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Bibliography Section

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

by

Pietro Li Causi
Università di Palermo
pietrolicausi@virgilio.it

Abstract

Speaking of hybridization between humans and animals, 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”. Whereas Aristotle, in his *De generatione animalium*, had rationalized all the beliefs dealing with extremely interspecific crossbreeding, secularizing also the concept of teras, Plutarch 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 are embedded in a larger theological and anthropopoietic framework, which in some ways constructs the animals as a moral ideal and as “manimals”.

Key-Words: Plutarch, Moralia, Hybridization, Animals.

1. Premise

This paper is a development of a larger research project I have conducted over the past ten years on theories, beliefs and cultural attitudes regarding hybridization and monstrosity in the ancient world. Part of this research has been published in two volumes whose titles are *Sulle tracce del manticora* and *Generare in comune*, in which I have dealt respectively with the epidemiology of the beliefs about fantastic animals and genetic theories about cross-breeding¹. What I would like to do here, however, is compare accounts about hybridization between men and animals found in two works of Plutarch, *Bruta animalia ratione uti* and *Septem Sapientium Convivium*, with the positions developed centuries

¹ See Li Causi 2003 and Li Causi 2008.