

Identity & Identification

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We expected to see a charlatan with his hair finely frizzed, and his manner full of impudence and conceit, and were pleased to meet a good-looking man with the air, gait and manners of a philosopher. As the doctor walked about the rooms, many eyes were gazing on him—some were so fortunate as to be introduced to him—others crowded round him to catch the words that fell from his lips. Henry Reeve, physician, 1805

The polarity of these reactions—suspicion, respect, worshipful admiration—to Franz Joseph Gall, the originator of phrenology exemplifies the standing he held both in his own epoch and thereafter. Personally reviled by many as a greedy mountebank, repudiated professionally and ridiculed for quackery, by others he and his doctrines were admired, respected and proved greatly influential.

Trained as a physician and widely regarded as a skilled anatomist, Gall came to public attention (and is still best known) for his theory of brain localisation, which he termed the “doctrine of the skull” or “organology”. This is the field that became known later through his disciples and popularisers as “phrenology”. The theory held that moral and intellectual qualities are innate; that they function through organs located in the brain, the size of which indicates their prevalence; and that these are reflected in and can be identified through the shape and size of the cranium. His system was founded on the observation of the skulls of individuals exhibiting extremes in behaviour or intellect, from lunatics and criminals to renowned geniuses. Gall’s taxonomy identified 27 organs controlling psychological and moral faculties, whose categories were deliberately generalised and without defined anatomical boundaries. Gall stated that his categories could only indicate propensities and he distanced himself from the more specific and detailed brain maps developed by his erstwhile assistant and collaborator Johann Spurzheim, as well as Spurzheim’s application of phrenology in prognosticating character and aptitudes.

The apparent materialism of Gall’s doctrine caused his public lectures to be banned in his adopted city of Vienna. He then embarked on a lecture tour of northern Europe before settling for good in Paris in 1807. It was in Britain that his theory—modified and successfully promoted primarily by Spurzheim and Scottish phrenology devotee George Combe—enjoyed its first widespread acclaim. However, even in its heyday in the 1820s–40s, it was under constant attack by opponents both scientific and lay. Whilst its fashionable appeal is attested by the mass manufacture of phrenologically-themed objects (such as marked heads, ladies’ fans and snuff boxes), the many scientific and popular satirical attacks demonstrate the widespread ridicule and opprobrium which it elicited.

The progressive adulteration of Gall’s doctrine into more extreme forms by subsequent practitioners and phrenology’s deterioration into a seaside entertainment has robbed Gall of a wider recognition of his merit and influence. Whilst he was not the first to propose a doctrine of cerebral localisation, his work was the most developed attempt to map moral and intellectual character. His belief in cerebral division of labour was propounded in a climate where the holistic tradition (a belief in the brain’s homogeneity) was ascendant. Though his organology and its correlation to skull features is now wholly discredited, the general principle of cerebral localisation has nonetheless become commonplace and the effort to map certain propensities and abilities within the brain is a thriving area of contemporary neuroscientific research.



Opposite This small bust was designed as a penholder and produced in glazed earthenware by Frederick Bridges in the 1830s or 1840s. Such items show the popular reach of the science that became known as phrenology, which was launched by the speculation of the Austrian anatomist Franz Joseph Gall that moral and intellectual faculties could be associated with particular regions of the brain.

FRANZ JOSEPH GALL 1758–1828

Ruth Garde

Below Gioachino Rossini was one of many notable figures illustrated in Joseph Marriott's *Phrenological album*, published in 1850. The numbers 31 and 32 inked on to the temples are said to correspond to the composer's large organs of "Time" and "Tune".

Opposite This image is taken from the *Phrenological album*, containing portrait prints of celebrated figures published by Joseph Marriott in 1850. Its subjects—ranging from Queen Victoria to Shakespeare, from Martin Luther to Heidegger—were chosen for their remarkable moral sentiments or intellectual faculties. Each has a number marked on their head locating their particularly noteworthy brain organ. This drawing of George Bidder, a mathematical child prodigy, has the number 28 beside his right eye, indicating a large organ of "Number".



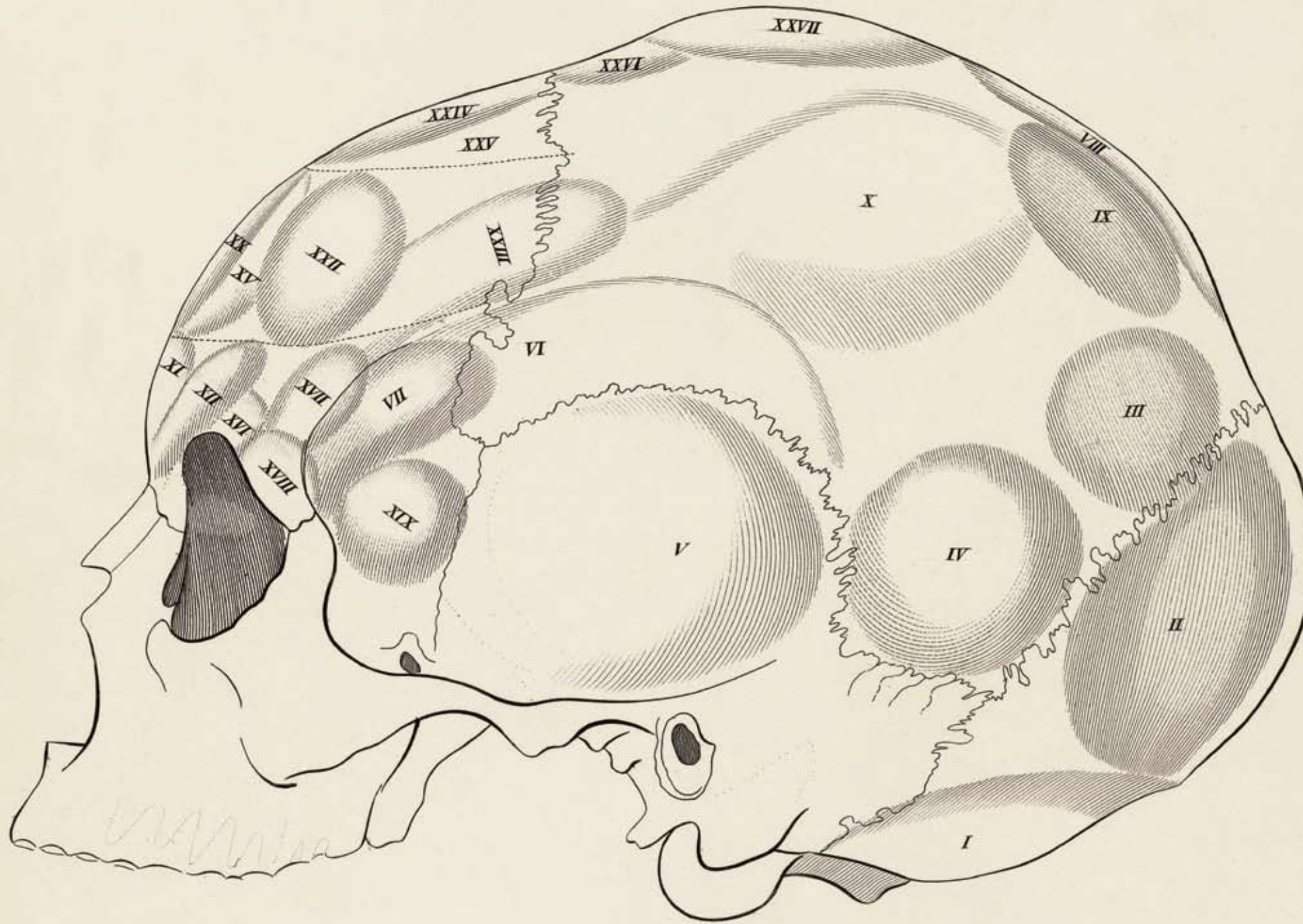
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GEORGE BIDDER,
The calculating phenomenon of England.
 Who at eight years of age & having received no instruction in arithmetic possessed the power of resolving difficult arithmetical questions without hesitating or shewing any appearance of mental operation, which power continues & improves.
 He was born at Morton Hampstead in Devonshire June 14th 1806.
 Engraved July 1815. by Freeman. from a picture by John King.



Opposite Bernard Hollander was a Vienna-born psychiatrist who worked in London around the turn of the twentieth century. He was a follower of Gall's phrenological school. He is shown here demonstrating his own method of craniometry.

Above Aenean sit amet odio neque, nec bibendum libero. In velit ante, faucibus ut ullamcorper eget, blandit vitae enim. Curabitur ultrices dignissim arcu vitae hendrerit eget ac leo. Nulla ultricies tempor.



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This beautifully drawn skull is contained in a volume of plates produced as an *Atlas of the Brain* by Franz Joseph Gall in 1810. This was a companion to his much larger text on the anatomy and physiology of the brain. It shows the 27 numbered organs in Gall's doctrine of brain localisation. For example, Cunning is VI and Cautiousness X.



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This set of 60 miniature phrenological heads, made in Manchester in 1831, may have been produced as a teaching aid or a reference collection. Each specimen is analysed according to the system of Johann Kaspar Spurzheim, Gall's assistant who later modified his taxonomy in a way that Gall rejected. The heads demonstrate a wide variety of talents and dispositions. Head No. 31 is that of a "born Astronomer", whose organs of "configuration, size, locality, order, calculation, marvellousness, cautiousness, firmness and self-esteem predominate". The organs of No. 23, on the other hand, reveal "the head of a dangerous bigot when in power".

The unproven—and apparently unprovable—claims of the phrenologists provided ample scope for mockery. This advertisement for Hudson's Soap, dating from around 1910, combines authentic phrenological 'organs' such as acquisitiveness and destructiveness with invented ones more suited to the claims of the product.

REFINEMENT. Refinement goes hand in hand with cleanliness. Antiquities, articles of vertu, bric-a-brac, bronzes, statuary, choice china and glass, Chass shades, &c., requiring delicate handling can be safely washed with Hudson's Extract of Soap, the dirt being dislodged without unnecessary contact or friction.

ADMIRATION. Contemplating the beautiful get-up of your linen, lawns, laces and fine underwear, and the charm of your house made sweet and wholesome by Hudson's Extract of Soap.

Economy. No cheaper soap exists than Hudson's, it economises in cost, in time, in labour, and in wear.

Neatness. No home so neat, no home so sweet, as the one kept in apple pie order by Hudson's Extract of Soap.

EDUCATION. Learn the thousands of uses to which Hudson's Extract of Soap can be applied, for home, ship, stable, workshop, and factories.

CLEANLINESS. Personified in the daily use of Hudson's Extract of Soap.

RAPIDITY. Though you rub! rub! rub! And you scrub! scrub! scrub! You'll find that It's not in your power, In the old-fashioned way To do in a day What Hudson's Will do in an hour! Hudson's Extract of Soap for rapid washing. Leaves No Smell.

CAUTIOUSNESS. Be wary to take no substitute for Hudson's Extract of Soap. Remember it has no drawbacks to explain away, and does not leave the objectionable smell common to modern soaps.

ACQUISITIVENESS. Hudson's Extract of Soap is a money saver, a time saver, a wear and tear saver, a labour saver, and a glass and china saver, less handling needed and less risk.

FAITH. Hudson's Extract of Soap enjoys the confidence of half-a-century's faithful service in doing good washing, cleaning & scouring work.

WEIGHT. Weight for weight Hudson's Extract of Soap will do more cleansing work in less time than any other soap in existence, the weight of argument is always in its favor.

COMPLETENESS. No Soap is so complete in itself as Hudson's Extract for washing, cleansing and scouring, every day, everywhere by everybody.

FRIENDSHIP. The best friend and the most helpful handy worker in every household is Hudson's Extract of Soap.

Destructiveness. Dirt and disease cannot exist where Hudson's Extract of Soap is in daily use.

COLOUR. Clothes washed with Hudson's Extract of Soap retain their proper colour.

PARENTAL SOLICITUDE. Hudson's Extract of Soap will make wholesome dwellings & real clean clothes, which are necessary to the health, happiness and prosperity of children, babyhood upwards.

Are you Domesticated?

BUY HUDSON'S SOAP IN DOZENS.

1890

SAFETY. Hudson's Soap is invaluable in Hospitals & Public Institutions, for all sanitary uses, rapidly removes obstinate dirt, keeps the wards & dormitories sweet, dries at once.

MERCIFULNESS. Hudson's Soap is merciful to the clothes, it only removes the dirt, grease and stains, leaving the linen behind in the wash-tub, spotlessly white, wholesome and pure.

PURITY. Hudson's is a Pure Dry Soap in fine powder, sold in packets. It makes a foaming lather, softens all waters and leaves no smell.

REALIZATION. What joy to have a clean house, to realise that you have no dirty, musty corners, that your clothes are free from taint, all due to Hudson's Extract of Soap.

REGULARITY. The daily regulation in every well-governed house is to do all washing, cleansing, and scouring, with Hudson's Extract of Soap.

PROPER PRIDE. To feel that your house is delightfully clean, your linen sweet, your family protected from the danger and risks of disease, and health and happiness promoted by the daily use of Hudson's Extract of Soap.

OBSERVATION. On all sides you can observe the blessings resulting from the daily use of Hudson's Extract of Soap.

BEAUTY. Radiant linen! Spotless floors! Sparkling glass! Bright china! all owe their beauty to Hudson's Extract of Soap.

VARIETY. The great variety of uses to which Hudson's Extract of Soap can be applied in the kitchen for 'washing up' china, glass, knives and forks, in the house, all over the house, outside the house.

LANGUAGE. Language is quite inadequate to describe the multitudinous uses of the most useful thing in the world, Hudson's Extract of Soap.

DISCERNMENT. Shown by the millions of sensible people who daily use Hudson's Extract of Soap.

MIRTH. Nothing to do but laugh at the wash-tub with Hudson's Extract of Soap in it.

ALIMENTIVENESS. The pleasure of eating and drinking is increased by having the tableware, glasses, silver, table linen, &c., washed with Hudson's Extract of Soap.

COMBATIVENESS. (Bold to resist imitations) Hudson's Extract of Soap is an old public servant with half-a-century's reputation for doing what it claims. It will not injure the most delicate fabric, and leaves no smell.

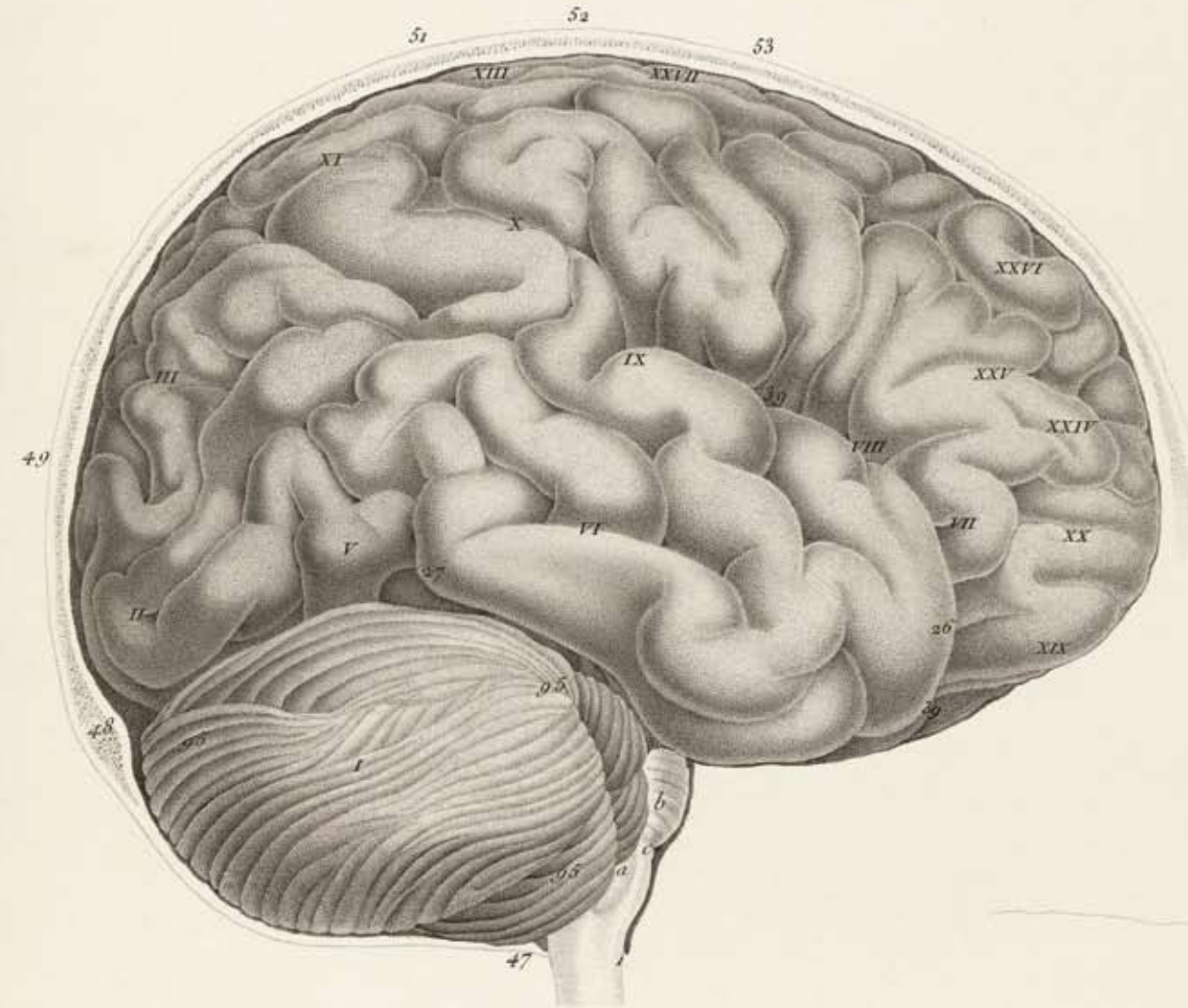
LOVE OF HOME. The sweetest, healthiest, happiest homes are those where Hudson's Extract of Soap is in daily use.

LUXURIOSNESS. Revel in the luxury of pure sweet linen made white as snow and fresh as sea breezes with Hudson's Extract of Soap.

Try your Bumps

BUY HUDSON'S SOAP IN DOZENS.

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This plate from Gall's *Atlas of the Brain* represents the "female brain".

Pinx. del.

Benquet sculp.



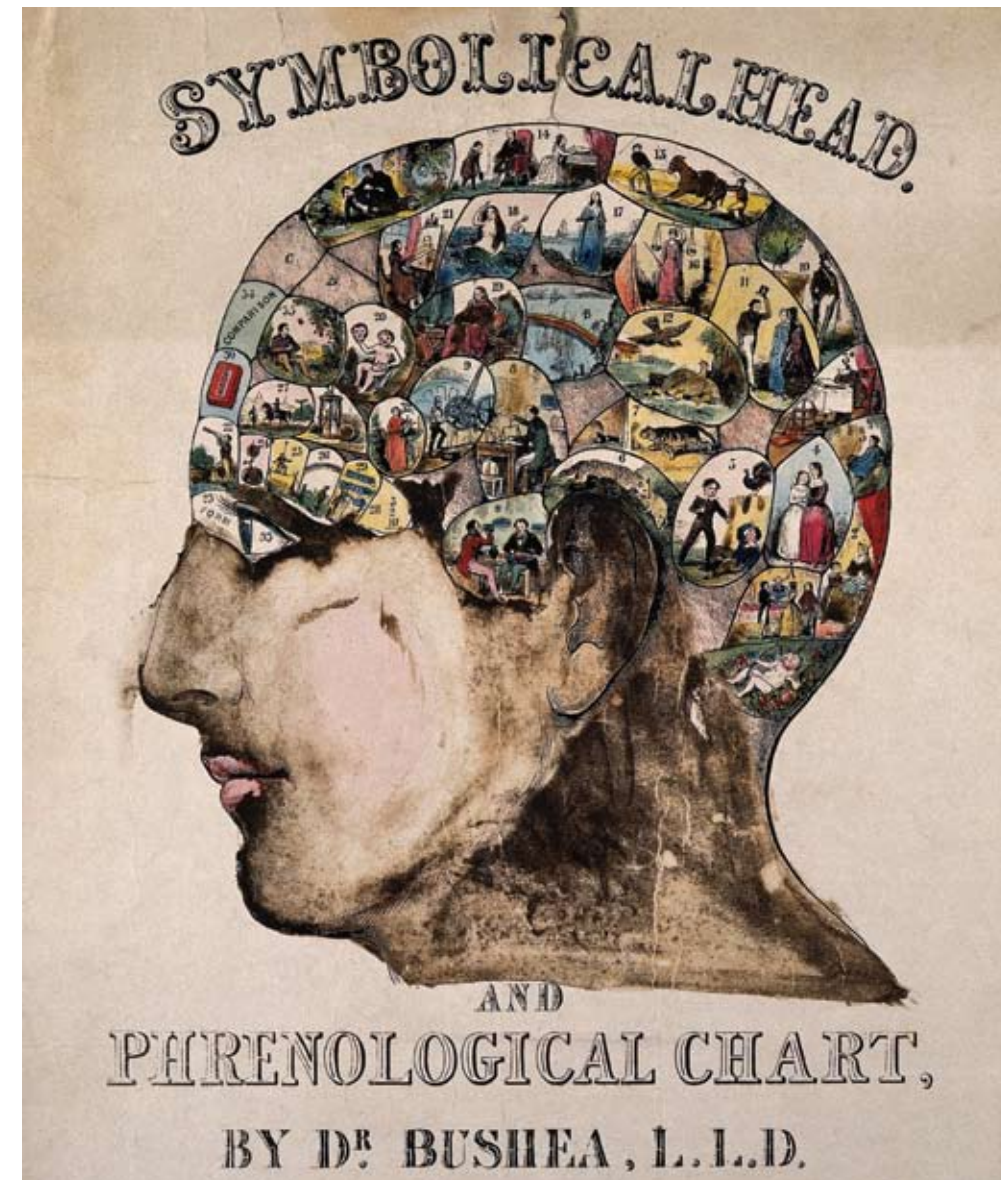
Craniological Gall

I sing of the organs and fibres
 That ramble about in the brains
 Avaunt-ye irreverent Gibbers
 Or come and be wise for your pains.
 All heads were of yore on a level,
 You could not tell clever from dull
 Until I, like Le Sage's lame Devil
 Unroofed with a touch every Skull.
 Oh! I am the mental disvector
 I fathom the wits of you all
 So come in a crowd to the Lecture
 Of Craniological Gall

The passions, or active or passive,
 When touched by my magical spells
 As busy as bees in a glass Hive,
 Appear in their separate cells.
 Old Prometheus who wanted a cavernment
 Whence all in the heart might be read
 If living would stare with amazement
 To find what he wants in the head.
 Oh! I am the mental disvector
 &c &c

Opposite In this poem, the unknown writer lampoons the practice of phrenology and its claims to discern the character by feeling the skull. He goes on to manufacture ridiculously specific and frivolous faculties, such as one "for driving a Tilbury gig", or "giving booksellers a lift", and predicts that henceforth love matches should be decided not on the feelings in one's heart but by analysing a prospective partner's cranium instead. Indeed, some serious practitioners did suggest using phrenological analyses as a way of vetting potential marriage partners.

Above This coloured wood engraving made around 1845 by Henri Bushea depicts the mental faculties where they were thought to arise in the brain according to the later theories of Spurzheim, George Combe of Edinburgh and the Fowler brothers. These men were highly successful practising phrenologists even though by this time the field had drifted a long way from its anatomical origins with Franz Gall and was widely ridiculed by sceptical scientists and the public.



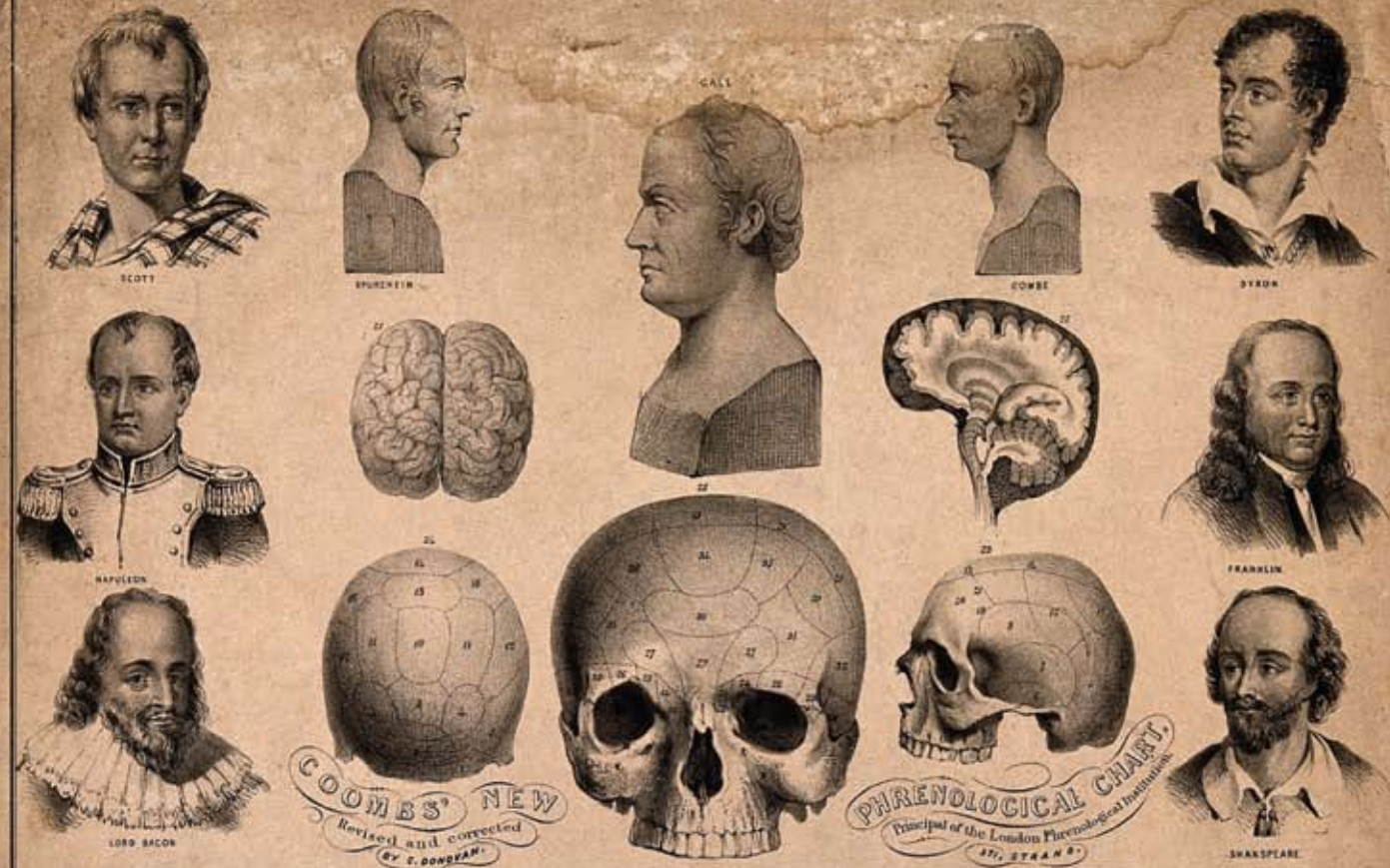


Many caricaturists found phrenology impossible to resist. This drawing shows a servants' employment agency where applicants are screened by having the (conveniently exposed and exaggerated) bumps felt on their heads. The author supposes that this scientific method might "supersede the necessity of further enquiry into character".





This French snuff box, made of pearwood and lined with tortoiseshell, has a lid stamped with three views of a skull with organs numbered according to Gall's scheme. The key is given on the base of the box.



COOMBS' NEW
Revised and corrected
BY T. DONOVAN

PHRENOLOGICAL CHART,
Principal of the London Phrenological Institution,
27, STRAND.

CLASSIFICATION AND FUNCTION OF ORGANS
ORDER I. PHALANX. GENUS I. PROPRIETIVE.
 1. **GENIUM**—Great source of ideas, seat of memory, reason.
 2. **PHANTASIA**—Imagines, and is the seat of the passions.
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This chart by George Edward Madeley and Cornelius Donovan dates from the mid-nineteenth century. It largely follows the system of Combe, then the most prolific advocate of phrenology in Britain. As the variety of skulls indicate, phrenology had ambitions to measure brain differences on a racial basis. Combe wrote that the phrenologist "has observed that a particular size and form of brain is the invariable concomitant of particular dispositions and talents, and that this fact holds good in the case of nations as well as of individuals."