

GRAPHOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY

Chapter

1

Summary

1. Psychological problems related to personality assessment. - 2. Personality traits in the Morettian graphological system. - 3. Interpretation criteria for the graphical movement.

1 Psychological problems related to personality assessment

Given that, according to its theoretical assumptions, graphology aims to define individual personality by analysing a spontaneous piece of writing, it is necessary to recall some issues - as they emerged in psychological research - related to the evaluation of this well-structured psychic reality, which, though apparently inconsistent, is in reality a source of deeply rooted behaviour.

Graphology, being psychology applied to the study of personality, necessarily embraces all the issues related to the definition of the field of research, investigation methodology and theoretical assumptions connected with the research on individual differences, knowing that such a goal is extremely challenging, since it aims to define that inner core whose development is strongly influenced by both genetic heritage and the social environment the individual belongs to.

This field of investigation is inevitably broad, requiring theoretical and experimental links to all specific research areas in the psychological sciences related to the individual and the organisation of the traits that characterise him or her. And if this were not enough, the picture is further complicated by the fact that each personality structure is unique and irreproducible, since it is the product of a very large number of variables whose respective importance is difficult to define, whether we identify them in hereditary terms such as 'genes' or in terms of personal development such as 'individual experiences'.

Personality characteristics under evaluation

As already stated, the term 'personality' is remarkably broad and it is impossible to identify a formal definition which would be acceptable to all psy-

chologists. Thus a certain arbitrariness comes into play, resulting from the fact that the personality can be observed from different perspectives. For instance, Allport defines personality as “the dynamic organisation, within the individual, of those psychophysical systems that determine their characteristic behaviour and thought”.¹ Such a highly conceptual definition reminds us, via the use of the term ‘psychophysical’, that personality is neither exclusively mental nor exclusively physical. Its organisation entails the contemporary functioning of mind and body in a unique and inseparable whole.

The characteristics most often taken into consideration and evaluated in the various definitions of the term ‘personality’ given by different authors are the following: physical appearance and temperament, which highlight the physiological correlates of the personality; the qualitative and quantitative aspects of intelligence; motivational inclinations, from the lowest level of instincts to the top level of values and interests; social attitudes, such as authoritarianism, despotism or gregariousness; expressive and style traits, independent of the content expressed, such as consistency, loquacity, steadfastness, hesitancy and so on; and, lastly, any pathological tendencies.

Furthermore, when we speak about personality we are referring to two important basic beliefs - nowadays part of commonsense knowledge - that explain why we find it so interesting. First, the unsettling idea is obvious, even to people lacking specific psychological knowledge, that a specific personality structure affects the way events are perceived and, at least in part, also the basic concepts about life the mind expresses and believes it has freely chosen. This concept, for instance, led to interesting studies on authoritarian personalities and on the relationships between expressed ideologies and the specific underlying structure. Moreover, the personality – understood as the dynamic core coordinating our inner intellectual, emotional and social elements according to particular individual patterns - affects our ability to adapt to our environment; thus many cases of social maladjustment can be seen as being part of disturbed personalities rather than external causes. It is also considered equally obvious that all personality structures, even the best organised, have inherent limitations, given by the amount of stress they are able to tolerate and beyond which the Self begins to show signs of collapse.

Clearly the progressive acknowledgement of the existence and importance of the personality - seen as the inner core capable of fluidly coordinating innate constitutional factors with conditioning via upbringing and the environment, balancing assimilation and creativity - caused a dramatic increase in the psychological studies conducted in this field. Theoretical rese-

¹ GORDON WILLARD ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, Italian translation *Psicologia della personalità*, published by PAS Verlag Zurigo 1973, p. 24.

arch, by defining the components involved and their causal relations, as well as practical application, through the construction of increasingly more sector-specific personality tests, respond to a growing need to differentiate individuals from a psychological perspective in education, work and in the colourful world of psychopathology. In each of the fields of application listed above, the existence of a psychic structure within ourselves, whether more or less stable and differentiated, is given as a proven fact alongside the idea that this structure determines what we are and how we behave at a mental, emotional and social level.

With this in mind, it is clear why the study of the personality can barely stay within the boundaries of formal science. When we acknowledge the reality of such a structure and its power to affect our everyday lives, we come to feel a burgeoning need for popular psychology books to help us understand why we find ourselves confronting the same problems day in day out. When we are young we find it easier to blame our problems on external causes, later in life we inevitably come to realise that certain dynamics recurring again and again in our lives actually belong to us. The widespread circulation of psychology handbooks on child rearing, love relationships, sexual problems and so on, responds to this need: consistently with the theoretical assumption they are based on, they are meant to be tool for us to use in order to become more balanced in our personal lives and, furthermore, enable us to gain a deeper understanding of the interpersonal dynamics we are all somehow involved in, so that our automatic reactions shift from being entirely conscious to an initial form of consciousness. Not to mention the fact that some degree of psychological competence cannot be seen as a luxury or an attribute reserved solely for professionals in the field of mental health, but it belongs to the development and the much broader reflection that humanity is conducting on itself.

Personality traits and their organisation

One possible approach to the study of the personality is based on the assumption that a very complex object of study, as the personality structure appears, can be broken down into components, identifying (within the personality) a number of basic psychic features and subordinate behavioural patterns. This perspective transversely characterises all the study models of individual differences based on the search for personality traits.

This idea is quite obviously indispensable, in the sense that even when dealing with an apparently impalpable reality such as a psychic reality there is no other way, in the progressive path of scientific research, but to shift from a broad composite unit to one that is smaller. In this case, however,

unlike the decomposition of the atom in physics, in psychology positing the existence of basic components of personality – traits - does not, even today, lead to a widely shared definition, as different authors do not agree on the list of traits considered as basic units of behaviour, nor on a model to describe the interactions that characterise them. While the desire underlying this research is clear, as Allport wondered ², when shifting to the empirical level the question naturally arises: are the traits identified by various psychologists real or arbitrary dispositions? The importance of this issue is easily understandable, as - at the present state of research - personality traits are hypothetical constructs, a mere conjecture in need of new methods because those used to date have proven inadequate as direct demonstration of their existence.

Though facing the undeniable fact that no single trait theory exists, there is however considerable agreement on what is meant by this term: systematic observation of behaviour has revealed, beyond any doubt, that each individual is characterised by a number of habitual behavioural tendencies which are decontextualised, i.e. implemented independently of actual circumstances. For example, a personality prone to aggressiveness will implement said tendency even in relatively calm situations because the tendency is present within the personality and is easily projected outwards. And it is this characteristic of decontextualised habitual behaviour that differentiates between traits and motivations, which are, on the other hand, related to the attainment of specific aims.

Personality analysis carried out using tests designed to identify specific behavioural traits is a significant part of psychology today which studies individual differences. In spite of the explicit admission that all these different methods adopted are based on quite arbitrary assumptions, somehow differentiation is not random.

In addition to significant applicability in practice, trait theory is quite convenient for understanding personality, as it is grounded on the search for the psychical characteristics and behavioural modes all human beings share. At the same time it explains individual differences, since traits vary from person to person both in the intensity of the individual trait and the pattern of reciprocal interaction. Moreover, trait theory enables us to perceive the prodigious work performed by the Self, integrating all the different and sometimes contradictory tendencies into a reference framework that is both stable and capable of more or less flexible adaptation.

This complex and dynamic view of personality requires an equally structured theoretical reference system, capable of identifying personality traits at the core of human experience in its instinctive, intellectual, emotional,

² *Ibid.* pp. 285-287.

social and also ideal aspects. Moreover, we should bear in mind that when studying personality in terms of traits, besides the difficulty in identifying primary behavioural tendencies, it is necessary to describe how these are organised, since personality is not only unique, but also structured.

Without going into detail when examining this highly intricate issue, we can briefly conclude by recalling that in this field of research the following issues still need to be resolved: an unambiguous definition for the significant units constituting personality (trait identification); construction of a theoretical model able to explain how such behavioural units interact (trait organisation).

The object of studying Graphology

The close analogy between the current state of the issues in the psychological sphere concerning the research on personality traits and the development of graphological theory cannot pass unnoticed. Graphologists' thought, by defining graphological signs, is research that aims to identify and define the basic components in the human personality, understood as personality traits.

At the foundation of all graphological systems we find, firstly, the definition of the graphical signs, i.e. "those individual qualities in human handwriting which indicate the intellectual, emotional-active and somatic human qualities."³ A graphological sign is, in essence, a psychological synthesis of a number of characteristics which, in order to correspond to a real personality trait - similarly to that previously suggested in psychology - has to observe two conditions: a) be able to identify specific personality characteristics that can be defined unambiguously; b) the identified characteristics should not overlap. In other words this means that each sign should correspond to a lasting and identifiable aspect of individual personality and the theoretical system adopted should not include several differently named signs which actually identify the same quality.

The problems in psychology in identifying the significant units that make up the personality and, to a greater extent, the existence of different theories on personality trait organisation enable us to understand how the same problems also emerge in the field of graphology. People eager to interpret the human personality quickly, by approaching psychology or graphology, at the beginning feel confused when confronting the fact that they first have to choose a school of thought or a graphological orientation.

³ GIROLAMO MORETTI, *Trattato di Grafologia* (Treatise on Graphology), Edizioni Messaggero, Padua 1972, p. 41.

In reality this lack of general agreement both in the psychological and graphological fields is not surprising for people who are aware of the enormous complexity of the problem under investigation. In this respect, many scientists who studied personality (like Jung) often remarked that psychology is a very young science.

The work of Italian graphologist Girolamo Moretti (born in Recanati, 1879 - died in Ancona, 1963) focused especially on understanding personality and its components through the definition of a complex series of graphological signs, related to specific psychological qualities, and at the same time developing a theoretical model able to explain how the identified traits are organised.

2 Personality traits in the Morettian graphological system

Now the field of investigation for graphology has been explained, we are ready to enter the Morettian system, which is based on the definition of over 70 graphological signs - seen as indicators of individual psychophysical characteristics - and on the rules established to enable us to organise these characteristics in order to trace that unique and structured group which is the human personality.

The first step, the subject of this book, is inevitably that of introducing the individual graphological signs, which are certainly the most original psychological contribution by Moretti, while reference is made to other publications for the intricate question of combining the individual signs so as to trace the uniqueness of the personality.

Although Moretti's exposition is fascinating in his description of his psychological intuitions, owing to his profound vision of man and his rich subtleties of interpretation, reading his books directly does not facilitate our understanding of the rigorous theoretical system he developed for at least two reasons. First, the description of the different signs required a whole lifetime of reflection and thus each individual definition was revised and expanded many times in different works. Second, his most systematic work, the *Trattato di grafologia* (Treatise on Graphology), describes the signs in order of importance, which does not help the vision nor application of his method in practice.

This volume introduces the Morettian system by following a different approach: the signs are grouped so that it is possible to immediately grasp

the basic interpretation category encapsulating them, which is indicated in the title of each chapter. Moreover, for each individual sign, the conceptual context of the tendency under examination is outlined, along with its standard value, and how any deviation from the norm (whether above or below) should be interpreted. For example, with regard to calibre (i.e. the average height of the minor lower case letters), it is possible to understand the interpretation principle used on the analogical level, the value considered as statistically more diffuse (the so-called norm interval is 2-3 mm) and any deviations from the average value, whether above or below. It is interesting to observe how, in practice, the distribution of average values and deviations of the same follow the classic bell-shaped distribution (Gaussian curve).

Although the goal of providing a standardised measurement for each behavioural unit described by the various graphological signs has not yet been achieved, this manual for differential diagnosis based on the Morettian system intends to highlight how this method is able to fully satisfy some basic psychometric requirements (sensitivity, reliability and validity) necessary for graphology to be rightfully admitted into the category of psychological tests. As a matter of fact, with regard to each specific personality trait indicated in the definition of the corresponding graphological sign, the Morettian interpretation system is highly discriminating between individuals (sensitive), allows measurements that are accurate and constant over time (reliable) and is actually able to measure what it purports to measure (valid).

As the present manual will elucidate, the Morettian sign system is a unique tool in the psychological and graphological landscape; it has diagnostic and predictive capacities, owing to the huge number of personality traits that are considered. Its overall theoretical framework is quite simple and based on readily comprehensible assumptions on the relationship between psychic and graphical features. It can be applied under both clinical and everyday life conditions because it is a fascinating tool through which we may access knowledge of the supporting structures of the individual psyche, seen in its essential components - sentiment and intelligence. In this sense it is essentially a diagnostic tool and not a therapeutic one. However, the possibility of directly accessing the personality's inner core may itself be a therapeutic action whenever 'seeing' a structure from the outside leads to an understanding of its dynamics, in an almost deterministic perspective; therefore, it lays the foundations of both self-reconciliation and reconciliation with others.

As previously mentioned, this book intends to introduce the Morettian sign system seen in its interpretative foundations and is supplemented by

the Morettian sign anthology *Il segno grafologico come sintesi psicologica*⁴, which allows the reader to grasp, for each sign, the whole range of interpretation as it appears in the different definitions taken from all Moretti's works. As is well known to all enthusiasts of Moretti's work, his original phrasing - both from a lexical and conceptual perspective - earned him the title of 'graphological genius'. His genius is still more evident when he summarised the personality traits he identified.

But while Moretti's identification of the various signs was highly detailed and convincing, as far as the rules for personality trait combination are concerned he just left some basic indications which are insufficient for practical application.

First, the work of combining signs is facilitated by the fact that they are classified differently based on the whether they are substantial, modifying or accidental signs. According to Moretti's *Trattato* "Substantial signs possess a foundation value, related to the structure of the human personality. Modifying signs possess intrinsic accidental value, but have so much power and such characteristics that they are capable of modifying, and in some cases they can change the course of the substantial signs and, somehow, attract them to the tendencies suggested by the modifying signs. Accidental signs are those which are not related to the substance of the Self, but only to the general outline and ancillary issues that can very often give individual distinction to the substantial and modifying signs."⁵

Second, we should remember that "All the signs, in themselves, enjoy autonomy of action"⁶, however their actual drive depends on the intensity of their specific tendency. This intensity is measured using a decimal scale according to the criteria clearly indicated by Moretti in his *Trattato*. Moreover, measuring the tendency entails observing a norm value that varies depending on the tendency under examination. For instance, the ability to keep the writing stable on the line (related to the *Stable on the Line* sign) is considered average when it is no lower than 7/10; angularity is considered socially acceptable when it is around 3 or 4/10; and sentiment is balanced when the *Spacing between Letters* sign is exactly 5/10. And it is this difference in the mean value (5/10 of the sign) and what is the norm that conveys particularly clearly the complexity and rigor of the methods adopted.

Another interpretation principle behind the Morettian sign system is the

⁴ LIDIA FOGAROLO, *Il segno grafologico come sintesi psicologica* (Graphological Signs as Psychological Synthesis), Edizioni Messaggero, Padua 2010.

⁵ G. MORETTI, *Trattato di Grafologia*, Edizioni Messaggero, Padua 1972, p. 41-42.

⁶ GIOVANNI LUISETTO, *P. Girolamo Moretti e la sua grafologia* (Father Girolamo Moretti and his Graphology), Istituto Grafologico P. Moretti, Urbino 1982, p. 195.

distinction it operates between signs of sentiment and signs of intelligence. Although there is no mutual exclusion principle, since “All the signs somehow come to modify part of sentiment as well as part of intellect, because in man everything is whole”,⁷ graphological signs deal mostly with either sentiment (including all the individual emotional-active dispositions) or intellect. Moretti’s *Trattato* opens with the classification of the “Signs of Sentiment” and “Signs of Intellect”; such a distinction is essential because, according to Moretti, the personality traits related to sentiment are the ones that lead the game within the Self. Whatever a person may believe of themselves, it is always that part that goes beyond the rational mind that has absolute priority as the driving force of the human personality. In this regard, Moretti’s vision is in tune with his times, given that the 20th century began with the ‘scientific’ discovery of human irrationality, embodied in that vast unconscious world of Freudian thought containing all the negative drives that the mind can only attempt - often in vain - to repress. Such a deeply pessimistic vision of man gradually became less harsh over time, in the sense that the negative irrational part of the psyche – as it was first defined - is today better considered a world in touch with ‘rational’ forces more powerful than the conscious mind. According to this branch of research - both psychological and neurological - sentiment is equivalent to a complex and masterly instinctual drive, only partially mediated by the conscious mind, which can take full control in cases of emergency, exerting a genuine emotional hijacking that bypasses the more aseptic processes pertaining to the cognitive functions. Using this interpretation key Moretti, though a very isolated man at a cultural level, was extremely modern in his vision of man and the inconsistency between what the mind thinks and what the heart (or instinct) wants, and how the latter almost always wins.

After establishing the basic interpretation principles, connected to a precise quantification of the signs and their hierarchical organisation through the indicated criteria, so that signs of sentiment dominate over signs of intelligence, and substantial signs over both modifying and accidental signs, thus we have the first rules to then proceed with combination. Moretti provides a very effective summary to describe the practical application of his method: “To carry out a graphological analysis, you have to proceed as follows: first, you have to detect the signs occurring in the handwriting, grading them according to their intensity. Then, you have to consider those among substantial signs which describe emotional-active dispositions. The sign of emotional-active dispositions that has the highest gradation is the main sign and the

⁷ G. MORETTI, *Trattato di Grafologia*, Edizioni Messaggero, Padua 1972, p. 42.

other signs are either supporters or opponents or indifferent.”⁸ This latter clarification embodies the dynamic principle of Moretti’s method: signs interact by supporting each other whenever they push in the same direction and by contrasting each other whenever they embody opposite psychic qualities, or are indifferent whenever they occupy independent positions. For example, when excessive Spacing between Words and the Small Calibre, which for different reasons suggest intense mental activity, are both present they reinforce each other and drive the personality to excessive intellectualism. Whereas the same excessive Spacing between Words combined with the medium-large Calibre does not run this risk because the latter favours the extroversion of sentiment. Or Right Concave Extensions increase the tendency to surrender when the writing is curved and fluid, while in angular or jerky handwriting it points to social skills.

This is the most fascinating part of the Morettian method as it enables us to grasp the complexity of the movement underlying the personality structure. Moreover, with practice we can notice that the dominant movement of the psyche, graphically represented by the substantial sign of sentiment with the highest value, can summon other signs to support and complete it, in order to give the personality enough strength to express its primary tendency in real life. Thanks to this delicate supporting interaction, personality analysis becomes easier, as it is established that an important disposition of the psyche cannot pass unnoticed or be misunderstood because it is supported by several signs that converge in the same direction and offer their specific contribution in terms of energy potential.

According to Moretti’s psychological view, “Man possesses only one heart, only one intellect, only one will, only one body, one single movement, one responsibility, one single dominant passion or psyche that presides over the whole being. Consequently, each movement, both of mind and body, cannot remain impersonal.”⁹ This uniqueness of the personality should not be overly simplified, because – as previously remarked - it is the result of many converging tendencies, but also because the importance of the forces contrasting the dominant tendency ought to be highlighted, as contrasting elements actually create greater intensity, both in expression and substance. No personality can revolve around just one dominant feature or one temperament because the vital creative process, even a psychic one, is based on the tension between opposites; it is Self’s task to seek one perspective which sur-

⁸ Cited by G. LUISETTO in *P. Girolamo Moretti e la sua grafologia*, Istituto Grafologico P. Moretti, Urbino 1982, p. 201.

⁹ G. LUISETTO, *P. Girolamo Moretti e la sua grafologia*, Istituto Grafologico P. Moretti, Urbino 1982, p. 186.

passes both. This duality characterising each personality structure takes shape in very different ways.

Someone working in the field of psychology or a simple observer of human reality cannot help noticing that personality appears more consistent and whole in some individuals than in others. Furthermore, the search for an organising structure cannot blind us to possible expressions which seem fragmentary and independent of the dominant theme, whatever it may be. Phenomena such as personality dissociation or intense inner conflict are especially striking examples of the contradictions exhibited by the whole human being, as already theorised. And it is by confronting this issue that Morettian graphology demonstrates its highest potential since, owing to the dynamic vision of the personality traits it refers to, it enables us to clearly identify how the Self manages the multiple tendencies present within it. First, it is able to distinguish whether we are dealing with a structure endowed with many traits or, conversely, the Self has few basic elements; whether their drive is intense or moderate; whether the traits mainly share the same direction of movement or highly contrasting elements are present in their inner drives. Moreover, Moretti's method enables us to understand whether the system is well-structured, which happens when it is able to integrate numerous and varied inner drives or, on the contrary, exhibits signs of dissociation. Furthermore, as it is closely connected to the analysis of the movement, it is able to detect any decreases in vitality or progressive psychic fragmentation related to heavy forms of depression, as well as any rigid and pervasive patterns to the extent they compromise interpersonal relationships in the family, at school or work. As it is based on the interpretation of a very high number of personality traits, it is an extremely sensitive psychodiagnostic tool capable of detecting even the slightest forms of psychic suffering at their onset.

In practice, this method provides various application possibilities. Identifying specific personality traits, related to corresponding graphological signs, is quite a simple path that enables us to detect important and significant behavioural tendencies. Whereas, in order to understand the complex game of supporting, contrasting and indifferent signs which allows us to access the inner dynamic core (whose vital movement is highly differentiated and whole, corresponding to what Moretti defined the predominant passion) we need specialist training owing to the obvious complexity of the object of study: the individual human personality.

3 Interpretation criteria for the graphical movement

After having examined the position handwriting analysis holds in psychodiagnosis and the relationship between personality traits and graphological signs, we can now identify the criteria for interpreting graphic movement which enable us to carry out the peculiar work of reading and shifting from the graphic to the psychological level.

Although Moretti employed his amazing intuition in the practical application of graphology as a psychodiagnostic tool, from the perspective of theory he developed his method for personality analysis based on graphological signs by extensively using analogy, identifying the relationships between the graphical features and the respective characteristics of the writer. If the use of causal thinking highlights the horizontal relationships connecting different phenomena (before/after), analogical thinking seeks ways to extend some properties from a well-known and defined case to other cases with reasonably similar aspects. Analogy, which in this sense is a metatheory i.e. a principle that cannot be proven scientifically but can still inspire or generate more specific and verifiable theories, is set according to the identity of the contents in the different forms.

Furthermore handwriting analysis, seen as expressive behaviour, is based on a psychological principle according to which each psychic content, whether conscious or unconscious, is manifested outwardly in some form of expression: all forms of expressive behaviour are typical of the person expressing them or of one of their characteristics. And these characteristics may be grasped either in gesture, voice or gait, because the “whole human being is also expressed by one single, spontaneous movement coming from the inside.”¹⁰

After defining the theoretical principles, the practical criteria Moretti used to identify the different graphological signs appear highly diversified, to the point that here we can only give a few suggestions regarding possible agreement with the analogical process described above. Sometimes we see associations that can be considered entirely obvious, as demonstrated both by psychological and graphological research: this happens, for example, in the interpretation of the curved or angular movement, the former seen as soft adjustment while the latter is seen as the tendency to brusque reactions and a breaking movement. Staying within the graphological sphere, in some cases Moretti agrees with other authors, while in others his view deviates greatly from some classical interpretations. For instance, the Methodically Uneven sign is based on a shared analogical principle according to which excessive graphical uniformity

¹⁰G. MORETTI, *Trattato di Grafologia*, Edizioni Messaggero, Padua 1972, p. 19

indicates the inability to break with convention and, consequently, little originality. While less even writing implies - more or less structured - inventive tendencies, both for the ability to focus on the differences and the tendency to express a movement that is not conditioned by pre-existing rules.

On the other hand, to understand where the principal differences come from we need to also be able to grasp the objective difficulties and pitfalls of analogical thought. For example, many authors have associated the large calibre with the Self's need to expand until it reaches - as this tendency grows - a form of megalomania. Based on this interpretation principle, which was also shared by Moretti, the opposite psychic characteristic, given by the small calibre, has consequently been interpreted as a sign of inhibition deriving from the assumption that the Self expresses its fear of showing itself in this way. The calibre category appears homogenous as it is able to strictly follow logic with regards to the interpretation principle adopted. However, in fact, it is essentially wrong, as demonstrated by practical experience, in that not only is the small calibre not always linked to forms of fear, but on the contrary - as Moretti correctly pointed out - it can reach true stubbornness and conceit. This complex graphical feature highlights the originality of the Morettian sign system which gives the medium, small and large calibre a logical and unitary interpretation able to realistically explain, starting from the medium calibre, what can be inferred by its expansion or reduction.

But if the pitfalls of the analogical method can only be grasped by an expert in different theoretical graphological systems and the difficulties this process entails, I believe everyone can appreciate the conceptual originality and practical effectiveness, which leaps to the eye, of many of the sign categories defined by Moretti. We just need to consider the brilliant elaboration of the Triple Width sign, which alone enables us to focus on differentiated and highly complex personality issues. For example, we are able almost at a glance to recognise that we are dealing with a person who is pondered (above average Spacing between Words) or instinctive (below average Spacing between Words), guided by sentiment (Curved-Fluid) or intuition (Rushing). With the same immediacy we can verify whether in its judgements the mind tends towards equity or generosity, or whether its restrictions are excessive to the point of sophistry of sentiment (narrow Spacing between Letters) so that nothing from the outside is considered acceptable.

This book introduces the Morettian sign system and each category is preceded by a precise definition of the psychic movement under analysis and the reasons why it is assumed that this movement is reflected in the handwriting. For example, the following principle governing expressive behaviour is seen as vital: each expansive movement, reflected in the handwriting as a form of graphical dilatation, is based on a trusting attitude towards the world; whereas a con-

tracted movement suggests - in order of increasing intensity - attention, cautiousness, anxiety, distrust or total closure. The complex Morettian sign system is so precise in analysing movement, whether it is physical, psychic or graphical, that it allows us to pinpoint details. For instance, some apparently similar psychic characteristics, such as tenacity, firmness and inflexibility, in a graphological perspective correspond to different movements that are clearly defined and distinct, represented by the signs B Angles, Stable on the Line and Straight Extensions, so that the three terms cannot be used as synonyms.

Graphology, precisely because it is conducted by analysing movement, is not based on a form of knowledge that can be obtained by means of learning the signs and various combinations by rote. Understanding the psychic experience of each personality structure occurs by activating that form of analogical knowledge that today is related to mirror neurons: by reading and interpreting the movement, referring to its inner complexity and differentiation, the graphologist can understand where the writer positions themselves and which experiences have shaped them.

In addition to this basic principle, related to the fact that in order to understand the complexity of the problems associated with the human condition we somehow need to have made them our own at a level which is much deeper than the mental level, it is imperative that graphology remains intimately linked to psychological research, understood in its broadest sense. In fact, it is this which provides the theoretical clarifications on the background of each subjective experience, so that the infinite complexity of the problems, inner tensions, contradictions and shadows that mark the individual personality and, consequently, how it is coloured and shaped by the relational world around the Self do not escape the graphologist.