Deborah Savage

The Nature of Woman in Relation to Man

Genesis 1 and 2 through the Lens of the Metaphysical Anthropology of Aquinas

I. Introduction

Since its initial publication as *The Original Unity of Man and Woman* in 1981, Pope Saint John Paul II's widely studied work, *A Theology of the Body,* has generated interest, debate, and scholarship.[1] Much has been written already on this investigation into the sacramental meaning of the human body and its implications for our understanding of human personhood and the ontological and physical complementarity that characterizes men and women; his starting place in Genesis and his interpretation of these passages is well documented. What has gone mostly unnoticed by scholars of his thought in this area is the significance of John Paul's claim that the two creation accounts each reveal a different aspect of the nature of man, known and knowable in both its objective and subjective aspects. In the opening pages of the text, the Holy Father points to the two distinct creation accounts found in Genesis 1 and 2 as the place in scripture where we can derive the meaning of man, first as an objective reality created in the image of God and, secondly, as a concretely existing subject. It is this claim that is the focus of this investigation.

In the second general audience, the late Holy Father states that the "powerful metaphysical content" hidden in Genesis 1 has provided "an incontrovertible point of reference and a solid basis" for metaphysics, anthropology, and ethics and been a source of reflection throughout the ages for those "who have sought to understand 'being' and 'existing.'"[2] But in Genesis 2, he goes on to say, the depth to be uncovered in this second (though historically earlier) creation account has a different character; it "is above all subjective in nature and thus in some way psychological." Here we find man in the concrete, as a subject of self-understanding and consciousness; here the account of the creation of man refers to him "especially in the aspect of his subjectivity."[3]

As is well known to those familiar with his body of work, two categories are foundational to his thought: being and existence; and personal subjectivity. Throughout his writings, he frequently contrasts the philosophy of being and the philosophy of consciousness and attempts to reconcile and synthesize their claims. His own anthropology is an attempt at a creative completion of the Aristotelian-Thomistic account of man, which, he argues, though it provides the necessary "metaphysical terrain" in the dimension of being and paves the way for the realization of personal human subjectivity, leaves out an adequate investigation of lived human experience and thus lacks an essential component of what it means to be an actual living person.[4] The thrust of his effort is to capture the meaning of human personhood in light of both the objective nature of the person and his lived experience as the subject of his own acts.[5]

Setting aside for the moment the question of whether or not this is an accurate criticism of Aristotelian-Thomistic anthropology, my argument in this article is that, though the beginnings of a comprehensive theory regarding the nature and complementarity of man and woman can be found in his treatise, John Paul himself does not fully or adequately exploit his own claim regarding the meaning to be found in the creation accounts in Genesis on the nature of man.[6] I will show that only in looking at these texts through the lens provided by a fuller

exposition of the metaphysical anthropology of Aquinas do we uncover their profound, hidden meaning. Thus, my thesis is not precisely a departure from that of the Holy Father, but is meant to represent a legitimate development of his project. I intend to show that, when considered through the anthropology of Aquinas, the two creation accounts illuminate the full truth about man, not only in the sense of man qua man, but also in terms of his personal subjectivity and the differentiation and complementarity of the sexes.

II. Grounding the Theology of the Body: The Metaphysical Content of Genesis 1 and 2

John Paul begins his catechesis on the theology of the body, by taking his starting place from Jesus's exchange with the Pharisees regarding the indissolubility of marriage found at Matthew 19:3ff (cf. also Mk 10:2ff). The Pharisees question Jesus about the Mosaic laws on divorce: Moses seemed to sanction divorce and they are trying to trap Jesus into giving the wrong answer on the question. John Paul tells us that, rather than allowing himself to become ensnared in the juridical or casuistic complexities of the issue, Jesus chooses instead to refer his interlocutors to the "beginning," to the first chapters of Genesis,[7] as the place to look for God's revelation on the question of divorce.[8] This "beginning" is a reference to Genesis 1:27, which states that "God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Since in this passage Jesus refers twice to this beginning" and refers explicitly to both of the creation accounts found in Genesis 1 and 2, we can be sure it is no accidental reference, but a point with significance. Jesus is calling his interlocutors, both then and now, to reflect on the "way in which, in the mystery of creation, man was formed as 'male and female' in order to understand the *normative* meaning of the words of Genesis."[9]

John Paul goes on to say that his intention in what follows is to "penetrate toward that 'beginning' to which [Christ] referred in such

a significant way," indicating that his investigation will lead to a deeper reflection on the first several chapters of Genesis, in particular the two different accounts of creation found in Genesis 1 and 2.[10] Having introduced his intentions in the first audience, in the second of his general audiences John Paul points to the "cosmological character" of the account of the creation of man and woman in Genesis 1, placed as it is within the rhythm of the seven days of the creation of the world. Man is created with the visible world, while placed above the world and responsible for it. Like all other earthly creatures, man has a body, an essential truth about him that applies to both male and female. But he cannot be understood or explained in his totality through reference only to categories taken from the "visible totality of bodies." Because unlike any other creature, man is created in the image of God, clearly not as a simply another step in the gradual progression that precedes his appearance, but after a pause at which God says: "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." John Paul states that, at this moment in the text, God seems to halt before calling man into existence, "as if he entered back into himself to make a decision."[11] And this decision results in the creation of man as male and female, both made in the image of God.

The Holy Father points to the objective nature of this first creation account, stating that it is concise and factual, free from any reference to man in the subjective sense. It defines the objective reality of the creation of man, and, as mentioned above, contains "hidden within itself a powerful metaphysical content."[12] It is here that we find man defined "primarily in the dimensions of being and existing ('*esse*')" and the metaphysical ground of man's existence— and all of creation—as contingent being.[13] According to John Paul, the first chapter of Genesis has provided and still provides an incontrovertible point of reference and solid basis, not only for a metaphysics, but also for an anthropology and an ethics grounded in the fundamental conviction that "*ens et bonum convertuntur*" (being and goodness are convertible).[14]

While the first Genesis account concerns man in the abstract, or

man qua man, in the third audience, John Paul points out that the second creation account found in Genesis 2 has a very different character: it is "subjective in nature and thus in some way psychological." In fact, it "constitutes in some way the oldest description and record of man's self-understanding and . . . is the first witness of human consciousness."[15] In Genesis 1:2, we find reference to all the elements of an analysis of the human person that are of particular interest to the contemporary philosopher, that is, a reference to man in the aspect of his subjectivity.

John Paul argues that, if we take as our guide the words of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, they point to the significance of these two accounts when taken together. For Jesus quotes both passages in succession, referring first to Genesis 1:27 ("From the beginning, the Creator created them male and female") and then immediately invoking the separate creation of woman at Genesis 2:24. At this point, what had been a reference to *man,* that is, *adam,* in the first account, now becomes *male* (*'îsh*) and *female* (*ishshâh*). In other words, we have witnessed the creation of man abstractly considered in the first account, and, in the Holy Father's language, man considered in the subjective sense—as male and female—in the second. The two accounts taken together reveal that this subjectivity itself "corresponds to the objective reality of man created 'in the image of God.'"[16]

John Paul next investigates the significance of the account of the fall in Genesis 3 and introduces the now familiar language of the "original innocence" that characterized man (male and female) before the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. From a "state of integral nature," *'îsh* and *ishshâh,* otherwise known as Adam and Eve, suddenly find themselves in a "state of fallen nature" and are banished from the Garden.[17]

In the *Theology of the Body*, John Paul builds on this initial analysis in order to develop a thorough-going theological framework for understanding the body within the context of human love and human sexuality and its characteristic feature—that of self-gift. I have a somewhat different aim in this investigation. I am here interested

specifically in what the two creation accounts reveal about human nature in both its objective and subjective aspects. And so I pause at this point in this exploration of the pope-saint's work and turn to what I argue provides a much fuller exegesis of the two accounts found in Genesis. It relies on the basic framework laid out by John Paul, but goes further in its analysis of the text in light of a more comprehensive account of the metaphysical anthropology of Aquinas.

III. The Exegetical Framework Reconsidered

St. Pope John Paul has already provided us with the basic exegetical framework found in Genesis 1 and 2. His own starting place and analysis lead to a consideration of his claim that the two creation accounts refer, first, to man in the objective sense (Genesis 1:27ff) and second, to man in the aspect of his subjectivity (Genesis 2:24ff). My task is to investigate what amounts to mostly an assertion in the opening reflections of the *Theology of the Body*. My aim is to determine if this claim is plausible.[18]

I will take the two accounts in turn but note that they provide additional insights when considered together.

A. GENESIS 1:27–28:

As in John Paul's own analysis, the first text that provides a point of departure for my hypothesis is found at Genesis 1:27: God says he will make man (*adam*) in his image and so "God created man (*adam*) in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female (*zâchâr* and *nikevah*) he created them."[19]

I will take the two parts of the passage in sequence, beginning with "God created *adam* in his own image, in the image of God he created him." The first essential point reveals itself in a consideration of the word *adam*. In the original Hebrew in which it was written, the word is understood to refer to humanity in the collective sense. Ancient Semitic thought would likely not have developed the concept of a universal human nature, a term introduced by the Greeks.

Nonetheless, the word *adam* is used rather frequently in the collective sense, that is, as a term that stands for the whole human race. Importantly, it retains its connotations of personhood and concreteness even while standing for the whole human race rather than merely an individual. Thus, though "*'adam*" can be used to designate the individual man so called, and also another individual man, what is meant in a particular passage would be clear either from the context or from the use of the definite article with it: namely, if the reference is to *hâ'adam,* it would refer back to some man already indicated from the context. But in Gen 1:27, the "man" already indicated from the context is precisely the individual man who also stands for the collective: the word "*'adam*" mentioned in v. 26 is without the definite article and therefore can be said to indicate man as such.[20] Thus, *'adam* is a reference to man per se, not to an individual or particular human being. A different word—*'îsh*—would have been used (and is used in the second creation account) if the intention was to refer to the individual man or that particular man the tradition has come to refer to as Adam, the husband of Eve.[21]

It is not going too far to say that if there were a reference to the notion of man qua man in Hebrew it would be *'adam*. To avoid any illegitimate leaps in interpretation, the best way to maximize care and precision would be to say that, of all the terms available in Hebrew, the one that would have to be adopted to designate what later philosophy would refer to as man in the abstract would have to be *'adam*. It is this word that stands for "man" as the English language has traditionally and collectively used the word; it corresponds to the Greek *anthrôpos*, the Latin *Homo*, the German *Mensch,* or the Polish *człowiek*.

Now, understood through the lens of Aquinas, man as such is a reference to the substantial form in union with common matter. Though again, it is unlikely that the author of Genesis 1:27 would have had these particular terms in mind, it is plausible that he would have intended the general notion of man, that is man as such, man in the abstract sense. This hypothesis is borne out even further when we consider that the instruction a moment later at Genesis 1:28, to

"be fruitful and multiply," implies a body or matter. The fruitfulness of the original male and female could only issue from the union of the substantial form with a body designed to procreate through the transmission of matter. This is reflected in the Thomistic account of man per se, according to which the nature of man concretely considered is a composite, that is, man per se also includes matter as an essential element in the notion of man.

More precisely, the nature of man considered as such includes both the substantial form (that which makes something what it is) with common matter (that which is common to the species): both substantial principles make man what he is per se. Thus, it is indeed quite reasonable to interpret this passage, as John Paul argues, as a reference to the creation of man qua man, a composite being made of body and soul, whose essential nature is in some way a reflection, an image, of the God who creates him.

Now a second point of significance is found in the second part of the passage: "male and female he created them." The Hebrew terms used in this passage, namely, *zâchâr* and *nikevah*, usually translated as male and female, are not always used as nouns; in this case, they are adjectives more properly translated as "masculine" and "feminine." The usual English translation as "male" and "female" obscures this distinction; its importance is found by considering the logic of the grammar in the passage. Their reference point is the noun *'adam* mentioned in the first part of the passage: God makes *'adam* in his image—*'adam* is created *zâchâr* and *nikevah*.

Thus, assuming the first account is concerned with the creation of man per se, it follows that these adjectival terms can be said to describe man qua man and we can conclude that, in the first creation account, it is man as such that is created "masculine" and "feminine." That is, masculinity and femininity—or, more properly, the active and receptive principles that characterize the male and female of the human species (indeed creation as a whole)—are attributable to man as such; they are a feature of the species of man.

Since that which is in the effect must first be in the cause, there

is a further step that must be taken into account for the complementarity that is attributable to man as such. What would be the source? It would have to be a property of the substantial form since it is the soul that determines the nature of the substance, the powers and potencies it possesses. Here it is necessary to derive and propose a new metaphysical principle: It can be said that the nature of the soul is both active (understood as the masculine principle) and receptive (understood as the feminine principle). How so?

Aquinas follows Aristotle in arguing that the soul is the first principle of life in a body potentially alive. But he states further that "the soul communicates *that being in which it subsists* to the corporeal matter, out of which and the intellectual soul there is exists one being."[22] In another manner of speaking, then, the soul subsists in the being of God, receives its existence and life from God; it is this existence and life that is communicated to the body.[23] The soul is therefore also active in that it animates the body as its form and first principle of life. Thus we can say that the soul itself reflects both receptive and active principles that, when taken together, lend a potency for relationship, for giving and for receiving, to human nature as such. This is a further specification of a principle that is an established premise of the received tradition: Man as such is a reflection of the nature of the Triune God, a God who is in His nature a relationship of persons; it is man qua man who contains the principle of relationality in his very essence.

This potency is concretely realized when the soul, united with designated matter in either man or woman, reveals the embodied complementarity of the human species. But it can also be argued that when the terms masculine and feminine are replaced with their traditional corollary terms active and receptive, we are led directly to the insight that though men certainly represent the active principle and women the receptive (a simple reflection on the design of the human body leads to this insight), it can certainly also be said that, if these principles are attributable to man as such, then both men and women possess these capacities. Both will possess the potency to be

properly active and receptive, something clearly borne out in any honest analysis of human experience.

Thus it can be said now that, though the details may have been missing, the late Holy Father appears to have been justified in claiming that the first creation account is a reference to man in the objective sense, that is, to man qua man, the nature of man in the abstract. Most importantly for our purposes here, this analysis reveals that Genesis 1:27 confirms the fundamental equality of men and women, correcting what some would say is a persistent misunderstanding in the tradition. Both are made in the image of God, both are constituted by the same substantial form, and are therefore both equally human, endowed with reason, will, and freedom, and characterized by both receptivity and act.

B. GENESIS 2:22–24:

In the second account, we find a very different description of the creation of man and woman, a sequence of events that bears a close look. At Genesis 2:22, woman is made or built (*banah*) out of one of man's ribs (*tsela*) and both God and the man are finally content that a proper helper has been found. God takes material from man, in this case, the individual particular man, to fashion woman. Here the sacred author refers to woman and man as *'îsh* and *ishshâh,* references to individual and concretely existing persons. Adam is made from *adama,* from the earth; Eve is made from *tsela*—and a different word is used to describe her coming into being—she is "built" (*banah*) from Adam's rib (*tsela*).

In Thomistic terms, in the second creation account, designated matter and the principle of individuation have been introduced into the equation. The Adam and Eve (the *'îsh* and the *ishshâh*) of the second creation account are the result of particular matter (earth; rib) being introduced; the substantial form that makes man what he is absolutely (*adam*) illuminated in the first account has now found individuation and differentiation via the designated matter that the form animates. The complementarity that characterizes the nature

as such has now been embodied in two concretely existing beings, differentiated by two distinct but related kinds of matter. That is, as Aquinas argues in *De Ente et Essentia,* (referencing his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*) to be male or female is in the species of accident: "Some accidents result from matter because of its relation to a special form. Examples are male and female among animals—a difference that is reducible to matter, as the *Metaphysics* says."[24]

Clearly, however, the difference constituted by gender refers to something more definitive than white or black skin, or blue or brown eyes. Here Aquinas further distinguishes two types of accidents: those accidents that do not flow from the essential principles of the species (e.g., eye color) and those that do. These latter are inseparable (or proper) accidents. An accident is deemed "inseparable" or "proper" because it follows of necessity from the essential principles of a substance. Eye color is not an inseparable accident; if it were, all human beings would have the same color eyes. Thus, to be exact, in Aquinas, gender is an inseparable accident (i.e., one caused by the proper principles of a substances) following upon the matter and ordered to a "special form" called animality, by reason of which the matter serves as its proximate principle.[25] These sorts of accidents do not remain in the matter should the form be removed, that is, they do not remain with the body after death, but remain with the form.[26] They are inseparable from the essential principles of the substance.[27] The other type of accident is that which remains in the matter when the form is taken away. These are separable accidents such as black or white skin; these do not issue "from the nature of the soul" and do not follow from the essential principles of a substance.

That Aquinas does not consider gender attributable to matter alone is demonstrated more precisely in the second book of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*.[28] After treating a series of objections to the claim that the individuation of the human soul continues after death, Aquinas argues that each soul is commensurate to a particular individual body; that is, it is adapted to *this* body and not to *that* body.[29] It is this commensuration that remains in the soul even in its state of

separation.[30] Every human person is a union of a particular soul with a particular body; it is one and the same substantial form, shaped by or commensurate to the composite substance of which it is a part.[31] This would seem to support John Paul's frequent reference to the "personal inner structure" of the person. If each person is also individuated according to the soul with which it is destined to be united, this could be the origin of the personal subjectivity of concretely existing human persons.[32]

In sum, on Aquinas's account, gender is an inseparable or proper accident, accruing to man on account of matter but residing not in the matter but in the composite. It is a proper accident, that is, something that is predicated properly of the substance, inherent in and inseparable from the *res* concretely considered. To be a woman or a man is not an accident like having blue eyes or white skin. The type of accident that is constituted by being a man or a woman is one that is "inseparable from the form of the human species once this species is individualized."[33]

We are able to conclude that men and women possess the same essence; they are different only in the way this essence (the individualized essence) is actualized in an individual human person. More precisely, each soul is commensurate to the particular body it animates, providing the powers that reflect not only those that attend the substantial form of the *suppositum humanum* but those that permit it to adapt to the individuality of the individual it animates. By its very nature, the soul also constitutes the unique and unrepeatable individuality of each man and woman.

There is one remaining element in the Scripture passage that needs to be accounted for, that is, the fact that it is the matter of which man is made that gives of itself for the fashioning of woman. Woman is not created of the same "stuff" as man but "built" out of the man's rib. One implication of this is that it could be said that woman is made from "finer stuff," that is, from matter that already contains a higher degree of actuality and of potency. Thus, it could be argued that woman's "first actuality," itself a kind of potency, united to the

signate matter of which she is made, manifests her embodiment as the receptive principle as such, lending woman a purer potency, a greater receptivity that is both ontological and physical.[34]

The priority given to activity in human affairs overlooks the fact that activity is derivative of receptivity; it is dependent on receptivity. The significance of woman's place in the created order and her very embodiment as the receptive principle suddenly take on new significance.[35]

Aquinas argues that the good disposition of the sensitive powers is as necessary to the exercise of the intellect as are the phantasms.[36] Indeed, in his account, those with the greater bodily sensitivity "have the better intellect."[37] Thus the material disposition of the subject will be a determining factor in the capacity of the subject to know; the more sensitive the subject, the more disposed he or she is to engage in the immaterial operations of knowing. Given woman's purported finer sensitivity, could this insight point to the foundations of so-called "women's ways of knowing"? Is it not possible that the matter of which women are made (and which is immediately distinguishable from that of the male in DNA tests) lends itself to greater receptivity and to the reception of different phantasms? Given that, as Scripture reveals, woman has the same rational powers as man, her capacity to abstract universal natures from the individuating conditions of matter would equate with his. But both science and human experience points to differences in the things to which men and women attend.[38] Though these questions go beyond our purposes here and are topics for another study, it does seem plausible that those differences are attributable to the actual nature of men and women, distinguished as they are by the matter of which they are made.[39]

But what is most important here is that the equality of man and woman can now be said to include not only that they are equally human, since both are instantiations of the same substantial form. They are also equal in the sense that both are instantiations of a composite being in which their distinct and complementary genders are inseparable accidents, attributable to that composite. This resolves the

problem that certain feminists (perhaps correctly) claim has plagued human history: the male of the species cannot be considered normative for the species *humanum*. And neither can the female. This analysis accounts for the readily observable phenomenon that men and women both possess a capacity for both receptivity and action. And it illuminates the significant truth that receptivity comes *before* activity, affecting a proper reordering of the qualities attributable to the human person as such.

C. GENESIS 1 AND 2 CONSIDERED TOGETHER

Taking Genesis 1 and 2 together will illuminate more fully the meaning of Genesis 2:22 and its significance for our question here. In Genesis 1, the sacred author seems to lay out a particular hierarchical order in which God creates. God begins with the heaven and the earth, then light, he then divides the waters, then creates dry land, then vegetation, day and night. He goes on to create swarms of living creatures: birds, monsters, cattle, and things that creep. This all culminates in the creation of *adam,* human nature created male and female. This is clearly a hierarchy that is on its way up, from lower life forms to higher.

In the second account we read at 2:7 that a particular man (*'îsh*) is made from the dust of the earth. When, at Genesis 2:18, God sees that man is alone, God forms every creature and brings them to man to be named. Then God, realizing that none of the creatures correspond to man's own being, and that it is not good for man to be alone, decides it is necessary to make a fitting helper (*ezer kenegdo*) for him—then puts him into a deep sleep and forms the woman from man's rib. Adam says "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" and as John Paul says, in Eve he recognizes another person, a being equal to himself, a someone, not a something—a someone he can love, to whom he can make of himself a gift and who can reciprocate in kind. This seems fairly straightforward.

But there are several additional and important points to glean from considering these two chapters together. First of all it is only

when we come to the making of woman that we see the final significance of the order introduced in the first account and brought to completion in the second. Adam is made from the earth (*adama*) but Eve is made from Adam. Though it has troubled feminists forever, the fact that Eve is created second is not to make her subservient. Eve is not created "second"; she is created last. And she is, in fact, made on the way up—the last creature to appear, a creature made, not from earth, but, as stated earlier, from something that arguably already contains a greater actualization than dust or clay. It is certainly plausible to suggest that she is made of "finer stuff." But minimally we can say that because of the order suggested by reading the accounts together, Eve can be seen as the pinnacle of creation, not as a creature whose place in that order is subservient or somehow less in stature than that of Adam.

This proposition is reinforced when we consider that the Hebrew word usually translated as "helper," "*ezer*," does not mean servant or slave.[40] When this word is used elsewhere in Scripture, it has the connotation of Divine aid.[41] Used here to express helper or partner, it is a word that is indicates someone who is not a slave or even subservient—there is the sense of an equal, a partner, help sent by God.[42] Thus, Eve is not to be his servant—a different word would have been used if that were the intention—but someone who can help him to live. However, it is essential to note the full text: it is '*ezer kekenegdo*; *kekenegdo* is a preposition that means "in front of," "in the sight of," "before" (in the spatial sense). And so we must recognize that while woman is not "below" man in the order of creation, neither is she above him. She stands in front of him, before him, meeting his gaze as it were and sharing in the responsibility for the preservation of all that precedes them. After all, at Genesis 1:27, both male and female are given the command to subdue the earth and fill it.

Perhaps now we can say something more definitive concerning John Paul's claim in the opening passages of the *Theology of the Body*. Looked at through the lens provided by Aquinas's account of the soul in union with matter, it does appear to be plausible that the

first creation account is concerned with man in the objective sense, while the second account refers to man in his subjectivity. Both male and female are proper accidents because of "their relationship to a special form," a predication that can only be made if we first understand that human persons are composites of both a substantial form and matter. To be a man or a woman is a property that is predicated of the species—and is thus a part of the essence of the species, when instantiated in particular individual human beings. This analysis thus frees us to consider the differences between men and women, and their complementary natures without compromising their fundamental equality. John Paul's further statements regarding the psychological character of the subjectivity expressed by the second creation account now have a proper context: they point to the need for a further development of a properly Thomistic psychology that renders male and female complementarity coherent within that framework.

The Genius of Men and of Women

While acknowledging the need for further investigation if we are to arrive at a robust Thomist account of complementarity,[43] there are several things that can be stated at this point in this current study. Specifically I propose that this analysis reveals something significant and quite distinct about the genius attributable to both man and to woman, an analysis I can only point to here.[44] I begin with man since he is first in the order of creation.

First, it is notable that man is (apparently) in the Garden alone with God for some period before the appearance of woman, something that has important implications for the place he occupies in the created order and the traditional understanding of man as the head of the household. But aside from this special relationship with the Creator, it can be said that man's first contact with reality is of a horizon that otherwise contains only lower creatures, what we might call "things" (*res*); this is what leads God to conclude that the

man is incomplete and alone, and ultimately leads to the building of woman. Now man's orientation toward things is clearly a part of God's design. Man is tasked with naming all the things God brings him (including woman); it is in naming them that he takes dominion over them.[45] He knows them in ways that woman simply does not. It is man who, at Genesis 2:15, is put in the garden to "till it," well before the fall puts him at odds with creation. This is his work. The fact that man's initial horizon includes only things could be said to provide a point of departure in Scripture for the well-documented evidence that men seem more naturally oriented toward things than toward persons.[46] In fact, it has significance for the question of what might constitute the genius or charism of men.

But this orientation toward things does not mean that man is somehow disordered. Man's first contact with reality includes the Lord God. He is, in the first instance, aware of his dependence upon his Creator and he is truly marked by that relationship forever after. It is within this context that he encounters the woman. Until the woman is brought to him, both to name and to love as he can love no other, he has no "other" like himself. Though this will change after the fall, he knows immediately that the woman is not a thing, not an object; she is a person. Without hesitation he declares that she is "flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bones." And, while he can and does name her, he cannot have dominion over her in the same way he has over everything else. She represents for him his highest good, the greatest gift God has given him and, as a consequence, the value of all the rest of creation is abrogated. From and through his encounter with the woman, the Lord God reveals to him the nature of the reciprocal relationship of the gift of self. And he must realize as well that his own gift—that of caring for and using the goods of creation—is a gift to be exercised in service to her authentic good and in the service of their mission to have dominion over all the earth.

The contemporary dissatisfaction with the tendency of man to attend to things more than to people completely overlooks the fact that the things of creation also have ontological status. They may be

lower creatures, but they are creatures and, as such, are held in existence by God in much the same way that human persons are.[47] The masculine inclination toward things and their uses is an aspect of the charism of men and, in many ways, it accounts for the building up of human civilization, has led throughout history to human flourishing, and has made and still makes possible the preservation of families and of culture. The proper response to the manifestation of the genius of men is not ridicule or resentment, but gratitude.

Now to woman. In contrast to man and of special significance is the quite legitimate claim that, since woman comes into existence after man, her first contact with reality is of a horizon that, from the beginning, includes man, that is, it includes persons. One can imagine Eve, a person also endowed with reason and free will who, upon seeing Adam, would recognize another like her, an equal, while the other creatures and things around her appear only on the periphery of her gaze. This exegetical insight seems to provide a starting place in Scripture for the equally well documented phenomenon that women seem more naturally oriented toward persons.[48]

In *Mulieris Dignitatem,* John Paul argues that the feminine genius is grounded in the fact that all women have the capacity to be mothers—and that this capacity, whether fulfilled in a physical or spiritual sense, orients her toward the other, toward persons. There is plenty of evidence to demonstrate this claim. And in every sense, Eve is certainly the mother of all humankind. But, the point is that, in addition to her capacity to conceive and nurture human life, indeed prior to it, woman's place in the order of creation reveals that—from the beginning—the horizon of all womankind includes persons, includes the other. This may explain why girls and women seem to know—from the beginning—that they are meant for relationship.

The genius of woman is found here. While man's first experience of his own existence is of loneliness, woman's horizon is different, right from the start. From the first moment of her own reality, woman sees herself in relation to the other. The fall will result in a disorder in this inclination; Eve's desire will now be for relationship with

man, even if she knows he is using her as an object. But the preceding analysis has shown that this capacity—to include the other—is not a lesser quality. It is not something that only unnecessarily complicates things, diverting us from an otherwise clear line of sight to achieving results. Nor does it compromise woman's fundamental intelligence, her competence, her ability to get things done. Woman's genius is to keep constantly before us the fact that the existence of living persons, whether in the womb or walking around outside of it, cannot be forgotten while we frantically engage in the tasks of human living. Woman is responsible for reminding us all that all human activity is to be ordered toward authentic human flourishing.[49]

Though space does not permit a fuller treatment, it must be noted that, while the masculine and feminine genius can be spoken of on the level of nature, they are in fact both supernatural realities whose full expression cannot be realized without the action of grace. This is clear when one considers John Paul's claim that Mary is the prototype of the feminine genius.[50] I have argued elsewhere that St. Joseph offers a model for men.[51]

Conclusion

My aim in this paper was fairly straightforward: to reinterpret the two creation accounts in the first two chapters of Genesis through the lens provided by Aquinas's account of the soul in union with the body, in order to illuminate and extend the properly Thomistic framework of Saint Pope John Paul II's theory of complementarity. I have shown that it is reasonable to conclude that the nature of woman in relation to man is one of equality and one of difference, but a difference that in no way compromises that equality. I have endeavored to reveal the meaning thus found in Genesis 1 and 2 and describe its implications for a theology of complementarity and the genius of man and of woman.

Perhaps it goes without saying that there are signs all around us of the descent of man. The world is in desperate need of both wom-

en and men who understand and live out the complementarity that characterizes their fundamental relationship. As the Compendium on the Social Doctrine of the Church reminds us, it is from this "uniduality" that we derive our mission: "to this 'unity of the two' God has entrusted not only the work of procreation and family life, but the creation of history itself."[52]

Notes

1. St. Pope John Paul II, *The Original Unity of Man and Woman* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1981). John Paul's original text was revisited, retranslated, and reordered according to the late Holy Father's own schema by Dr. Michael Waldstein and republished under the title *Man and Woman He Created Them: The Theology of the Body* (Boston: St. Paul Media, 2006). All references in this article are to the Waldstein edition cited hereafter as *TOB*.
2. *TOB*, 2:4.5, 136–37.
3. *TOB*, 3:2.1, 138–39.
4. Karol Wojtyła, "Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being," *Person and Community* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 212. See also my paper, "The Centrality of Lived Experience in Wojtyła's Account of the Person," *Roczniki Filozoficzne*, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, 2013, Vol. LXI, no. 4, 19–41.
5. See in particular John Paul, *Love and Responsibility* and *The Acting Person*, as well as several essays in *Person and Community* and *Fides et Ratio*.
6. There is a much fuller treatment of this in his apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (August 15, 1988). However, it also does not provide the analysis necessary to establish the actual foundations of complementarity. As the Holy Father states at the beginning of the letter, it is written as a meditation and so the language and approach corresponds more properly to that sort of document.
7. *TOB*, 1:2–3, 132.
8. *TOB*, 131–32.
9. *TOB*, 1:3, 133.
10. *TOB*, 1:2–3, 133. Italics mine.
11. *TOB*, 2:3, 135.
12. *TOB*, 2:4–5, 135–36.
13. *TOB*, 2:5, 136.
14. *TOB*, 2:5, 137.
15. *TOB*, 3:1, 137–38.
16. *TOB*, 3:1–2, 138–39.
17. It should be noted that only neither "Adam" nor "Eve" acquire names until after the fall.

18. I wish to acknowledge the work of Joseph Hartel at this point in my essay. Late in my research I discovered his text in which he explores many of the same questions that interest me in this investigation and those I anticipate. I was pleased to find that he confirmed my analysis of Aquinas's treatment of these questions as well as my own instinct that, in Aquinas, we will find the framework we need for an integral feminism. See Joseph Francis Hartel, *Femina ut Imago Dei in the Integral Feminism of St. Thomas Aquinas*, *Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana,* (Rome, 1993).
19. I am indebted to Monsignor Michael Magee, chair of the Systematic Theology Department and professor of Sacred Scripture at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia, for his help with the meaning of the original Hebrew texts and his affirmation of my hypothesis.
20. It is important to state that the notion of man as such is not exactly the equivalent to the notion of all men collectively considered. However, as stated above, when the word "adam" is without the definite article, it is a reference to man in general, the notion of man. Thus it is possible to claim a certain degree of coextensivity between these two terms.
21. The word *'îsh*, on the other hand, designates specifically the male, the concrete individual man, because the word *zâchâr* is the one used in an adjectival sense for "male" (it is related to the word for "remember," perhaps because of the computation of genealogy through the male line). Sometimes *'îsh* is also used in the sense of "each one, each man." The word *'îsh* is not used at all until Gen 2:23, right after the woman is created and Adam is naming her *ishshâh* while saying this is because she is taken from the *'îsh*.
22. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 76, a. 1, ad 5. Italics mine.
23. This is quite exact since Aquinas holds that being is "existence" itself and that God himself is pure act or existence.
24. Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1968) chaps. 6, 5, and 68.
25. Gender is here used in its comprehensive sense—as both an ontological and material reality.
26. Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, chap. 5, 68.
27. Ibid., chap. 7, 69.
28. See *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, 81, 8. Though it does not deal directly with the distinction between genders but with the individuation of the human soul and its continuing individuation after it is separated from the body at death.
29. Commensuration is a term that means literally to have the same measure. Aquinas means here that each body is adapted or accommodated, even interpenetrated in an equal measure by the soul intended for it.
30. I am indebted to Sr. Prudence Allen and especially to Monsignor John Wippel for this insight into Aquinas's treatment of the question of gender. Though he does not treat gender in particular, for a very thorough treatment of Aquinas's use of the terms substance and accident, see John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas*

Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being (Washington: Catholic University of America Press) 2000, 197–237.

31. Thus Aquinas cannot be said to conclude that there are two different types of souls for men and for women.
32. John Paul argues in *Mulieris Dignitatem* that woman's genius issues from "the personal structure of her feminine nature." This category is used by Karol Wojtyła throughout his work and especially in *The Acting Person* (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), Chapter 3.
33. See Hartel, *Femina ut Imago Dei in the Integral Feminism of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 71.
34. This proposition will require further research; at a minimum, it calls for a brief explanation of the term "first actuality." As Aristotle uses the expression, a first actuality is not itself an activity; that would constitute a "second actuality." It is a capacity or ability to act. It is thus a kind of potentiality that permits the living thing to act according to its nature. *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: From Thales to Aristotle*, eds., S. Marc Cohen, Patricia Curd, and C. D. C. Reeve, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2011) 689–690.
35. I am indebted to Professor Janet Smith for pointing out this implication of the analysis.
36. Aquinas, *ST,* I, 79, 4, reply objection 3.
37. Ibid.
38. Though it will not be possible to include it here, it should also be noted that scientific research regarding what distinguishes men and women supports many of the conclusions found in the work of John Paul as well as in this paper. See Steven E. Rhoads, *Taking Sex Differences Seriously,* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2004) 22–26; Anne Moir and David Jessel, *Brain Sex: The Real Difference Between Men and Women*, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1991) 68–112.
39. For a more complete account of these propositions, see my paper "Woman as Knower," *Lonergan Review,* Volume 5, Issue 1, 2014.
40. I am using the word here as it is usually meant—as someone who occupies a lower rung on the ladder in any particular context. A different interpretation of the word servant is associated with being a follower of Christ, which, at this point in salvation history, cannot be invoked. But I do not mean to imply that woman is not to serve man. As St. Paul says in Ephesians 5, both men and women are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. The question of the headship of the man in the family is not under scrutiny here and is a topic for further research.
41. Excellent examples can be found in the Psalms: for example, Ps 30:11b, "The LORD will be a helper (*'ezer*) to me," or Ps 121:1, "I will lift up my eyes to the mountains, whence comes my help (*'ezrî*)." The name of the great scribe "Ezra" of the restoration of Israel under the Persians, namesake of the biblical book, seems to be the Aramaic masculine form of the same word.
42. In his very fine translation of these texts, Robert Alter translates *ezer kenegdo* as "sustainer" rather than "helper," a word with a much closer meaning to that intended

by the sacred author in my opinion. I refer here to "helper" since that is the more traditional term used in most translations and makes my dispute with the usual interpretation more precise. See Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: Norton and Company, 1996), 9, fn. 18.

43. For example, a fuller Thomist account would require an exploration of the role the divine exemplars plays in understanding God's intent in creating man male and female. In addition, Aquinas argues that distinctions of masculinity and femininity mirror the beauty found in the diversity of nature and thus lead to the perfection of the species (*ST Supp,* q. 81.3) since these differences are ordered toward contemplation (*ST* I.92.1). Clearly there is much more work to be done to bring to light a Thomistic understanding of complementarity.
44. For a more detailed account, especially of the "masculine genius," see my paper "The Genius of Man," in *Thinking with Pope Francis: Catholic Women Reflect on Complementarity, Feminism, and the Church,* forthcoming from OSV Publishing, Fall, 2014.
45. Indeed, Aquinas argues that Adam received an additional preternatural gift, infused knowledge, in order to be able to name all the animals brought before him. *Summa theologiae* I, Q. 94, a. 3. And though it is from an entirely different tradition, I find it so interesting to consider that one of Lao-Tze's more famous aphorisms is: "The beginning of wisdom is to call things by their right names."
46. See especially *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 18. Scientific studies have documented that infants and young children display behavior that corresponds to these differences from the very beginning. See Rhoads, 24–25
47. For an extended treatment of the meaning and significance of creatures qua creatures, see Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, as well as Deborah Savage, "The Metaphysics of Creation as a Foundation for Environmental Stewardship and Economic Prosperity," *Nova et Vetera* 12 (Winter, 2012): 233–52.
48. See Rhoads, 23–24.
49. Angelo Cardinal Scola's argues that the father introduces the child to the "law of exchange [work] as the law of growth in life," while the mother introduces her to the "law of gratuity [love]." See Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery,* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005) 242.
50. John Paul, *Mulieris Dignitatem,* 5.
51. Deborah Savage, "The Genius of Man," forthcoming, OSV Publishing.
52. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004) 147.