

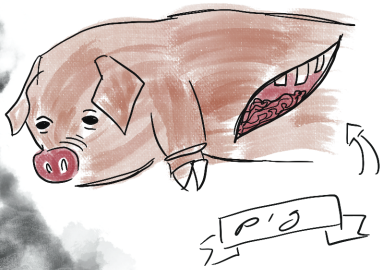
Historia Anatomica Inventionis

or!

*The History of Anatomical
Discovery via Graverobbing*

Seen as polluting forces,
dissection of corpses carried
heavy taboo in Early
European societies like
Ancient Greece.

Despite this, Ancient Greek people created the initial basis of
knowledge for what is now known as anatomy and physiology.



Animals were used as
surrogate dissection models.
Though it was understood that
they were not the same as
humans, they functioned as
important references and
opportunities for discovery.



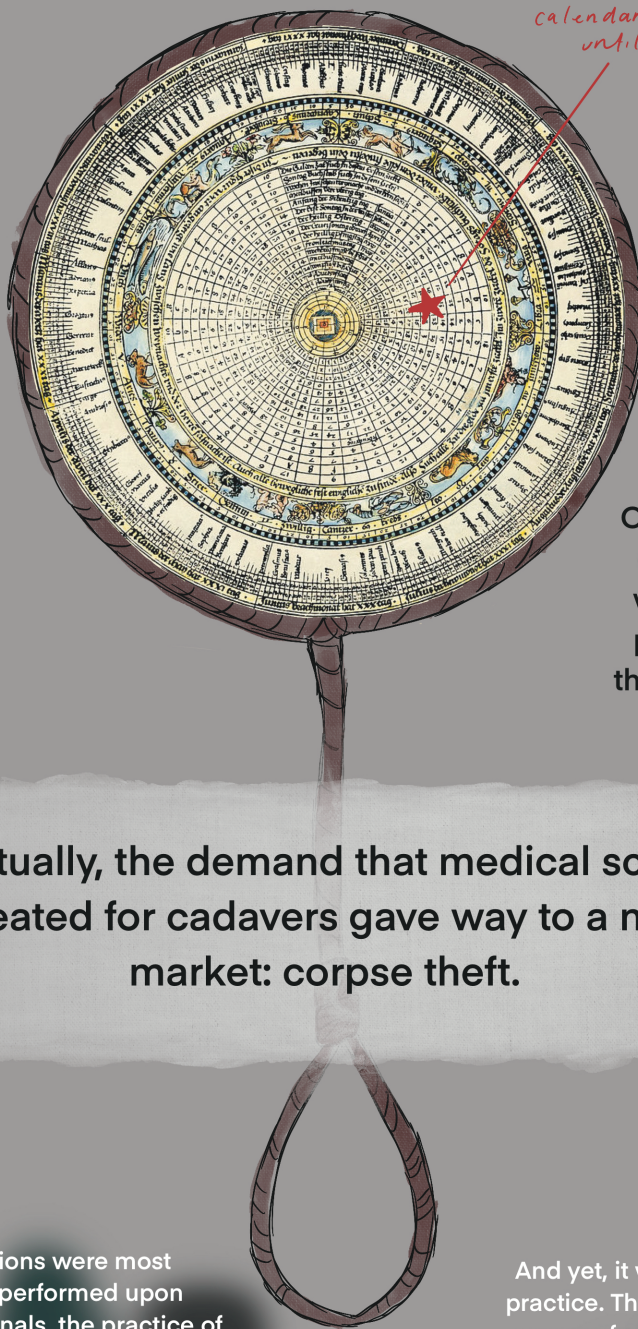
fun fact –
these were
the most
commonly
dissected
animals
in
Antiquity!



As time passed, attitudes changed. Taboo gave way to
the desire to teach and learn about the human body.

University and more formal medical education rose to prominence.

Medicine moved away from the status of craft, toward a more book learned discipline.



This is the Julian calendar which was in use until 1582! This would be the single annual dissection.

But their beginnings were humble.

On average, only one dissection was performed per year due to the lack of access to cadavers.

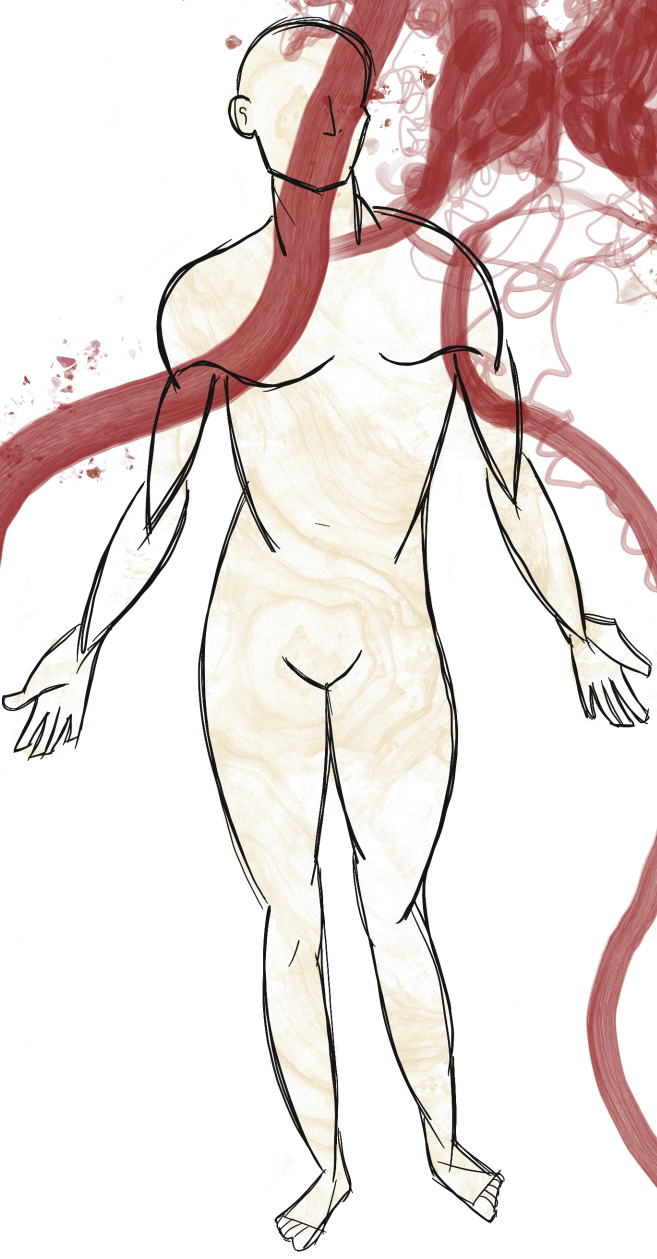
Eventually, the demand that medical schools created for cadavers gave way to a new market: corpse theft.

As dissections were most commonly performed upon executed criminals, the practice of corpse theft—which primarily affected those of lower classes—was the worst thing that could happen to a deceased person and their families grieving process. It was a humiliating experience for families and a common worry.

And yet, it was a common practice. The act of stealing corpses for the purpose of dissection was also a common part of the medical school education. Even well respected physicians such as Felix Platter participated in the activity during their training.

FIG 1.
RETE MIRABILE

In fact —
the rete mirabile was
thought to originally be
the rest place of the soul
which explained why it
couldn't be found in
early autopsys!



For centuries, a significant portion of medical cadavers were sourced from grave robbing. Though deeply unethical, consistent access to cadavers allowed for more in depth medical training and anatomical discovery. Rather than working with reference animal corpses, real cadavers allowed for mistaken knowledge to be corrected such as is the case of *rete mirabile* which is only found in deer and cows, not humans.

The spirit of anatomical discovery that existed within the 1500s with the most important practitioners of the time such as Vesalius still lives on today. All the knowledge that we use today has been based upon the actions and information of the past.