



# **The New Phrenology: The Limits of Localizing Cognitive Processes in the Brain (Life and Mind: Philosophical Issues in Biology and Psychology)**

*By William R. Uttal*

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William Uttal is concerned that in an effort to prove itself a hard science, psychology may have thrown away one of its most important methodological tools—a critical analysis of the fundamental assumptions that underlie day-to-day empirical research. In this book Uttal addresses the question of localization: whether psychological processes can be defined and isolated in a way that permits them to be associated with particular brain regions.

New, noninvasive imaging technologies allow us to observe the brain while it is actively engaged in mental activities. Uttal cautions, however, that the excitement of these new research tools can lead to a neuroreductionist wild goose chase. With more and more cognitive neuroscientific data forthcoming, it becomes critical to question their limitations as well as their potential. Uttal reviews the history of localization theory, presents the difficulties of defining cognitive processes, and examines the conceptual and technical difficulties that should make us cautious about falling victim to what may be a "neo-phrenological" fad.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

Uttal's new book *The New Phrenology* is an iconoclastic attack on even the possibility of the localization of cognitive function in the brain. Criticizing attempts from Lashley to today, Uttal is particularly scathing about current studies of imaging the human brain.

(Charles Gross, Department of Psychology, Princeton University)

With the recent explosion of new imaging methods allowing us to visualize the thinking brain, now is the perfect time to reconsider the question being addressed in this monograph -- can psychological processes be localized? William Uttal's answer is provocative, yet well balanced; while it serves as a statement of caution, it is also encouraging. Anyone interested in how the brain works will enjoy and benefit from reading this treatise.

(Mark D'Esposito, Director, Henry H. Wheeler, Jr. Brain Imaging Center, University of California, Berkeley)

This is an exciting book...

(Vanja Kljajevic *Metapsychology*)

### **About the Author**

William R. Uttal is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Psychology at the University of Michigan and in the Department of Industrial Engineering at Arizona State University.

Mark J. Cherry, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Saint Edward's University, in Austin, Texas. He is Editor-in-Chief of Healthcare Ethics Committee Forum, Assistant Editor of The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy, and an Associate Editor of Christian Bioethics. He also has edited Persons and Their Bodies: Rights, Responsibilities, Relationships (Kluwer Academic Press, 1999) and was coeditor of Allocating Scarce Medical Resources: Roman Catholic Perspectives (Georgetown University Press, 2002).

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