



Ca' Foscari
University
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Department of Philosophy
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FRAMEWORK PER L'ATTRAZIONE E IL RAFFORZAMENTO
DELLE ECCELLENZE PER LA RICERCA IN ITALIA

The Blue Marble / photo: NASA

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A registration is required.

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Rethinking the history of deep time

Ivano dal Prete
Yale University

In his classic *The Dark Abyss of Time*, Paolo Rossi maintained that the eighteenth-century discovery of the depth of geological time was a change as radical "in the position of man" as the Copernican revolution. In my forthcoming book, I argue instead that the possibility of an ancient Earth was common in medieval and early modern Europe (including in vernacular and didactic literature), and that the narrative of its eighteenth-century discovery was a product of Enlightenment political and cultural agendas. In this talk, I intend to briefly present my work on the subject and to discuss some of the outstanding historiographical issues that have emerged from my research. How can easily available sources hide in plain sight? What can "unimportant books" and literature and that has long been ignored by historians of science tell us about the scientific culture of a certain age? Above all, why did a flawed narrative go unchallenged for centuries, and become entrenched among academics and the larger public alike as historiographical common sense?



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