

Pietro LI CAUSI

**Strange Animals: Extremely Interspecific Hybridization (and *Anthropopoiesis*) in
Plutarch**

Speaking of hybridization between humans and animals, in the ancient world (and not only in the ancient world), means referring to dealing with genetic chaos *logoi* of the mythic tradition. But it also means constructing human-animal boundaries in a view which anthropologists call “anthropopoietic”.

If Aristotle, in his *Historia animalium* and in *De generatione animalium*, had rationalized all the beliefs dealing with extremely interspecific crossbreeding, secularizing also the ancient concept of *teras* and *teratodes*, Plutarch, in several *loci* of his work (e. g. *Sept. Sap. Conv.* 149 C ff., or *Bruta anim.* 990 F ff., or even *Per.* 6, 1-5), seems to go back to a more flexible idea of nature, where prodigious births are again permitted.

This does not mean an abjuration of the natural history principles which Greek philosophical tradition has fixed. Simply these principles – which are also used as rhetorical and polemical tools in the ancient debate about animal reason – are embedded in a larger theological framework, which, while recovering platonic issues, in some ways – in opposition to what happened in the zoogonies of *Timaeus* and *Protagoras* - construct the animal as the human ideal.

What happens is that, just when the animal is used in a positive light as a reversed mirror of the human, it creates a still anthropocentric moral perspective, while blurring the boundaries between what I call “anthroposphere” and “zoosphere”.