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## Special Transformism Contra Special Creation. A Critique of Mariusz Tabaczek's Concept of the Origin of Man

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**Abstract:** This paper is a response to Mariusz Tabaczek's concept of special transformism as proposed in his book **Theistic Evolution**. After clarifying Tabaczek's terminology the author presents the authentic Aquinas's doctrine on the origin of man as opposed to Tabaczek's proposal. Then the author shows how Tabaczek's concept clashes with Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics. This includes four issues: (1) the incorrect understanding of the disposition of matter, (2) the incorrect understanding of animal and human generation, (3) the impossibility of an animal to give birth to a human and (4) the lack of explanation of the origin of the first woman. These four issues make Tabaczek's view contradictory to Aquinas's account of human origins. In the last section the author shows how Tabaczek misrepresents the teachings of three Fathers of the Church (Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom and Augustine) by showing that each of them clearly and explicitly supports the concept of special creation rather than special transformism.

### Keywords:

creation;  
creationism;  
evolution;  
hominization;  
human origins;  
transformism

## 1. Preliminary clarification

In this article I will comment on Mariusz Tabaczek's concept of hominization as presented in the last chapter of his book **Theistic Evolution** titled "Theological



Anthropogenesis and Evolution”.<sup>1</sup> Before I refer to his specific ideas, however, I need to clarify two issues.

First, the terminology. Tabaczek divides the present views on human origins into three categories: (1) the *naturalistic* view in which a human is a product of a (natural) process of evolution which brings about his body and psychological and intellectual capacities. This view can be traced back to Darwin and materialistic/atheistic evolutionists; (2) the *semi-naturalistic* view on which the body is a product of evolution while the human soul is created by God and infused into the body at some stage of evolution. This view can be traced back to the first Catholic evolutionists such as Mivart, Leroy and Zahm; (3) the *antinaturalistic* view on which the body and the soul are created directly by God. This is a classic Christian position shared by Aquinas and all Christian writers before Darwin.

There are some problems with the names given to these three categories and I see no reason why the traditional terminology should be dropped.<sup>2</sup> Traditionally, the first category is called *natural* (/naturalistic/materialistic/atheistic) *transformism*, the second — *special* (/mitigated) *transformism* and the third — *special creation*.<sup>3</sup> Surely, according to this terminology, one may say that special creation is a specific type of special transformism because on the first view God transforms clay (earth, dust or slime) into the first human while on the latter God transforms an animal (“living matter”) into the first human. So special creation differs from special transformism by the substrate used in the supernatural transformation which in the first case is non-living simple matter while in the latter it is highly organized matter in the form of some animal.

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<sup>1</sup> See Mariusz TABACZEK, **Theistic Evolution: A Contemporary Aristotelian-Thomistic Perspective**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2024, pp. 222–277.

<sup>2</sup> The following terminology is adopted, for instance, by Brian W. Harrison (see Brian W. HARRISON, “Early Vatican Responses to Evolutionist Theology”, *Living Tradition* 2001, No. 93, <https://tiny.pl/t346bp-v> [27.10.2025]).

<sup>3</sup> “Special creation” (*peculiaris creatio*) is a common term used in the debates over evolution to describe the direct divine act in production of the universe, man or species. The term taken per se is redundant, as any creative act of God must be direct and therefore, special. Unfortunately, theistic evolutionists have introduced permanent confusion around the term “creation” by which they designate all kinds of divine acts (including ordinary and extraordinary providence). This is why in today’s context adding “special” is necessary in order to differentiate the act of creation from any other divine activity.

The superiority of the traditional terminology consists in the fact that it directly refers to the meaning of each position. In contrast, the names given by Tabaczek consider these three positions as referenced to the notion of naturalism which the Author does not define. But “naturalism” is quite a term carrying various philosophical associations so that without additional clarifications it may easily lead to confusion.<sup>4</sup> Keeping this in mind we should stay with the traditional terminology, since the one proposed by the Author introduces unnecessary ambiguities.

Second, we need to clarify what the Author actually argues for. One subsection of the chapter is titled “Thomistic View of the Evolutionary Origin of the Human Species”.<sup>5</sup> But Thomas Aquinas quite clearly teaches the direct creation of man according to his body and soul, thus his position is special creation.<sup>6</sup> Precisely this idea (special creation) was challenged and rejected by evolutionists beginning with Darwin. Hence Aquinas’s view is contrary to the evolutionary view and there cannot be a “Thomistic view” of an evolutionary origin of man unless the “Thomistic view” is contrary to what Aquinas teaches. Surprisingly, this is what the Author proposes — his “Thomistic view” is even better than that of Aquinas, as the latter falls into dualism while the Author thinks he does not.<sup>7</sup>

One may therefore wonder, what is the point in calling “Thomistic” a type of doctrine that contradicts St. Thomas? The problem is that while the Author pursues the view clearly contradicting St. Thomas, which he still calls “Thomistic”, at the same time he claims to have reconciled Aquinas’s teachings with evolution. Any reader should be aware therefore of being exposed to a form of manipulation by which the Author strives to “keep the cake and eat the cake”, that is, at the

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, naturalism can be understood in at least two ways: either as a position that recognizes the objective existence of the natural order or as a position that denies the existence of the supernatural order. Accordingly, “antinaturalistic” view may be understood at least in two ways as well – either as a position that does not recognize the objective existence of the natural order or as a position that simply recognizes the existence of the supernatural order. This, obviously, is valid under the assumption that “antinaturalistic” stands in logical opposition to “naturalistic”.

<sup>5</sup> See TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution...*, p. 231.

<sup>6</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 91, <https://tiny.pl/czh3m9p6> [17.11.2025].

<sup>7</sup> See TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution...*, p. 243. “The Thomistic model of the evolutionary origin of the human species I proposed differs considerably from the antinaturalistic view [of Thomas Aquinas]”. TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution...*, p. 243.

same time entertain the “Thomistic” view while rejecting that view due to its presumed incompatibility with “modern science”.

## 2. Engaging with Aquinas

What strikes one upon reading the chapter is the fact that among the 118 footnotes there are only three references to the works of Aquinas and the remainder refer to contemporary authors of whom all (with a couple of exceptions) are theistic or atheistic evolutionists. This fact alone may suggest that the Author’s engagement with Aquinas’s actual doctrine is somewhat superficial.<sup>8</sup> At one point he writes:

In light of what was said about human nature [the unity of the soul and body — M.Ch.], it becomes clear that this view of Aquinas [special creation — M.Ch.] requires reinterpretation, as it assumes a dualistic distinction between soul and the body.<sup>9</sup>

[T]he contemporary conversation offers some more nuanced and viable options [than that of Aquinas].<sup>10</sup>

For some reason the Author believes that even though (in his own words) “Aristotelian-Thomistic anthropology insists on the unity of a human person”, by which it is different from the Platonic one,<sup>11</sup> yet Aquinas’s account of the origin of the human being is dualistic. We may try to explain how these two apparently contradictory claims may be held simultaneously by bringing up what the Author believes about the concept of special transformism. On his view:

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<sup>8</sup> In **Aquinas and Evolution** (see Michael CHABEREK, **Aquinas and Evolution: Why St. Thomas’s Teaching on the Origins is Incompatible with Evolutionary Theory**, The Chartwell Press, USA 2019, pp. 36–37) I had pointed out the same problem with the book **Thomistic Evolution** edited by Nicanor Austriaco in which there are very few references to Aquinas, none in the chapter on Biblical exegesis or intelligent design and Aquinas (Nicanor P.G. AUSTRIACO et al. **Thomistic Evolution: A Catholic Approach to Understanding Evolution in the Light of Faith**, Cluny Media, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> TABACZEK, **Theistic Evolution...**, p. 243.

<sup>10</sup> TABACZEK, **Theistic Evolution...**, p. 244.

<sup>11</sup> TABACZEK, **Theistic Evolution...**, p. 226. “It is in contrast to the Platonic notion of human nature that I want to emphasize the relevance of the Aristotelian-Thomistic anthropology with its insistence on the unity of human person” (TABACZEK, **Theistic Evolution...**, p. 226).

[T]he main difficulty of the semi-naturalistic position is its dualistic flavor, as it speaks about the infusion of the human soul to an already existing human body.<sup>12</sup>

This [i.e. the infusion of the soul into the body] suggests [...] a dualistic anthropology and the notion of human soul as added to human body — an imprecise and confusing terminology that, regrettably, is still prevalent in Catholic philosophical and theological anthropology.<sup>13</sup>

[Kemp's proposal] is (2) dualistic — since human souls are added to otherwise almost rational human beings, which is not acceptable from the Aristotelian-Thomistic point of view.<sup>14</sup>

From these we learn that Tabaczek believes that both special transformism (the position of many theistic evolutionists) and special creation (the position of Aquinas) are dualistic because they speak about the emergence of the body separately from the creation of the soul. Now, whether it is true on both views we will explain later. But first we need to clarify the terms. What does the Author mean by dualism/dualistic?

As with naturalism, dualism may be understood in at least two ways: One is that there are two realms – material and spiritual, which constitute the entire reality of being. Another is that there are two completely disconnected realms so that one cannot communicate anything to the other. Restricted to the human being, this term may mean just a virtual distinction between the soul and the body or that the soul and the body are entirely disconnected so that they exist, as it were, parallel to each other.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, Tabaczek does not explain which one of these he means although he rejects dualism. But logically, the opposite of dualism is monism, which means that the soul and the body are just one type of being (be it materialistic monism — all reality is material, or pantheistic — all reality is divine/spiritual). So, since the Author rejects dualism it follows that he advocates monism. But if he does not advocate monism, then how does his own po-

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<sup>12</sup> TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution...*, p. 239.

<sup>13</sup> TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution...*, p. 255.

<sup>14</sup> TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution...*, p. 259.

<sup>15</sup> There may be several versions of such dualistic view. The extreme version is that the “res extensa” and the “res cogitans” cannot communicate at all. In the Cartesian, less extreme version, they do communicate through bodily organ in the brain. But this version still differs from the Thomistic dualism by which the soul is a form of the body.

sition differ from Aquinas's dualism, which he supposedly rejects? These are just basic questions that, if left unanswered, leave room for ambiguities that can be easily manipulated towards reaching contradictory conclusions.

Next we need to agree that in the classic Christian literature as well as the literature advocating special transformism the phrase "human body" is sometimes used as meaning something separate from the soul. A good example is found in the formulation of special transformism by Pius XII:

The Teaching Authority of the Church does not forbid that, [...], research and discussions, [...], take place with regard to the doctrine of evolution, in as far as it inquires into the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter — for the [...] souls are immediately created by God.<sup>16</sup>

Our Author deems this language dualistic because — as he says — there is no human body unless there is the human soul as these two constitute the substance of man. Indeed, on strictly metaphysical grounds, there is little sense in speaking about the human body as long as there is no form of the human body, which is the rational soul. However, the Author misses a simple fact here that the expression "human body" is not to be taken univocally in each case, nor does it have to be taken in the strictly metaphysical sense at each instance. Surely, both those who support special transformism and those who support special creation employ the term "human body" sometimes meaning the human body in the metaphysical sense (matter organized by the human form), sometimes as a body being virtually present in the substance of man, and even more often as a bodily form that has all essential features of the human body (such as two hands, two legs, an erect posture, etc.). It is regrettable that the Author dismisses virtually all theistic authors, including Aquinas and Pius XII, due to such a trivial misunderstanding of terms.

Now, let us ask if Aquinas's account of human origin is actually dualistic. One of the objections against the origin of man being fittingly described in Genesis that Aquinas quotes states that the Genesis account is unfitting, because it splits the origin of man into two actions: the formation of the body from clay and breathing into it the breath of life which is the form of the human body.<sup>17</sup> This is exactly

<sup>16</sup> PIUS XII, "Humani Generis", *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 1950, Vol. 42, pp. 576–577 [561–578].

<sup>17</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*..., I, q. 91, a. 4, ad 3. Objection 3: "The form of the human body is the soul itself which is the breath of life. Therefore, having said, *God made man of the slime of the earth*, he should not have added: *And He breathed into him the breath of life*". THOMAS AQUINAS,

what Tabaczek would call a dualistic account of the origin of man. But this is precisely an objection that Aquinas dismisses. St. Thomas replies that:

[...] by breath of life we must understand the soul, so that the words, *He breathed into his face the breath of life*, are a sort of exposition of what goes before; for the soul is the form of the body.<sup>18</sup>

This means that the first human being, Adam, was created in one direct, divine act and the succession that we find in the Genesis account (2,7) should not be understood as division into two events across time but rather a kind of a logical division so that the first statement is explained by the other. This obviously excludes the type of dualism to which Tabaczek refers. Unfortunately, the Author did not adequately engage with Aquinas's text which led him to impute Aquinas the alleged dualism which Thomas explicitly rejects even in the milder form.

Now, Aquinas's *special creation* differs substantially from Catholic evolutionists' *special transformism*. Indeed, it is hard to formulate this latter idea in a way that would not smack of dualism as it necessarily entails the succession of time in the production of man.<sup>19</sup> The first stage consists of bringing the "living matter" to a disposition to receive the human soul and the second stage (separate logically and in time) consists of the infusion of the soul. It is worth noting that Tabaczek's version does not escape this type of dualism either.

What may be surprising is the fact that we find a direct response to special transformism in Aquinas, which means that the kind of mistaken ideas that we commonly attribute to the post-Darwinian theologians actually were not unknown to the medieval authors:

Some have thought that man's body was formed first in priority of time, and that afterwards the soul was infused into the formed body. But it is inconsistent with the perfection of the production of things, that God should have made either the body without the soul, or the soul without the body, since each is a part of human nature.

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**Summa Theologiae...**, I, q. 91, a. 4, ad 3 [emphasis added].

<sup>18</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, **Summa Theologiae...**, I, q. 91, a. 4, ad 3 [emphasis added].

<sup>19</sup> The succession of time does not refer to the creation of the soul alone. In the light of what Aquinas says, the body and the soul must be created all at once whereas in special transformism the body (the bodily form of man) emerges first in time.

This is especially unfitting as regards the body, for the body depends on the soul, and not the soul on the body.<sup>20</sup>

Theoretically we could have two types of special transformism: One claiming that the body comes first through evolution and the soul is created at the end of this process and another claiming that the soul is first infused into an animal body and then, due to the superiority of reason, the body slowly adapts to become human by losing animal characteristics ultimately becoming a universal, unadapted, that is, human body.<sup>21</sup> Aquinas rejects both of these scenarios, but he calls the first option “especially unfitting” (*magis inconueniens*), i.e., the one commonly adopted by Catholic evolutionists and allowed as a matter for discussion by Pius XII. This option is more inappropriate according to Aquinas, as it makes the soul depend on the body rather than the other way round. Keep this remark in mind, because it matters in our evaluation of the scenario proposed by Tabaczek.

In another place, Aquinas again rejects special transformism along with the dualism it implies:

It is clear that God made the first things in their perfect natural state, as their species required. Now the soul, as a part of human nature, has its natural perfection only as united to the body. Therefore it would have been unfitting for the soul to be created without the body.<sup>22</sup>

Here, similarly to the previous fragment, Aquinas makes it clear that each nature was created in its perfect state, otherwise we could not say that divine works are perfect.<sup>23</sup> This principle states that every species upon its creation had everything that belongs to its nature — dogs everything that belongs to dog nature, cats everything that belongs to cat nature etc. Consequently, man had the human soul and the human body at once from the beginning. There is no dualism understood as a disconnection of the human form from the human matter in the human composite according to Aquinas’s account.

<sup>20</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae...*, I, q. 91, a. 4, ad 3.

<sup>21</sup> More on these two variants and their biological and metaphysical non-viability see: Michael CHABEREK and Rômulo CARLEIAL, “Human Origins Revisited: On the Recognition of Rationality and the Antiquity of the Human Race”, *Studia Gilsoniana* 2022, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 249–287, <http://dx.doi.org/10.26385/SG.110210>.

<sup>22</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae...*, I, q. 90, a. 4, co.

<sup>23</sup> Deuteronomy 32:4.



### 3. The proposed version of special transformism

Even though the Author rejects special transformism as dualistic, he claims his model to be “closely related” to it except that “it was not only the human body that arose through evolution but human being as such”.<sup>24</sup> As I explained, there is no real difference between these two expressions, because the difference consists of using the words “human body” with different meanings. What actually differentiates Tabaczek’s version from the mainstream special transformism is the moment at which the transformation is supposed to occur. Most proponents of this view would imply that it happens in adult hominids who acquired the proper disposition of their bodies to receive the human soul whereas for Tabaczek this happens at the moment of conception (fertilization of the egg). Our Author explains:

[The soul] is directly created by God. Parental organisms (together with other agents in an evolutionary matrix of causes) properly dispose PM [prime matter] to receive it. Consequently [...] they can only be called secondary causes of the proper disposition of PM to be actualized by a human soul, which is not educed from the potentiality of PM but is directly created by God.<sup>25</sup>

The first human soul(s) was/were created *ex nihilo* at the moment of conception of the first human being(s). It/they actualized properly disposed PM, underlying gametes produced by male and female hominins at the moment of substantial change accompanying fertilization.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution...*, p. 240.

<sup>25</sup> TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution...*, pp. 231–232.

We should notice here that the Author contracts education of a form and the direct creation of the form in matter (“not educed but directly created”). But to educe the form from the potentiality of matter (reduce potency to act) is the same as introducing a form into matter whether by direct creation or by the production by parents in natural generation. What he wants to say, therefore, is that in this case the form is not passed from the parents on the first human in generation, but produced directly by God and added to the designated matter resulting in the production of a new nature.

<sup>26</sup> TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution...*, pp. 233–234.

Tabaczek even believes that: “It was much more fitting (argument *ex convenientia*) for God to bring the process of hominization to its conclusion at the moment of the conception of the first human being(s)” (TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution...*, p. 234). Generally, arguments *ex convenientia* are somewhat risky as they may reflect what an author rather than God himself considers more fitting. Aquinas, however, never says what was “much more fitting for God” as this might go slightly beyond the capacity of human judgment. There is a place though, in which St. Thomas says what was actually more fitting regarding human origins: Thomas brings an objection which says that the first hu-

On this account the origin of man happened analogously to the natural generation of every man with the difference that in ordinary human generation the properly disposed matter is delivered by parents (in the form of reproductive cells) and the soul is created by God, whereas here the soul is created by God and the properly disposed matter is delivered by non-human animals. Their gametes become properly disposed due to the set of evolutionary changes that occurred in the chain of non-human animals and ultimately in the gametes of some particular non-human individuals who become biological parents of the first man. As we read, this could happen in one or more individuals, which would mean that evolutionary processes could independently dispose different matters in different individuals in exactly the same way.

## 4. The difficulties of the proposed solution

The proposed solution fails in what it has in common with the Author's account of "evolutionary transitions" (1) as well as in what it imports as unique to the origin of man (2 and 3).

### 4.1. The incorrect understanding of the disposition of matter<sup>27</sup>

According to Aristotelian-Thomistic (hereafter A-T) hylemorphism, the dispo-

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man body should have been created out of nothing rather than from earth. To this Thomas responds by saying that "it was more fitting" that it was created from the elements (THOMAS AQUINAS, **Summa Theologiae**..., I, q. 91, a. 1, ad 1.). Thus, according to Tabaczek, it was "much more fitting for God" to create man in animal generation while according to Aquinas, it was more fitting that God would create man from the earth. Our Author's knowledge about the fitness of divine works obviously exceeds that of Aquinas (no surprise here). But his confidence that he knows better what was *more fitting for God* (sic!) might be somewhat unsettling.

<sup>27</sup> I already presented the difficulties around Tabaczek's account of disposition of matter in my response to his "Afterward" to the Polish edition of **Thomistic Evolution** (see Michael CHABEREK, "Where Do Substantial Forms Come From? A Critique of the Theistic Evolution of Mariusz Tabaczek", *Nova et Vetera* 2024, English Edition, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 239–254). Unfortunately, we do not find even a hint of a clarification of this problem in his rejoinder (see Mariusz TABACZEK, "Evolution and Creation — A Response to Michael Chaberek's Critique of Theistic Evolution", *Nova et Vetera* 2024, English Edition, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 255–284).

sition of matter can be considered essentially in two aspects.

(a) One is the disposition that is virtually present in a given substance, and this one depends on the form. In this sense in a material being form is the act, matter is the potency and disposition of matter is some aptitude of matter to the act.<sup>28</sup> And because every substance is a unity, it is impossible that matter would change disposition without immediately changing the form.<sup>29</sup> This understanding of disposition in matter excludes Tabaczek's view of hominization as well as his account of "evolutionary transitions", as he postulates that disposition changes and appears in matter independently from the form.

It follows that according to A-T hylemorphism, a composite is made of (1) matter and (2) form. When referred to a particular composite it is designated matter and an individual form. According to Tabaczek, however, a composite consists of (1) matter, (2) disposition of matter and (3) form. Accordingly, on the A-T view there are two types of change (1) accidental and (2) substantial, whereas on the view proposed by the Author there are three types of change: (1) the acciden-

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<sup>28</sup> "It is clear that something is in act according to the form, according to matter is in potency and according to the dispositions of matter is in aptitude or habit to the act." (Patet etiam quod secundum formam est aliquid actu, sed secundum materiam est aliquid in potentia; et secundum materiae dispositiones est aliquid in aptitudine vel habilitate ad actum [THOMAS AQUINAS, **Scriptum super Sententiis**, IV, dist. 49, q. 3, a. 2, co.]). My own translation after: SAINT THOMAS, **S. Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia, Corpus Thomisticum**, <https://tiny.pl/g-2g1jx8> [27.10.2025].

<sup>29</sup> "Dispositions of matter remain with the substantial form" (Dispositiones materiae manent cum forma substantiali [THOMAS AQUINAS, **Scriptum super Sententiis**..., I, dist. 1, q. 4, a. 2, co.]). "Form and matter must always be mutually proportioned and, as it were, naturally adapted, because the proper act is produced in its proper matter. That is why matter and form must always agree with one another in respect to multiplicity and unity. Consequently, if the being of the form depends on matter, its multiplication, as well as its unity, depends on matter. But if this is not the case, then the form will have to be multiplied in accordance with the multiplication of the matter, that is to say, together with the matter and in proportion to it; yet not in such a manner that the unity or multiplicity of the form itself depends upon the matter" (THOMAS AQUINAS, **Summa contra Gentiles**, II, 80, § 8). Hereafter English text after: SAINT THOMAS, **Summa Contra Gentiles: On the Truth of the Catholic Faith**, trans. Anton C. PEGIS, James F. ANDERSON, Vernon J. BOURKE, and Charles J. O'NEIL, Hanover House, New York 1955–1957, online edition, <https://tiny.pl/g9bt4j8t> [27.10.2025]). "So long as the matter's disposition to the form remains, the form itself remains, and when the disposition goes, the form also goes" (THOMAS AQUINAS, **Sententia libri De anima**, I, lect. 9, n. 13. English text after: SAINT THOMAS, **Sententia libri De anima: Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima**, trans. Kenelm FOSTER and Sylvester HUMPHRIES, Yale University Press, New Haven 1951, online edition, <https://tiny.pl/cqqfgxk8> [27.10.2025]). Note that from the fact that a lack of disposition of matter necessitates the departure of the form does not follow that the presence of disposition of matter necessitates the arrival of the form.

tal change, (2) the change of disposition, and (3) the substantial change. Tabaczek's account of "evolutionary changes" simply relocates and hides the problem of (3) under (2). He thus substantially diverges from the A-T hylemorphism and for this reason his view cannot be called Aristotelian-Thomistic.

(b) In the other sense, Aquinas calls dispositions of matter some basic qualities, among which the first is dimensional quantity (*quantitas dimensiva*), since every material being is divisible. In this sense we can say that the dispositions of matter are some of the most basic accidental forms.<sup>30</sup>

On this account, we could say that there emerge new accidents in the process of generation, but if accidental changes were to properly dispose matter to receive a rational soul it would mean that the infusion of the rational soul does not result in a substantial difference between a human and a brute and therefore the difference between the two is only accidental. This renders Tabaczek's view contrary to the solemn teachings of two councils which established the substantiality of the human soul as Catholic doctrine.<sup>31</sup>

Thus the disposition of matter may be construed as either something virtually present in a composite or some basic accidental forms. In neither of these senses the disposition of matter replaces or makes up for the form, unless a merely accidental one. But changing accidents, as I argued elsewhere,<sup>32</sup> will never produce

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<sup>30</sup> "For we find certain lowest-grade forms which cannot operate other than to the extent of qualities which are dispositions of matter; qualities such as heat, cold, moisture and dryness, rarity and density, gravity and levity, etc. And those forms are the forms of the elements: forms which therefore are altogether material and wholly embedded in matter" (THOMAS AQUINAS, **Summa contra Gentiles...**, II, 68, § 8). See also: THOMAS AQUINAS, **Scriptum super Sententiis...**, IV, dist. 12, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 3, co.

<sup>31</sup> The Council of Vienne (1311–1312) stated against the errors of Pietro Olivi: "We reject as erroneous and contrary to the truth of the catholic faith every doctrine or proposition rashly asserting that the substance of the rational or intellectual soul is not of itself and essentially the form of the human body [...] we define that anyone who presumes henceforth to assert, defend, or hold stubbornly that the rational or intellectual soul is not the form of the human body of itself and essentially, is to be considered a heretic", **Council of Vienne 1311-1312 A.D.**, *Papal Encyclicas Online*, [https://tiny.pl/yt4j\\_9kp](https://tiny.pl/yt4j_9kp) [27.10.2025].

The definition of the Council of Vienne was confirmed at the Fifth Lateran Council: "The soul not only truly exists of itself and essentially as the form of the human body, [...] but it is also immortal [...]" **The Fifth Lateran Council**, Session 8, 19 December 1513, *Papal Encyclicas Online*, <https://tiny.pl/ksrrv-6w> [27.10.2025].

a new substance, therefore it will never produce what Tabaczek calls an “evolutionary transition”. This is why St. Thomas says:

The difference of form which is due only to the different disposition of matter, causes not a difference according to species but only a numerical difference: for different individuals have different forms, diversified according to the difference of matter.<sup>32</sup>

Forms are not consequent upon the disposition of matter as their first cause; on the contrary, the reason why matters are disposed in such and such ways is that there might be forms of such and such kinds. Now, it is by their forms that things are distinguished into species. Therefore, it is not in the diversity of matter that the first cause of the distinction of things is to be found.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, different dispositions of matter would be found in different individuals as well as different species, but changing the disposition of matter in an individual would bring about only an accidental change in this individual (size, color, temperature), never changing it into different species, let alone generating an entirely new species.

When God creates a new living nature, such as human, not only does He create a new form in matter, He also disposes matter to accept the form. Such disposition is not consequent upon changes in matter (Tabaczek’s “evolutionary process”) but created in matter together with the form. There are many places where Aquinas confirms it.<sup>35</sup> And this is why the proposed solution fails.

<sup>32</sup> See Michael CHABEREK, “The Metaphysical Problem for Theistic Evolution: Accidental Change does not Generate Substantial Change”, *Forum Philosophicum* 2021, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 35–49.

<sup>33</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*..., I, q. 85, a. 7, ad 3. See also: I, q. 115, a. 3, ad 2 and III, q. 77, a. 2, co.

<sup>34</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*..., II, 40, § 3.

<sup>35</sup> “An agent of infinite power needs no matter or disposition of matter, brought about by the action of something else; and yet, looking to the condition of the thing caused, it must cause, in the thing caused, both the matter and the due disposition for the form” (THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*..., I–II, q. 112, a. 2, resp. 3 and ad 3; I–II, q. 5, a. 7, co.). “Between the operation of a creature and that of God there is this difference, that, to bring about an effect, God’s activity does not need matter or any material disposition, for by His activity He produces not only the form but also the matter. However, He does not make the form without matter or without a disposition, but He can make matter and form together in one operation, or He can transform the matter, however unfit, to the proper disposition which is needed for the perfection which He gives. This is clear in resuscitation of a dead man, for the dead body is altogether unfit to receive the soul. Yet by the one divine action the body receives the soul and the disposition for the soul. [And this is also clear in the creation of species when God not only creates a new form in matter but also creates the disposition in matter by the

For the same reason we need to conclude that — unlike the classic form of special transformism — the solution proposed by the Author cannot be reconciled with A-T metaphysics. In contrast, we can say that the classic form of special transformism is metaphysically acceptable, as God can take any matter — whether living or dead — and transform it into anything else. In the classic type of special transformism God takes a hominid (“living matter”) and transforms it into a man. Upon this action God creates in the hominid at once the disposition in matter and the human form. In the same way, He creates the disposition and form when transforming, for instance, water into wine. But on Tabaczek’s account, the proper disposition is supposed to emerge by the natural operations “in” and “on” the “living matter”, which — as has been shown — is impossible according to Aquinas.

## 4.2. The incorrect understanding of animal and human generation

Tabaczek believes that “[the soul] is directly created by God. Parental organisms (together with other agents in an evolutionary matrix of causes) properly dispose PM to receive it”.<sup>36</sup> But he misses the fact that according to the A-T account of animal generation these are parental organisms (not God) who produce the form of the posterity.<sup>37</sup> Thomas says that it does not even matter whether we

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same immediate act – M.Ch.]. But matter and the disposition of the matter are required for the activity of a creature, for a created power cannot make whatever it wishes from anything.” (In particular, a created power cannot produce a new substantial form, such as the one in a new living species with properly disposed matter — M.Ch. [THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Veritate*, q. 12, a. 4, co., English text after: SAINT THOMAS, *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate*, trans. Robert W. MULLIGAN, James V. McGLYNN, and Robert W. SCHMIDT, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago 1952–1954, online edition, [https://tiny.pl/1\\_f06cm5](https://tiny.pl/1_f06cm5) [27.10.2025]]). “We must observe that as God who is the universal efficient cause requires neither previous matter nor previous disposition of matter in His corporeal effects, for He is able at the same instant to bring into being matter and disposition and form, so neither does He require a previous disposition in His spiritual effects, but is able to produce both the spiritual effect and at the same time the fitting disposition as requisite according to the order of nature” (THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*..., II–II, q. 172, a. 3, co.).

<sup>36</sup> TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution*..., p. 231.

<sup>37</sup> “It follows of necessity that both the sensitive soul, and all other like forms are naturally brought into existence by certain corporeal agents [parents] that reduce the matter from potentiality to act, through some corporeal power of which they are possessed [the gametes]” (THOMAS AQUINAS,

attribute the generation of animal posterity to parents or reproductive cells, since we can equally say that a thing is produced by the instrument as we can say that it is produced by the principal agent.<sup>38</sup> So in animal generation the substance of parental organisms is passed on to posterity through the instrumentality of the reproductive cells. But this way of animal generation contradicts Tabaczek's claim, because if parents pass on their form then the matter which is actualized by this form must be disposed to this (animal) form. Thus, it cannot be disposed to the human soul, because the same matter cannot be at the same time disposed to two different substantial forms.

We see therefore that on the A-T account of animal generation the vision proposed by Tabaczek is impossible. The reason why his solution falls into this error was indicated in the previous point — he believes that disposition to a new (substantial) form may emerge without that (substantial) form, which contradicts A-T hylemorphism.

When it comes to human generation, A-T tradition teaches that the embryo is initially animated by the vegetative soul which then is corrupted and as if replaced by the sentient soul so that the "intellectual soul is created by God at the end of human generation, and this soul is at the same time sensitive and nutritive, the pre-existing forms being corrupted".<sup>39</sup> The Author ignores the Thomistic account of human generation because on his model the embryo is informed by the intellectual soul from the beginning. This would be impossible on Aquinas's view.

The only thing that the Author could say is that the human soul is created by God at the end of animal generation, that is, when the organic element achieves the proper disposition to be able to receive the sentient soul and from that moment on God could infuse the intellectual soul into the animal in a way surpassing animal generation. But this takes his vision back to the standard model of special transformism in which God at once creates the soul and the disposition in the already "living matter".

Now, we need to stress again that — contrary to Tabaczek's concept — special transformism is metaphysically possible, because God can take whatever matter

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**Summa Theologiae...**, I, q. 118, a. 1, co.).

<sup>38</sup> See THOMAS AQUINAS, **Summa Theologiae...**, I, q. 118, a. 1, co.

<sup>39</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, **Summa Theologiae...**, I, q. 118, a. 2, ad 2.

with whatever disposition and transform it into whatever composite. We just need to remember that not every metaphysical possibility has been realized in actual history and the question for special transformism is not “what God could have done” but rather what He did, and whether this view concords with historical theology (including the Bible) and science (biology). The reason why the classic version of special transformism (as defined by Pius XII) has barely any following among today’s theologians is mostly because it involves not just the “ontological leap”, but also the “physical leap”, which contradicts theistic evolutionists’ commitment to the evolutionary vision of life.

### 4.3. An animal cannot generate a human

As we have shown, on Aquinas’s view the creation of man is one divine act, but the generation of a man is a process with the succession of several stages. On Tabaczek’s view, at one point God would have intervened in the process of animal generation by creating a new substantial form at fertilization. This, however, would have disrupted the process of generation by creating a physical (biological) incompatibility between an embryo and the parental organism. This obviously makes such a scenario biologically impossible.

Unfortunately, theistic evolutionists including the said Author seem to view anything imaginable as physically possible. So the answer to this problem provided by theistic evolutionists is that the non-human animal (last hominid) who gives birth to the first human is biologically “very similar” to a human so that there is no organic incompatibility that would preclude such transition in generation.<sup>40</sup>

But this response does not take into account what such transition actually involves. A human being is classically defined as “rational animal” with “animal” be-

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<sup>40</sup> Kenneth W. Kemp, to whom Tabaczek refers, believes that there could have been “biological humans” (that is non-rational animals with human bodies) and “theological humans” (rational animals with human bodies) which could have interbred in the beginning. I provided a separate critique of this view in Michael CHABEREK, “Original Sin, Monogenesis and Human Origins: A Response to Kenneth W. Kemp”, *Forum Philosophicum* 2024, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 153–165, <https://doi.org/10.35765/forphil.2024.2901.08>; Michael CHABEREK, “The Arches and the Spandrels: A Response to Kenneth W. Kemp”, *Forum Philosophicum* 2025, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 273–287, <https://doi.org/10.35765/forphil.2025.3001.13>.



ing the genus and “rational” being the specific difference. The “last hominid”, however, would be a non-rational, i.e., merely “sensitive animal” with “animal” constituting genus and “sensitive” constituting specific difference. This means that a human being and an animal are two different species, two different natures separated by an ontological chasm of substantial difference.

Now, even though humanity is constituted by rationality, rationality on its part requires a specific type of body. Hence, the human body needs to be human. Similarly with animals — animals need animal bodies. And because animals do not have reason, their bodies need to be specified to some sensory functions which allow them to survive in nature. Thus, every animal has a set of adaptive (assaulting and/or defensive) features such as fangs, claws, fur, shells, horns, etc. In contrast, the human body is universal (unadapted), because humans survive thanks to the tools (clothing, weapons, shelters, etc.) which they create. The creation of tools is possible due to the faculty of reasoning which comes with the human soul. Thus, the human and animal body need to differ substantially precisely because they have very different forms which also means that the disposition in matter is substantially different in animal and human. And this is where the proposed model of hominization fails: no evolutionary process could ever lead to the emergence of the disposition to receive the human form, because such disposition would diminish rather than increase survivability and fitness. A creature with a human-like body without reason cannot exist, because it cannot survive due to its unfitting biology.

Paradoxically, Tabaczek calls his model “more viable” than that of Aquinas’s,<sup>41</sup> but what he actually proposes is not viable at all. It is dead in the water. Moreover, he claims to have avoided dualism, by which he means that there is close relatedness between the body and the soul,<sup>42</sup> but in fact he ignores the reality and the specificity of the human body.

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<sup>41</sup> “Aquinas unreservedly followed the classical (more literal) monogenetic interpretation of the Bible, assuming the creation of Adam from dust and Eve from Adam’s rib. However, the contemporary conversation offers some more nuanced and viable options” (TABACZEK, **Theistic Evolution...**, p. 244).

<sup>42</sup> See TABACZEK, **Theistic Evolution...**, pp. 224–228.

#### 4.4. No explanation of the origin of the first woman

It is quite common among theistic evolutionists that they propose different models of human origins but they confine their models to the first man (single or many). Somehow they miss the fact that they also need to explain the origin of the first woman. But often times it happens that extending their models to the origin of the first woman may actually ruin their models altogether so that these models are non-viable from the start.<sup>43</sup> It seems that this is also the fate of the model proposed by the said Author. But in order to see it, first we need to ask, what requirements would a Catholic model of human origins need to meet? Where should we look for these standards?

I propose that we should look for them in the Catholic Bible and the Catholic tradition. But I grant that Catholic evolutionists reject the Catholic reading of Genesis (which is literal and historical)<sup>44</sup> and that they deem Catholic tradition (the teachings of the Church Fathers and Holy Doctors) outdated and irrelevant due to what they call — “scientific progress”. Still, I want to believe that some (most? few?) Catholic evolutionist would agree on what they call “deeper” theological truths contained in Genesis. So, let us find the common ground in these “deeper” theological truths.

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<sup>43</sup> For example, Dalmase Leroy OP upon presenting his evolutionary view of the first man (special transformism), was challenged by Joseph Brucker SI to explain the origin of Eve. Leroy could not explain it other than by saying that Eve was created from the rib, as the Bible literally has it (see Mariano ARTIGAS, Thomas F. GLICK, and Rafael A. MARTÍNEZ, **Negotiating Darwin: The Vatican Confronts Evolution, 1877–1902**, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2006, p. 64). Similarly a German priest, Wilhelm Schmidt claimed the evolutionary origin of Adam’s body and the (direct) creation of Eve (see, Antoine LEMMONYER, **La Révélation primitive et les données actuelles de la science d’après l’ouvrage allemand du R.P.G. Schmidt**, Gabalda, Paris 1914, p. 137). Most scholars would call such solution inconsistent because it accepts the alleged “scientific evidence” (i.e., an opinion of most biologists) to reinterpret the traditional belief on the origin of Adam at the same time it drops the alleged “scientific evidence” and adopts the Catholic tradition and literal Biblical message in the case of Eve.

<sup>44</sup> A *Responsum* of the Pontifical Biblical Commission of 1909 makes it clear that the literal and historical sense of Genesis 1-3 cannot be abandoned by Catholic scholars. As I have shown in **Catholicism and Evolution** the decree has never been revoked or amended. As such it stands as the actual and valid teaching of the Church. Nor does the fact that a decree is ignored by a majority of Catholic scholars invalidate it (see Michael CHABEREK, **Catholicism and Evolution: A History from Darwin to Pope Francis**, Angelico Press, Kettering 2015, pp. 162–167).

I propose (following the Catholic tradition) that these “deeper truths” entail at least two things: (1) the unity of the human race and (2) the natural inclination and subjection of woman to man.<sup>45</sup> Thus, a model of human origins which would not do justice to these two principles should be rejected by Catholics.

Surely, both of these principles are most clearly reflected in Aquinas’s view (which is also the Biblical view) of human origins, because the first man is created directly by God from dead matter while the first woman is created directly by God although not from dead matter but from man. Both are then created directly by God, which secures their equal and extraordinary dignity. At the same time, there is a natural inclination of woman to man resulting from the fact that he is the head and the sole ultimate origin of the human species while she comes from him. This also secures the unity of the human race. In contrast, it does not seem that either of these two principles is secured by the story told by Tabaczek.

First, because the proposal that man (at least in his bodily form) is a product of more or less random processes of evolution and connected through biological generation with animals does not seem to satisfactorily secure his superiority over non-rational animals and the rest of creation.

Second, because if the first man (and perhaps some other men and women) was produced in the womb of one hominid and the first woman in the womb of another the unity of the human race is doubtful. These different humans have disconnected lineages of descent coming from different hominid individuals.

Third and foremost, as there is no way to establish the natural reference of woman to man on Tabaczek’s account. Man and woman simply have disconnected and totally independent origins. The various stories proposed by Catholic evolutionists (including Tabaczek) as alternatives to the Biblical teaching do not do justice even to this modicum of theological standards that otherwise these authors seem to accept.

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<sup>45</sup> Aquinas explains that even if our first parents did not sin there would have been the natural subjection of the woman to her husband: “The subjection of the woman to her husband is to be understood as inflicted in punishment of the woman, not as to his [Adam’s] headship (since even before sin the man was the head and governor of the woman), but as to her having now to obey her husband’s will even against her own”. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*..., II-II, q. 164, a. 2, ad 1.

## 5. Engaging the Catholic Tradition

The Author believes that his model is “theologically more accurate and precise than the most prevalent semi-naturalistic position that is favored and repeated by many theologians and accepted in the official statements of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”.<sup>46</sup> We have just shown that these self-referential overtones of the first part of this phrase may be somewhat premature. Now we should comment on the second part in which the Author claims that special transformism is “accepted in the official statements of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”.

Regrettably, the Author references only three documents: (1) John Paul II’s “Address to the Plenary Session on »The Origins and Early Evolution of Life«”<sup>47</sup>, (2) „Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God” by the International Theological Commission (2004)<sup>48</sup> and (3) **Humani Generis** by Pius XII<sup>49</sup>. This rather limited choice of documents creates an impression that the Author thinks that prior to 1950 the Catholic Church had nothing whatsoever to say about human origins. This is obviously not true. I refer to my book **Catholicism and Evolution**<sup>50</sup> for evidence that since Christian Antiquity until modern times, i.e., both before and after Darwin, the Magisterium has issued doctrinal documents unequivocally supporting the special creation of man which render the Author’s view false.

As to the documents brought up by the Author: Ad 1: John Paul II’s “Address to the Plenary Session...” does not import anything new to the debate. It just reminds the faithful of the teachings of **Humani Generis**.<sup>51</sup> Ad 2: „Communion and Stew-

<sup>46</sup> TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution...*, p. 223.

<sup>47</sup> JOHN PAUL II, “Address to the Plenary Session on »The Origins and Early Evolution of Life«”, *Pontifical Academy of Sciences* 1996, October 22, Vatican City, <https://tiny.pl/tdcp7-33> [17.11.2025].

<sup>48</sup> International Theological Commission, „Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God”, *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* 2004, July 23, Vatican City, <https://tiny.pl/v70g-qq9> [17.11.2025].

<sup>49</sup> PIUS XII, **Humani Generis**, Vatican City 1950, <https://tiny.pl/vz2hj8gv> [17.11.2025]

<sup>50</sup> The English edition of the book (which is severely curtailed) provides little evidence for the pre-Darwinian era. The Polish edition (which contains the full version of the text) provides evidence from throughout the history.

<sup>51</sup> The Address does not import any doctrinal novelty nor any new insights into the human origin. The media-popularized phrase about “new knowledge” that “has led to the recognition of the

ardship...” is not a Magisterial document, so it does not deserve any comment in this context. Ad 3: **Humani Generis** is indeed a Magisterial document and the last one that deserves some attention since it brings some novelty to the debate relative to previous Magisterial teachings. What is the novelty?

Pius XII says that the Magisterium “does not forbid” scholars to discuss special transformism. But it is one thing to say: “I do not forbid discussions about an X idea” and another thing to say “I support an X idea”. The Pope says the former, he does not say the latter. So where is the “acceptance” of the semi-naturalistic position in the Magisterium of the Catholic Church that Tabaczek speaks of? There is no such acceptance. For some reason the Author, as well as most Catholic evolutionists, seems unable to grasp the straightforward meaning of **Humani Generis**.

Next, we need to notice that Pius XII allows for the debate under several conditions among which these three are of the greatest importance: (1) the disputants should weigh the arguments of both sides (one being special transformism and the other special creation); (2) the disputants cannot claim that the evolutionary origin of the human body is proved by the facts; (3) the discussion on polygenism is forbidden.

We need to notice that none of the three conditions is fulfilled by today’s Catholic evolutionists who typically: (1) ignore or up-front dismiss the arguments for special creation, (2) deem the evolutionary origin of man “proven” by science; (3) wage broad discussions and debates on different forms of polygenism. Moreover, very few of them actually adopt “special transformism” – the position that the Pope does not forbid them to discuss as an alternative to special creation. Today’s evolutionists typically speak about the natural emergence of man either due to a (genetic) mutation or an acquisition of some psychological or spiritual trait, which means that there is only an accidental rather than substantial difference between brute and man.<sup>52</sup> This is not the position of special transformism that Pius

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theory of evolution as more than a hypothesis” does not introduce any doctrinal novelty. The Pope simply expresses an opinion on the scientific status of the evolutionary hypothesis which, according to him, can now be called a theory. The fact that Karol Wojtyła (as well as many scholars before and after him) called evolution a theory already in the 1950s (when the “new knowledge” was yet unavailable) only confirms that the very distinction is not clear and no argument should be made based on this Papal phrase.

<sup>52</sup> I have expounded more on this topic in: CHABEREK and CARLEIAL, “Human Origins Revisited...”, pp. 258–268.

XII does not forbid them to discuss.

As is customary among Catholic evolutionists, the Author misrepresents the Patristic and Medieval theologies depicting them as uncertain or allowing different views about human origins.<sup>53</sup> Again, a real engagement with these two sources is the missing part of the book especially given that, contrary to the Author's suggestions, patristic and medieval theologies are entirely consistent and unequivocal in their teaching about the special creation of man regarding the body and the soul. Nevertheless, two of his claims require special treatment.

1. In one place the Author says: "there is no definitive and universal claim in medieval theology that this interpretation [special creation] is an indispensable part of the Christian dogma".<sup>54</sup>

To break down the ambiguity of this statement we should approach it in two steps: (a) There is a definitive and universal claim in medieval theology supporting the special creation as the only way to explain how man began to exist. (b) Indeed, there is no "indispensable Christian dogma" regarding the origin of man, and this applies not just to medieval but any other Christian theology. But the argument from the "non-dogma" often brought up by Catholic evolutionists is an empty phrase — if there were a dogma, Pius XII would have forbidden the debate and probably there would not be any. The real question is not whether there is a dogma on the origin of man, or what rank in the hierarchy of Magisterial documents is awarded to those concerning human origins, but rather which one — special creation or special transformism gets better support from the Magisterial documents, Aquinas and the scholastics, the Church Fathers and the Bible itself. With the problem thus formulated, it seems clear that special creation has far greater support (to put it mildly) than any kind of transformism.

2. Specifically, Tabaczek casts a shadow of a doubt on three of the Fathers — Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom and Augustine due to their acceptance of some forms of the philosophical idea of seminal reasons. I have explained elsewhere<sup>55</sup> why the concept of seminal reasons does nothing to justify the idea of theistic evolution (actually, it flatly contradicts it). However, the error of the Author goes

<sup>53</sup> See TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution...*, pp. 242–243.

<sup>54</sup> See TABACZEK, *Theistic Evolution...*, pp. 243.

<sup>55</sup> See CHABEREK, *Aquinas and Evolution...*, pp. 104–117.

deeper than that, since all three of the Church Fathers explicitly teach the special creation of the human body.

Gregory of Nyssa, similar to other Church Fathers, clearly distinguishes creation from generation applying the first mode of emergence to the first man and the second to every man that follows:

The first man [Adam], and the man born from him [Abel], received their being in a different way; the latter by copulation, the former from the molding by Christ Himself; and yet, though they are thus believed to be two, they are inseparable in the definition of their being [...].<sup>56</sup>

The same distinction between the first man being created and the following men being generated is stated by St. Gregory in another place:

He Who framed the universe made the nature of man with all things in the beginning, and after Adam was made, He *then appointed for men the law of generation one from another*, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply” [Gen 1:28].<sup>57</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa also employs an analogy of faith (*analogia fidei*) commonly accepted among the Fathers, by which they want to explain how Jesus was conceived in Mary’s womb. This is explained by comparison to the more obvious and widely understood (in his times) truth about the creation of the first man:

Then [Christ] took dust from the earth and formed man. Again, He took dust from the Virgin, and did not merely form man, but formed man about Himself. Then — He created; afterwards — He was created: then — the Word made flesh; afterwards — the Word became flesh [...].<sup>58</sup>

By this analogy Gregory explains that Jesus was formed in the womb of Mary directly by God, without the cooperation of any creatures (specifically a husband), i.e., in the same way that Adam was formed by God in the beginning without any parent. Gregory also speaks out against theistic evolutionists who reduce the message of Genesis down to saying that the Bible says only “that” God created man but nothing about “how” God created him:

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<sup>56</sup> GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Against Eunomius*, I.34; cf. III.3, <https://tiny.pl/7m6k55y8> [17.11.2025].

<sup>57</sup> GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Against Eunomius...*, III.3 [emphasis added].

<sup>58</sup> GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Against Eunomius...*, IV.3.

Above [Gen 1,27], the text says that God created; here [Gen 2,7] it says how God created. If the verse had simply said that God created, you could have believed that he created [man] as he did for the beasts, for the wild animals, for the plants, for the grass. This is why, to avoid your placing him in the class of wild animals, *the divine word has made known the particular art which God has used for you*: God took the dust of the earth and formed man.<sup>59</sup>

These words explain two things. First, Gregory asserts the direct creation of the body of the first man from the dust of the earth by the power of God. Second, he maintains that the Biblical description not only states “that” God creates but also “how” He does it. The evidence could be extended but this is enough to show how misleading and ill-informed is the account presented by Tabaczek.

Now, let us turn to John Chrysostom. In one passage he explains:

God formed the human being, taking dust from the earth. Even in this detail notice the regard for us. I mean, he does not simply take some soil, but dust, the finest grains of soil, so to say, and this very dust of the earth by his own design he changed into the nature of body. You see, just as he brought into being the very substance of the soil when it did not exist, so now, at his will, he changed the dust from soil into body.<sup>60</sup>

In this fragment Chrysostom explains that the creation of man happened as if in two stages — the first one was when God created the matter of the universe (Aquinas and scholastics call it “first creation”) and then when God formed the previously created soil into the human body (Aquinas’s “second creation”).

It is worth noting that for Chrysostom this way of creating man testifies to the great regard that God has for us humans. One could only wonder, what kind of regard would be shown to us if God allowed us to be born of beasts as an effect of animal copulation as Tabaczek proposes?

Besides this one fragment there is massive evidence in many other places that Chrysostom not only supports and justifies the special creation of man but also deems inappropriate any other way of human beginning. Among the more interesting arguments there are two analogies by him:

(1) As food that man eats is transformed into human body so was the soil that God used in creation transformed into the first human body. (2) Commenting on

<sup>59</sup> My own translation after: *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 44, col. 281 [emphasis added].

<sup>60</sup> My own translation after: *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 53, col. 105.



the words said by Jesus to Nicodemus about the necessity of being born again from “water and Spirit” <sup>61</sup>, Chrysostom says:

[Jesus says:] I formed (man) of earth and water; but that which was formed was unprofitable, the vessel was wrenched awry; I will no more form them of earth and water, but “of water” and “of the Spirit.” [...] And if anyone asks, “How of water?” I also will ask, How of earth? How was the clay separated into different parts? How was the material uniform, (it was earth only) and the things made from it, various and of every kind? Whence are the bones, and sinews, and arteries, and veins? Whence the membranes, and vessels of the organs, the cartilages, the tissues, the liver, spleen, and heart? Whence the skin, and blood, and mucus, and bile? [...] These belong not to earth or clay. [...] For as the earth, which is soulless and motionless, was empowered by the will of God, and such wonders were worked in it; much more when the Spirit is present with the water, do all those things so strange and transcending reason, easily take place. <sup>62</sup>

Thus we find here another beautiful patristic analogy of faith: As the first man was born of water and earth (=clay) thus the second man (=each of us) must be born of water and Spirit.

Augustine confirms the special creation of the human body in many places. But instead of providing extensive quotations I will only anticipate one objection that could be filed against his position.

When Thomas Aquinas speaks about the direct creation of the human body among the objections he lists one that could be derived from Augustine who says that “man's body was made during the work of the six days, according to the causal virtues which God inserted in corporeal creatures; and that afterwards it was actually produced”. <sup>63</sup> But, as the objection continues, “what pre-exists in the corporeal creature by reason of causal virtues can be produced by some corporeal body. Therefore, the human body was produced by some created power, and not immediately by God”. <sup>64</sup> In response to this objection Thomas says that the human

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<sup>61</sup> John 3:5.

<sup>62</sup> JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, **Homily XXV on the Gospel of John**, on John 3:5, § 1, [https://tiny.pl/v\\_7yvfrp](https://tiny.pl/v_7yvfrp) [17.11.2025].

<sup>63</sup> AUGUSTINE, **De Genesi ad Litteram**, VII, 24(35). English text after: AUGUSTINE, “De Genesi ad Litteram”, in: John E. ROTELLE (ed.), **The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century**, trans. Edmund Hill, Vol. 13, New City Press, Hyde Park (NY) 2002, pp. 168–506.

<sup>64</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, **Summa Theologiae**..., I, q. 91, a. 2, ad 4.

body “pre-existed in passive potentiality only” which is matter previously created and then used by God in the formation of the human body on the sixth day.<sup>65</sup> We see, therefore, that Aquinas reduces Augustine’s concept to the classic notion of special creation (exactly the same as the one expressed by Chrysostom in the quote above).<sup>66</sup> What Augustine believes about the creation of man is summed up in the following fragment of the same work:

In what manner did God make him [Adam] from the mud of the earth? Was it straight-away as an adult, that is, as a young man in the prime of life? Or was it as he forms human beings from then until now in their mothers’ wombs? [...] The only thing proper to Adam was that he was not born of parents but made from earth. [...] Adam was not made otherwise when he was formed from mud already in adult manhood (*perfectae virilitatis*).<sup>67</sup>

This fragment not only confirms Augustine’s support for special creation but also directly rejects Tabaczek’s view of the first man being born from a womb.

Nevertheless, another charge could be filed against Augustine, namely, that he is inconsistent. But this accusation would come from ignorance of his teachings. Augustine consistently maintains that he is not sure how to interpret Genesis and this is why he intentionally offers multiple alternative interpretations. For the most part he teaches the classic version of Christian creationism (i.e., successive, over the six days, completed with the special creation of man) with only one provisional exception in his “Literal Commentary on Genesis” where he presents his idea of one-time creation and seminal reasons. Augustine wants to resolve several interpretative difficulties by proposing this alternative interpretation, but he makes it clear that anybody who is able to avoid these difficulties should adhere to the literal reading.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*..., I, q. 91, a. 2, ad 4.

<sup>66</sup> This also confirms how baseless Tabaczek’s references to the Augustinian notion of seminal reasons are in his desperate search for support for theistic evolution in Augustine.

<sup>67</sup> AUGUSTINE, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, VI, 13(23) and VI, 18(29).

<sup>68</sup> “If anybody is not satisfied with the line which I have been able in my small measure to explore or to trace, but requires another theory about the numbering of those days, by which they may be better understood, not as prophetic types and figures, but as a strict and proper account of the way the foundations of this creation were laid, then by all means let him look for one and with God’s help find one”. AUGUSTINE, *De Genesi ad Litteram*..., IV, 28(45); cf. I, 20(40).

This brief overview of the three Church Fathers to whom our Author refers as supporting “gradualism” in the origin of man (due to their use of the idea of seminal reasons) should make it clear to any reader that there are fragments in Tabaczek’s book that it is hard to call other than uninformed or even misleading.

## 6. Conclusion

Despite the Author’s deep conviction about the superiority of his model over all others we have shown that his version of special transformism encounters multiple difficulties. Specifically it contradicts (1) A-T hylemorphism, (2) the A-T account of animal generation and (3) the Thomistic account of human generation. When amended by these three points, it boils down to the “classic” version of special transformism. As we noticed, special transformism is possible by the standards of A-T metaphysics. However, it is not enough that an account of human origins is simply “metaphysically possible”. It needs to be consonant with the revealed sources and scientific evidence as well, as “truth must not contradict truth”. There is no doubt that the original Catholic theology, of which Aquinas is a faithful representative, decisively supports special creation. Science — on her part — cannot explain the origin of man, as this unique event escapes the very method of science.<sup>69</sup> It is important to stress that Tabaczek’s model, as it stands, contradicts Aquinas’s theology as well as Aquinas’s metaphysics, and it does not engage with science. On the contrary, it ignores obvious scientific difficulties such as the biological impossibility of a brute giving birth to a human. Thus, his model is refuted by each of the three levels of knowledge (science, philosophy and theology).

In the context of our debate it is also important to emphasize again what was pointed out in the beginning: Tabaczek’s concept clashes with that of Aquinas’s in several crucial points, including the principles of metaphysics (A-T hylemorphism). Can it, therefore, be called Thomistic? This depends on how we define the term “Thomistic”. If by “Thomistic” we understand any philosophy that employs the technical terms used by Aristotle or Aquinas, then perhaps yes, but this does not seem to be a reasonable standard. If, however, by “Thomistic” we mean a phi-

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<sup>69</sup> See Michael CHABEREK, **Knowledge and Evolution: How Theology, Philosophy, and Science Converge in the Questions of Origins**, Resource Publications, Eugene (OR) 2021, pp. 70–83.

losophy that — at a minimum — remains compatible with the philosophical principles of Thomas Aquinas and employs his terms with the same meaning, then Tabaczek's concept is not Thomistic. In fact, his idea — if taken seriously — would ruin most of A-T metaphysics. His view therefore should not be categorized as Thomistic.

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