A N D R E A S  V E S A L I U S

The Fabric of the Human Body

An Annotated Translation of the 1543 and 1555 Editions with Vesalius’ Own Notes for a Never Published Third Edition

D A N I E L  H .  G A R R I S O N
M A L C O L M  H .  H A S T

• Modern layout enables the 21st-century reader to understand and delve into the complexity and the pioneering nature of this milestone in medical history without the need of knowing Latin
• Different colors allow easy identification of notes relevant to both the 1543 and the 1555 editions
• Added notes for a never published third edition
• Up-to-date design and high-resolution digital scans of the woodcuts
• Nomina Anatomica and Terminologia Anatomica for the first time included to provide Vesalius’ descriptions with modern medical terminology
• Prefaces by the translators and introductions by medical historians Vivian Nutton and Nancy Siraisi

Special pre-publication offer until September 2013

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**What the Thorax Is; the Chest; the Pectoral Bone [Sternum]**

...the story of the thorax as a whole is neither bony nor fleshy but bone alternating by turns with flesh (the 7th and 8th tables of muscles illustrate this), is admirable. The skull, by contrast, is chiefly of kerchief or Occipital bone, bone around something instructed for muscle-compressing the brain one such liver, such (the first) uterus mach put yelling of things gestating in the uterus protrude? Where would excrement be set aside, or how would offspring be expelled in fruitful labor? Could it happen that no muscle rendered assistance here? The motion of the thorax, which we need most of all for the inspiration of air, would be lost altogether if the thorax consisted only of bones. If, on the other hand, they were fashioned solely from muscles that create motion, these would impinge upon the lungs and the heart even without the pressure of something external. So, in order to have some inner thoracic capacity, and for the thorax to be moved voluntarily, muscles (S, T, V, X in the 6th table of muscles, and T, V, in the 11th) are placed alternately between the ribs. This immediately contributes in no small way to the security of the heart and lungs, for they are now better protected than if the thorax had been constructed solely of muscles. What is more, the bony mass of the thorax contributes admirably to strengthening and supporting the scapula and thence the arms as well; for we shall explain that the scapula rest upon the ribs only, and the clavicles are supported by no bone except the pectoral bone and the scapula, to which in turn are attached the humerus, the forearm, and the hand in a series (these are Q, R, S, T, Z, F, A in the skeletal figures). If the thorax were constructed with no bones, there would be no place from which muscles could originate for the scapula, the humerus, the abdomen, and certain other members, nor would muscles attach to or be situated on any foundations. And, surely, turtles instruct us perfectly regarding this necessity of the thoracic bone, if anything does, to the supreme credit of our Creator: these turtles are walled about with such a safe house, yet in the lateral surfaces of the chest and thorax they show the most elegant and beautiful structure of bones, created with astonishing craft for the sole purpose that the forward limbs might rest upon it, and so that the muscles moving the turtle’s arms might conveniently originate from it.

**Why the Abdomen is Not Also Bony**

But perhaps someone might interject: Why should not the abdomen also be bony, like the thorax? For if such a bony mass formed in alternation with muscles were placed around the belly, it would not interfere with its contraction...
The Fabric of the Human Body uses fresh high-resolution digital scans of the 273 woodcut illustrations used in De humani corporis fabrica. Each woodcut has been carefully restored to ensure legibility it has never had before and to reflect the intention of Vesalius.

And so, in the passage of time, the science of healing has been so sadly torn asunder that certain doctors, peddling themselves as physicians, have taken for themselves exclusively the prescription of medication and diet for hidden conditions; other branches of medicine they relegated to those whom they call surgeons and scarcely respect as servants, disgracefully spurning what is a principal and most ancient branch of medicine, one preeminently reliant (if anything is) upon the investigation of nature:

The translation of De humani corporis fabrica is faithful to the actual language of Vesalius, telling the reader a great deal about the way he thought, which is essential in that rhetoric and language are crucial elements of the book.

The annotations in The Fabric of the Human Body identify Vesalius’ relation to the ancient authorities on whom Humanistic medicine based its anatomical knowledge, providing text citations and translations of passages from Galen, Cicero, Aristotle, Plato, and the Hippocratics, as well as notes on Vesalius' unacknowledged sources.

The Fabric of the Human Body translates both the 1543 and 1555 editions, with added notes regarding the 1546 Epistle on the China Root, the 1538 Tabulae sex, the 1539 Venesection Letter, and Vesalius’ notes for a never published third edition of De humani corporis fabrica.

In keeping with the uniqueness of Vesalius’ masterpiece and the font in which it was first published, the designer, Christian Mengelt, developed a typeface based upon the font distinctive to 16th century Basel. Basel Antiqua is a modern rendition of that typeface.
“This translation allows a true understanding of Vesalius and his achievement for the first time, which in short makes it a new Fabrica.”

Vivian Nutton