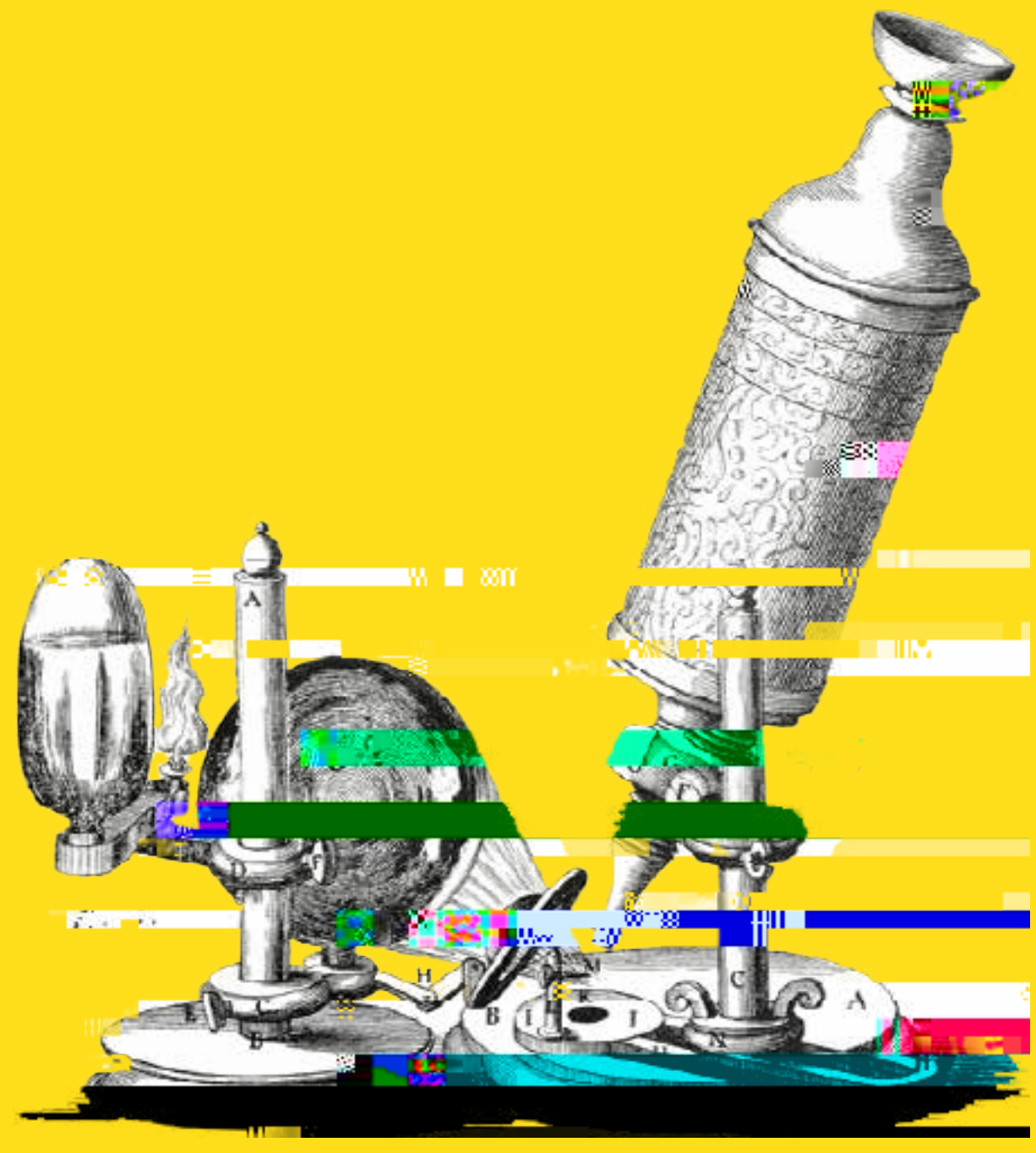


# THE FIRST CELLS

The 17th century brought microscopes, which made looking at small living material possible. Observers recorded and shared observations through letters and publications, with illustrations to show others what they saw.



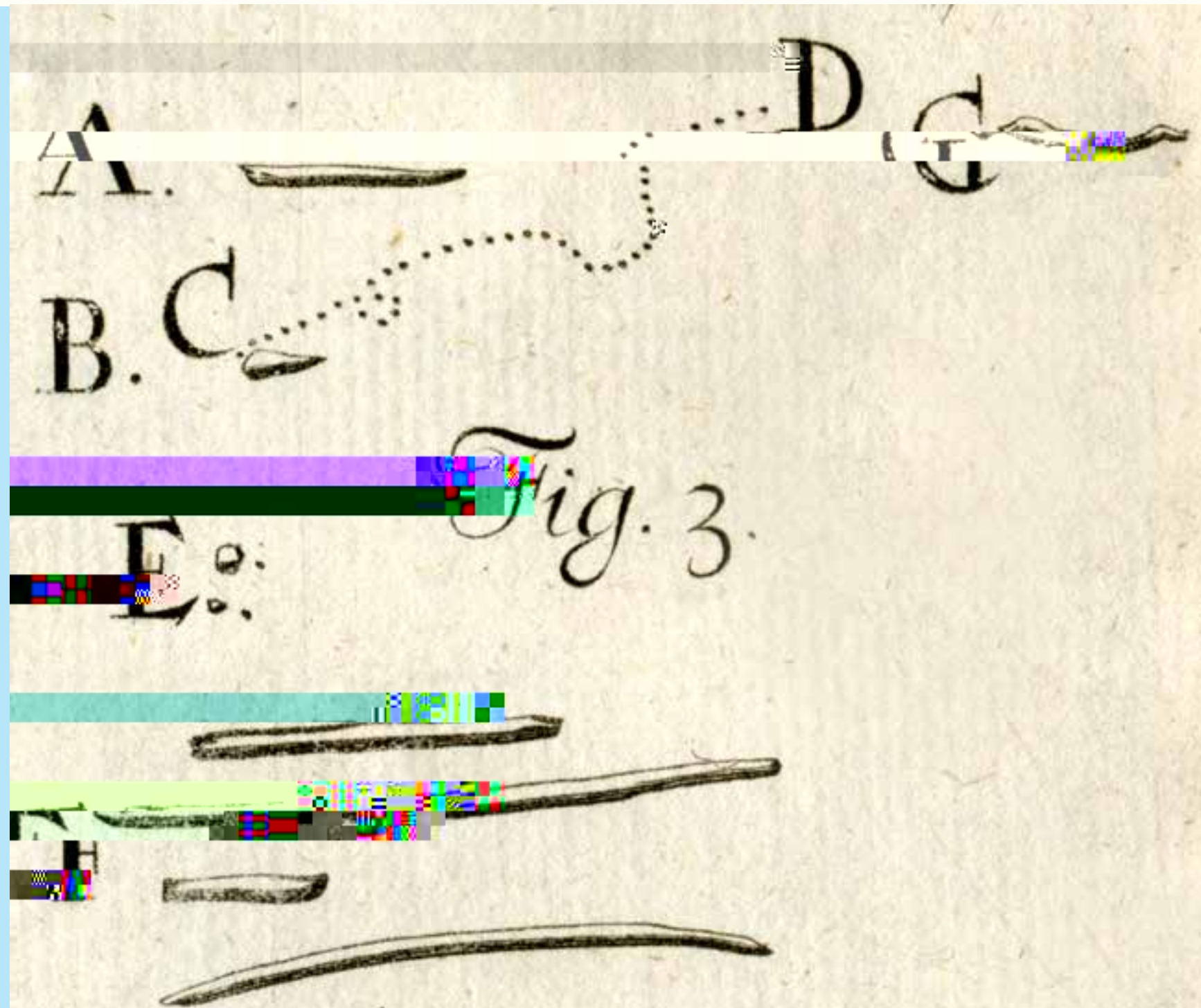
Hooke 1665

In his 1665 *Micrographia*, British microscopist Robert Hooke applied the term “cell” to the empty spaces he observed in slices of cork, vegetables, and seashells. His cells were units of organization rather than living things.

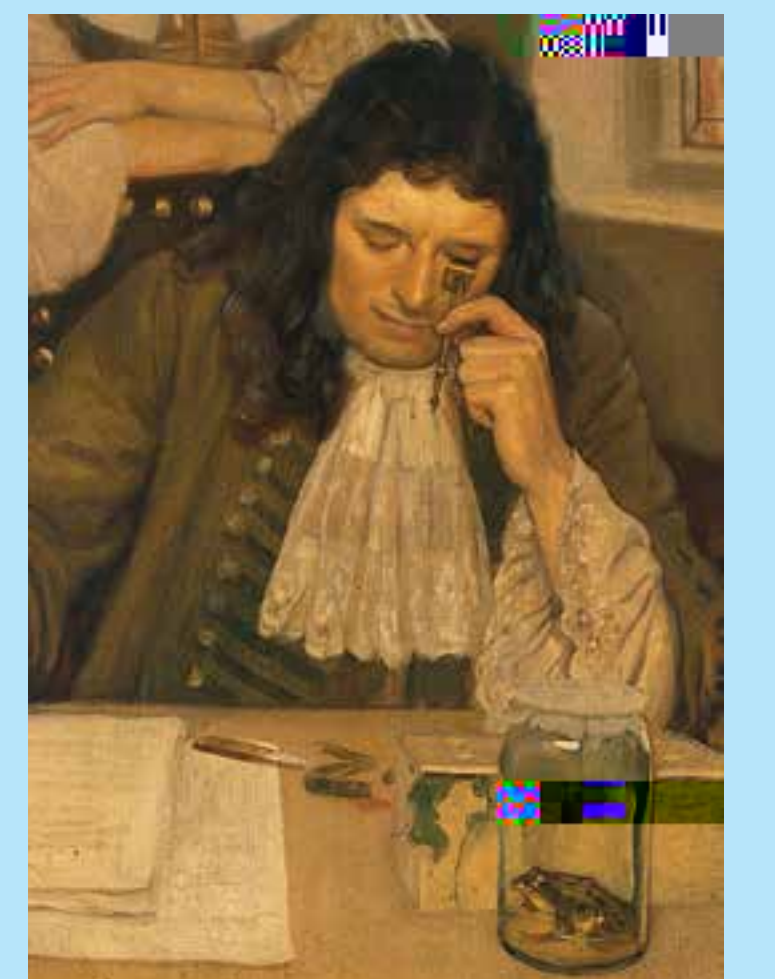


Cells observed in cork Hooke 1665

Dental plaque animalcules Leeuwenhoek 1683

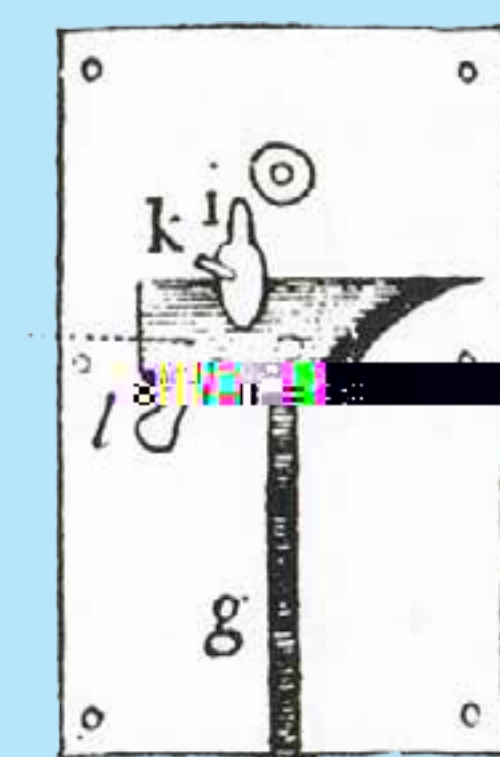


Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, Anton van Leeuwenhoek focused on living materials. He saw wiggling ovals in scrapings from his mouth and called them “animalcules.” Non-moving disks in blood he called “corpuscles.”



Board c. 1913

Blood corpuscles Leeuwenhoek 1700



Microscope  
Baker 1753

Others also began to see organized units of life that they called cells. They focused on observing and describing what they saw and did not yet develop a theory of cells. That came in the 19th century with improved microscopes.

What was that cell theory?