

AN
A P O L O G Y
FOR
THE STUDY
OF
P H R E N O L O G Y .

BATH:

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1825

TO

GEORGE COMBE, ESQ.

THE ABLE AND ELOQUENT DEFENDER OF PHRENOLOGY,

THIS LITTLE TRACT

Is Inscribed,

WITH SENTIMENTS OF RESPECT

AND ESTEEM,

BY THE AUTHOR.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Introductory Remarks	5
Phrenology founded on Observation and Induction	10
Phrenology not at Variance with Religious Faith	17
Uses of Phrenology	24

AN APOLOGY, &c.

Introductory Remarks.

IF Phrenology be founded in truth, it must be worthy the serious attention of every reflecting mind; for, next to the Divine truths (which involve eternal welfare,) what subject can engage the human mind so deeply interesting as its own nature and functions?

The philosophy of matter has long held its just rank among human sciences; and, by diligent cultivation, has been successfully explored in all its branches, so as to have attained, at the present day, a considerable degree of advancement.

The philosophy of mind has also received its due portion of attention, and been investigated with as much acuteness of observation, and depth of reasoning, as human intellect is capable of exercising.

The pre-eminent importance of this latter inquiry has been always acknowledged, and philosophers of the highest intellect have devoted to it their undivided and unwearied labours. Whence is it, then, that while Physics, or the philosophy of matter, has been so successfully cultivated, Metaphysics, or that of mind, should have accomplished so little, that, with all the efforts of consummate genius, no theory of mental powers should have resulted on which any rational mind can rely? Whence, but in the fundamental disadvantage which Metaphysicians have ever laboured under, of deriving their principal facts from individual consciousness rather than collective observation; from the error of assuming, though in the face of overwhelming contradictions afforded by every day's experience, that all minds are essentially the same, and that the individual might, in this respect, be considered as representing the species? A course of inquiry, thus necessarily defective, never could embrace the comprehensive view of the subject from which just conclusions could be drawn; from premises so partial, nothing but imperfect inferences could be deduced; and consequently Metaphysics, as heretofore pursued, has utterly

failed in establishing this branch of knowledge on any sound or permanent foundation. It appears, then, that existing systems, if such they can be called, possessed no completeness to preclude the necessity of further inquiry; Phrenology therefore must at least be acquitted of having engaged in a superfluous undertaking.

But if investigation were requisite, it was surely desirable to pursue some mode different from that which, after ages of unsuccessful effort, had so signally failed. If facts derived from individual consciousness had proved insufficient for deductions worthy to command general assent, what more obvious or natural course could be devised, than to collect facts, by such extensive observation of mental phenomena as by the copiousness of the induction would lead to the establishment of irrefragable truths? This Phrenology has endeavoured to effect; and if, in pursuing such inquiry, a connexion close and intimate has been traced between the several faculties of the mind and the conformation of that important organ to which all mental power is almost intuitively referred, I own I cannot in this circumstance see any just ground either for distrusting the conclusions drawn from the phenomena ob-

served, or for attaching to the inquiry that ridicule with which it has been so much the fashion to treat it. Whether the mind actually possesses the faculties deduced from the observations of Phrenologists, admits of proof by competent evidence; and it is equally cognizable whether these faculties uniformly co-exist with the special developments of brain to which Phrenologists refer them.

The question seems here resolvable into two parts: the one referring to the phenomena of mind; the other, to the alleged connexion of these phenomena with the conformation of the brain. And it appears to me, that they who find any difficulty in admitting the latter as sufficiently proved, may nevertheless give truth and consistency to their metaphysical inquiries by adopting, as the ground of their reasonings, those innate powers which Phrenology has developed, in preference to the gratuitous faculties which Metaphysicians have heretofore assumed. By this suggestion I mean not, in the slightest degree, to surrender the claim which Phrenology has to full belief on both grounds,—for on both the foundation is equally sure: I merely shew that the advantages of the science need not be wholly lost even to those who, from peculiarity of intel-

lect, strong prejudice, or timid apprehension, shrink from admitting, or even examining, the evidences by which the connexion of the mental faculties with the conformation of the brain is demonstrated.

The object of these pages is to represent Phrenology so as to vindicate its claim to candid examination, rather than to furnish any complete development of its principles; to shew, that, as a branch of natural science, it rests precisely on that foundation by which all natural truth is upheld, namely, induction from well-established facts; and to obviate certain prejudices hastily urged and heedlessly admitted, by which irreligious tendency has been groundlessly imputed to it. If these several points be maintained by fair argument, it is difficult to conceive how an inquiry so interesting and important as that of Phrenology can fail to arrest general attention. To those who may be induced to pursue it the way is open, and ample information respecting its present state may be obtained from several elementary works, which the industrious student can be at no loss to procure.

*Phrenology founded on Observation
and Induction.*

A brief history of the rise and progress of Phrenology will best support its claims for being acknowledged as a legitimate branch of natural science.

That the brain is the organ of thought, or subservient in some way to this inscrutable attribute of animal life, is admitted in numberless ways even by those who, in formal argument, affect to deny its agency.

I use the term inscrutable in reference to the real nature of mind and to its inexplicable connexion with matter, for these seem to transcend human comprehension. Into these Phrenology presumes not to penetrate; it merely deduces from outward manifestations the general laws to which they are subservient: but it is not the less valuable from its inquiries being thus limited, the knowledge of general truths deduced from individual facts being invariably the most useful that can exercise the mind of man.

The apple falls to the ground by a power incessantly and invariably operating. The philoso-

phic intellect of a Newton extended this simple observation, until he deduced from adequate facts the truly sublime discovery which has immortalized his name. Of the nature of gravity we know nothing; our knowledge is strictly limited to the general fact of such power existing, and to the laws by which it acts; and these have been deduced from patient observation of those phenomena which display the power in operation. By no other process can we ever succeed in scrutinizing the operations of nature, and with the knowledge thus acquired we should be content. Had Newton misapplied his powers to investigating the intimate nature of gravity, his life would have been as vain and profitless as it has been glorious and useful. He acted more wisely, and confining himself within those bounds by which the great Creator has circumscribed human knowledge, he, instead of presumptuously attempting to penetrate into mysteries surpassing human comprehension, devoted his transcendent talents to establishing the general laws by which the force of gravity acts in the economy of the universe. The results of his inquiries, and their effects on the welfare and happiness of mankind, are too familiar to every

cultivated mind to need any exposition in this place.

With the intimate nature of mind the Phrenologist professes no acquaintance: he only investigates the general laws by which it is governed, and the connexion which the great Author of Nature has formed between it and animal organization. To establish these, he assumes no plausible hypothesis; in his philosophy, fancy and imagination have no share. Abiding by the maxims of the distinguished founder of sound philosophy, he has contented himself with patiently observing phenomena, and deducing from accumulated facts those general truths which their uniform correspondence in certain points served to establish. If such course of proceeding be not conformable to the principles of philosophising laid down by the highest authorities, I must confess myself wholly ignorant of what these principles enjoin.

The object of Phrenology then is not to penetrate into the intimate nature of mind, with which it has no concern, but to deduce from mental phenomena those general truths which man is permitted to explore. To the labours of the Metaphysicians I shall not advert. They de-

rived their knowledge of mind chiefly from their own consciousness; the subject of examination was the individual, not the species; and hence the utter inadequacy of their several systems to embrace the collective phenomena which more extended observation presented. As already remarked, their labours produced no system admitting of universal application; it was reserved for Dr. Gall to institute a different course of inquiry; and to his genius are we indebted for whatever lights Phrenology has shed on this intricate and interesting subject. From his earliest days, Gall was led to observe the difference of intellectual power and of moral feeling evinced by those around him, and to investigate the causes from which such differences sprung. Perceiving peculiar faculties of mind to prevail in certain individuals marked by corresponding peculiarity of aspect, he traced the latter to certain projections of skull which influenced the features. The projections he found to coincide with corresponding and proportionate prominences of the brain at the projecting points; and finding the mental powers and the prominences to co-exist invariably in all the individual instances which he examined, he inferred that a neces-

sary connexion subsisted between them, and that the organic conformation was essential to the exercise of the mental powers; in other words, that the portions of brain causing such prominences were the organs of the powers respectively with which they so invariably co-existed. In collecting facts, and comparing developments of brain with the mental powers possessed by those whose heads he inspected, Gall was unwearied. Of the extent to which his industry and application in this respect were carried I could give no adequate notion in this brief tract; it is sufficient to say, that in tracing the connexion of development and faculty Gall represented no special organ as established, until he had verified his observations by such abundant proofs as left no doubt of the accuracy of his conclusions. Until this degree of certainty could be attained, he was satisfied to state the organs as conjectural; and many which were long regarded as doubtful, became afterwards confirmed when more ample experience enabled him to pronounce determinately respecting them. The caution thus displayed evinces none of that visionary enthusiasm with which Gall and his followers have been so unjustly charged.

Gall had pursued his inquiries diligently and extensively for many years ere he considered them sufficiently matured for promulgation. In 1798 he first announced his intention of publishing on the subject: yet not until 1810 did he produce his great work, which he had prepared in conjunction with his able coadjutor, Dr. Spurzheim. This was published at Paris, and was entitled "Anatomie et Physiologie du Systeme Nerveux en general, et du Cervaux en particuliere, &c." It embraces the fullest account of Phrenology that has yet appeared. As yet no translation of it has been made in this country: one is announced, however, by the Editors of the Phrenological Journal as in progress, the appearance of which cannot fail to benefit essentially the cause of Phrenology by opening to the general reader the ample stores of information which the industry and zeal of the distinguished authors had collected. In the interim, they who may feel inclined to enter on the study, or to extend their knowledge, will find sufficient assistance in the Phisiognomical System of Dr. Spurzheim, with his illustrative Tracts on Education and Insanity; in the valuable works of Mr. Combe; Forster's Phrenology;

Scott's Observations; Sir George Mackenzie's Illustrations; the Transactions of the Phrenological Society of Edinburgh; and the Phrenological Journal: all of which will amply repay the perusal. It is needless to discuss this part of the subject further, as sufficient ground has, I trust, been shewn for admitting Phrenology to the rank of a science, and a sufficient refutation given to those idle calumnies which represent it as founded on visionary conceptions rather than rational induction. They who deem the refutation sufficient, will surely no longer recoil from a study that promises so much pleasure and instruction.

*Phrenology not at Variance with
Religious Faith.*

THAT Phrenology tends to weaken religious belief can be so readily disproved, that it excites some surprise how so strange a misconception could ever have been entertained: indeed it could only have arisen from the objectors never having condescended to examine the science which they denounced by so heavy an accusation.

What does Phrenology profess? Not to investigate the abstract nature of mind, but merely to develop its phenomena, and to establish, by observation and induction, the real faculties which it possesses, together with the dependance of those faculties on the conformation of the brain. In representing the brain as the organ of thought and moral feeling, the Phrenologist never dreams of attributing to it an independent agency; nor ever regards it save as the instrument by which the spiritual principle exercises its powers. It seems not to have been sufficiently borne in mind, that spiritual and physical truths are supported by evidences wholly dissi-

milar, and that they require to be investigated by processes which bear no resemblance to each other.

Our knowledge of the material world is derived solely from observation of its phenomena, the collection of individual facts, and the deduction of truths more general whenever individual facts accumulate so as to warrant their generalisation. For all that we know of the spiritual part of our being we are indebted to divine revelation alone: from no other source could truths so inscrutable be derived.

The immortality of the soul could be imagined by those whose conceptions had not the light of revelation to guide them: it could never be substantiated save by the express declarations of that Being who is himself the fountain of all truth. Of physical truths, we judge by the accuracy with which philosophic methods have been adhered to in deducing them; our reliance on spiritual truths rests solely on the evidences by which the reality of a divine revelation is established, which evidences being complete, we admit the truths implicitly, however they may surpass our finite comprehension.

The imputations of irreligious tendency cast

on Phrenology seem, so far as they have any specific character, to be bottomed on the silence which Phrenology observes respecting the spiritual part of man. The nature of this spiritual part admitted of no direct proof from phrenological inquiry; why then should the Phrenologists interfere with what belonged not to their province, or weaken, by attempts to effect what the course of nature denied, those all-sufficient evidences of the existence of soul which the sacred volume affords? It was enough that the truths which their philosophy deduced were in perfect harmony with those which revelation had imparted, and which they have never, either directly or indirectly, impugned.

The candid mind will readily perceive that any extension of their inquiries beyond the natural boundaries which limited them would have left them justly chargeable with the profane attempt of shewing revelation to be unnecessary! Why was revelation vouchsafed to man? because the truths thus revealed were utterly beyond the reach of his natural reason. An attempt therefore to deduce from human inquiry what revelation alone could disclose, must, to impartial judgment, appear no less impious than vain.

The defence of Phrenology against the charge of impiety might perhaps rest here; for if made on the ground of Phrenology not embracing deductions illustrative of our spiritual nature, (and I am ignorant of any other on which they can rest,) such accusation can be of little weight when it is seen that, by an opposite course, a much more direct charge of impiety would be incurred. But a matter so important must not be left to this issue alone. It is right to shew, not only that Phrenology has no hostility to religious faith, but that, however silent it may be on the proofs of spiritual existence, its doctrines throughout imply the presence of an immaterial principle; in other words, that to be at all intelligible, they involve the existence of a rational soul.

Has any Phrenologist ever assigned to the brain an independent power of thought or feeling? or averred more than that these faculties are exercised through the medium of the brain? By whom exercised? surely by that spiritual inmate to whom this corporeal frame has been given as its earthly tabernacle, and which will survive when the perishable clay in which it is, for a time, embodied, becomes resolved into its

original dust. I know not what admission the most staunch believer can require beyond this; and this I boldly pronounce to be the doctrine of Phrenologists, though unsuspecting of blame, they may have been little sedulous to dwell on professions so uncalled for. Why are Phrenologists so gratuitously supposed insensible to revealed truth? Are they so dull in feeling as to have no regard for those eternal interests by which every human bosom is more or less agitated? or so obtuse in intellect as not to comprehend the value and importance of that gracious dispensation which a merciful Creator has vouchsafed to his blind and erring creatures to guide their steps and lead them to Himself? I, at least, disclaim the unworthy suspicion; and while the best powers of my understanding acknowledge the truths which Phrenology has explored, I feel the far more important truths of divine revelation, so far from being weakened, only the more deeply implanted in my mind and heart by the exquisite harmony which may every where be traced between the doctrines of Phrenology and the inspired writings.

It is almost descending too much to advert to the close analogy that subsists between the

general doctrines of Phrenology, and those which have ever been maintained with respect to the external senses. We see with the eye, hear with the ear—who in pursuing the studies of optics or acoustics ever imagines that these organs alone are capable of such functions; or conceives otherwise than that they make returns which are perceived by the intelligent inmate to whom they are subservient? Phrenology does no more; it traces to the brain, by a close induction from innumerable facts, an agency by which thought and feeling are exercised. It establishes a direct connexion between the several faculties of the mind and those respective portions of the brain with which it has found them uniformly to co-exist, and it denominates these portions the organs of the respective faculties. The peculiar mechanism of the eye and ear, so directly suited to their respective functions, procures an unreluctant assent to the conclusion that they are the proper organs of sight and hearing. The mode in which the brain exercises its functions of thought and feeling is less obvious: but when the fact, that it is essential to their manifestation, is established by such proofs as are deemed sufficient in all other physi-

cal investigations, why should we rely on its truth with less confidence? Are no truths demonstrable or capable of proof, but such as are displayed in all their intimate operations to our view? The advocates of religious faith will do little service to the cause which they espouse by maintaining such doctrine. We have in the inductions of Phrenology the only proofs which the nature of the inquiry permits; the intimate operations of the brain in the exercise of the alleged functions we cannot see, and most probably never shall discover. In all human inquiry into the laws established by the Creator in the economy of this world, there is a point beyond which we cannot soar; but so far as we are permitted to penetrate into the mysteries of the Most High, it is clearly our bounden duty not to forego, through indolence or misconception, any investigation of nature's laws to which our comprehension is equal. To me it appears, that we have not only a direct interest in pursuing phrenological inquiries, from the advantages to which, in common with all natural truths, they necessarily lead, but that we are under a positive obligation to scrutinize that which our Maker, by enduing us with faculties suited to the

investigation, not only permits but enjoins us to explore.

I have no hesitation, therefore, in earnestly recommending the study of Phrenology to all those whose intellects are fitted for comprehending philosophic truth, and who have strength of mind enough to sacrifice untenable prejudices at the shrine of reason and of duty.

Uses of Phrenology.

SUPPOSING Phrenology to be founded in truth, 'can it be applied to any practical use?' is not unfrequently asked by those who, withheld by prejudice or timidity, hesitate to pursue it as a subject of philosophic research. And I hail the question, in every instance, as an evidence that the party proposing it may, on further reflection, open his mind to the truth; for it clearly implies that he is not satisfied with the motives which have suspended his researches, and that he seeks further justification for his own supineness. A very brief answer might suffice: for, if founded in truth, Phrenology cannot fail to be extensively useful, elucidating as it does

those mental energies by which the whole fabric of human society is upheld. In an age when physical science is so extensively cultivated, and when the slightest discoveries are, every day, seen to lead to the most important results, the usefulness of any general truth might be safely admitted as a consequence of its establishment. How pre-eminently useful must those truths be which illustrate the very powers by which all science is acquired and improved ! It is not my intention, however, to wave a more explicit reply, though perfectly satisfied myself that the general question needs no further answer.

To what uses Phrenology may eventually be rendered subservient, it is impossible to foresee. When the laws of gravity were first demonstrated, it is highly probable that even the capacious mind of the illustrious discoverer failed to contemplate all the uses to which it has since been directed. Even in the infancy of Phrenology, however, so many uses may be pointed out as to satisfy the most scrupulous that the time devoted to its cultivation is not misapplied.

Were there no other use, the advantage derivable from this science in the most important work in which man can be engaged, namely,

the exercise of moral restraint and the government of his passions, would amply repay the labours of initiation. I know of no system of ethics so powerful in regulating the conduct of life, as that which Phrenology comprises. Man is composed of various feelings, propensities, and passions: to regulate them in subjection to the laws which the great Author of Nature has imposed, is the first duty of this his probationary state, the main object for which he was sent into life. Can it be otherwise than highly useful to him to know more intimately the nature of those internal impulses by which he is continually incited to deviate from the right way? Does he not derive material assistance in restraining unruly passions by knowing that the turbulence proceeds from the partial activity of a mere cerebral organ; that he has full power, by a mere act of the will, to keep this under control; that by steady resistance the activity will moderate; and that should it continue, he has many corrective energies to call to his aid, by which the turbulent propensity may be effectually kept in subjection?

That Phrenology can minister to all this I confidently aver, though fully to explain its

powers in this respect would lead me far beyond my present design, and indeed be scarcely intelligible to those to whom these pages are addressed. If they will pursue the study of Phrenology with a sincere desire to profit by its interesting and instructive truths, they will find the promise here held out more than confirmed.

Analogous to this use is that which may be derived from Phrenology in the important business of education. To the perfection of this it is essential that the moral sentiments be steadily exercised in keeping the lower propensities in due subjection ; that the intellectual powers be cultivated according to the capability which each individual possesses ; and that the appropriate occupation selected for each be such as to call forth those special faculties with which Nature has more particularly endowed him. All this Phrenology is capable of directing ; and were education universally conducted on these principles, the general welfare would be incalculably promoted, and individuals be much happier. It can never be too strongly impressed that no two individuals are exactly alike, either in their moral endowments, intellectual powers, faculties, or passions ; yet human institutions seem almost

invariably founded on the assumption that all mankind are essentially the same. Our systems of education at least acknowledge no diversity, for all intellects are subjected to the same unvarying discipline; to which, as to the bed of Procrustes, their mental powers, however dissimilar, are compelled to conform. There are two main facts which should never be lost sight of in the conduct of education: the first, that by calling forth those powers which Nature has most abundantly given, the great objects of cultivation will be best served, and the welfare of mankind best promoted; the second, that the happiness of the individual is greatly dependant on his being suffered to exert those talents with which he is more peculiarly gifted. The influence in this latter respect is not confined to the mere pleasurable feeling, but extends to the whole moral character; for occupation is no contemptible safeguard of virtue: if occupation be pleasurable, vicious joys will be less sought after; while the irksomeness of an ill-selected employment is oftentimes the fruitful source of sensual depravity. That Phrenology is capable of much valuable guidance, both in directing juvenile education and in selecting the employ-

ments of more advanced life, admits not of question.

Among the infirmities of life, few are more deplorable than insanity. Dr. Johnson has expressed this strongly: "Of the uncertainties of our present state, the most dreadful and alarming is the uncertain continuance of reason." On the magnitude of the evil it is needless to descant; for where is the individual who would not submit to any suffering in preference to the loss of reason? That it is an evil of too frequent occurrence, the records of insanity amply prove. How can that science be too highly prized which extends our power of averting this infliction, and of mitigating it when it occurs? That Phrenology gives us a clearer insight into the several functions of the brain, and thereby increases our power of correcting the aberrations of mind dependant on a disturbance of those functions, may be confidently alleged.

That phrenological truth may in time exert an influence on the whole system of criminal jurisprudence, is in the highest degree probable; though the supposition has been treated with such ridicule that I almost hesitate to instance this as a practicable use. Yet, why should it be

otherwise? Are not our laws supposed to be founded on reason? and is there any thing unreasonable in imagining that laws, enacted for the regulation of human conduct, and penalties inflicted for the breach of those laws, should have some reference to the internal impulses which incite to their violation? Here again, as in education, our policy is too indiscriminating: we punish with the same severity offences which apparently correspond, but which differ greatly in the degree of criminality. We hold up as preventive of crime, terrors which affect peculiar dispositions only, but utterly fail in making impression on others whose minds are differently constituted. What influence Phrenology may exert in those respects, or when it may be resorted to, I am not prepared to say: the day is probably far distant, but I confidently anticipate that the time will come when its dictates will not be disregarded by our Legislature.

I am not anxious to pursue this further, having, I trust, advanced enough to show that Phrenology is capable of some useful application.

Having thus attempted to point out some of the uses to which Phrenology may be directed, I cannot close this section without an urgent

remonstrance against some abuses in which phrenological tyros may be tempted to indulge. The applications of Phrenology to individual character are hazardous in the extreme, and should never be attempted until a thorough knowledge of its principles, and a familiar acquaintance with organic developments, afford some security against the mistakes to which imperfect knowledge is liable. To scrutinize individual heads for the purpose of ridicule or levity, cannot be reprobated too severely: it is trifling with a valuable science; it nurtures dispositions which every sound Phrenologist will suppress; and it hazards giving pain, which it is wanton cruelty thus to inflict. Such abuses are not chargeable on Phrenology, for it gives no sanction to practices so objectionable. Even when individual examination is made from good motives, extreme care is required to guard against hasty or erroneous conclusions. Man is to be judged, not from his propensity to evil, but from his weakness in yielding to it. Propensities may be strong, yet the conduct correct; in which case the merit of resistance is greater than if less incitement were experienced. It should never be forgotten that with reference