part. As a result, many of the items in this “dictionary” are somewhat biased in the negative direction or in the direction of what the individual has had to develop to deal with a non-supportive environment.

As time goes by, these leanings in the definitions will become less and less functional. A concerted effort has been made to weed out the blatantly hostile (and the ethnocentric or arrogant) qualities of the “dictionaries” of the past.

However, there will undoubtedly remain some of the original flavor in some of the items. They just reflect where we have been. They do not necessarily reflect where we are going.

At this point, the only successful way to function in the future is from a base of loving compassion for each other and ourselves, and it is the intention of this “dictionary” to generate that response to the unique individuals you will be encountering. It is for this reason that the process involved here is called, “HEART CENTERED FACE READING.”

Another thing to keep in mind about these items is that the postulated learning histories presented represent an effort to make some sort of sense out of the final outcome of the person’s functioning. They are, if you will, prototypes of what sorts of things would be the likely bases of the individual’s manifestations.

They are not meant to be statements of exactly what happened in the person’s formative history. They are presented to give a flavor of what sort of things might have resulted in the person’s outcomes.

One final comment about these facial features. They are, remember, those of the Caucasian ethnic group and culture primarily. This is, of course, because that was the focus of the literature in the past.

In order to develop similar “dictionaries” for other ethnic groups, we will have to repeat the procedures that lie at the base of this “dictionary” done by members of those cultures as on-site experts, so to speak.

Before moving on to the “dictionary” itself, a few words about its organization. At the beginning are some general facial and head characteristics such as the sections of the face, the general face shapes, profile patterns, the head positions, the skin qualities, the characteristic facial emotional positions for the face parts, and the like.

As these are completed, we then proceed to move down the face from the forehead to the chin and then the neck. The “tour” is started with a section called “Hairy Tales,” covering both head and facial hair characteristics, after which the section on foreheads, then the section on the eyebrows, then on the eyes, and so on occurs.

So if you are looking for a particular characteristic of the face, look where it is on the top to bottom dimension and look approximately at the same place in the “dictionary.” Or, of course, you can also use the Table of Contents.

Humans are highly complex beings as a result; many of the items in this “Dictionary” have “multiple characteristics” associated with them. This means that you will encounter a meaning/character for an item, after which there will be a string of asterisks below it. Then there will be another meaning/character, and so on. See example below:

“Self-determining control-avoidance.” This shows up when they come from a family in which rebellion is fostered.

“Vengeful righteousness.” This occurs when they are the product of a vicious vengeance-vendetta family.