

Department: Biomedical Sciences (BM)

Area Progettuale: DSB.AD008 / Technologies applied to Biomedical Sciences

Progetto: DSB.AD008.125 / Development of skills in popular science

Responsible of the Project: **Federico Focher**



This project aims to study, deepen and propose to scientists and laymen some scientific topics, both historical and current, through the publication of articles, books and reviews. Whenever possible, the results obtained within this project will be disseminated through conferences (e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWP8LnFzfQM>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4JLPv7cuOI>), classes and debates.

Particular attention will be given to controversial scientific topics, to particular historical events, or to anniversaries (centenaries, awards, etc.) in order to contribute, with our scientific experience and careful research of sources, to a correct, scientific and rational evaluation by the public opinion of the facts examined. The popular science work will be carried out in various locations, both institutional and private, in the form of public talks (*Figure 1*) and printed works [*Figure 2: Books by F. Focher on Alfred Russel Wallace (Bollati Boringhieri), Alexander von Humboldt (Il prato) e Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis (Ibis, e Pavia University Press)*].



In particular, it is my aim to deepen the study of the role played by Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) in the development of biological thought in Europe, and in particular in the scientific vocation, literary style and naturalistic training of Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913). Particular emphasis will also be given to the figure of the Enlightenment Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis (1698-1759) with the aim of making young people and the general public known this great French scientist, now forgotten, who had brilliant insights in the field of “genetics” and “evolutionism”.

For educational purposes, recently (2019) I wrote *Alla scoperta delle leggi della vita. Ritratti di Redi, Maupertuis, Trembley, von Humboldt, Wallace, Mendel*, published by Il prato (*Figure 3*).

With the aim of recovering the memory of the roots of biological thought, six portraits of scientists are outlined in this book who, seeking the truth, have marked some milestones of the sciences of nature. Among the many that deserved to be remembered, not the most famous were deliberately chosen, but those who, despite their indisputable importance in the history of science, are less known today, or those who, like Gregor Mendel, are not known in their personal aspects and in his training as a scientist because obscured by a bulky posthumous monument.