Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828) and his assistant Johann Gaspar Spurzheim (1776-1832) are the fathers of the science of phrenology. Gall began developing his theories in late eighteenth-century Vienna, where he observed that similar abilities seemed to correspond with certain physiological characteristics of the skull. Spurzheim further developed Gall’s ideas and helped spread the science with his lectures and presentations in England, Scotland, and the United States.

This anonymously published guide to the basics of phrenology was printed in Edinburgh, and may be the work of George Combe. Combe was a Scottish lawyer who, though skeptical of phrenology at first, became a convert after seeing Spurzheim give a series of lectures in Edinburgh. Combe went on to assist in founding the Phrenological Society of Edinburgh in 1820. Following in Spurzheim’s footsteps, Combe helped popularize the science by lecturing throughout Britain, the United States, and Europe.