

## Facial Morphology—Who You Are Is Written On Your Face

The study of facial and body morphology is believed to have originated in the ancient Egypt more than 4500 years ago. This is the western morphology. The eastern morphology of India and China is different and may have a different origin. The evidence of an Egyptian origin can be seen in its sphinxes. The sphinxes have been categorized by type: crisosphinx (lion body with ram head), hierocosphinx (lion body with hawk head), and androsphinx (lion body with human head, like the Great Sphinx). Thus they portray the four creatures—man, lion, eagle, and ram or ox that are used in morphology do denote the four temperamental types.

References to morphology can be found in the Bible. The river that comes out of the Garden of Eden and parts into four (Genesis 2:10) is believed to refer to the four flows of energy, which is the most succinct way of defining temperaments. The creature with four faces, those of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle is also described in Ezekiel 1:10.

The gospels are also believed to denote the four temperamental currents, Mark—Eagle, Matthew—Bull, John—Man, and Luke—Lion.

The ancient Greece has contributed the twelve geometrical faces that describe personalities. They were originally named with the names of Greek gods and later renamed by their Roman counterparts (i.e. Poseidon turned into Neptune, Chronos into Saturn, Aphrodite into Venus, Zeus into Jupiter etc.). This knowledge of the Mediterranean region was acquired and later brought to Europe by the Arabs, at the time of Mohammedan conquest, when their empire extended from China to the Atlantic. France took a particular interest in this knowledge. There it has been preserved and taught in medical and nursing schools to this day.

I learned morphology from Dr. Gerald Epstein, who is a practicing psychiatrist and mindbody practitioner in New York City. He was taught morphology by our mutual teacher, Colette Aboulker-Muscat, who learned it from her uncle-physician, in French North-Africa.

Morphology is denotative, not connotative system. It places no value judgments, but simply describes both inner natural pre-dispositions and habitual choices we make in our interactions with the world. In the traditional form of teaching, the learner was always

informed about the responsibility he undertakes by acquiring this knowledge. It is not to be used for entertainment. An unwisely made suggestion about another person's possibilities can have a long lasting limiting effect on the one who accepts it, and on the one who offers it.

The system of knowledge underlying morphology is analogical (as opposed to logical), acausal, and spiritually based. It is based on the knowledge that is known by all spiritual traditions—that essence gives birth to existence, quality gives rise to quantity, function to form.

For example, the essence of acceptance and receptivity can be thought of as giving rise to (or expressing itself in) the existence of an indentation on the surface of the earth such as a ravine, on an earthly level. Such a receptive indentation creates a potential space that can be filled with water creating a lake. At the level of objects receptivity is expressed, among other things, by a bowl that can be filled with something. At an animal level receptivity is expressed by the female principle. At the heavenly level, by the dome of the sky that receives the sun, the moon, the stars, comets and meteors, night and day, without discrimination. As we may note, from heaven to earth the function of acceptance and receptivity has a round form. At the physical level, the greater the quality of receptivity, the greater is the degree (or quantity) of roundness. Thus a sphere is a shape that in geometry is known to have the greatest possible volume capacity for the amount of occupied space. It is not surprising that the function of acceptance and receptivity at a human level is expressed by a roundness of the form of the face.

This is not to say that all round-faced people are accepting, morphology is a complex science, but it is based on simple principles such as the one described above.

To illustrate what I mean by analogy I'd like to offer another example. Deep indentations on the Earth can contain a lot of volume, such as a deep lake and ocean, which is beyond our reach and can contain a lot of unknown material. For instance, there are still many creatures living in the deep sea that have not been discovered. The deeper the hole, the more one can hide into it. By contrast, the protrusions on the surface of the Earth do not create a receptacle, but spew things out, as is the case with volcanoes. Our intuitive

knowledge of connections between things has led us to create many expressions in different languages throughout the Earth that reflect this understanding. We speak of the world below the surface, the underground, and the underworld when we want to describe the hidden. By analogy, it is not surprising that the shape of the face of an extrovert will have more protrusions (open and protruding eyes, nose, lips) and that introverts will have those deeply buried (deep set eyes, small non-protruding nose, inverted lips).

This system of knowledge is acausal, meaning that it is not based on cause-and-effect thinking. There is only one cause, what we may call God, everything else is an effect. Unlike psychology, which asserts that the traumatic experiences of childhood cause mental handicap in the adulthood, no such relationship is seen as possible in the morphology. Instead, a traumatic experience of the childhood is simply understood as a reflection of the inner makeup of the child (reflection not cause). Not surprisingly, the child will often, but not always, move on into adulthood without transforming those inner limitations and will become a “dysfunctional” adult. In the morphological understanding, such an adult would not be called “dysfunctional.” It would be understood that he is functioning perfectly in accordance with his inner make up. It is not known, in the West, why we come into this world with different inner makeup. In the East this is explained by the concepts of karma and reincarnation.

A superficial look at these ideas leads many to think that this system of thought “blames the victim.” With a deeper reflection, however, one may realize that the only way to salvation is through personal responsibility. Blaming “the perpetrators” is a way of remaining for ever enslaved to them. Thus a “destructive” temperament in a child is not blamed on his parents. This does not obviate the need for the parents to address their own destructiveness, but it is done in the context of helping a child and the parent, not in a context of placing blame on a parent. A traditional morphologist will never see another human being as a victim.

Seeing the wholeness of the person’s temperament, denoted by one’s profile, personality, denoted by one’s front face, features (eyes, nose, lips, ears, eyebrows etc.), and habitual attitudes denoted by the habitual movements of facial muscles and by the gaze helps to have a deep understanding of the human being. In my mind, morphology does not

contradict the modern scientific knowledge. As a result of a human genome project, more and more discoveries are being made about genetic predispositions responsible not only for our physical characteristics, but for behavior. So it is not at all surprising that the genome would contain a corresponding imprint of facial features that would go along with the physical and behavioral predispositions.

Morphology does not imprison one into his characteristics but simply helps to understand them. Through spiritual growth the four temperaments become one and the spiritual adept is no longer bound by his morphological characteristics. At a practical level, morphology helps to take advantage of one's strengths, instead of trying to battle against one's nature. It never prohibits one from becoming what one wants to be, but instead shows the way of getting there faster. The type of physical activity, diet, and mental activity, are all distinct in each of the four temperamental morphological types. The names of the four types are based on the relative predominance of the function of certain body systems, Sanguine—blood (or cardiovascular system), Lymphatic—lymph (the system that has the largest capacity for accumulating fluid), Nervous—nerve (or nervous system), Bilious—bile (hepatobiliary system).

Here is an example of how a teenager of each type could use the information about his type if he or she wanted to become an astronaut and realized that this will require lots of studying. The Sanguine type would have to schedule some regular physical exercise, preferably outdoors, that would interrupt his studying. The lymphatic type would need to eat and not to worry about being somewhat overweight; he would need to abstain from drinking too much water. This would help him stay alert and absorb lots of information easily. Nervous types are natural crammers and are very good at it. They need not be discouraged from cramming, but need to be discouraged from the 'all-nighters', as it overtaxes their system. They need to have some light weight lifting (at the comfort of their home and with light weights only) in order to grow a small amount of muscle, which is difficult for them. This helps them to stay grounded and to keep on the target. Bilious type needs to be allowed to find his own way of studying; an external imposition will only be met with resistance and won't be helpful. He just needs to be left alone and helped only when he asks. He needs to avoid foods with long transit time (i.e. ham, large amounts of fried

meat) as they put a strain on his system.

In addition to the practical applications in the everyday life, morphology offers a wealth of information for the clinician, and for the educator. In education, each child has to be raised according to his morphological type. Thus trying to apply the same system of education to everyone is bound to be somewhat ineffective. For a clinician, instead of labeling a person schizoid, hypomanic, compulsive, inattentive, hyperactive, etc, as is done in psychology, we recognize that those are the characteristics that are appropriate for certain types. Thus when there is a disorder or a dysfunction, the affected person is seen not as different in kind, but as different in the degree only. His natural tendencies have been exaggerated out of proportion; which is a sign of imbalance that can be brought back into balance. There is no need for labels.

In interpersonal relationships, understanding of morphology helps for mutual understanding by a realization that each person is acting according to their morphology. Behaviors and attitudes that were seen a personally offensive begin to take on a different meaning. We begin to understand the other's choices and we feel less inclined to be judgmental. We begin to see that everyone cannot act the same way, there cannot be one standard of what is right. This understanding of oneself and others holds the potential of greater openness and love, as the judgments are discarded and understanding increased.

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