



Seminari ILIESI
Incontri di idee

Lunedì 30 gennaio 2020

Roma, Villa Mirafiori, Via C. Fea 2

Stanza **218/A** (2° piano) - ore **11:00**

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Early Modern Natural History and the Question of Protestant Hermeneutics

Peter Harrison explains the disappearance of symbolic meanings of animals from seventeenth-century works in natural history through what he calls “the collapse of allegorical interpretation of texts.” By contrast, the present article argues in favor of a different understanding of the connection between hermeneutics and Protestant natural history. Martin Luther, Johannes Brenz, Philipp Melanchthon, Johannes Oecolampad, Huldrych Zwingli and Jean Calvin were aware of the allegories inherent in the biblical texts. And in particular, they continued to assign symbolic—moral, spiritual and prophetic—meanings to animals. If there are differences between Protestant and Catholic interpretations of animals, then these differences derive from the reformer’s greater insistence on providing textual support for identifying allegories, their resulting greater reluctance in assigning prophetic meanings to animals, and their caution to eliminate spiritual interpretations of animals that are in tension with central tenets of Protestant theology. These differences in hermeneutics and theology may explain some of the divergences between the symbolic interpretations of animals proposed by the Reformed naturalist Konrad Gessner and those proposed by his Catholic colleague Ulisse Aldrovandi.

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prossimo incontro: Stefano Gensini