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## Neurological stamp

### Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832)

The great German poet, dramatist and philosopher eventually ranked science as important as his poetic activity. He was the first to use the term morphology, and recognised in the human species the intermaxillary bone (premaxilla) (1786). Goethe considered that the skull was made up of modified vertebra and the jaws of insects as being modified limbs. He was also interested in the concept of evolution, in optics and also contributed to the physiology of colour vision. Goethe was instrumental in having Purkinje appointed Professor of Physiology and Pathology at the University of Breslau in 1823.

Goethe's understanding of the association of aphasia with stroke is clearly shown in his *William Master's Apprenticeship*, which he wrote in 1795.

My father was suddenly seized with palsy, which attacked his right side and deprived him of the power of speech. We were obliged to guess at everything he wanted, for he never expressed the words which he intended to utter. Often times this was to me fearfully distressing, particularly on occasions when he insisted upon being left alone with me—he would signify, by violent gestures, that every other person should retire; but when we were left together he found himself unable to express his thoughts.

Goethe is shown here on a stamp issued by Luxembourg in 1977 (Stanley Gibbons 981, Scott 593).

L F HAAS

