

BOOK PRESENTATION

The Traveling Anatomist

Nicolaus Steno and the Intersection of Disciplines
in Early Modern Science

by **Nuno Castel-Branco**

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Tuesday,
14.4.2026
at 4:00PM

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Program

Chair:

Gaston J. Basile (The Medici Archive Project)

Discussants:

Stefano Dominici (Museo di Storia Naturale, Università di Firenze)

Abram Kaplan (Villa I Tatti, Harvard; St. John's College)

Featuring the Author:

Nuno Castel-Branco (All Souls College, Oxford)

Nicolaus Steno (1638–1686) was a renowned anatomist in his lifetime. He reformed the anatomical understanding of glands, argued that the heart was a muscle, renamed the so-called female testicles as ovaries, and developed a mathematical model for understanding muscle contraction—discoveries that were fundamental to the fields of anatomy and physiology. However, other aspects of Steno's life have come to define him: his claim that mountains' strata reveal the history of the Earth and his conversion to Catholicism as a practicing scientist. This excessive attention to his geological discoveries and to asking whether science and religion are compatible, Nuno Castel-Branco argues, has obscured his significant accomplishments as an anatomist. *The Traveling Anatomist* thus restores Steno to his rightful place as a crucial figure in early modern science.

