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### Franz Joseph Gall's *Schädellehre* in August von Kotzebue's comedy *Die Organe des Gehirns* : questioning and satirising the (pseudo-)scientific idea of phrenology

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#### Résumé | Abstract

**FR** Entre 1805 et 1808 Franz Joseph Gall, médecin et anatomiste, voyageait en Europe centrale avec ses conférences sur l'organologie et la cranioscopie. Basé sur ses conférences et ses recherches précédentes, Gall est devenu le fondateur de la (pseudo)science, plus tard nommée, phrénologie. En 1806, August von Kotzebue, l'un des dramaturges allemands les plus célèbres et influents du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, présente une comédie intitulée *Die Organe des Gehirns*. Herr von Rückenmark, le personnage principal, est obnubilé par l'idée de lire dans les crânes des gens. Kotzebue satirise l'approche phrénologique de son personnage principal et ridiculise les résultats obtenus à travers la phrénologie. Cet article vise à analyser la nature scientifique de la phrénologie, sa réception critique et son influence sur la culture aux XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles. L'analyse textuelle de l'une des comédies de Kotzebue moins connue devrait mettre l'accent sur la popularité de la théorie de Gall dans la société et sur l'ambiguïté de sa réception.

**Mots-clés:** Franz Joseph Gall, August von Kotzebue, phrénologie, théories pseudo-scientifiques, satire.

**EN** Between 1805 and 1808 Franz Joseph Gall, physician and anatomist, travelled across Central Europe giving lectures on organology and cranioscopy. Based on these lectures and his previous research, Gall became the founder of the (pseudo-)science, later named, phrenology. In 1806, August von Kotzebue, one of the most famous and influential German playwrights of the eighteenth century, presented a comedy entitled *Die Organe des Gehirns*. Herr von Rückenmark, the main character, is obsessed with the idea of reading people's skulls. Kotzebue satirises the phrenological approach of his main character and ridicules the results gained from it. This article aims to investigate the scientific nature of phrenology, its critical reception and its influence on culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The text analysis of one of the lesser-known comedies by Kotzebue aims to emphasise the popularity of Gall's theory in society and the ambiguity in its reception.

**Keywords:** Franz Joseph Gall, August von Kotzebue, phrenology, pseudo-scientific theories, satire.

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**Franz Joseph Gall's *Schädellehre*  
in August von Kotzebue's comedy *Die Organe des Gehirns*:  
questioning and satirizing  
the (pseudo-)scientific idea of phrenology<sup>1</sup>**

**Phrenology:** (from Greek *φρήν* (phrēn), meaning “mind”, and *λόγος* (logos), meaning “knowledge”). Phrenology is the study of the conformation of the skull as indicative of mental faculties and traits of character, especially according to the hypotheses of Franz-Joseph Gall, a Viennese doctor<sup>2</sup>.

**1. Phrenology – scientific nature, critical reception and cultural influence**

**P**HRENOLOGY IS NOW CONSIDERED TO BE A PSEUDOSCIENCE of no scientific importance or value. In the 19th century, when it was first introduced by the works of Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828) its reception and critical review was not all negative. This article focuses on demonstrating the role of phrenology and its place in the scientific debate and discourse of the 19th century as well as its relation to another “popular” supposed science, Physiognomy<sup>3</sup>. The highly productive German playwright August von Kotzebue (1761-1819) was inspired by this new fashion of analysing human skulls and wrote the comedy *Die Organe des Gehirns* to satirise it.

Franz Joseph Gall was born into a wealthy family in Tiefenbrunn (Baden). He studied medicine first in Strasbourg and later in Vienna. As later described in the preface of his monumental work *Anatomie et physiologie du système nerveux en général et du cerveau en particulier* (4

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<sup>1</sup> Quotes from primary sources were not corrected and are reproduced in the original spelling. The translations of the primary and secondary sources are, if not specified differently, made by the author of this article.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica: <<https://global.britannica.com/topic/phrenology>> [last visited 25/10/2016].

<sup>3</sup> In order to avoid confusion with the term physiognomy for the general appearance and form of things without the scientific connotation, the science Physiognomy is written with the capital letter throughout the entire article.

volumes, 1810-1819), from a young age on, Gall was interested in the relation between the human body and character. Through his medical studies he tried to find a scientific explanation for his observations of his classmates and he became more and more interested in the human brain as centre and source of the human character and soul:

J'avois, dans l'intervalle, commencé l'étude de la médecine. On me parloit beaucoup des fonctions des muscles, des viscères, etc. mais on ne me disoit rien des fonctions du cerveau et de ses diverses parties. Pendant que je faisois des conjectures sur les signes de certains talons qui s'annonçoient par la conformation de la tête, il ne me vint jamais en idée que la cause des facultés intellectuelles fût dans tel ou tel endroit du crâne; mais je supposai d'abord, ce que je ne tardai pas à porter jusqu'à la certitude, que la différence de la forme des crânes est occasionnée par la différence de la forme des cerveaux<sup>4</sup>.

Before being able to publish all his theories and observations in one opus, Gall taught his organology in public lectures first in Vienna and then all over Europe. These lectures were very popular and Gall's theory soon became known to the Viennese high society; many were even felt inspired to "feel" each other's skull<sup>5</sup>.

In 1798, Gall wrote a public letter, published in the journal *Der neue teutsche Merkur*, to one of the journal's critical collaborators – Joseph Friedrich Freiherr von Retzer (1754-1824) – in order to explain the ground rules and basic ideas of his science<sup>6</sup>. Seven premises form the basis of Gall's system. He explains all of them shortly in this letter. The first premise states that all the faculties and inclinations are inborn in humans and in animals (*I. Fähigkeiten und Neigungen sind dem Menschen und dem Thiere angeboren*<sup>7</sup>) and that everybody becomes an instrument rather than being a master of his/her own actions. Humans, in contrast to animals, experience a continuous conflict between their innate qualities and religious, moral and social stimulations and ideas. The second premise introduces Gall's fundamental idea: the faculties and inclinations have their seat, their basis in the brain (*II. Die Fähigkeiten und*

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<sup>4</sup> Franz Joseph Gall, *Anatomie et physiologie du système nerveux*, vol. 1, Paris, F. Schoell, 1810, p. IV. Translation: In the meantime I had begun the study of medicine. I was told a lot about the functions of the muscles, the viscera, etc. but nothing was said of the functions of the brain and its various parts. While making guesses about the signs of certain bumps made by the conformation of the head, it never occurred to me that the cause of the intellectual faculties was in this or that place of the skull; but I supposed at first, as I was not long in showing its certainty, that the difference in the form of the skulls is based on the difference of the form of the brains.

<sup>5</sup> See Wolfgang Regal and Michael Nanut, «Franz Joseph Gall und seine "sprechenden Schedel" schufen die Grundlagen der modernen Neurowissenschaften», in *Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift*, 2008, p. 317.

<sup>6</sup> Franz Joseph Gall, «Des Herrn Dr. F. J. Gall Schreiben über seinen bereits geendigten Prodromus über die Verrichtungen des Gehirns der Menschen und Thiere an Herrn Jos. Fr. von Retzer», in *Der neue teutsche Merkur*, vol. 3, Leipzig, 1798, p. 311-332.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

*Neigungen haben ihren Sitz, ihren Grund, im Hirne<sup>8</sup>*). Premises three and four are combined; all the faculties and inclinations are diverse from each other and have a different seat in the brain (*III. & IV. Nicht nur Fähigkeiten sind wesentlich von den Neigungen verschieden und unabhängig, sondern auch die Fähigkeiten unter sich und die Neigungen unter sich, sind von einander wesentlich verschieden und unabhängig; folglich müssen sie ihren Sitz in verschiedenen und unabhängigen Theilen des Hirns haben<sup>9</sup>*). Gall describes nerves as being the connection point between the sense organs and the “organs of the brain”. Gall declares that other “sciences” such as Physiognomy of “the pious Lavater<sup>10</sup>” erroneously preach that the soul becomes visible through facial features, though only the brain can influence the form and movement of the features. The composition of the organs in the brain and their size determine the size of the whole brain and/or the skull. This is the topic of the fifth, sixth, seventh and final premises (*V. Aus der verschiedenen Ausheilung der verschiedenen Organe, und aus der verschiedenen Entwicklung derselben, entstehen verschiedene Formen des Hirns. VI. Aus der Zusammenstellung und Entwicklung bestimmter Organe entsteht eine bestimmte Form theils des ganzen Hirns, theils einzelner Theile oder Gegenden desselben. VII. Von Entstehung der Kopfknochen an bis zum höchsten Alter wird die Form der innern Schedelfläche von der äußern Form des Gehirns bestimmt<sup>11</sup>*). In a second part of this letter, Gall explains that he applies these ground rules or premises by directly analysing skulls of humans and animals. He wishes that people would send him skulls in order to support his research. He also pursues his researches in madhouses and hospitals, to demonstrate the existence of a direct link between the form of the skull and the condition of the human soul. Gall regrets that nobody had understood the importance of the skull before him, and would therefore have kept skulls of famous thinkers, politicians and artists, such as Homer, Ovid, Hippocrates, Voltaire and Rousseau. John Van Wyhe remarks that Gall’s theoretical groundwork describing his scientific system did not go through many changes during Gall’s lifetime: “Although he avidly gathered new confirmations for the rest of his life, Gall never made any substantial changes to his system after his formulation in the 1790s<sup>12</sup>”.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

<sup>12</sup> John Van Wyhe, «The authority of human nature», in *British Journal of the History of Science*, 2002, p. 22.

Gall does not only describe his system in the letter to von Retzer, but he also describes his main interest in teaching people about this new, revolutionary system of reading the human mind. In the introduction of the letter, Gall points out that he does not use the “Kantian language” (“Kantische Sprache<sup>13</sup>”) in his explanations, because his aim is to be understood by as many people as possible. His public lectures, organised in Vienna and the surroundings were open to everyone who was interested in the topic. The popularity of his lectures did not only bring him positive but also negative side effects, such as an official ban issued directly through a letter by emperor Franz II at the end of 1801. The emperor’s physician Dr. Joseph Freiherr von Stifft (1760-1836) harshly criticised Gall’s public lectures harshly and called his doctrines “subversive, dangerous, and ill-founded<sup>14</sup>”. The critique arose not only because of Gall’s theory but also because Gall charged his audience with a ticket. Along with the critique by the authorities came the praise for his brain dissections<sup>15</sup>. Gall started every lecture with him or his student dissecting a brain. Subsequently, he started his explanations of the different organs of the brain by showing pictures of their cerebral localisation, skulls and plaster casts.

In 1805, Gall began his lecture travels through Germany, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland and France. In two years Gall visited over 50 different cities<sup>16</sup>, before settling down in Paris. Van Whye offers an extensive picture of the setting of these very popular lectures around Europe:

Gall discussed between two and five of his organs or faculties per lecture, presenting actual examples from his collections for each. [...] The impact on Gall’s audience was meant to be overwhelming. Gall’s auditors sat facing several tables covered in a large assortment of human and animal skulls as well as plaster casts and coloured wax models of brains. As he spoke, surrounded by his skulls, Gall’s science sincere conviction was apparent and his enthusiasm often persuaded even those originally disposed against him. Sometimes his audience broke out in enthusiastic applause<sup>17</sup>.

Gall had hundreds of skulls<sup>18</sup>. He also used his travels also to visit prisons and asylums to increase his research and knowledge of the organs

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<sup>13</sup> Franz Joseph Gall, «Des Herrn Dr. F. J. Gall Schreiben», *op. cit.*, p. 313.

<sup>14</sup> Stanley Finger, *Minds behind the Brain: A History of the Pioneers and Their Discoveries*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 124.

<sup>15</sup> See John C. Marshall and Jennifer M. Gurd, «Franz Joseph Gall: Genius or charlatan?», in *Journal of Neurolinguistics*, 8, 1994, p. 290.

<sup>16</sup> See John Van Whye, «The authority of human nature», *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> Gall left more than 300 human skulls and 120 plasters in Vienna before he started touring around Europe and later most of these skulls were sent to Paris where he added more than other 300 skulls to the collection. See Wolfgang Regal and Michael Nanut, «Franz Joseph Gall...», *op. cit.*, p. 317 and Stanley Finger, *Minds behind the Brain...*, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

of the human mind in comparison with the faculties of animals. Anthropologists and biologists followed Gall's example and collected hundreds of skulls for their research on races, tribes, animal families, etc<sup>19</sup>. The secondary literature refers to a "Skull-euphoria" among followers of Gall's lectures, which caused a hunt for famous skulls throughout Europe<sup>20</sup>. Even Gall himself would be beheaded after his death and his skull was to be studied by other phrenologists<sup>21</sup>.

After his first three years in Paris, Gall published together with his student Johann G. Spurzheim (1776-1832) the first volume of his *Anatomie et physiologie du système nerveux en général et du cerveau en particulier*. Gall concentrates his work on the description of 27 distinguished organs which form the brain. Each organ represents a faculty of the mind:

I. De l'instinct de la propagation	I. impulse to propagation
II. Amour de la progéniture	II. Tenderness for the offspring, or parental love
III. Attachement, amitié	III. friendly attachment or fidelity
IV. Instinct de la défense de soi-même et de sa propriété, amour des rixes et des combats	IV. valour, self-defense
V. Instinct carnassier, penchant au meurtre	V. murder, carnivorousness
VI. Ruse, finesse, savoir faire	VI. sense of cunning
VII. Sentiment de la propriété. Instinct de faire des provisions	VII. larceny, sense of property
VIII. Orgueil, hauteur, fierté, amour de l'autorité, élévation	VIII. pride, arrogance, love of authority
IX. Vanité, ambition, amour de la gloire	IX. ambition and vanity
X. Circonspection, prévoyance	X. circumspection
XI. Mémoire des choses, mémoire des faits, sens des choses, éducatibilité, perfectibilité	XI. aptness to receive an education, or the memoria realis
XII. Sens des localités, sens des rapports dans l'espace	XII. sense of locality
XIII. Mémoire des personnes, sens des personnes	XIII. recollection of persons
XIV. Sens des mots, sens des noms, mémoire des mots, mémoire verbale	XIV. faculty for words, verbal memory
XV. Sens du langage de parole; talent de la philologie	XV. faculty of language
XVI. Sens des rapports des couleurs; talent de la peinture	XVI. disposition for colouring, and the delighting in colours
XVII. Sens des rapports des tons; talent de la musique	XVII. sense for sounds, musical talent
XVIII. Sens des rapports des nombres	XVIII. arithmetic, counting, time
XIX. Sens de mécanique, sens de construction, talent de l'architecture	XIX. mechanical skill
XX. Sagacité comparative	XX. comparative perspicuity, sagacity
	XXI. metaphysical perspicuity
	XXII. wit, causality, sense of inference
	XXIII. poetic talent
	XXIV. good-nature, compassion, moral sense
	XXV. mimic
	XXVI. theosophy, sense of God and religion

<sup>19</sup> See Antonie M. Luyendijk-Elshout, «Opening Address: the Magic of the Skull. 'Commercium craniorum' in the Nineteenth Century», in *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology*, n. 7, 1997, p. 571-574.

<sup>20</sup> See Wolfgang Regal and Michael Nanut, «Franz Joseph Gall...», *op. cit.*, p. 317.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

- XXI. Esprit métaphysique; profondeur d'esprit  
XXII. Esprit caustique, esprit de saillie  
XXIII. Talent poétique  
XXIV. Bonté, bienveillance, douceur; compassion, sensibilité, sens moral, conscience  
XXV. Faculté d'imiter, mimique  
XXVI. Dieu et Religion  
XXVII. Fermeté, constance, persévérance, opiniâtreté<sup>22</sup>
- XXVII. perseverance, firmness<sup>23</sup>

The first nineteen faculties are both human and animal. With this analysis Gall wants to point out the animalistic nature of men, and that the most controversial and cruel faculties arise from this. The other eight faculties are exclusively human. The fourth volume of his *Anatomie* is almost entirely dedicated to the differences and similarities between men and animals. One of the key elements of Gall's research is explained through an analogy between animals and men:

L'animal interne et l'homme interne, sont formés pour le monde extérieur; leur organisation intérieure doit donc se trouvera l'unisson avec les objets extérieurs, en tant que l'animal et l'homme dévoient avoir des points de contact avec les objets du dehors. Leurs organes du goût et de l'odorat sont à l'unisson des substances qui conviennent pour leur nourriture. De même, tous les organes cérébraux ou intérieurs sont adaptés aux objets extérieurs<sup>24</sup>.

The relation between the internal organs and the external features and circumstances of the living being is of utmost important for Gall's system. Gall points out that every human being is born in a specific way, which cannot change throughout his/her life. External influences, such as social, cultural and educational impulses, do not form or change the innate faculties, but can only expand or contain them. Man's external shape (and in this case also animals) is created through the action of the organs in the brain. God is the source of all actions and shapes, of all good and bad faculties of the human soul and mind:

Pour le mal moral, comme pour le mal physique, les hommes doivent se soumettre aux décrets de Dieu. L'un et l'autre existent, non comme le disent plusieurs personnes, parce que le créateur le permet; car une pensée semblable supposerait d'un côté un

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<sup>22</sup> Franz Joseph Gall, *Anatomie et physiologie du système nerveux*, vol. 3, Paris, F. Schoell, 1818, p. 85f (organs I-X) and vol. 4, 1819, p. 13f (organs XI-XXVII).

<sup>23</sup> Translated into English by John van Wyhe:

<<http://www.historyofphrenology.org.uk/organs.html#gall>> [last visited 18/09/2017].

<sup>24</sup> Franz Joseph Gall, *Anatomie et physiologie du système nerveux*, vol. 4, *op. cit.*, p. 100. Translation: The internal animal and the internal man are formed for the external world; their internal organisation must therefore be in unison with the external objects, inasmuch as the animal and the man must have points of contact with objects from without. Their organs of taste and smell are in harmony with the substances which are suitable for their nourishment. Likewise, all the cerebral or internal organs are adapted to the external objects.

pur hasard, et de l'autre l'impuissance du créateur ; mais ils existent parce qu'ils entrent dans le plan de l'éternelle providence. De même que les biens temporels sont répartis inégalement et sans aucune acception des personnes, de même aussi les maux physiques arrivent fréquemment sans qu'il y ait de la faute de celui qui en est affligé<sup>25</sup>.

Gall's lectures and later also his publications brought him much fame and his theory was widely known all over Europe. Owsei Temkin, who discusses Gall and the phrenological movement in an article dedicated to the history of medicine, states: "Phrenology in the first half of the 19th century represented a widespread movement transcending by far the circle of scientists and psychologists and affecting philosophy, religion, education and literature<sup>26</sup>". Criticism, which had emerged already in the earlier years of his lecturing, remained harsh and Gall's publications did not calm it down. On the contrary they rather nourished it<sup>27</sup>. Even his student and follower Spurzheim criticised this theory and his new interpretation of Gall's ground idea made phrenology, as Spurzheim started to call this science, more and more popular. Spurzheim distinguished between two types of faculties: on the one side, affective faculties, and, on the other side, intellectual faculties<sup>28</sup>. All together he created a list, based on Gall's theory, of 35 faculties. According to Spurzheim, science, religion and morality form a triad and lay the basis for the human being.

Critique of Gall's system and theory did not only arise from his own student. Physicians and philosophers as well criticised his approach, his results and his conclusions. Physicians, such as Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland (1762-1836), Joseph Hyrtl (1810-1894), Johann Gottlieb Walter (1734-1818) and Stephan August Winkelmann (1780-1806) criticised Gall's theory from a medical point of view. They criticised that Gall analysed just organs on the skullcap and did not go further into all the convolutions of the brain. They also criticised the assumption that every organ in the brain could only fulfil a specific purpose. To substantiate this point of criticism these physicians refer to people who

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<sup>25</sup> Franz Joseph Gall, *Anatomie et physiologie du système nerveux*, vol. 2, Paris, 1810, p. 94. Translation: For moral evil, as for physical evil, men must submit to the decrees of God. Both exist, not as many people say, because the Creator permits them; because such a thought would suppose, on the one hand, pure chance, and on the other the powerlessness of the creator; but they exist because they enter the plane of eternal providence. Just as temporal goods are distributed unequally and without any sense for the people, so also physical evil happen frequently without there being any fault of the one who is afflicted by it.

<sup>26</sup> Owsei Temkin, «Gall and the Phrenological Movement», in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 1947, p. 275.

<sup>27</sup> See Johann Adam Bergk, «Bemerkungen und Zweifel über die Gehirn- und Schädeltheorie des Dr. Gall in Wien», review in *Jenaische allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 1805, p. 71-72. The review is followed by a short list of other works published between 1802 and 1804 discussing Gall's theories and lectures.

<sup>28</sup> See Johann G. Spurzheim, *Manuel de phrénologie*, Paris, Imprimerie Porthmann, 1832.



miss, or have damaged one or more parts of the brain, and to the fact that their other brain organs cover the missing faculties and functions. Gall's system of analysing the different brain organs is criticised through the explanation that not every part of the brain is related and linked to the bones of the skull<sup>29</sup>.

Criticism from the philosophical side arose mainly through the writings of philosophers belonging to the German "Naturphilosophie". Secondary literature agrees that the main point of criticism was Gall's "glaring" materialism ("krassen Materialismus<sup>30</sup>"): "This concept was considered materialistic, it was violently opposed by the idealistic natural philosophers, but it drew the attention of the early anthropologists, who were eager to study the shape of the skull of various races in relation to their mental capacities<sup>31</sup>". Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel discusses the false assumptions of Physiognomy and cranioscopy together in his opus *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807):

Der Schädelknochen hat wohl im allgemeinen die Bedeutung, die unmittelbare Wirklichkeit des Geistes zu sein. Aber die Vielseitigkeit des Geistes gibt seinem Dasein eine ebensolche Vieldeutigkeit; was zu gewinnen ist, ist die Bestimmtheit der Bedeutung der einzelnen Stellen, in welche dies Dasein geteilt ist, und es ist zu sehen, wie sie das Hinweisen darauf an ihnen haben.

Der Schädelknochen ist kein Organ der Tätigkeit, noch auch eine sprechende Bewegung; es wird weder mit dem Schädelknochen gestohlen, gemordet usf., noch verzieht er zu solchen Taten im geringsten die Miene, so daß er sprechende Gebärde würde. – Noch hat auch dieses Seiende den Wert eines Zeichens. Miene und Gebärde, Ton, auch eine Säule, ein Pfahl, der auf einer öden Insel eingeschlagen ist, kündigen sich sogleich an, daß noch irgendetwas anderes damit gemeint ist als das, was sie unmittelbar nur sind<sup>32</sup>.

Gall's system is declared to be too superficial in capturing the real soul and mind of men. His drive to simplify complex explanations of the

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<sup>29</sup> See Martin Blankenburg, «Seelengespenster. Zur deutschen Rezeption von Physiognomik und Phrenologie im 19. Jahrhundert», in Gunter Mann, Jost Benedum and Werner F. Kümmel (eds.), *Gehirn – Nerven – Seele. Anatomie und Physiologie im Umfeld S. Th. Soemmerrings*, Stuttgart/New York, Fischer, 1988, p. 216; and Krünitz *Oeconomische Encyclopädie*, Physiognomik, vol. 112, p. 718-787, 1809.

<sup>30</sup> Martin Blankenburg, «Seelengespenster...», *op. cit.*, p. 217.

<sup>31</sup> Antonie M. Luyendijk-Elshout, «Opening Address: the Magic of the Skull», *op. cit.*, p. 571.

<sup>32</sup> Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* [1807], Leipzig, 1907, p. 219. Translation: The skull-bone does have in general the significance of being the immediate actuality of Spirit. But he many-sidedness of Spirit gives it existence a corresponding variety of meanings. What we have to obtain in the specific meaning of the particular areas into which this existence is divided; and we have to see how these areas contain an indication of that specific meaning. The skull-bone is not an organ of activity, nor even a 'speaking' movement. We neither commit theft, murder, etc. with the skull-bone, nor does it in the least betray such deeds by a change of countenance, so that the skull-bone would become a speaking gesture. Nor has this immediate being the value even of a sign. Look and gesture, tone of voice, even a pillar or post erected on a desert island, directly proclaim that they mean something else than what they simply are at first sight. Translated into English by A.V. Miller, *Hegel. Phenomenology of Spirit*. Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998, p. 200.

origin and purpose of the brain led to fundamental critique from many different sides, as briefly mentioned above. The criticism, but also the popularity among common people, who did not have either a medical nor a philosophical education, is clearly linked to the other widely-discussed pseudo-science of the 18th century: Physiognomy. Van Whye states that “Gall’s system was symptomatic of the renewed proliferation of physiognomy. [...] Gall’s system is sometimes confused with the Physiognomy of the Swiss priest Johann Caspar Lavater<sup>33</sup>”. We can note from Hegel’s discussion of the matter, that Gall’s organology is nearly always linked, if not even confused with Physiognomy, in its initial stage of diffusion all over Europe. Even dictionaries and encyclopedias cite the two “sciences” in one account and name Gall’s theory with many different and sometimes misleading names: “In der Literatur tauchte die Gallsche Schädellehre bald mit unterschiedlichen Bezeichnungen auf, von Dippellehre, Cranioskopie, Schädeltaster, Protuberanzenlehre, Craniognomik und Physiognomik des Schädels bis zur empirischen Schädelbuckellehre reichten die Benennungen<sup>34</sup>”. An example where Gall is even declared to be a new “teacher of Physiognomy” is the very extensive entry in *Krünitz Oeconomische Encyclopädie* (1809):

Um indeß die Bemühungen Lavater’s mit denen des Herrn Doctor Gall’s aus Wien zu vergleichen, der in den letzteren Jahren als ein neuer Lehrer der Physiognomik auftrat, will ich folgende Zuge hinzufügen. Lavater und Gall unterscheiden sich durch Zweck, Absichten und Beobachtungsmittel; treffen aber in verschiedenen Punkten und Verhältnissen zusammen<sup>35</sup>.

Gall himself discusses Lavater and his science several times throughout his writings. The first example is the above mentioned reference in the letter published in *Der neue teutsche Merkur*. In his *Anatomie*, Gall skirts around a direct negative critique by pointing out the differences in their theories: «Lavater regarde ces individus comme incorrigibles, et c’est dans le front qu’il place le signe indicatif de leur imbécilité. [...] On voit que Lavater avoit entrevu les phénomènes que nous avons décrits, et dont nous avons cité plusieurs exemples. Notre

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<sup>33</sup> John Van Wyhe, «The authority of human nature», *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>34</sup> Wolfgang Regal and Michael Nanut, «Franz Joseph Gall...», *op. cit.*, p. 316. Translation: In literature Gall’s phrenology soon appeared in different terms, from “Dippellehre”, over cranioscopy, skull toucher, theory of protuberance, craniognomics and physiognomy of the skull to empirical theory of the cranial boss.

<sup>35</sup> *Krünitz Oeconomische Encyclopädie*, vol. 112, *op. cit.*, p. 731. Translation: In order, however, to compare the efforts made by Lavater with those by the Viennese Doctor Gall, who appeared in the latter years as a new teacher of Physiognomy, I will add the following passages. Lavater and Gall differ by purpose, intentions, and means of observation; but they meet in different points and circumstances.

doctrine seule en donne une véritable solution<sup>36</sup>». Gall uses a concrete example (stupidity) to question the entire Lavaterian science.

The reception of Gall's theory in the literary circle is separated from its criticism as a science: "By the 1840s phrenology as a science was dead; what remained was little more than a mixture of popular entertainment, fortune-telling, and a way for sweet-talking itinerants to make a living as they wandered across the countryside<sup>37</sup>". The ambiguous character of the phrenological science and its criticism made it even more perfect for the inventive and creative minds of the moment:

Many politicians, writers, dramatists, and artists picked up on the growing negative response to phrenology. The result was a tidal wave of farces, ballads, editorials, plays, and jokes lambasting phrenology and equating it with astrology, palmistry, numerology, and the occult. [...] Despite the fact that phrenology was indirectly endorsed by the writings of such literary greats as Honoré de Balzac, Charles-Pierre Baudelaire, Gustave Flaubert, George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Walt Whitman, and Edgar Allan Poe, the opinions of its critics prevailed<sup>38</sup>.

The most important German intellectual of the time, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), was much interested in Gall's theories, as shown by Paul Julius Möbius's meticulous research<sup>39</sup>. Goethe met Gall twice and he wrote numerous letters about his lectures, writings and theories. Goethe was introduced to Gall's theories through his known interest in Lavater's Physiognomy. Both, with Physiognomy and Gall's organology and cranioscopy Goethe was first positively inclined towards these two "sciences", but then he became more critical and opposed to these doctrines and their exponents. Interestingly, Goethe also attended a performance of *Die Organe des Gehirns*<sup>40</sup> in 1807. Unfortunately his letters and diaries do not hold any information about his reaction to Kotzebue's comedy.

## 2. August von Kotzebue's *Die Organe des Gehirns*

August von Kotzebue was one of the most productive and influential authors of his time. Kotzebue wrote more than 200 plays, which were staged all over Europe and translated in numerous languages. His plays,

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<sup>36</sup> Franz Joseph Gall, *Anatomie et physiologie du système nerveux*, vol. 2, *op. cit.*, p. 189. Translation: Lavater sees these individuals as incorrigible, and it is in the forehead that he places the indicative sign of their stupidity. [...] We see that Lavater had foreseen the phenomena which we have described, and of which we have cited several examples. Our doctrine alone gives a real solution.

<sup>37</sup> Stanley Finger, *Minds behind the Brain...*, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134f.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Julius Möbius, *Goethe*, vol. 2, Leipzig, Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1903, p. 211-260.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

mainly comedies, satires and melodramas, contain all the comedic elements which were appreciated by the audience at the time: disguises and misunderstandings, spectacular scenes in fabulous settings, standardised characters such as comedic and sneaky servants and naive and stupid lords, blackmailing and involvement of the authorities, and romantic love opposed to arranged marriages. Kotzebue was well acquainted with the other great writers, thinkers and philosophers of his time and his productiveness made him a very well known name in the literary salons, coffee houses and table societies of the 18th and 19th centuries<sup>41</sup>.

Kotzebue met Gall in Vienna and Berlin<sup>42</sup>. This influenced his writing in many ways; probably most significantly his comedy *Die Organe des Gehirns* (1806). This satire is not the only literary work by Kotzebue which refers to this acquaintance. In 1799, Kotzebue wrote a poem entitled *Antwort*, which was published in answer to the poem *Codicille* by the Prince the Ligne in *Der neue deutsche Merkur*:

**Antwort**

Das Bäumchen blüht, und reifen wird die Frucht  
Hinweg wer mit der Lampe  
Des Diogen die Menschen sucht!  
Heil unserm Salzmann! unserm Campe!  
Es ist gelöst, das schwierige Problem,  
Bestimmung für den Mann im Knaben auszuspähen;  
Und jede Fähigkeit wird man hinfort bequem  
Mit Händen greifen und mit Augen sehen.

Kein Vater wird aus blinder Zärtlichkeit  
Den dummen Sohn der Kanzel weyhen,  
Dem die Natur ein besseres Gedyhen  
Als Schneidermeister prophezeit.

Heil jedem Ehemann! Zu Menschenhass und Reue  
Wird mir hinfort kein Stoff, vertraut;  
Der kluge Bräutigam sucht das Organ der Treue  
Bey Zeiten an der schönen Braut.  
So hat einst Delila, trotz seinen Wunderthaten  
Den Simson in den Schlaf geküsst,  
Beschoren seinen Kopf, und ihn erst dann verrathen  
Als das Organ der Treue sie vermisst.  
Da liegt der Grund, warum in unsern Tagen,  
(Der fehlenden Organe sich bewusst)  
Perücken unsre Schönen tragen,

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<sup>41</sup> See Armin Gebhardt, *August von Kotzebue: Theatergenie zur Goethezeit*, Marburg, Tectum, 2003; and Klaus Gerlach, Harry Liihrand and Kristel Pappel (eds.), *August von Kotzebue im estnisch-deutschen Dialog*, Hannover, Wehrhahn, 2016.

<sup>42</sup> See Heinrich Döring, *August von Kotzebue's Leben*, Weimar, Wilhelm Hoffman, 1830, p. 306 and Jürg Mathes, «Kotzebues Briefe an seine Mutter», in *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts*, 1970, p. 416.

Und lieber die entblöbte Brust,  
An den entblöbten Schädel wagen.

Heil dir, oh Nachwelt! Ja, du wirst  
Von Galls Genie die süßen Früchte erben;  
Der Enkel darf nicht mehr, wie Du, o Fürst!  
Durch Thaten erst Verdienste sich erwerben.  
Bequemer, weit bequemer streckt  
Er nur den Kopf hinaus, die Haare sich zu lüpfen,  
Und die Bewunderung, die das Genie erweckt,  
wird aus dem Herzen in die Finger schlüpfen.

[...]

Mag immer Gall einst Deinen Kopf zerstückeln  
Was dieser Kopf gedacht, bleibt ewig unzerstört.  
Bey jedem Biedermann, der Deinen Namen hört,  
Wird das Organ der Hochachtung sich schnell entwickeln<sup>43</sup>.

In the poem, Kotzebue refers to the “Organ der Treue” (“organ of faithfulness”), the “Organ der Hochachtung” (“organ of esteem”), as well as to the different faculties in the human brain (“Fähigkeiten”). He names Christian Gotthilf Salzmann (1744-1811) and Joachim Heinrich Campe (1746-1818). Both educationalists and pedagogues reached fame at the end of the 18th century through their work on education of children and youth, and their moral and ethical growth. Furthermore Campe, in his works (*Kleine Seelenlehre für Kinder*, 1780 and *Theophron oder der erfahrene Rathgeber für die unerfahrene Jugend*, 1783), also discussed similar faculties to those described later by Gall himself<sup>44</sup>. Kotzebue calls

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<sup>43</sup> August Von Kotzebue, «Antwort», in *Der neue teutsche Merkur*, vol. 2, Leipzig, 1799, p. 128-130. Translation: Answer: The tree flowers, and the fruit will ripen. Away, whoever seeks people with the lamp of Diogenes! Hail, our Salzmann! Our Campe! The difficult problem is solved, for the man to spy destiny in the boy; and each skill you will henceforth conveniently grasp with your hands and see with your eyes. / No father, out of blind tenderness, will dedicate to the pulpit his stupid son, for whom nature prophesies better success as a master tailor. / Hail, every husband! Misanthropy and regret will have no substance for me henceforth. The smart bridegroom looks early for the organ of faithfulness in his beautiful bride. Thus once did Delilah, despite his miracles, kiss Samson to sleep, shave his head, then betray him, because she lacked the organ of faithfulness. That's the reason why, in our time (aware of their lack of organs), our beautiful ones wear wigs and would rather bare their breasts than venture to bare their skulls. / Hail to you, O Posterity! Yes, you will inherit the sweet fruits of Gall's genius. O Prince [de Ligne], your grandson cannot be greater than you are, and merit will accrue to your family through his deeds. Comfortably, far more comfortably, he just stretches his head out to lift off his hair, and the admiration, which the genius arouses, will glide from his heart into his fingers. [...] / Just let Gall dissect your head, then what this head has thought will remain eternally undestroyed! The organ of esteem will develop quickly in every worthy man who hears your name. Translated into English by Eric v.d. Luft, *August von Kotzebue. The Organs of the Brain: a farce in three acts*, Gegensatz Press, 2014.

<sup>44</sup> See John Van Wyhe, «The authority of human nature», *op. cit.*, p. 20.

Gall a genius and he is convinced that future generations will be recognize and appreciate his research and scientific achievements.

There are no accounts in his biography, as to when Kotzebue started working on *Die Organe des Gehirns*. His biographer Döring dedicates a short paragraph to the satire and Kotzebue's acquaintance with Gall:

In dem letztgenannten Lustspiele verspottete er bekanntlich Gall's Schädellehre, ungeachtet er mit diesem Gelehrten in Wien und Berlin auf sehr freundschaftlichem Fuße gelebt, und ihm mit liebevoller Gastfreiheit sein Haus und seinen Tisch angeboten hatte. Gall aber nahm die Sache für einen Scherz, und fühlte sich nicht im mindesten dadurch beleidigt<sup>45</sup>.

Döring reprints also parts of a letter Kotzebue received in 1806 from the author August Gottlob Eberhard (1769-1845), who refers to a supposed dispute between Kotzebue and Gall, and quotes a letter Gall wrote to him. The entire letter including the quoted letter from Gall is contained in Kotzebue's *Hinterlassene Papiere*. Gall wrote to Eberhard:

Ich versichere Sie auf meine Ehre, daß Kotzebue nie auch nur den geringsten Theil von meinem Erwerbe weder gehabt, noch beabsichtigt hat. Wir waren Freunde in Wien, warens in Berlin, weswegen er mir mit der liebevollsten Gastfreiheit sein Haus und seinen Tisch anbot. Ich bin ihm also Dank und Wahrheit schuldig. [...] – Nächsten Mittwochen werden hier *die Organe des Gehirns* aufgeführt. Ich habe mir schon meinen Platz neben Hr. Hauptmann v. Archenholz bestellt. Man tadelt hier, in Wien und in Paris sehr die Tendenz derselben, und schreiet gewaltig über Kotzebue, als über einen meineidigen Freund. Wüßten die Leute so gut, wie ich, wie mächtig genialisch entwickelte Organe wirken; wüßten sie, wie sehr Kotzebue überzeugt ist, wie wenig mir *die Organe des Gehirns*, und durchaus jede Art von Spott anhaben können, daß ich eben so bei diesen, als bei Ischarioth Krall's *Lehren und Thaten* herzlich mitlache und ihre Verfasser liebe und ehre: so würden sie diesen, vielleicht etwas zu leichtfertigen Witz mit gleicher Fassung vertragen, wie ich<sup>46</sup>.

Gall's biographer Giovanni Antonio Fossati describes the performance of *Die Organe des Gehirns* he attended in Berlin: «Étant un jour à Berlin, il alla au théâtre voir jouer Crâniomanie, comédie de

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<sup>45</sup> Heinrich Döring, *August von Kotzebue's Leben*, *op. cit.*, p. 306. Translation: In the latter comedy he ridiculed Gall's phrenology, even though he had a friendly relationship with this scholar in Vienna and Berlin, and offered him his house and table with loving hospitality. But Gall took the matter for a joke, and did not feel at all offended.

<sup>46</sup> August Von Kotzebue, *Hinterlassene Papiere*, Paul Gotthelf Kummer, Leipzig, 1821, p. 276f. Translation: I honestly assure you that Kotzebue has never had, nor has ever intended, the slightest part of my acquisition. We were friends in Vienna, in Berlin, so he offered me his house and table with the most loving hospitality. I owe him thanks and truth. [...] – Next week *Die Organe des Gehirns* are performed. I already have my place beside Mr. Hauptmann v. Archenholz. In Vienna and in Paris and in here they blame and accuse Kotzebue for being a disloyal friend. If only the people knew as well as I do, how powerful the genially developed organs work; they would know how much Kotzebue is convinced, how little *Die Organe des Gehirns*, and any kind of mockery, can do to me, that I will very much enjoy this performance, as much as Ischarioth Krall's *Lehren und Thaten* and I love and honour their creators: so they would be able to tolerate this, perhaps somewhat too amiable joke, with the same form as I do.

Kotzebue: il y rit avec tout le public de la pièce qui le travestissait cruellement. La circonspection était une faculté très-forte chez Gall<sup>47</sup>».

Both the letter and Fossati's biography of Gall show that Gall was not at all offended by Kotzebue's satire, but that Gall also pointed out that Kotzebue, together with many critics, did not understand and capture the entire powerful truth of his science.

Kotzebue's *Die Organe des Gehirns* introduces the main character Herr von Rückenmark, his son Eduard and his daughter Emilie, as well as their love interests Caroline von Hellstern and Ferdinand von Bombeck. The most direct comedic action is related to the characters of the two servants Peter Gutschaaf and Katzrabe. In this three act comedy Herr von Rückenmark purchases a collection of skulls, and judges every human being according to the phrenological theory of Gall.

Herr von Rückenmark is searching for a new servant and he does not trust the written testimonials which one of the two candidates brought to him. He has a much better technique and science to prove who is worth the position.

Herr von Rückenmark:

*Gott sey Dank, ich kenne ganz andere Mittel, die stets untrüglich sind. Mich hintergeht keiner. Wen ich in meine Dienste nehmen soll, der muß sich zuvor den Kopf von mir befühlen lassen*<sup>48</sup>.

By feeling the servants's skull he detects a "Diebsorgan" under the skull and he declares the servant to be a thief and liar. Herr von Rückenmark is convinced that every character feature related to the form and shape of the skull is predefined by a higher power and nobody can change the way his/her brain and consequently the skull is formed.

Herr von Rückenmark:

*Das ist ein Unglück, wofür niemand kann*<sup>49</sup>.

Herr von Rückenmark is so convinced of the truth of his science, that he does not accept any kind of criticism, not even the well proposed objection by his daughter Emilie:

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<sup>47</sup> Jean Antoine Laurent Fossati, «Gall», in *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, vol. XIX, Paris, 1857, p. 276. Translation: Being one day in Berlin, he went to the theater to see *Die Organe des Gehirns*, Kotzebue's comedy, and he laughed with the audience about the play which cruelly disguised him. Circumspection was a very strong faculty of Gall.

<sup>48</sup> August Von Kotzebue, *Die Organe des Gehirns*, Paul Gotthelf Kummer, Leipzig, 1806, Act I, Scene 1, p. 5. My italics. Translation: Thank God, I know another way, which is completely foolproof. No one can cheat me. Whomever I take into my service must allow me to feel his head. This and all the following quotes from Kotzebue's play were translated into English by Eric v.d. Luft. *August von Kotzebue. The Organs of the Brain: a farce in three acts*. Gegensatz Press, 2014.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, Act I, Scene 1, p. 6. My italics. Translation: It is just bad luck, and no one can do anything about that.

Emilie

*Gesetzt auch, ihr System wäre unfehlbar, so hat doch ihr berühmter Lehrer selbst erklärt, es sey äußerst schwer, die Organe durch Ertasten zu unterscheiden. Dies seine Gefühl sey nur Wenigen und unter diesen fast nur Frauenzimmern zu Theil geworden.*

Herr von Rückenmark:

*Papperlapapp! Der Mann ist galant, er hat euch ein Compliment machen wollen, weiter nichts<sup>50</sup>.*

In this quote Kotzebue seems to refer directly to Gall and his studies, naming him as the “famous teacher”.

Herr von Rückenmark is determined to continue using his science to support all the assumptions he makes on other people. He found a bride for his son Eduard through the form of her skull and he dislikes his daughter Emilie’s choice because of the form of his skull. Ferdinand von Bombeck wants to marry Emilie, but he cannot convince her father. Desperate about this situation, Emilie tries to encourage Ferdinand to pursue their path to happiness and explains where her father finds his “scientific” explanations:

Emilie:

*Lieber Ferdinand, kehre dich nicht an meinen Vater, der lästert gar zu gern unser armes Geschlecht; besonders seit er in die Schädellehre sich verliebt hat, sind ihm alle unsere Köpfe zu klein, zu schmal, er spricht, wir hätten wenig Gehirn<sup>51</sup>.*

Eduard’s servant Peter Gutschaaf joins Ferdinand and Emilie and tells them that soon Eduard will come home. Eduard had the task to collect an inheritance Herr von Rückenmark had received from a relative and which would allow him to pay back his debt to Ferdinand’s father. Ferdinand and Emilie hoped that Eduard would come home later so that they would have been able to use their influence on Ferdinand’s father positively also for their engagement. Not only will Herr von Rückenmark get his money on time, he also admires Peter’s skull and does not realise how simple-minded he actually is.

Herr von Rückenmark:

*Warte er noch einen Augenblick. Sapperment, das ist ein Schädel, wie mir noch keiner vorgekommen. (Befühlt ihm den Kopf) Welch ein Scharfsinn, Welch ein Witz?*

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, Act I, Scene 1, p. 9. My italics. Translation: Emilie: Even if we allow that your system is foolproof, then all the same, your famous teacher himself has explained that it is extremely difficult to distinguish the organs from one another just by palpating them. His feeling was that only a few could do this, and that almost all of them were women. / Herr von Rückenmark: Poppycock! The man is gallant. He just wanted to pay you women a compliment, nothing more.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, Act I, Scene 4, p. 18. My italics. Translation: Emilie: Dear Ferdinand, don’t pay any attention to my father. He slanders our poor sex much too easily, especially since he fell in love with phrenology, this skull theory of his. All our heads are too small and too narrow for him. He says that we have little brains.



Peter:

Hä! Hä! hä! Was soll den das vorstellen? Warum fingeriren Sie mir denn so auf der Stirn herum?

Herr von Rückenmark:

*Diese kugelförmige Erhöhungen – ey ey, er ist ein witziger Schalk!*

Peter:

*Was? Ich ein Schalk? Du lieber Gott! Ich bin ehrlicher Leute Kind!*

Herr von Rückenmark:

*Diese Wölbung in der Mitte, der Mensch ist ein Genie!*

Peter:

*Ist das geschimpft<sup>52</sup>?*

This scene makes it clear that Kotzebue wants to create numerous very funny and satirising moments in this comedy. The audience is expected to enjoy the clash of cultures and education represented by the servants and the supposedly more educated Herr von Rückenmark.

Herr von Rückenmark not only feels every living soul's skull, but he also collects skulls of dead people. He brags about his collection with his son Eduard who comes home from his journey:

Herr von Rückenmark:

*Wenn ich einmal sterbe, so erbt ihr keinen baren Keller, aber dagegen ein paar tausend Scheidel, die eine Million unter Brüdern werth sind<sup>53</sup>.*

As described earlier, it was not at all uncommon to collect skulls in that period, and. Gall himself had a huge collection of skulls of common and famous people.

Eduard questions the value of all the skulls his father possesses and finds it a pity to spend so much money on them. While his father is obsessed by phrenology, Eduard prefers to read the human face in order to make assumptions about the character. He tells his father about a friend who came home with him. As soon as he begins describing his wonderful and expressive eyes, his father criticises the art and science of Physiognomy:

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, Act I, Scene 7, p. 28. My italics. Translation: Herr von Rückenmark: Wait here just a minute. Hell's bells! Now that's a skull like I've never seen before. (feeling his head) What cleverness! What wit! / Peter: Ha! Ha! Ha! What's this all about? Why are you fingering me like that all around my forehead? / HvR: These ball-shaped protuberances - hey, hey, he's a witty scoundrel! / Peter: What? I'm a scoundrel? No, dear God! I am the child of honorable people. / HvR: This dome in the middle - the man is a genius. Peter: Is that an insult?

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Act I, Scene 9, p. 37. My italics. Translation: Herr von Rückenmark: When I die, you will inherit not so much as one red cent, but instead, 2000 skulls, which are worth at least a million.

Herr von Rückenmark:

*Was geht mich seine Schönheit an? Mit der Physiognomie habe ich nichts zu schaffen,  
ich bin kein Lavaterianer, nur wo Gehirn liegt, da sind Organe*<sup>54</sup>.

Kotzebue was well aware of the fact that everybody in his audience would understand this reference to the even more popular pseudo-science Physiognomy and its main theorist Johann Caspar Lavater. Kotzebue himself knew about Physiognomy through his substitute-father Johann Karl August Musäus (1735-1787), his aunt's husband. After Kotzebue's father Levin Karl Christian Kotzebue died, the young August found in Musäus a very valuable father figure, model and teacher. Musäus was and is today mainly known for his collection of fairy tales *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (1782-86), his satirical epistolary novel *Grandison der Zweite* (1760-62) and his satirical novel *Physiognomische Reisen* (1778-79). Musäus first published the *Physiognomische Reisen* anonymously but after its success he decided to declare his authorship. After Musäus's death in 1787, Kotzebue published his *Nachgelassene Schriften*. In his introduction *Einige Züge aus dem Leben des guten Musäus*, Kotzebue dedicates a small paragraph to the *Physiognomische Reisen*:

Wenn wir auch der Physiognomik des schwärmerischen Lavater sonst nicht viel verdanken, so ist das Verdienst doch groß genug, die physiognomischen Reisen veranlaßt zu haben. Mit diesem launichten Werke trat jetzt Musäus, doch ohne sich zu nennen, auf die Bühne der deutschen Literatur, nachdem seine Muse lange Jahre geschlummert hatte<sup>55</sup>.

Kotzebue calls Lavater a “Schwärmer<sup>56</sup>”. He is not convinced, like Musäus himself, that the science of Physiognomy deserves the importance as attributed to it by so many people. He criticises both Lavater for inventing, and his pupils for following, this supposed science.

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Act I, Scene 9, p. 40. My italics. Translation: Herr von Rückenmark: What does his beauty matter to me? Physiognomy is not my concern. I'm no Lavaterian. Only where the brain is, that's where the organs are.

<sup>55</sup> August Von Kotzebue, *Nachgelassene Schriften des verstorbenen Professor Musäus*, Paul Gottthelf Kummer, Leipzig, 1791, p. 8. Translation: If we owe the Physiognomy of dreamy Lavater not much else, so the merit is but big enough to have caused the physiognomische Reisen. With this moody work Musäus now joined, but without revealing himself, the stage of German literature after that his muse had been slumbering for many years.

<sup>56</sup> The use of the epithet “Schwärmer” was very prominent during the German Enlightenment. A contemporary definition in *Wörterbuch der Sittenlehre* states: «Schwärmerei ist ein überspannter Gemüthszustand, welcher aus einer zu lebhaften Einbildungskraft hervorgeht» (*Wörterbuch der Sittenlehre*, Leipzig, 1834, p. 241). For further reading on this topic see: «Schwärmerei» in Werner Schneiders (ed.), *Lexikon der Aufklärung*, Munich, 1995; and Jean Mondot, «Aufklärung und Schwärmerei: eine deutsche Debatte», in Michael Dallapiazza, Stefano Ferrari and Paola Maria Filippi (eds.), *La brevitás dall' Illuminismo al XXI secolo*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2016, p. 49-64.

Herr von Rückenmark seems to be one of the fiercest followers of Gall's theory. He even discusses, in quite a macabre way, how he will let his children cut off his head after his death to add it to his skull collection. His son Eduard's secret wife, Caroline, who joins Herr von Rückenmark in his home dressed like a man, discusses phrenology in detail with her new father-in-law and makes him believe that she follows this science as much as him:

Herr von Rückenmark:

*Ich gebe Ihnen auch in meinem Testamente die Erlaubnis, meinen eigenen Kopf abzuschneiden, er ist, ohne Ruhm zu melden, gar nicht übel.*

Caroline:

*Sie überhäufen mich mit Güte.*

Herr von Rückenmark:

*Nicht doch, wenn ich todt bin, mache ich mir aus meinem Schädel gar nichts mehr. Aber das behalte ich mir vor, sollten Sie früher sterben als ich, so schneide ich Ihnen den Ihrigen auch ab<sup>57</sup>.*

Herr von Rückenmark needs to pay a fine because he accused Walther of being a thief. He is outraged by this and the supposed stupidity and blindness of the police, that fined him. He sees himself as an unrecognised genius, researcher and explorer, who will not be understood during his lifetime. He compares himself to others such as Christopher Columbus, Copernicus, Benjamin Franklin and Edward Jenner:

Herr von Rückenmark:

*Wann werden doch die blinden Menschen ihren wahren Wohlthäter kennen und schätzen lernen? – Als Columbus eine neue Welt ahndete, wurde er in der alten für einen Narren ausgeschrieen. Der erste Astronom, der der stolzen Erde zumuthete sich zu drehen, wurde verketzert. Der Philosoph, der dem Blitz eine Bahn anwies, sollte ein Frevler gegen die Vorsehung genannt werden. Der Arzt, der die Kuhpocken einimpfte, sollte den Menschen mit dem Rindvieh in Verwandtschaft bringen. Jeder lechzt nach etwas Neuem, und wenn das Neue da ist, so schimpft er darauf.*

[...]

*In hundert Jahren wird jeder Beamte die Schädellehre gründlich studieren müssen, [...] Dann werde ich auch späte Genugthuung erhalten<sup>58</sup>;*

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<sup>57</sup> August Von Kotzebue, *Die Organe des Gehirns*, op. cit., Act II, Scene 7, p. 79. My italics. Translation: Herr von Rückenmark: In my will I'll give you the authority to cut off my own head for your collection. It is, I may tell you without bragging, not bad at all. / Caroline: You are overwhelming me with goodness. / HvR: Certainly not. When I'm dead, I won't need my skull anymore. But I will reserve it for you; or, if you should die before I do, then I will cut yours off.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, Act III, Scene 1, p. 101f. My italics. Translation: Herr von Rückenmark: When will these blind people ever learn to know and cherish their true benefactors? - When Columbus surmised the New World, he was denounced as a fool in the Old World. The first astronomer to expect the proud Earth to rotate was accused of heresy. The philosopher Benjamin Franklin is supposed to

Phrenology holds, according to Herr von Rückenmark, the same scientific value as the Scientific Revolution started by Nikolaus Copernicus, and the discovery of the New World. He is so sure about his knowledge of this science, that he does not realise that everybody goes behind his back and makes a fool out of him.

The finale of the play sees Herr von Rückenmark going wild over a box of skulls of normal people, presented to him as the skulls of illustrious men and women of the past, such as Voltaire, Robespierre and Joan of Arc. He trades his daughter's and his son's marriage for the box of skulls. The comedy ends with Caroline's moral:

Caroline:

*Wer mit Systemen spielt, der wird selbst das Spielwerk Aller, die schlaue genug sind, sein Schoßkind zu streicheln*<sup>59</sup>.

Throughout the entire satire several organs are mentioned:

Organ der Bedächtlichkeit (Act I, Scene 3)	X. Circonspection, prévoyance
Organ der Festigkeit (I, 3; II, 7)	XXVII. Fermeté, constance
Organ der Gutmüthigkeit (I, 3)	XXIV. Bonté, bienveillance, douceur
Organ der Treue (I, 4; III, 6)*	
Organ der Theosophie (I, 4; III, 6)	XXVI. Dieu et Religion
Organ der Darstellung (I, 7)	XXV. Faculté d'imiter, mimique
Organ des Muthes (I, 9)	IV. Instinct de la défense de soi-même
Organ der Eitelkeit (I, 9; III, 9)	IX. Vanité, ambition, amour de la gloire
Organ der Schlaueit (II, 4)	VI. Ruse, finesse, savoir faire
Diebsorgan (II, 5)	VII. Sentiment de la propriété
Organ des Scharfsinns (II, 7)	XX. Sagacité comparative
Zahlensinn (II, 7)	XVIII. Sens des rapports des nombres
Organ der Liebe (II, 7)*	
Organ der Ruhmsucht (III, 9)	IX. Vanité, ambition, amour de la gloire
Organ der Anhänglichkeit (III, 11)	III. Attachement, amitié

These organs directly refer to different organs analysed by Gall; the only exceptions are the organ of faithfulness and the organ of love. Kotzebue himself already speaks about the organ of faithfulness already in his poem *Antwort*. Gall describes only one organ of love (*II. Amour de la progéniture*), but he does not refer to romantic love. Even Herr von Rückenmark himself starts to laugh, when Caroline in disguise mentions this organ (Act II, Scene 7).

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have been called a blasphemer against Providence because he directed the path of lightning. The physician Jenner is supposed to have created kinship between humans and cattle because he inoculated with cowpox against smallpox. Everyone yearns for something new, but whenever anything new arrives, they insult it and make fun of it. [...] in a hundred years every officer will have to study phrenology thoroughly, [...] Then I will get satisfaction, albeit too late.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, Act III, Scene 11, p. 142. My italics. Translation: Caroline: Whoever plays with systems will himself become the plaything of all who are cunning enough to stroke whatever is dearest to his heart.

With his portrait of Herr von Rückenmark, Kotzebue satirises more the blind followers of phrenology than Gall's theory. Phrenology being a science which is easily understandable by everyone, as Gall himself intended it, paves the way for charlatans to preach its reliability.

### **Conclusion**

Through his organology or cranioscopy, Gall introduced a very revolutionary science at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. His aim was to explain, through a detailed system, the different organs of the mind and their influence on the human character. His public lectures and publications created an extremely diverse reception throughout Europe. On the one hand, the common audience enjoyed the lectures and the apparently simple way of analysing the human mind and soul. On the other hand, scientists, philosophers and physicians criticised his scientific approach and were not convinced by his results. Gall's theory, even though or because it was so controversial, was discussed and used as inspiration for some literary works of that time.

Kotzebue, being one of the most staged playwrights of the 18th and 19th centuries, creates a comedy inspired by the popularity of Gall's theory within the high society. He criticises both Physiognomy and Phrenology mainly by focusing on their "blind" followers and less rather than the "scientific" approaches of Lavater and Gall. He certainly criticises the gullibility of the first but seems to understand the interest in human nature of the latter and their unconventional research.

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