



Article

Man as Image of Nature in Magnus Hundt: The Perspective of a Thomist ca. 1500

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Abstract: This paper draws on a late medieval example to show that images of nature can also be images of the human body. It presents the *Anthropologium de hominis dignitate* by the Leipzig magister Magnus Hundt (1449–1519). The *Anthropologium* is a text that prominently integrates the human body into its conception of man and its account of human dignity. The body is not presented as a prison of the soul, but as a perfectly balanced physical counterpart to the soul. The paper shows how Hundt's reflections were influenced by his commitment to the Thomistic school. Moreover, it reveals how the elevated Imago Dei thesis provides a justification for the study of the human body. Hundt is shown to offer nothing less than a theological–philosophical legitimation for practising medicine. In doing so, he also incorporates images of nature in a literal sense, insofar as he includes images of the human body in his book.

Keywords: scholasticism; image of man; Thomism; medieval medicine; anthropology; Magnus Hundt; human body

1. Introduction

Nowadays, human beings have a strange connection to their natural environment. In thinking about the relationship between humans and nature, it has often been emphasised that everything that has been affected by humans becomes part of their 'cultural' world. Only that which has remained largely untouched by humans can still be called nature. In this understanding, nature is that which remains distant from humanity.¹

The Middle Ages did not have this distinction between nature on the one hand and culture on the other. 'Natura' was the word that stood for the essence of a thing—whether it was the essence of plants, of arts or of humans. For example, according to the Aristotelian tradition, the nature of human beings was that they were rational animals. Therefore, in the Middle Ages, nature was not 'the other', but the essence of a thing.

From the aforementioned definition of the nature of human beings, one can already see that, according to medieval understanding, they have two essential components: First, they are animals and therefore have some characteristics in common with other animals. Secondly, humans are gifted with rationality, which distinguishes them from all other corporeal beings.

Historically, when philosophers thought about human beings, the emphasis was very often on those specificities which distinguish them from other living beings. Of course, it is precisely these that make humans so unique. In this context, much has been said in the history of philosophy about the human intellect, mind and reason. Magnus Hundt, the Thomistic thinker who is the subject of this paper, was very interested in the connection between both the intellectual and the 'animal' part of the human. He will therefore be introduced here.

Hundt first became known as a philosopher before 1500, but then subsequently studied at the medical faculty of the University of Leipzig (Worstbrock 2008). Despite institutional barriers, his *Anthropologium de hominis dignitate* (Hundt 1501) served as a bridge that helped to integrate the physical component of the human being into the overall conception of man.



Citation: Engel, Karsten. 2023. Man as Image of Nature in Magnus Hundt: The Perspective of a Thomist ca. 1500. *Histories* 3: 32–45. <https://doi.org/10.3390/histories3010004>

Academic Editors: Jon Mathieu and Simona Boscani Leoni

Received: 14 December 2022

Revised: 4 February 2023

Accepted: 6 February 2023

Published: 10 February 2023



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In addition to his great praise for the human soul in this work, one cannot help but observe the enormous potential he attributes to the human body. The dignity of the human being, which is one of the stated themes of the treatise, is thereby explained with reference not only to the soul, but also to the particularities of the human body. In other words, an image of the bodily nature of the human being is strongly connected to an image of man.²

The aim of the present paper is to present this Renaissance approach to thinking about the human being, which focuses not only on the soul and reason, but also on his physical aspect, i.e., his 'natural creatureliness'. Previously, the soul, which in the medieval understanding is in much closer contact with God than the body is, had often been understood as the bridge by means of which we can reach a better understanding of God. However, on Hundt's account, it is also by perceiving himself as a corporeal being and by examining the body that an individual learns about God and his intentions in creation.

Moreover, in becoming more familiar with their bodily needs, human beings are also studying what, in a certain way, connects them with other creatures. Hundt's anthropology, which will be presented in more detail here, stands within this dialectic, which deals with the special dignity of the human being, on the one hand, and his physical commonalities with other living beings, on the other.

2. Magnus Hundt's *Anthropologium* and His Image of Man

Magnus Hundt has been so far quite rarely the subject of research. However, more recently his treatises on anthropology (Santing 2020), medicine (Lanska 2022), grammar (Kneepkens 2017) or logic (Hoenen 2023) have been analysed in more detail. We know that Magnus Hundt was a magister at the Saxon University of Leipzig from 1486 and achieved fame mainly as a logician and teacher in the faculty of arts. By 1500 at the latest, however, he became increasingly well known for his work on natural philosophy, theology and anthropology. It is documented that Hundt had taken up the study of theology and medicine in the 1490s, completing his medical studies with a baccalaureate in 1499 and his theological studies with a doctorate in 1505 (Worstbrock 2008, col. 1176).³ His anthropological work, which is the subject of this article, was published in Leipzig in 1501 by the printer Wolfgang Stöckel. Its title proclaims that it is an 'Anthropologium on the dignity, nature and properties of man; on the elements, parts and members of the human body; what is beneficial and harmful to them and their accidents, infirmities, remedies and physionomy; on the excretions and discharges; on the human mind, its nature, parts and creations and on the human soul and its appendages'.⁴

The title says it all: in a good 230 pages, Hundt compiles what he considers to be the most important scientific findings about man that had been expressed by philosophers and physicians up to that time. Moreover, as the title announces, the book not only makes general statements about humanity's position in the world, but also deals with, for example, the individual organs, hair, nerves and intestines (Figure 1) in a thoroughly medical manner. The anatomical drawings that can be found on certain pages are intended to help the reader to understand and mentally process the material (see Sudhoff 1909, p. 119; Santing 2020; Lanska 2022).

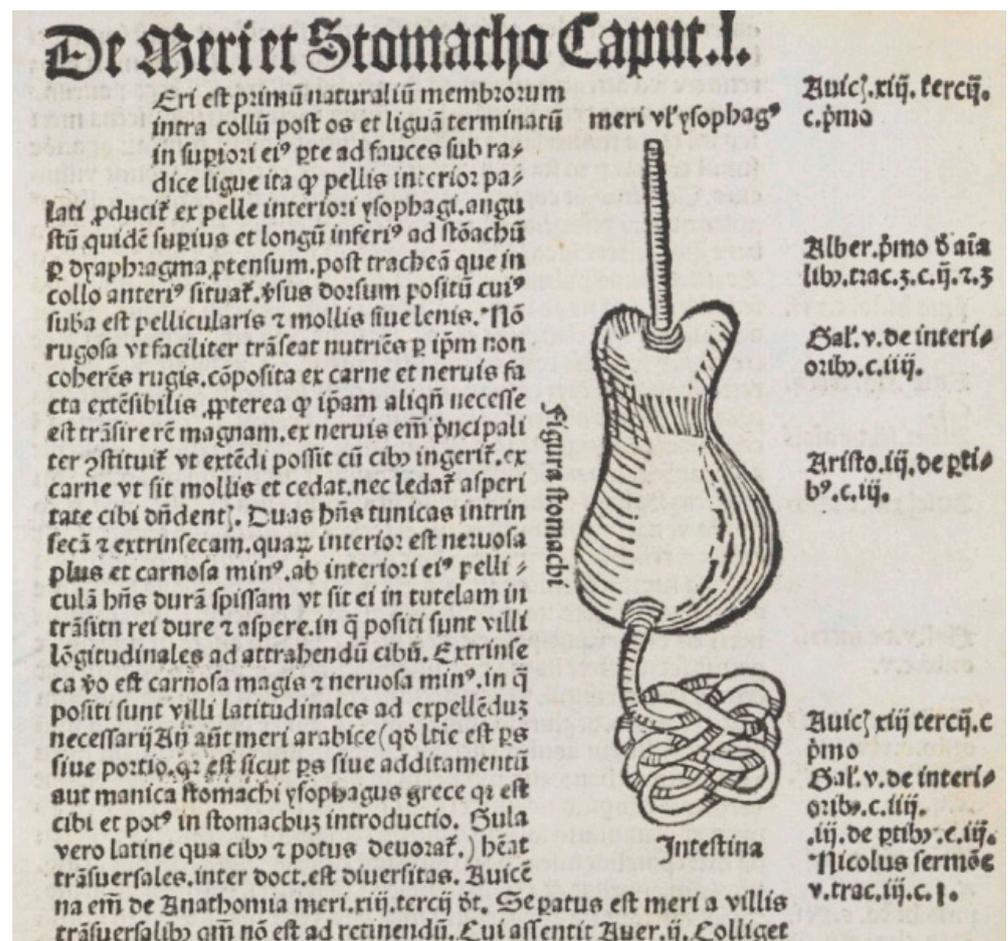


Figure 1. Hundt's illustration of the stomach and intestines (Hundt 1501, fol. O Vr).⁵

The first chapter of the text, which deals with the 'dignity of the superior human nature', gives us a somewhat more comprehensive overview of Hundt's conception of man. Even though human beings are afflicted with deficiencies as regards both their bodies and their souls, they were created in the image of God and are therefore the worthiest of all creatures. After all, God himself had become a man.⁶

Furthermore, man could also be understood as the knot between the divine world and the earthly one: on the one hand, man possesses the divine intellect in his rational soul; on the other, he is part of the earthly world in virtue of his body. Possessing both characteristics, he is the optimal intermediary between God and the earthly sphere.⁷

At the same time, Hundt also distinguishes man from God. Both God and man are creators, but what God creates (including humans) are natural things, while what man creates are artificial things that only imitate nature. Human creation is a mere imitation of God's creation.⁸

In a series of superlative characterisations, Hundt presents the most important features of his conception of man in didactically memorable omnia formulas: 'homo est omnia' (man is everything), 'homo continet omnia' (man contains everything), 'homo est finis omnium' (man is the purpose of everything), 'homo cognoscit omnia' (man recognises everything), 'homo potest omnia facere' (man can make everything), 'ad hominem omnia tendunt' (everything strives for man).⁹ These formulas are elucidated very extensively in the course of the text and are supported by arguments (cf. Haedke 1961, p. 37).

The reason why the human being 'is' everything, for example, is grounded in the fact that the soul can 'carry' all species within itself. Just as God carries all things within himself, because he possesses the ideas that underlie these things, in virtue of which he can

directly know their essence, the human soul carries perceptible things in itself by means of the senses and intellectually comprehensible things by means of the intellect.¹⁰ This also explains how man can ‘know’ all things.¹¹

The reason why man can ‘do’ everything has both a physical and a mental dimension. On the one hand, he can reproduce all intelligible things (in the intellect) through the ‘intellectus agens’ and ‘intellectus possibilis’; on the other hand, he is also capable of creating physical things. For the hand, which is the executive organ of the soul and serves as its tool, is the organ of the organs (*organum organorum*), by means of which man can produce all material things.¹² This is also the reason why man is born naked, because he himself can produce everything he needs to live, while nature provides him with everything he needs for this.¹³

Moreover, in a certain way, the human being also ‘contains’ all creatures, because these can all be found in some way in the human being: the inanimate ones simply in virtue of their being, the animate ones due to the fact they are alive, the animal ones with regard to their sensory abilities and, finally, the spiritual and separate substances with regard to the intellect.¹⁴ In this respect, man is also to be understood as a world in miniature: everything that can be found in the world is also mirrored in human beings—a *topos* that reappears in relation to the human being as a reflection of the divine principle of order and creation in the world.

In this account, it is precisely in the human being that all the elements and parts composed of elements, which elsewhere do not fit together very well, are united in ‘unanimity’ and harmonise wonderfully. Because this phenomenon can also be seen throughout the entire universe, it is even easier to understand why human beings represent the entire world in miniature.¹⁵

A little later, it is even said that ‘everything strives towards man and according to him the heaven and all nature are ordered’.¹⁶ Hundt refers to Albertus Magnus, according to whom the universe is ordered not only in relation to God and itself, but also in relation to man. Man is ultimately the goal (*finis*) of all creatures and the one to whom all things render their service (*subministrant*).¹⁷ This view is justified by man’s higher degree of perfection as compared to other creatures: ‘The more perfect things are the purpose of the others’.¹⁸ Just as God is the purpose of the optimal human being, the optimal human being is also the purpose of other human beings.¹⁹ In addition, human beings in general are the purpose of other creatures, and so on.

It should be clear by this point that, in his argumentation for the special dignity of the human being, Hundt repeatedly refers to the bodily dimension of the human being, and not only to the mental-intellectual one. In other passages, he makes this even more explicit, painting a picture of human nature in which the body also plays an important role. These will be examined in greater detail in the following sections.

3. The Emphasis on the Human Body

The aim of the *Anthropologium* is primarily to present the superior dignity of the human being. As we have seen, Hundt pursues the goal of substantiating this dignity by means of arguments. He devotes a considerable part of his text to deriving this dignity from the human body. At first glance, the body has certain shortcomings (just like the soul, incidentally), and Hundt emphasises that it is to a large extent subject to various necessities and needs. The reason for this is original sin.²⁰ Nevertheless, Hundt is able to prove in his *Anthropologium* that it is the body of the worthiest creature on earth (cf. Figure 2).

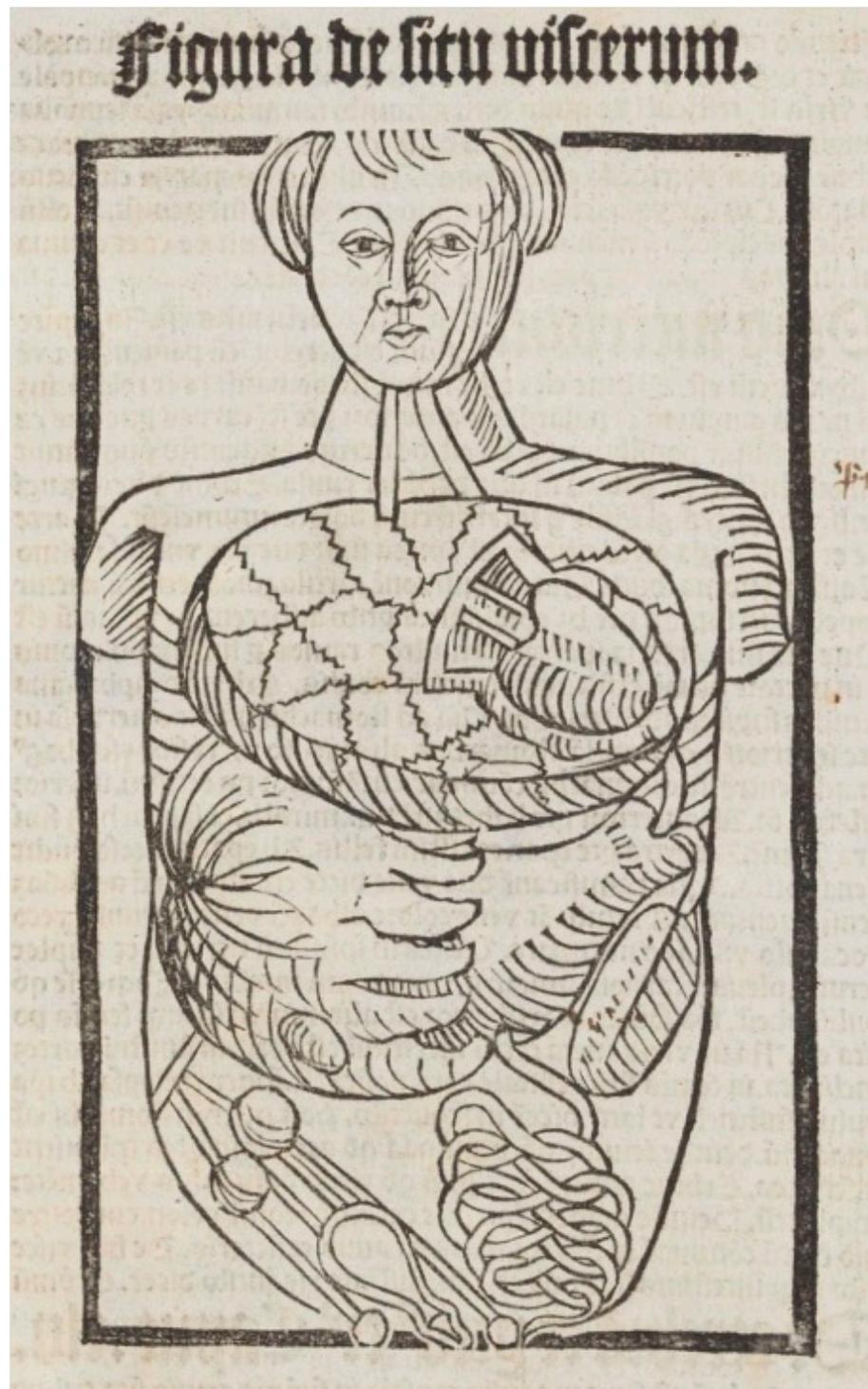


Figure 2. Hundt's illustration of the location of the viscera (Hundt 1501, fol. L Iir).²¹

What at first glance sounds like a typical humanist project turns out, on closer look, to be a compilation of a wide variety of scholastic ideas. It is true that Hundt, especially at the beginning, shows off his knowledge of classical authors such as Ovid or Horace and also important humanist authors such as Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Nevertheless, not only is the style typically scholastic but also the majority of the sources Hundt consults for the *Anthropologium*. He makes use of many standard medical works of the Middle Ages and relies, for example, on Petrus de Abano, Avicenna and Averroes (Santing 2020, pp. 471–75). The main ideas of how the dignity of man is shown in his body

look like humanist ideas, but actually come from Albertus Magnus. Hundt's interest in depicting the human being in a certain way may well have been influenced by a humanist mindset. However, the arguments and ideas he consults are predominantly medieval-scholastic. Hundt does not hide these roots, but rather highlights them. This is also evident, for example, when he describes the properties and functioning of the body in the words of Albertus Magnus.

Hundt shows that man has a special dignity, which is seen, for example, in his upright posture, a feature that distinguishes him from other creatures. Hundt writes: 'Man is the noblest creature [. . .] with regard to his posture, because he has an upright stature which is directed towards heaven.'²² The head of man—so the reasoning goes—in which the intellectual and living powers are understood to reside is placed above the body in view of its leadership role and is formed with regard to its position within creation and the order of the entire world.²³ Therefore, Hundt emphasises again the Aristotelian insight that the human being is a 'miniature world' (minor mundus).²⁴ This motif is also found in the statement that the order of the world is established by God, i.e., metaphorically speaking: 'from above'. According to this principle, it is only coherent that the head, which also directs and guides the body, is positioned above it.²⁵ Man's upright posture is thus a symbol of the 'ruler's role' that God has bestowed on his most worthy creature, elevating it above the others.

In this context, Hundt also emphasises that if humans did not walk upright, like other animals, they would not have had both hands free for various activities. The hands are, in fact, the most important tools of the human body in the medieval understanding. They are, as already indicated above, 'organa organorum', because, with them, man can produce anything that he wants and that his intellect commands him to. The hands are, in a special way, the executive organ of the intellect and the guarantor that man can produce everything he needs for himself. While animals can only rely on the original tools given to them at creation, man can produce these tools (e.g., weapons for hunting or protection) on his own, using his intellect together with his hands, which carry out the former's commands. In this respect, the hands are also the 'signs of the intellect'.²⁶ Later, when he describes the physiology of the hand, Hundt returns to this fact.²⁷ If humans had to use their hands for locomotion like other animals, the organ of organs would be constantly impeded and could only perform this important executive function of the intellect to a very limited extent. This is why man was created by God as an upright walking being.²⁸

That said, not only man's upright gait, but also his proportions reflect human excellence. They express very well his beauty and elegance, which are also a reflection of his spiritual powers. Hundt shows this in great detail with reference to the three different masses of the body, i.e., its length, width and depth. In humans, these masses are in perfect proportion with each other. They correspond most perfectly to the 'natural' masses. The length of a body, for example, must always exceed its width. While humans and, for example, worms fulfil this criterion, the ratio of length and width in worms is not well proportioned. In humans, by contrast, it is. Hundt admittedly presents these kinds of considerations about the measurements of humans in more detail in his text.²⁹ However, this may suffice to give an insight into the ways in which the dignity of the human body is justified.

In addition to the upright gait and distinctive proportions of the human body, the mixture of elements and fluids of the body is also used to make clear the special dignity of the human being. The human body is said to be perfectly mixed in the same way, namely that it is one of the most intelligent living beings and that God can influence the world through it.³⁰ In the background here is a medical tradition that assumes that different natural objects are composed of different elements. Thomas Aquinas had already stated this in his *Summa contra gentiles*. In this context, Aquinas emphasises—just like Hundt—that man has the body that represents the best mixture of these different elements. No other

body is so well mixed that a spiritual substance can be united with it. This is only possible in the human body.³¹

In Hundt's understanding, the soul is also the ruler of the body and brings it 'into form' (informatio).³² However, even if the soul is much more perfect and the body is sometimes afflicted with shortcomings, it is nevertheless 'tempered' just right to ensure the optimal functioning of a rational living being. This particular insight is shared by Thomas Aquinas and Magnus Hundt.

4. A Thomist's Project?

The view that the body is an important tool of the soul and that corporeality is at the same time an essential component of the image of man is not at all surprising for a Thomist such as Hundt. In both the classical Aristotelian tradition and, subsequently, the Thomistic one, a balanced answer had always been given to the problem of body and soul, i.e., the question of how the soul and the body were connected and which part of the human being was superior. Unlike in the Platonic tradition, for example, the body was always an important part of the human being for both Aristotle and Thomas (see, for example, among many others, [Rapp 2003](#)).

It is therefore not surprising that Thomas, like Hundt many years later, writes: 'Now the next purpose of the human body is the rational soul and its activity. For the material is chosen because of the form, and the tools because of the intended activity. God has therefore fitted the human body in such a way that it may serve such a form of being and the corresponding activities. Additionally, if anything defective is really observed in the arrangement of the body, it must be considered that such a defect follows the substance with necessity, inasmuch as some things are therefore required in order that the due relation of the substance to the form of being and to the corresponding activities may exist.'³³

Thomas Aquinas thus concludes that the human body, despite its occasional defects, is a very good—and even the only possible—'shell' for the soul. This claim also aligns with the conclusions of the Thomists of the 15th century, who adopted the teachings of Thomas Aquinas. Researchers have been able to demonstrate the philosophical–theological motives in light of which the followers of Thomas Aquinas considered not only the soul, but also the human body, so worthy of investigation ([Hoenen 2001](#)).

This point becomes particularly clear through a contrast with the competing school of Albertism. Albertists were scholars who primarily followed the writings and thoughts of Albertus Magnus. When asked how the cognition of the essence of a thing functions in humans, Albertus Magnus answers with a reference to Plato. He claims that those things that a person wants to know can be grasped primarily through ideas. According to the Albertists, these ideas are insights that were imprinted in people at the time of their creation and are therefore already present in the soul. Intellectual cognition is thus an incorporeal activity and therefore not necessarily dependent on sense data (Heymericus de Campo (1496), foll. H III^r-H IV^r; cf. [Hoenen 2001](#)).

Unlike the Albertists, Thomists such as Hundt seem to attach particular importance to the physicality of human beings in their capacity for cognition.³⁴ Many Thomists of this time agreed that cognition also takes place to a good extent through abstraction from individual things. In particular, the recognition of form takes place in an abstract way (cf. [Seidl 1988](#), esp. pp. 106ff.). For such abstraction, however, sensual perception—and thus also the physicality of the perceiver—is indispensable. Intellectual cognition is thus only possible if the soul also has a body through which it can obtain the sensual 'information' (cf. [Hoenen 2001](#)).³⁵ Hundt had previously emphasised in his writing that the soul comes into the world 'naked' and without an understanding of species, habits or forces.³⁶ Only sensory perception, which is bound to the physicality of the human being, thus gives the soul 'working material'. As a convinced Thomist, Hundt accepts this claim. It is therefore obvious that, in his anthropology, he is particularly interested in the functioning of the eyes, the ears and the nose.

Even though Hundt quotes Albertus Magnus in extenso in the first chapter of the *Anthropologium*, the whole project is a fundamentally Thomistic endeavour for this reason. The body, which is so central here—this is the Thomistic insight—helps the soul to progress with intellectual knowledge. This is where human dignity lies.

Hundt also cites the reincarnation of God as another argument for the special role of the body. Jesus Christ came to earth in the physical form of a human being. God not only created man in his image, but also became man so that he, in turn, could become God.³⁷ Hundt thus uses God's incarnation to bring the special dignity of the human body to the fore. The underlying idea is that by studying his own body more intensively, man can better find out what intentions and characteristics God may have had and still has.

In contrast to the Albertist doctrine presented above, man can be located much further 'towards nature' from Hundt's Thomistic perspective. Not only the examination of his soul, but also that of the body thus help us to better understand God and thereby indirectly also the functioning of the world. It can be seen that Hundt's Thomistic understanding of the human body can be interpreted as a reading of the book of nature. This observation reminds of the important findings that James Bono made some years ago about the scientific changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. People began to interpret the biblical narratives in such a way that they understood nature as the word of God that could be read like a book (Bono 1995, esp. p. 72).

To make this plausible, Hundt adopted a seemingly strange hybrid position between medical, philosophical and theological literature in his *Anthropologium*. For example, in addition to the first chapter on human dignity in general, there are also accounts of the functioning of the digestive tract (Figure 1), the necessity of body hair, female menstruation and sweat. As we have seen, this is no coincidence, but fits precisely into this picture.

To a certain extent, the human being is thus more 'naturalised'. He is an 'image of nature'. Hundt's approach, which involves claiming that the image of man is to a certain extent an image of nature, is very clearly reflected in the interesting drawings of the human body that can be found in his text (Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3).

5. Example: The Eye

In order to obtain a clearer idea of the extent to which the image of man in Magnus Hundt's Thomistic worldview is also an image of nature, a medical example will now be examined in more detail.

In chapter 33, Hundt discusses the eye and its parts (Hundt 1501, foll. H IVr–H VIv). According to Hundt, the main sources for his explanations were Galen, Averroes, Avicenna and Albertus Magnus. However, he also quotes directly from Aristotelian and pseudo-Aristotelian texts.

In characterising the eye, Hundt first states that it is the organ of sight. It is also watery and has a round surface. It is found on the upper front part of the head, consists of seven tissue layers and three fluids, and is moved by six muscles, one, two or three of which also support it (Figure 3).³⁸ This brief characterisation of the most important features of the eye is followed by a more detailed explanation of these points.³⁹

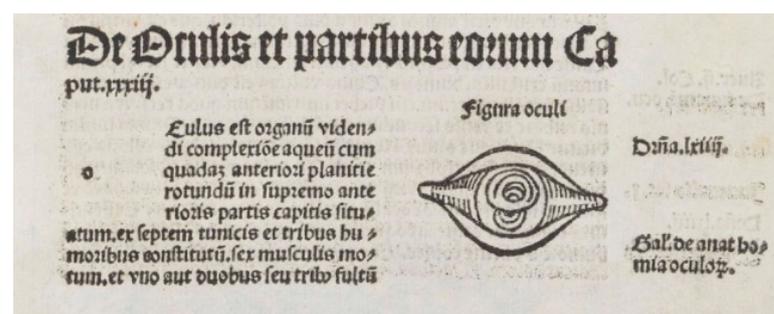


Figure 3. Hundt's illustration of an eye, beginning of chapter 33 (Hundt 1501, fol. H IVr).⁴⁰

For example, Hundt cites an interesting debate about the location of the eye. Avicenna and Galen supposed that the eyes were located in the upper part of the body, insofar as they can be compared to the guardians of a city. The head therefore has such an elevated position in the body because of the eyes. From this vantage point, it is possible to see particularly far and to recognise dangers from a distance.⁴¹ As should already be clear from the above-mentioned interpretation of man's upright posture as being oriented towards the heavens, Hundt himself does not necessarily accept this interpretation, instead citing a pseudo-Aristotelian text that claims the opposite, a position Hundt seemingly endorses, albeit without saying exactly what this opposite (*oppositio*) consists of.

In addition to other medical explanations, Hundt emphasises the parts of which the eye is composed. Essentially, the eye is made up of ten parts: three different aqueous parts and seven others. In addition to these main parts, there are other 'adjunctive' parts, which are in turn of two types: intrinsic and external. The adjunctive intrinsic parts are, for example, the optic nerves, veins, arteries and muscles. The external parts include the eyebrows, eyelashes, eyelids, eye sockets and lacrimal fluid.⁴²

A little later, Hundt describes the structure and functioning of the retina in great detail, incidentally noting that the word 'retina' comes from the fact that it looks like a net. One by one, the various functions that the retina fulfils are enumerated. The fourth tissue layer of the retina is the so-called 'aranea', on which colours and shapes are imprinted during sensory perception. This function of the retina is also the main goal of the visual process. Thus, the aranea layer of the retina is also the actual tool of the sense of sight.⁴³

Hundt also describes the diversity of eyes found in different people, including large, small and medium-sized eyes. What is certain, however, is that a person always has two eyes—just as the other sense organs are always present in duplicate.⁴⁴

In contrast to the ears, however, the eyes are directly adjacent to each other, so that the visual activity can be carried out more perfectly. This is why the optic nerves are crossed.⁴⁵ Hundt had previously described in great detail how exactly the optic nerves run from the retina to the brain and where the optical information is processed.

In addition to all these remarks, however, the chapter also deals with various other anatomical and psychological *topoi* about eyes that were part of the classical medical tradition. In humans, for example, the eyes would indicate the will of the heart and soul to a particular degree (Hundt 1501, fol. H Vv). Hundt also explains how the pupils move and how tears are formed. Finally, eye diseases and their treatment are discussed. The chapter also includes a small drawing of an eye, which makes it easier for the observer to better understand its different layers and muscles (Figure 3).

The eye thus serves as one of many examples that can be cited to illustrate Hundt's special interest in the human body. Here, too, the same applies as has already been mentioned above: The Renaissance, with its special interest in seeing, in light and thus also in the eye, probably also influenced Hundt's studies. Similar to the humanist Lorenzo Ghiberti's third commentary (Ghiberti 1986), which takes a closer look at optics and the functioning of the eye, Hundt demonstrates an affinity for this subject. However, the sources he consults to inform himself and his readers are primarily standard medical works of the Middle Ages. Avicenna's *Canon medicinae* (Avicenna 1902) should be mentioned first and foremost.

6. Conclusions

The question of how human beings understand their relationship to nature and other living beings is connected not least to the question of how they understand themselves. The image that humans have of themselves—the so-called 'image of man'—has frequently been the subject of controversy. As medieval as most of the sources of the *Anthropologium* are, what is shown here is a compilation of medical and philosophical knowledge that is quite fruitful for the debate of the 'image of man' and the northern Alpine history of ideas in general. It marks an important milestone for the transformation process into the modern era. Hundt's work not only helps to give a name to a discipline that was still unknown at

the time. He also contrasts knowledge about one part of natural creatures (that of humans) with knowledge about other natural creatures. He, thus, becomes, to a certain extent, the name and impulse giver of the discipline of anthropology.

In the Middle Ages, it was clear that the image of man always oscillated to some extent between his two essential parts, namely the physical and the mental. However, there was little agreement concerning the weight to be attached to these respective parts. Whereas some of Magnus Hundt's contemporaries focused primarily on the exquisiteness of the human soul when characterising man, Hundt points out that he was also created, at least in part, as a physical being. While he does concede a certain superiority to the soul, he also takes his insight into the importance of the body very seriously. In his *Anthropologium*, he examines the human body in extenso. This is the component of the human being that can be studied following the same standards as when studying the nature of other creatures.

The *Anthropologium* is, in fact, first and foremost a philosophical–medical treatise whose argument can certainly be interpreted as ascribing dignity not only to the soul of the human being, but also to every single organ in his body. Even though Hundt does not explicitly refer to this idea in every subsequent chapter, but rather speaks about dignity primarily in the first chapter, the reader is already given the impression from the beginning that the composition of the human body is not the product of pure chance. On the contrary, it was conceived with careful deliberation. Hundt thus makes clear right from the start that its physical components, such as the mass of the body, its upright posture, its composition out of the elements and so on, also point to its dignity and a certain resemblance to God. These should therefore also be understood as part of the image of man.

This paper has shown that Hundt's underlying Thomistic programme explains this unique approach to the human body. The Thomists of his time had a special interest in the human body, because they took Thomas Aquinas' statements on epistemology to mean that all knowledge—including knowledge of God and the world—is based on sensory experiences, which the intellectual component of the body needs in order to arrive at this knowledge. Sensory experience is, however, only possible if the soul has a body that can produce these experiences for it. This means, therefore, that its physical, natural component is very closely related to the soul. Man's relationship to the world and to God is only possible in virtue of his physical nature. Hundt also illustrates how flexible Thomism was. On the one hand, Thomism was able to incorporate the knowledge especially collected by Albertus Magnus and make it part of the Thomistic project. On the other hand, Thomists such as Hundt were capable of responding to the new needs and humanistic interests of the Renaissance, which had become popular at the time, both inside and outside universities. In both respects, the enormous potential of late medieval Thomism becomes clearer.

Moreover, God had chosen to come to Earth as a human. After all, Jesus Christ had appeared on Earth in human form. If one wishes to better understand God's intentions, the study of the human body helps reveal what was important to God. Learning more about the human body therefore also means understanding better God's intentions on Earth.

Finally, Hundt also captures this human nature in images, namely in the images of nature in which man represents himself as a natural being. From the eye to the digestive tract, Hundt's Thomistic worldview is revealed in the form of images: in a very special way, the image of man is also an image of nature.

Funding: This research was funded by Schweizerischer Nationalfonds zur Förderung der Wissenschaftlichen Forschung, grant number 192196.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: I thank the University Library of Basel for digitising the illustrations from Hundt's text and Lukas Bickel for his assistance in transcribing the text.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

- 1 For an ethnological and anthropological study that is also influential in the historical sciences, see [Descola \(2005\)](#).
- 2 There is a certain terminological difficulty with the word ‘nature’ or its Latin equivalent ‘natura’ in the Middle Ages. In the texts of Hundt and his contemporaries, ‘natura’ is used to refer to the essence of a thing. Thus, ‘Homo est animal rationale’ was used to define the nature of man. In this context, the nature of man includes both his physical component, which he has in common with other living beings, and his intellectual component. Today, however, when we speak of the ‘natural side’ of man, we tend to mean his physical side. In this paper, the meaning oscillates somewhat between these two senses. However, I have tried to indicate as clearly as possible what is meant in each case.
- 3 See [Buchwald \(1920\)](#), for more information on Hundt’s life.
- 4 The original title of Hundt 1501 reads: ‘Antropologium de hominis dignitate, natura, et proprietatibus, de elementis, partibus, et membris humani corporis, de iuvamentis nocumentis, accidentibus, vitiis, remediis, et physionomia ipsorum, de excrementis et exeuntibus, de spiritu humano eiusque natura, proprietatibus, et operibus, de anima humana et ipsius appendiciis’.
- 5 Reproduction from the Universitätsbibliothek Basel, Le VI 27.
- 6 Hundt 1501, fol. A IV^v: ‘Tametsi hominum natura multipliciter servata est [. . .] ex parte corporis [. . .] et ex parte animae [. . .] ipsa tamen post deum [. . .] cuncta excellit sua dignitate creata, quoniam non solum ad dei imaginem factus est homo, propter quem deus factus est homo, ut ipse rursus deus fieret.’
- 7 Hundt 1501, fol. B II^v: ‘Et haec est anima rationalis, quae cum corpore humano hominem constituit. Sic itaque solus homo est dei et universi totius nexus, caelestium et terrestrium unicum et nodus [. . .]’
- 8 Hundt 1501, fol. B III^v: ‘In hoc autem a deo differt, qui omnia facit in esse naturali, homo autem in esse artificiali, quod naturam imitatur’. Cf. Aristotle, *Physics*, 194a21–22.
- 9 These formulas are essentially printed marginalia of the ‘Anthropologium’. They are also mirrored at the beginning of the chapter, Hundt 1501, fol. A IV^v in the following formulation: ‘[Homo existit, K.E.] omnia ens, omnia continens, omnia cognoscens, potens et arte perficiens, ad quem omnia ordinantur, in quo omnia communicant, propter quem omnia facta sunt.’ For this, cf. also [Haedke \(1961\)](#), p. 37.
- 10 Hundt 1501, fol. B II^v: ‘[A]nima est omnia secundum species, quas in se habet, nam omnia sensibilia secundum sensum et intelligibilia secundum intellectum.’ Cf. Aristotle, *De anima*, 431b21. Hundt 1501, fol. B II^v therefore also speaks at this point of man being the measure of all things: ‘Homo est mensura omnium’.
- 11 Hundt 1501, fol. B III^f: ‘Cognoscit [. . .] homo omnia sensibilia per sensum et spiritualia sive intelligibilia per intellectum abstrahendo species rerum, quae sunt in anima.’
- 12 Hundt 1501, fol. B III^v: ‘Et manus est organum organorum, qua homo potest omnia materialia facere.’ Cf. Albertus Magnus (1916–20), lib. 21, tract. 1, cap. 1, vol. 2, p. 1324 and Aristotle, *De anima*, 432a1f.
- 13 Hundt 1501, fol. B III^v: ‘Natura autem da[t] homini membra, quibus potest omnia facere.’
- 14 Hundt 1501, fol. B II^v: ‘Ex hinc infertur, quod homo continet omnia, quia [. . .] omnes creaturae mundi quodammodo inveniuntur in eo [. . .] inanimata secundum esse, vegetabilia ratione vegetationis, animalia quo ad sensum, spiritus et sepe quoad intellectum.’ Cf. also Thomas de Aquino (1889), prima pars, q. 91, art. 1; p. 390f. which Hundt cites for this. On fol. B III^f it then reads: ‘Ex his liquet hominem omnia continere tanquam ex omnibus constitutum.’ The formulation that in man all things come together is similar in meaning to ‘in homo omnia communicat’ (Hundt 1501, fol. B IV^r). In this context, however, it is primarily a matter of the arrangement of the elements and humours in the creatures.
- 15 Hundt 1501, fol. A IV^v: ‘[Homo] mundus minor dicitur’. Cf. [Hamesse \(1974\)](#), p. 156, no. 206; Aristotle, *Physics*, 252b26f.
- 16 Hundt 1501, fol. B III^v: ‘Ad hominem praeterea omnia tendunt et ordinata sunt caelum et tota natura.’
- 17 Hundt 1501, fol. B III^v: ‘Tribus enim ordinibus universum ordinatur secundum Albertum in de homine in fine, scilicet in deum, in se et ad hominem. [. . .] Ad hominem autem, quia est finis omnium creaturarum, cui omnia subministrant, qui de omnibus participat, unde ad ipsum omnia ordinantur et tendunt.’ Cf. Albertus Magnus (2008), p. 595, ll. 4–35; cf. also Hundt 1501, fol. B II^v.
- 18 Hundt 1501, fol. B III^v-B IV^f: ‘Perfectiora enim sunt fines aliorum.’ Cf. Aristotle, *De partibus animalium*, 645a25–36.
- 19 Hundt 1501, fol. B III^v: ‘Sicut enim deus est finis optimi hominis, ita optimus homo est finis aliorum.’ Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a22–24, 1102a1–4, 1101b12–18; Aristotle, *Physics*, 194a29–33.
- 20 Hundt 1501, fol. A IV^v: ‘Hominum natura servata est [. . .] ex parte corporis, quod multis et variis subiectum est necessitatibus et indigentibus ob legis praevaricationem.’ For a contextualisation of the original sin and its implications, see ([Hoenen 2023](#)).
- 21 Reproduction from the Universitätsbibliothek Basel, Le VI 27.
- 22 Hundt 1501, fol. B V^v: ‘Homo est nobilissimum animatum [. . .] quoad figuram, quia habet erectissimum figuram tendentem ad caelum.’ Cf. Albertus Magnus (1916–20), lib. I tract. 2 cap. 26., vol. 1, p. 179.
- 23 Hundt 1501, fol. A VI^v: ‘Hominis enim caput, in quo sunt virtutes intellectuales et animales, positum est supra totum corpus regimine et situ secundum creationem et situm mundi totius.’
- 24 Hundt 1501, fol. A VI^v: ‘[Homo] mundus minor dicitur’. Cf. [Hamesse \(1974\)](#), p. 156, no. 206; Aristotle, *Physics*, 252b26f.

- 25 Hundt 1501, fol. B I^r: ‘Et quia homo superius sui corpori, quod est caput, versus superius mundi habet, et inferius versus mundi inferius, ideoque optime est dispositus secundum dispositionem totius mundi.’
- 26 Hundt 1501, fol. B III^v: ‘Et manus est organum organorum, quia homo potest omnia materialia facere, [. . .] Homo autem, quia inter omnia animalia intelligentiam habet et cognitionem in omnibus modis, fuit ei datum instrumentum, in quo conveniunt omnia instrumenta, dabantur igitur illi manus loco omnium, cum ita utatur eis loco modorum armorum. Et ideo lenis corpore et nudus nascitur, quia omnia sibi facere potest [. . .] Est praeterea manus signum, quod homo omnibus dominatur animatis, ut declarat Albertus in De animalibus.’ Hundt refers here, among others, to Galen, *De iuvamentis membrorum*. Cf. Albertus Magnus (1916–20), lib. XIV tract. 2 cap. 2., vol. 2, p. 965f.
- 27 Hundt 1501, fol. I IV^v: ‘Manus signum intellectus et organum existens organorum, in quo omnia conveniunt instrumenta, [est, K.E.] a deo datum hominibus.’
- 28 Hundt 1501, fol. A VI^v-B I^r: ‘Solum igitur corpus humanum ad mundi ordinationem situatur erigendo caput sursum versus caelum, [. . .] quia locutio impediretur, quae est homini propria, si caput inclinatum haberet aut manuum usus ad diversa opera cessaret.’
- 29 Hundt 1501, fol. B V^v: ‘[H]omo est nobilissimum animatum [. . .] ratione quantitatis, quia diametri tres omne constituunt corpus perfectum, primo caeli, quare naturalius et perfectius erit corpus quod diametrorum naturalium mensuram participat. Diameter autem longitudinis mensurat a sursum in deorsum, et in solo homine idem est sursum, quod est sursum mundi, et idem deorsum, quod est deorsum mundi. Similiter est de latitudinis diametro, quia solus inter omnia animalia latum habet corpus secundum mensuram suae quantitatis latitudine proportionata, quamvis quidam vermes lati sint non tamen latitudinem habent longitudini proportionatam. Longitudo enim in corpore naturali semper debet vincere latitudinem, si non sit vitium naturae. Quadrupedia autem habent spissiora corpora quam lata. Homo etiam solus diametrum profunditatis minorem habet ceteris diametris.’ Santing (2020, p. 6), adds that there is a longer so-called ‘physico-philosophical’ tradition, in which philosophical and medical considerations are very closely connected. The hope was that some moral, economic or political insights about human beings could be gained from the study of physical characteristics.
- 30 Hundt 1501, fol. A VI^v: ‘Solum igitur corpus humanum ad mundi ordinationem situatur [. . .] gratia mixtionis perfectae.’ Cf. also foll. B I^r and B IV^r. Hundt 1501, fol. B IV^v: ‘Mixtum praeterea humanum corpus existit temperatissimum, quia deus donavit homini complexionem temperationem, quam in hoc mundo foret possibile invenire cum suarum virtutum, quibus agit aequidistantia’. In 1490, Hundt had published a pseudo-Thomastic text on the composition of the elements under the title ‘De mixtione elementorum’ (Hundt 1490).
- 31 Thomas de Aquino (1918), lib. 2, cap. 90, p. 549: ‘Complexio autem maxime aequalis est complexio corporis humani. Oportet igitur, si substantia intellectualis uniatur alicui corpori mixto, quod illud sit eiusdem naturae cum corpore humano. Forma etiam eius esset eiusdem naturae cum anima humana, si esset substantia intellectualis. Non igitur esset differentia secundum speciem inter illud animal et hominem.’ Cf. Fitzpatrick (2017, chp. 3, fn. 89).
- 32 The soul as ruler in the body is discussed in Hundt 1501, fol. A VI^v: ‘Praeterea: sicut se habet in nave nauta, in curro auriga, in choreis choraula, in civitate lex, in agmine dux, ita deus in mundo et anima in corpore humano’. The ‘informatio’ is mentioned in Hundt 1501, fol. B IV^r: ‘consubstantiatio totius corporis cum anima, quae dici potest informatio’.
- 33 Thomas de Aquino (1889), prima pars, q. 91, art. 3, c.; p. 393: ‘Finis autem proximus humani corporis est anima rationalis et operationes ipsius: materia enim est propter formam, et instrumenta propter actiones agentis. Dico ergo quod Deus instituit corpus humanum in optima dispositione secundum convenientiam ad talem formam et ad tales operationes. Et si aliquis defectus in dispositione humani corporis esse videtur, considerandum est quod talis defectus sequitur ex necessitate materiae, ad ea quae requiruntur in corpore ut sit debita proportio ipsius ad animam et ad animae operationes.’
- 34 For the distinction between the schools in the 15th century, and especially between Albertism and Thomism, see (Hoenen 1993a, 1993b, 1996, 1997).
- 35 For another Thomistic reference, see Lambertus de Monte (1498, fol. 60^b).
- 36 Hundt 1501, fol. A IV^v: ‘[N]atura hominum [. . .] serva est [. . .] ex parte animae, quae nuda sine specibus, habitibus et virtutibus creatur.’
- 37 Hundt 1501, fol. A IV^v: ‘[T]amen post deum, qui est prima omnium causa, [homo, K.E.] cuncta excellit sua dignitate creata, quoniam non solum ad dei imaginem factus est homo, propter quem deus factus est homo, ut ipse rursus deus fieret.’
- 38 Hundt 1501, fol. H IV^r: ‘Oculus est organum videndi complexione aqueum cum quadam anteriori planitie rotundum in supremo anterioris partis capitis situatum, ex septem tunicis et tribus humoribus constitutum, sex musculis motum, et uno aut duobus seu tribus fultum.’
- 39 With regard to the aqueous composition of the eye, Hundt refers, for example, to the Aristotelian text *De sensu et sensato*. Cf. Hamesse, p. 196, no. 9; Thomas de Aquino (1985), tr. 1, cap. 2, p. 22f.; Aristotle, *De sensu et sensato*, 438a12–14.
- 40 Reproduction from the Universitätsbibliothek Basel, Le VI 27.
- 41 Hundt 1501, fol. H IV^v: ‘Sursum locatur sicut custodes civitatis. Unde Avicenna et Galenus volunt caput esse creatum et elevatum propter oculos; cuius oppositum dictum est et patet ex differentia XL.’
- 42 Hundt 1501, fol. H IV^v: ‘Oculi partes sunt duplices: Essentiales vere ipsum constituents, quarum sunt decem, scilicet tres humores et septem particuli. Et coadiuvantes sive circumiacentes, quae sunt duplices, scilicet intrinsice et forinsice. Coadiuvantes

intrinsice sunt nervi optici, vene, arterie, musculi, caro alba et piguedo. Extrinsice vero sunt supercilia, cilia et palpebre, orbita et lachrymalia.'

43 Hundt 1501, fol. H IV^v: 'Quarta [sc. tunica, K.E.], quae dicitur aranea, oritur a prima posteriori, quae est ultimi puriditatis et luciditatis, quia colores et forme imprimuntur in ipsam. Unde ista tela est proprium visus instrumentum vel per se vel per adiutorium cristallini humoris.'

44 Hundt 1501, fol. H V^r: 'Quantitas oculi diversificatur, nam quidam sunt magni, quidam parvi, quidam mediocres. Numerus est binarius sicut in aliis organis sensuum.'

45 Hundt 1501, fol. H V^r: 'Situavit natura eos in homine propinquos ut perfectius perveniret ex eis videndi actus, propter eandem causam nervi optici cruciantur.'

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