

Objective of the project

My aim is to analyse and order the various interpretations of Aristotle's psychology, and especially of "De Anima" 3.5, where Aristotle introduces the active intellect (nous poietikos) and its divine nature. The given description poses numerous questions which resulted in many different theories. I will try to order them by introducing a division into "mystical" and "rational" readings. The mystical ones are based on a conviction that nous poietikos does not belong to humans, but it is Deity or a divine sphere with which we can connect via kind of a "union". In the rational interpretations nous poietikos is a tool that belongs to human psychology and via its intellectual activity it strives after the Deity and immortality. In its Christian version rationalism introduces theistic God. It is worth noticing that some of the mystical readings resign from immortality. Among mystics I count (inter alia): Eudemus, Avicenna, Averroes, from the newer philosophers Eduard Zeller and from the quite contemporary – Victor Caston, for instance. The rationalists are (inter alia): Theophrastus, Thomas Aquinas, the XIXth century Aristotelian revival (F. Trendelenburg, F. Brentano, Ch. Brandis) and from the contemporary ones – A. Kosman.

I also plan to scrutinize the issue of activation and deactivation of nous poietikos as well as to answer the question why we do not remember its action and we have to resort to mystical language to describe it.

Research to be carried out

In my project I plan to carry out the following research tasks.

1. Overview of mystical and rational interpretations of Aristotle's nous poietikos.
2. Ancient and early medieval interpretations – analysis and comparison.
3. Medieval Christian Aristotelianism, especially Thomas Aquinas.
4. XIXth century Aristotelian revival as a case of Christian Aristotelianism.
5. Contemporary readings of Aristotle's psychology.
6. Activation and deactivation of nous poietikos and the issue of our knowledge about its work.

Reasons for choosing the research topic

Nous poietikos is one of the central issues of philosophy. And it has been so from the very beginning. Intellectual soul is one of these motifs that have driven our civilisation and people have always wanted to understand its nature. It was worthwhile even in the periods of retreat from Aristotelianism. Despite all this, the question about its true essence is far from being solved. My ambition is not to solve it, as this would be a colossal task (if at all possible), but to order the existing interpretations and thus facilitate the whole discourse.

In the recent years, nous poietikos and the entire Aristotelian cognitive apparatus have been an object of interest for such distinguished scholars as: V. Caston, A. Kosman, R. Johnston, D. Modrak, P. Macfarlane & R. Polansky, A. Oksenberg Rorty, L. P. Gerson, I. Kupreeva, M. J. White, J. Beere, D. Perler, K. Corcilius, et al. And I wish to engage in the ongoing discussion.

In addition, this subject has significant implications for ethics/morality and philosophy of religion. The overview of interpretations of nous poietikos can be of interest for those working in the fields of philosophy of mind and cognitive science as well.