



CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF
MEDICINE AND THE BODY
IN THE RENAISSANCE

INSTITUTIO SANTORIANA
FONDAZIONE COMEL



YALE UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences



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**UNIVERSITÄT
WÜRZBURG**



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PARMA



STUDIO FIRMANO
PER LA STORIA DELL'ARTE MEDICA E DELLA SCIENZA

CSMBR
ONLINE
EVENTS



NON-HUMAN ANIMALS AND ANCIENT MEDICINE

5
NOVEMBER
2024
5.00 pm CET

A SHARED HISTORY IN THE CONSTITUTION OF MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE

MARCO VESPA • The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The historical constitution of various traditions of medical anatomical knowledge in ancient Greek and Roman cultures almost always involved the observation, experimentation and, above all, killing of non-human animals. While the vivisection of humans was always considered unethical, the dissection of human cadavers was practised only very sporadically and only in certain periods of the Graeco-Roman world. In this cultural context, the dead or

living bodies of non-human animals represented a field of study and intellectual controversy, from Aristotle's observations on the presence of blood in the lungs to Galen's harsh criticism of his opponents about the so-called 'heart bone' (os cordis) in elephants. In this paper I will attempt to examine various aspects of the presence of non-human animals in the constitution of medical knowledge. Not only will the modalities

of anatomical examination of the animal body be explored, but also the relationships between medical observation and knowledge from cultural domains that are not strictly medical, such as sacrificial practices or ancient traditions of veterinary and husbandry. I will also look at ethical considerations of the value of non-human animal life in ancient anatomical texts (Aristotle and Galen). The extent to which discussions of the emotions and cognitive capacities of non-human animals are contained in rhetorical strategies of reifying animal bodies and legitimising their killing will be examined.

The event is free to attend but registration is required. Info at csnbr.fondazionecomel.org