



What can grow from the divine seed? The divinity of human beings according to Aristotle

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Abstract

This text aims to show that the core of human divinity according to Aristotle is exercising the divine mind for its own sake. Being happy and thus divine is auto-teleological, and must not be reduced to any sort of instrumental value. This reading of Aristotle excludes the theist interpretations of Prime Mover as well as the attempts at identifying the human mind with God, mainly because both these (different) interpretations seem to make auto-teleological *bios theoretikos* impossible. The first do this by introducing the divine provision which makes people act for God's sake and not for their own sake. The others reduce the special status of humans by taking away the divine part, in my opinion being the *sine qua non* condition of the concept of human divinity. All the interpretations of human divinity which I have presented above can be useful nowadays in the ethical, (bio)ethical, social or even political discourse. This shows that the history of philosophy is not only about the past, but also about the future.

Keywords: animation, Aristotle, Brentano, creationism, Deity, divine seed, divinity, Eberl, embryogenesis, god/God, human being, *nous*, *nous pathetikos*, *nous poietikos*, soul, St. Thomas, *theion sperma*, traducianism, Zeller

Słowa kluczowe: animacja, Arystoteles, Brentano, kreacjonizm, Bóstwo, boskie nasienie, boskość, Eberl, embriogeneza, bóg/Bóg, istota ludzka, *nous*, *nous poietikos*, dusza, św. Tomasz, *theion sperma*, traducjanizm, Zeller

When Aristotle defines the human being he refers to those features that distinguish us from animals. For example, let us take the concept of *animal rationale*. “Animal” is *genus proximum*, and “rationale” is *differentia specifica*. Animals may have perception, memory and imagination, but what they lack is the distinctive faculty of understanding, reserved for the human's lot. Thus, what we get is an animal with intellect. If we bear in mind that – according to Aristotle and many other philosophers of his time – the intellect is divine, we get a composite of something animal and something divine. According to Aristotle, therefore, defining human beings is not only distin-

guishing them from animals as we tend to conceive it, but also comparing them with the Deity. To be human means to be somewhere in between¹. But where exactly on this scale? This poses the following questions: to what extent are human beings divine? Are we divine all the time, or maybe only in specific conditions? Can a person achieve or lose his or her divinity? If one loses one's divinity, does one remain the same person? These questions are important not only for historians of philosophy, but also for the contemporary debates in the fields of ethics and bioethics. These debates concern the following issues: what does it mean to be a person? when does a person begin? when can we speak about human dignity, and what is its basic criterion? I will briefly address these issues at the end of this text.

First of all, I will try to explain the issue of human divinity by giving three different but complementary accounts of divinity present in the Aristotelian sublunary world. I will analyse the following questions: (1) the affinity between human beings (especially those who exercise *bios theoretikos*) and the Deity; (2) *nous/nous poietikos* as the divine seed, or in Greek *theion sperma*, in the light of Aristotelian embryology and the "creationism vs. traducianism" discussion between the two philosophy historians Franz Brentano and Eduard Zeller; (3) the ontological status of *nous/nous poietikos* and its teleological implications. In my deliberations I will refer, *inter alia*, to *Nicomachean Ethics* X 7, 9; *Metaphysics* XII; *De generatione animalium* II 3 and *De Anima* III 4, III 5.

| Entity | Type of soul | Functions |
|--------------|--|---|
| Plants | Vegetative soul | Reproduction and growth |
| Animals | Sensitive soul | Operations of the senses: movement, perception, memory, imagination |
| Human beings | Intellectual soul consisting of <i>nous pathetikos</i> and <i>nous poietikos</i> . These are respectively the passive and active intellect. | <i>Nous pathetikos</i> is receptive and <i>nous poietikos</i> is active. <i>Nous pathetikos</i> needs input, i.e. sensible impressions. <i>Nous poietikos</i> is self-sufficient and not mixed with the body. Both are immaterial and have no bodily organ. |
| Deity / God | We cannot say that the Deity/God has <i>nous</i> . We can identify it with <i>nous</i> , but in a limited or metaphorical sense. | Self-contemplation. Again: ascribed in a limited or metaphorical sense. |

As a prerequisite I will present Aristotle's division of soul which, I believe, will be essential for better understanding of my following deliberations and remarks. The below table is necessarily simplified and does not illustrate all the links and connec-

¹ See: the medieval *ordo entis*, meaning the order or hierarchy of beings in the sublunary world.

tions between the three levels of the soul (e.g. present in a human being). We must remember that according to Aristotle one type of soul fluently transforms into the other, which is the opposite of medieval interpretations, where the lower soul must be annihilated if the higher one is to appear (see: St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia 76.3, 76.4, 76.5; *Questiones Disputatae de Anima* XI, *Summa Contra Gentiles* II 89).

Theoretical life as a *sine qua non* condition of the affinity with God

The concept of affinity between human beings and the Deity can be based upon the standard reading of *Nicomachean Ethics* X 7, according to which we become as divine as it gets by exercising our divine part, and thus achieve *bios theoretikos* and *eudaimonia*, perfect happiness. The perfect exercise (i.e. theoretical contemplation) of the best part of the human soul (intellectual soul, reason, *nous*) makes us similar to gods, and thus worthy of their love.

If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be that of the best thing in us. Whether it be reason or something else that is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us, the activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness. That this activity is contemplative we have already said².

In this passage Aristotle poses two important questions. First of all: is “the best thing in us” *nous* or something else? Aristotle sometimes uses *nous* to refer to *nous pathetikos*, and sometimes to refer to the whole *nous*, consisting of *nous pathetikos* (also known as *dynamēi*) and *nous poietikos*³. Here, in my opinion the words “this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine” suggest *nous poietikos*. So not something entirely else, but something “more” than the receptive *nous (pathetikos)*, “the second intellect” (see: *De Anima* III 4 for *nous* – the first intellect and III 5 for *nous poietikos*⁴ – the second intellect), something able to think about divine things, something that does not need to use senses in any aspect of its activity. The second question is whether this special part of humans is divine but in a limited, human sense (as our feature or a birthmark), or if it is something divine itself (a god or God). The answer to the first question may not seem to be as significant as the answer to the second; however, the importance of the distinction between passive intellect and agent intellect will grow as we move to analysing *De Anima* (Aristotle’s psychology). So, while analysing *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle’s anthropology), we can speak of *nous* without making further divi-

² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* X 7, 1177 a, transl. by W.D. Ross [in:] *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, R. McKeon (ed.), New York 1941.

³ See above table.

⁴ In this part of *De Anima* Aristotle speaks of “the second intellect”. The name *nous poietikos* is used by commentators like Teophrastus, A. Bullinger, and Brentano.

sions. What is vital is Aristotle's explicit statement that the best part of humans, i.e. *nous*, is **our** best part and not "God's part" ("since not only is reason the best thing in us, but the objects of reason are the best of knowable objects"⁵). Apart from *nous* being the divine part of humans (not something divine itself, not a god or God, as we learn from *Nicomachean Ethics* X 7, 1177a, b) and the identification of its perfect activity with happiness *Nicomachean Ethics* gives us an interesting account of the Divine, because Aristotle presents us with the pantheon of gods instead of his Prime Mover (see: *Metaphysics* XII). Although I am mainly concerned with the relation between humans and the non-theistically conceived Prime Mover, I do believe that the theist interpretations of the Prime Mover (which I find inadequate) are rooted, *inter alia*, in the conflation of the two concepts of the Divine: one from *Metaphysics* and the other from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The only theism we find in Aristotle is, in my opinion, polytheism⁶. The theist interpretations of the Absolute tend to neglect two basic facts. First of all: that the happiness consisting in the best intellectual activity and thus similarity to the Divine is self-contained, auto-teleological. According to some Christian commentators (e.g. St. Thomas Aquinas, Franz Brentano), this similarity or kinship⁷ is a means, not a goal. The goal is God's love and/or provision. Yet happiness according to Aristotle is an intrinsic value, not an instrumental one. I will argue that so is the affinity with the Divine. Being divine gives us a special ontological and moral status which is itself valuable. Theoretical contemplation is an activity similar to the divine form, but it is exercised for its own sake. As we learn from the *Metaphysics* XII – and this is the second basic fact which the theist interpretations neglect – the Deity has neither knowledge, nor interest in the sublunary world; it can only think (about) itself or, in other words, it is a pure act of thought (in Greek: *noeseos noesis*). So the relation between human beings and the Deity can be described as one-sided. The divine intellect of humans strives for the Divine in order to develop and improve itself, not in order to somehow influence the Deity (the Deity, unlike

⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* X 7, 1177 a, transl. by W.D. Ross [in:] *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, R. McKeon (ed.), New York 1941.

⁶ Here, by "polytheism" I understand the multitude of gods in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, not the multitude of divine beings such as – besides the Prime Mover – the heavenly spheres and/or *nous poietikos*, although I am aware of the fact that such interpretations exist.

⁷ This kinship or affinity (German *Gottesverwandtschaft*) is an interesting context for the theories of animation (being equipped with the soul) and embryologies. If the soul can come from God like the biological features come from the father or both parents we can speak of an analogy between these two relations. If we are related to our parents, then why not to God? The term *Gottesverwandtschaft* comes from Franz Brentano's commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima* called *The Psychology of Aristotle* (written 1867). He says there that in *De Anima* 408b soul is *gottesverwandt* (related to God), whereas in English translation (the translations of W.D. Ross, D.W. Hamlyn) the soul is simply "more divine" or "diviner". Even if this "more divine" has a hint of causality, it is not as informative and capacious as *Gottesverwandtschaft*. *Gottesverwandtschaft* is so important because it sheds light on the theories of animation not only according to Aristotle but also to Plato (see: *Timaeus* and the divine seeds implemented in human bodies). It also reminds us of the Christian concept of *imago dei*, according to which people are alike God and this theist God is usually their father and carer. What is interesting is the fact that, apart from Brentano's account, I have not come across an analysis of the concept of *Gottesverwandtschaft*. And without this concept it is hard to even start speaking about the transition from the ancient Divinity (the God of the philosophers) to the theist paradigm of Christianity.

gods, does not require anything from us). This means that the goal of our divine intellect is simply exercising its divinity. And if the intellect is divine, where exactly does it come from? What is its origin?

The divine seed (*theion sperma*)

The above question brings us to the issue of the divine seed (*theion sperma*). We encounter this notion not only in Aristotle, but also in Stoic philosophy (see: *logos spermatikos*, or in English “seminal logos”, as the generative principle of the universe) and Plato’s dialogue *Timaeus* (41 C, D), where the Demiurge equips people with seeds that will help them lead pious, just and divine lives and thus achieve immortality. “Now so much of them as it is proper to designate ‘immortal’, the part we call divine which rules supreme in those who are fain to follow justice always and yourselves, that part I will deliver unto you when I have sown it and given it origin”⁸. From the same dialogue (73 B, C, D) we learn that the divine seed is located in the brain (the rest of the semen is in the bone marrow). Thus we can conclude that the *theion sperma* which we encounter in Aristotle’s *De generatione animalium* (II 3) is the *nous/nous poietikos* from *De Anima* (III 4, III 5), it is either the one “that has no bodily organ” (meaning *nous*, including *nous poietikos*, III 4) or the one “that comes from without” (agent intellect, III 5). But where exactly does it come from? Is the *nous* in the father’s semen, or does it come directly from God, as the name *theion sperma* would suggest? If so, are we divine *a priori*, or is the *theion sperma* a potentiality yet to be developed? Here I would like to make a distinction between two ways in which, I believe, a human being can be divine. We can either be (1) *divine a priori*, which means that we get the divine seed from God and it makes us automatically divine independently of our actions. Or we can be (2) *divine a posteriori*, which means that we are supposed to develop the potentialities of divine seeds but we are not determined to do so (there is no obligation to become divine; we can stay at the “human level” or even end up as an animal). The *a priori divinity* is better suited to Christian interpretations, whereas the *a posteriori divinity* seems to be in accordance with Aristotle’s embryology, psychology and anthropology (you can only be happy when you achieve certain age, so it cannot be given *a priori*) and the worldview of ancient Greece. Could we be divine if *nous* came from the father? The two most popular answers to the question about the origin of the divine seed/intellectual soul are creationism and traducianism.

Creationism and traducianism are basic concepts of every embryology and animation⁹ theory. The first one – creationism – states that the soul is somehow incarnated, embodied or enmattered, and it comes from beyond, that is from the Deity or God.

⁸ Plato, *Timaeus*, 41 C, transl. by W.R.M. Lamb [in:] *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Cambridge, MA–London 1925.

⁹ Animation is a general concept that is used to describe the act and/or process of being equipped with the soul. It is applied to all the parts of the soul; however, when a being is endowed with the intellectual soul, we can also call it “hominsation”.

Traducianism, on the other hand, says that we inherit the soul like the biological features or, simply, that we get it from our parents, especially from the father. The starting point of my deliberations on this subject will be Franz Brentano's interpretation of *theion sperma* according to Aristotle, which we find in his works *Die Psychologie des Aristoteles, insbesondere seine Lehre vom nous poietikos* (*The Psychology of Aristotle*, 1867) and *Aristoteles und seine Weltanschauung* (*Aristotle and his World-view*, 1911). Brentano is a creationist for whom God's intervention or providence is necessary for the possibility of even speaking about the higher moral status or divinity of humans. He believes that the intellectual soul comes from beyond, and the nutritive and sensitive ones are the effect of the "cooperation" of form (the father's semen) and matter (mother's womb). He accuses the other great historian of his time, Eduard Zeller, of traducianism, whereas Zeller's position presented in his *opus magnum – Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (*Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*, 1882) is surprisingly similar to Brentano's. It can be described as "an agnostic point of view". Zeller believes that from Aristotle's theory we can conclude traducianism (with regard to the nutritive and sensitive soul) and creationism (with regard to the intellectual soul). So, as we see, these two competitive positions are correspondent but not identical. First of all, Brentano is strongly influenced by the doctrine of the Catholic Church and St. Thomas Aquinas' account of Aristotle, whereas Zeller is a specialist in ancient Greek philosophy, which partly causes the shifts of meanings we can observe while comparing the two theories. For example, for Brentano the word "traducianism" is an accusation and a departure from his views inspired by Christian theology, whereas for Zeller the same concept is a fully neutral *terminus technicus*. The Brentano–Zeller discussion lasted almost fifty years (from 1867 to 1911, even despite Zeller's death in 1908) and therefore it is impossible to describe it in detail.

I would also like to devote some time and efforts to the contemporary solutions of the creationism vs. traducianism problem. For example, Victor Caston, in his text *Aristotle's Two Intellects: a Modest Proposal* (1999), presents an interesting account of this issue which can serve as an antidote for the creationism vs. traducianism problem and has one more advantage: it differentiates between *nous* and *nous poietikos*, which, I believe, is crucial while discussing human divinity from the psychological standpoint. Instead of saying that the divine seed (intellectual soul, *theion sperma*, *nous poietikos*) comes from God, Caston argues that it is in fact God, and thus believes himself to have solved another long-running difficulty: whether *nous poietikos* has any functions at all. It does not, argues Caston, because God does not have any; God does nothing besides self-contemplation, for every activity would destroy His perfection (see: *Metaphysics* XII). It is more appropriate to say that God is self-contemplation (*noeseos noesis*) than to say that He exercises it. We must remember that the name *poietikos*, meaning "active", "productive", comes from the commentators, not from Aristotle himself. What does the "second intellect" do? Philosophers have been discordant about the specific function of *nous poietikos*, since Aristotle's description of the higher part of intellectual soul is rather vague and therefore mysterious. In the light of this bewilderment Caston's solution seems to be a useful problem-

solver. Despite the fact that the *nous poietikos* is transcendent, Caston proposes a full traducianism when it comes to the lower parts of the soul, which looks like another good idea. But is Caston's proposal really so perfect? I will return to this question in the following paragraph.

Can a human being become God?

One thing is sure: divine seed (whatever its ontological status is) can develop into a divine person. But can a person be anything more? Can a person become a god/God and transcend the "human level"? Or maybe this question is iconoclastic? Trying to answer the eponymous question of this paragraph I will describe positions according to which *nous poietikos* is not only divine, but in fact it is God, especially the one mentioned above – Victor Caston's proposal. The first attempts at identifying *nous poietikos* with God were pursued by the peripathetic philosopher Alexander of Aphrodisias, who lived and taught in Athens at the beginning of the third century. Also Avicenna (980–1037) and Averroes (1126–1198) believed that *nous poietikos* was not part of the human mechanism of thought – it was one of the multitude of movers¹⁰, but not the Prime Mover. All these readings must have influenced Victor Caston. As I said above, such an interpretation of *De Anima* III 5 has many advantages. However, it causes some difficulties too. If we identify *nous poietikos* with God, we either lose the criterion of distinguishing humans from God because, on this reading, every human being is in fact God (if each individual human being has an individual *nous poietikos*; if *nous poietikos* is in human beings); or we lose the criterion (*differentia specifica*) of distinguishing people from animals if we do not want to identify ourselves with God. The non-identification of humans and the Deity leaves us with *nous pathetikos* only. And *nous pathetikos*, as we learn from *De Anima*, is not only perishable but also mixed with the body, because it needs the senses. And because Caston identifies *nous poietikos* with God and thus does not identify God with humans, it seems impossible to speak of immortality (although *nous pathetikos* has no bodily organ it is mixed with the body and perishes along with the dying, decomposing body), affinity with God and individual development (i.e. *bios theoretikos* and *eudaimonia* as we know them from *Nicomachean Ethics*). The lack of individual immortality does not seem to be a problem on Aristotelian grounds (although Christian commentators would put it otherwise). But the impossibility of affinity with God and individual development through theoretical contemplation make this theory rather questionable (Caston does speak of our similarity to God, however, yet in his account this similarity consists in making humans a part of a teleological chain of entities, including plants and animals striving after the Deity, without emphasising the special status of human beings); which can be interpreted as diminishing or even removing the exceptional status that every human as *animal rationale* has. In addition, in *Nico-*

¹⁰ Besides the First Unmoved Mover (*proton kinoun akineton*) there are 55 other movers in Aristotle's ontology, who set the heavenly spheres in motion.

machean Ethics (as we have already learned from passages X, 7, 1177a, b) Aristotle states that reason is **in** human beings, and it is **our** divine part. So on the one hand the theories which identify it with God may be interesting and to some extent useful, but on the other hand they are not complementary with certain positions in Aristotle. What we are looking for, then, is an interpretation which “saves” our individual intellectual development and does not identify *nous poietikos* with God. The ontological status of *nous poietikos* is one of the most mysterious in the history of philosophy, and there have been many attempts at giving an adequate definition of it. One of the solutions I find valuable and appropriate is the proposal of Patrick Macfarlane and Ronald Polansky (*God, The Divine and Nous in relation to the “De Anima”*), which “saves” our affinity with God and suggests an interesting account of so-called “immortality”.

To anticipate where we are going, since mind is fundamentally potentiality, it is completely inappropriate to say that God is mind, or even that God is wise (will Aristotle’s God think all things?). Mind, knowledge and wisdom are potentialities. Therefore it is impious, if unintentionally so, to speak of God as Divine Mind, or to refer to God as knowledgeable and wise¹¹.

Strictly, mind does not think, but a human thinks by way of having mind. [...] the so-called “agent intellect” is just our knowledge that allows us to think the things that we know. Knowledge plays the role of moving cause for thinking. Knowledge is a disposition or state (*hexis*) – having universals in the soul and / or the capacity to demonstrate – that can be viewed as potentiality and / or actuality...¹²

According to this theory, we can say that *De Anima* III 5 explains moving from potentiality, a disposition to think, to actuality of thought (see: *noeseos noesis*). But how do we explain the numerous positions (e.g. *De Anima* III 4, III 5, *De generatione animalium* II 3) that state that mind comes from without, engaging theist interpretations of Deity? The authors say that it means simply that people learn from other people (knowledge is neither incarnated nor inborn). That we have dispositions which we actualise by acquiring knowledge and this knowledge builds an outer “reservoir” or “body of knowledge” that everyone can use or in which everybody can participate. Thus in Aristotle’s philosophy we come across knowledge in the individual and knowledge in the species. As we remember from Aristotle, an immortality can be ascribed to species, not to individuals. Macfarlane and Polansky describe this continuous, teleological development of knowledge, that leads to this certain form of immortality, as divine.

¹¹ This is exactly what I meant by saying that we can ascribe *nous* or self-contemplation to God, but in a limited or metaphorical sense.

¹² P. Macfarlane, R. Polansky, *God, the Divine and Nous in relation to “De Anima”* [in:] *Ancient perspectives on Aristotle’s De anima. Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, series I 41, Leuven 2009, p. 116 and 117.

Bioethical implications¹³

One of the main concerns in addressing the bioethical issues at the beginning of human life is stating when an embryo or a foetus becomes a human being or a person. The bioethical issues in question are, *inter alia*, abortion, in vitro fertilisation, embryonic stem cell research or the use of abortifacient contraceptives. One can say that the ancient accounts of human embryogenesis are of no value for the contemporary discussion, for the biological data from the distant past can no longer be treated as valid. On the other hand, we can see that science, despite the spectacular development and the continuously growing knowledge about the beginnings of human life, is not always capable of answering all the urgent questions, like “when does a person begin?” Therefore, there are scholars who try to combine Aristotle’s metaphysical account of human nature with the scientific data that biology and medicine provide. In most cases they approach Aristotle via St. Thomas Aquinas (e.g. Jonathan Eberl, Benedict Ashley, Joseph Donceel, Robert Pasnau). Although I believe that some aspects of the Thomist reading of Aristotle are unjustified and at some points even indefensible (like ascribing theism to Aristotle), the main concepts have remained, more or less, unchanged (division of the soul into a vegetative, sensitive and intellectual one, the theory of animation). And so, the natural body has to be informed by a rational soul in order to constitute a human being. If it is informed with it immediately, as some commentators (e.g. Benedict Ashley¹⁴) would wish, i.e. in the very moment of conception, we have an immediate animation/hominisation, and we are obliged to acknowledge the dignity and personhood at the same time. But there are also commentators (e.g. Joseph Donceel, Robert Pasnau¹⁵) that state that the instantiation of the intellectual soul occurs later, after the embryo has experienced some preparatory transformations. This position is called “delayed animation/hominisation”, and it implies that the dignity and personhood are not acknowledged until the vegetative and sensitive parts of the soul have developed¹⁶. Let me now quote a significant passage from Jason T. Eberl’s text on Aquinas’s account of embryogenesis:

Aquinas’s account of human embryogenesis begins with his understanding of a human being as constituted by a rational soul informing a material body. In defining the necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be informed by a soul – which may be either vegetative, sensitive, or rational – Aquinas first notes Aristotle’s definition of “soul” as “the actuality of a physical organic body having life potentially” [...]. Aquinas then asserts that “such potentiality does not reject the soul” [...]. Aquinas holds that a soul’s potentiality to perform its definitive opera-

¹³ In this section I will utilise two important texts by J.T. Eberl: *Aquinas’s Account of Human Embryogenesis and Recent Interpretations*, “Journal of Medicine and Philosophy: A Forum for Bioethics and Philosophy of Medicine” 2005, No. 30 (4), p. 379–394 and J.T. Eberl, *The Beginning of Personhood: a Thomistic Biological Analysis*, “Bioethics” 2000, No. 14/2, p. 134–157.

¹⁴ See: J.T. Eberl, *Aquinas’s Account of Human Embryogenesis...*, p. 379–394.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ Here we can see that it is appropriate to use the noun “animation” in order to describe the implementation of the lower parts of the soul: the vegetative and sensitive one; whereas the highest stage of animation, i.e. the implementation of the intellectual soul, should be called “hominisation” in order to make it clear when a person begins.

tions – whether life, sensation, or rational thought – is necessary for it to exist [...]. Of course, a developing human embryo or fetus, and even a newborn infant, does not actually exercise all the operations proper to a human being, including rational activity. Nonetheless, Aquinas denies that this lack implies that a rational soul does not inform the matter of a developing human embryo, fetus, or newborn infant. All that is required for the presence of a rational soul, and thus the existence of a human being, is a human body that has the potentiality for the operations proper to a rational soul [...]. Concerning the question of when the potentiality for the operations proper to a rational soul is first present in a developing human body, Aquinas asserts that a body must have the proper *organic structure* if it is to have a rational soul as its substantial form [...]. The appropriate organs for a rational soul are those associated with sensation, because it is through sensation of particular things that the mind comes to possess intelligible forms, which are the natures of things understood as abstracted from any particular material conditions¹⁷.

This is a very complex issue, and therefore it is impossible to further dwell on it in this article. However, we must bear in mind that the moment of hominisation is the moment of the appearance of the divine seed and – *a fortiori* – human divinity. We can therefore see how important the issue of the divine seed can be nowadays, and that Aristotelian concepts, although ancient, are not outdated.



¹⁷ J.T. Eberl, *Aquinas's Account of Human Embryogenesis...*, p. 381–382.