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## **Man's face and mimic language**

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Preface

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# Preface

It is probably no exaggeration to say that mimicry is the primary language of mankind and of the individual. Facial mimicry and other expressive movements must have been primitive man's attempt to communicate with strangers who spoke to him in an unknown and unintelligible tongue. Through mimicry, the first mental contact is achieved between the child in the cradle and its mother.

That mimicry and mimic movements exist also in some form in the animal kingdom as a stage in the silent communication of animals one with another is nowadays generally accepted. Thus it can be seen that the capacity for creating mimicry to express thoughts, feelings, and desires must be something fundamental, something that lies safely anchored in the genes. Therefore, we humans are extremely sensitive to changes in the facial expressions of our fellows. This has also set its mark on the use of language when, for instance, we speak of "turning up the nose", of "turning down the corners of the mouth", of "lowering the brows" and of "clenching the teeth" in the sense of "expressing disapproval", of "being unhappy", of "being angry", and of "collecting or bracing oneself to face future difficulties". Expressions such as "a sly and dishonest look in the eye", "a sensual line over the lips", and "a placid, untroubled forehead" are also heard. But if anyone is asked to describe objectively the observation that led to the, perhaps in itself completely correct, conclusion, there would in most cases probably be no answer. We understand — or think we understand — the silent language of mimicry, which we too can employ, but are ignorant of the letters of the language and the spelling of the words.

Considered against that background, it is rather remarkable that so few really serious attempts have been made to investigate and systematize the muscular activities that create certain decisive facial expressions. Our current anatomical textbooks, of course, give a thorough account of the most important functions of each individual muscle. But the effects on the face produced by each muscle are only parts of the letters of the mimic language. No real mimic synthesis — i.e. a combination of the muscular effects first into letters, then into mimic words — could be found by the author in a survey of the literature. An exception is the account given by

the German physician Fritz Lange in his work "Die Sprache des Menschlichen Antlitzes" (München 1952). Many of the conclusions presented in this work, however, seem to the present author to be highly debatable. The small handbook for photographers, artists, picture directors, and models, entitled "Posing for the Camera" by Harriett Shephard and Lenore Meyer (London 1960), is also of value.

This insufficient knowledge concerning the play of muscles that underlie the mimic facial expressions has also impelled the author, who has over the years studied various motion-mechanical conditions in the human body, to penetrate more closely into the matter and the problems involved. The result is the work presented here.

The subject is primarily of interest to medical and odontological students, for whom it is intended as a supplementing textbook. But also physicians (here the author has in mind mainly psychiatrists and plastic surgeons), dentists, anthropologists, psychologists, teachers of the deaf and dumb, portrait painters and portrait photographers, artists, actors, and make-up men can — perhaps within their own spheres — find use for it. Besides the circle of experts, the general public who take an interest in facial analysis and portrait interpretation may find something of value here.

The potential readers thus have considerably widespread interests and therefore start the study with altogether different basic outlooks. This has set its mark on both the content of the work and its wording. Some sections discuss conditions that must be well known to some experts, but a description of them was inevitable with regard to other readers. The author is also fully conscious that several discussions are of a somewhat heavy and complicated nature. However, if the nucleus of the problem is to be approached, it is necessary to know thoroughly the elements that compose the problem.

It can be difficult to provide descriptions and accounts in such a way that also the layman can profit from them, especially as certain technical terms often must inevitably be employed. Unfortunately, the following is therefore encumbered with explanations that can, to some readers, seem quite superfluous. Current English names are used to describe various anatomical details; for the group of medical and odontological students, the Latin terms are given in parentheses.

As far as possible, the author has tried to illustrate the work with photographs, diagrams, and schematic drawings. When these are taken from other works, this is mentioned in the captions. Other illustrations, of which the author's original drawings are models, may readily be used by other authors providing the source is acknowledged.

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