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Locating a Spousal Meaning of the Body in the *Summa Theologiae*:
A Comparison of a Central Idea Articulated in the *Theology of the Body* by Pope John Paul II
With the Mature Work of St. Thomas Aquinas

A DISSERTATION

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This study offers a comparison of the mature thought of St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa theologiae* with *The Theology of the Body* catecheses of Pope John Paul II, specifically concerning the notion of “the spousal meaning of the body” that the pope articulates. The study argues that *The Theology of the Body* was one of several attempts, and certainly the most elaborate, by John Paul to defend *Humanae vitae*, the 1968 encyclical on birth control by Pope Paul VI. There are two premises argued by this study. First, that the birth control debate was partly the result of an insufficient methodology in moral theology at the time, which overemphasized the exterior structure of human action at the expense of a unified view of the human person. Second, that John Paul sought to reconnect theology with the experience of human persons.

Therefore, this dissertation first offers an historical narrative describing the departure from the unified theology articulated by St. Thomas Aquinas which yielded the deficient theological methodology of the early twentieth century implicated in the debate surrounding birth control. This study then offers a survey of John Paul’s pre-pontifical work. Through an examination of that corpus, the study argues for a certain respect John Paul had for Aquinas even though he was fascinated by the consciousness-based philosophical school of phenomenology.

In his published defenses of *Humanae vitae*, John Paul argued that since the human body represents the person to the world, the body speaks a certain language. In *The Theology of the Body*, he would insist that the body has a spousal meaning—a drive for another person to whom one can make a complete gift of self. This spousal meaning of the body is inherent in the constitution of every person.

While John Paul did not offer any positive reference to Aquinas in his *Theology of the Body*, this study explores Aquinas's mature work to conclude that his metaphysical anthropology provides a suitable foundation for the notion of the pope's spousal meaning of the body. At the same time, John Paul's articulation corrects some deficiencies in Aquinas's own thought.

This dissertation by Thomas Petri fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in sacred theology approved by John S. Grabowski, Ph.D., as Director, and by William C. Mattison, Ph.D., and John D. Corbett, O.P., Ph.D. as Readers.

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Contents

Signature page.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Abbreviations.....	vi
General Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: From Aquinas to the Manualists.....	13
Introduction.....	13
I. From St. Thomas Aquinas to Nominalism.....	14
<i>A. The Early Penitentials and Confessionals</i>	14
<i>B. The Synthesis of St. Thomas Aquinas</i>	16
<i>C. William of Ockham and Nominalism</i>	29
II. After William of Ockham.....	38
<i>A. The Development of Casuistry after the Thirteenth Century</i>	38
<i>B. The Birth of Neo-Thomism</i>	44
Conclusion.....	47
Chapter 2: Personalism in the Debate on Marriage and Contraception.....	56
Introduction.....	56
I. The Stirrings for Change Before 1953.....	57
<i>A. The Anglican Communion and Casti Connubii</i>	57
<i>B. Personalism and Marriage: Dietrich von Hildebrand and Herbert Doms</i>	62
<i>C. The Roman Rota and Pope Pius XII</i>	67
II. The First Phase of the Debate (1953-1962).....	70
<i>A. The Hesperidin Pill and the Principle of Double Effect</i>	70
<i>B. The Therapeutic Use of the Progesterone Pill</i>	72
<i>C. The Emergence of Personalist Arguments in the Birth Control Debate</i>	75
III. The Second Phase of the Debate (1962-1968).....	78
<i>A. John Rock and the Widening of the Birth Control Debate</i>	78
<i>B. The Second Vatican Council</i>	82
<i>C. The Reports of the Papal Commission</i>	87
IV. <i>Humanae Vitae</i> and the Aftermath.....	95
<i>A. The Encyclical</i>	95
<i>B. Reactions to the Encyclical</i>	102
Conclusion.....	108
Chapter 3: The Moral Theory of Karol Wojtyla.....	111
Introduction.....	111
I. Karol Wojtyla's Early Studies.....	113
<i>A. Experience and Theology: Wojtyla Studies St. John of the Cross</i>	113
<i>B. Experience and Philosophy: Wojtyla Studies Max Scheler</i>	118
II. Wojtyla's Early Teachings.....	124
<i>A. The Lublin Lectures: The Relationship of Phenomenology and Ontology</i>	124

<i>B. Development from the Lublin Lectures to Love and Responsibility</i>	128
<i>C. Love and Responsibility</i>	134
III. A Philosophy Matures.....	138
<i>A. The Shift after Love and Responsibility</i>	138
<i>B. The Acting Person</i>	141
<i>C. After The Acting Person</i>	148
Conclusion.....	151
Chapter 4: Karol Wojtyla's Ethics of Sexuality.....	153
Introduction.....	153
I. Sexuality and Marriage.....	154
<i>A. The Personalistic Norm and the Sexual Urge</i>	154
<i>B. Love and the Gift of Self</i>	158
<i>C. The Nature of Marriage</i>	162
II. The Body in Wojtyla's Early Works.....	169
<i>A. The Religious Experience of Purity</i>	169
<i>B. The Body in Love and Responsibility</i>	172
<i>C. The Body in The Acting Person</i>	175
III. Karol Wojtyla's Analysis of <i>Humanae Vitae</i>	182
<i>A. Conjugal Love and Responsible Parenthood</i>	184
<i>B. Integration and the Conjugal Act: Its Significance and Meaning</i>	186
Conclusion.....	193
Chapter 5: The Spousal Meaning of the Body in <i>The Theology of the Body</i>.....	195
Introduction.....	195
I. The Analysis of Creation.....	198
<i>A. Creation and Original Solitude</i>	198
<i>B. The Body in Creation</i>	203
II. The Meaning of the Body after the Fall.....	211
<i>A. Sin, Shame, and Concupiscence</i>	211
<i>B. The Redemption of the Body</i>	215
III. The Language of the Body in Marriage.....	221
<i>A. Consent, the Body, and Truth</i>	221
<i>B. The Moral Norm of Humanae Vitae</i>	226
Conclusion.....	232
Chapter 6: The Anthropology of St. Thomas Aquinas.....	238
Introduction	238
I. Man: A Composite Person.....	239
<i>A. A Body and Soul Composite</i>	239
<i>B. The Powers of a Soul United to a Body</i>	247
<i>C. The Body and Knowledge</i>	256
<i>D. Person in Aquinas</i>	262
II. Sexuality and Human Flourishing.....	270
<i>A. Sexual Difference in the Summa Theologiae</i>	270

<i>B. Sexuality and Human Flourishing</i>	277
III. Original Innocence and Original Sin.....	283
Conclusion.....	291
Chapter 7: The Movement of Love in the <i>Summa Theologiae</i>.....	294
Introduction.....	294
I. The Metaphysical Foundation of Love.....	295
<i>A. Love: Attraction to the Good</i>	295
<i>B. Passion, Reason, and Will</i>	301
<i>C. Friendship and Concupiscence</i>	309
II. Virtuous Love.....	316
<i>A. Love is Prudent</i>	316
<i>B. Love is Temperate</i>	324
III. Charity: The Friendship of God.....	333
<i>A. Grace and Nature</i>	333
<i>B. Charity: The Love Ordering All Loves</i>	339
Conclusion.....	348
Chapter 8: Marriage and the Conjugal Act in St. Thomas Aquinas.....	351
Introduction.....	351
I. Marriage as the Greatest Friendship.....	354
<i>A. The Nature and Role of Women according to St. Thomas Aquinas</i>	354
<i>B. Marriage in the Supplement of the Summa Theologiae</i>	360
<i>C. Marriage in the Summa Contra Gentiles</i>	366
<i>D. Marriage in the Summa Theologiae</i>	371
II. The Conjugal Act according to St. Thomas Aquinas.....	381
<i>A. The Conjugal Act in the Summa Theologiae</i>	381
<i>B. The Marriage Debt, Union, and Procreation</i>	384
Conclusion.....	394
General Conclusion.....	396
I. Summary and Synthesis.....	396
<i>A. Context</i>	396
<i>B. Karol Wojtyla – Pope John Paul II</i>	400
<i>C. St. Thomas Aquinas</i>	409
II. Conclusion and Critique.....	413
III. Further Questions.....	418
Bibliography.....	421
Primary Sources	421
Secondary Sources	425

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout the dissertation:

<i>AAS</i>	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>
<i>AS</i>	<i>Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II</i> (Vatican: Typis Poloygottis Vaticanis, 1970-)
<i>CC</i>	Pope Pius XI, “On Christian Marriage (<i>Casti connubii</i>),” Encyclical (December 31, 1930), in <i>AAS</i> 22 (1930): 539-592. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations are from the official Vatican translation available at: www.vatican.va .
<i>GS</i>	Vatican Council II, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (<i>Gaudium et spes</i>),” (December 7, 1965), in <i>AAS</i> 58 (1966): 1025-1120. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations are from Norman P. Tanner, ed., <i>Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils</i> (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1990): 2:1069-1135.
<i>HV</i>	Pope Paul VI, “On the Regulation of Birth (<i>Humanae vitae</i>),” Encyclical (July 25, 1968), in <i>AAS</i> 60 (1968): 481-503. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations are from the official Vatican translation available at: www.vatican.va .
<i>ST</i>	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa theologiae</i> . Unless otherwise notes, all English translations are from <i>Summa theologiae</i> , trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1948; repr., Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1981).
<i>TOB</i>	John Paul II, <i>Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body</i> , trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006). I will be using Waldstein’s internal numbering system to refer to paragraphs of each general audience given by the Holy Father.

General Introduction

The scholastic movement that began in the twelfth century had a tremendous impact on the theology and practice of the universal Church.¹ Though not uninterrupted, the influence of the St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) has endured through the centuries. His intellectual progeny often refer to themselves as Thomists.² Scholasticism itself experienced a revival of sorts in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This new scholasticism, or neo-scholasticism, was situated in opposition to the secularism of the Enlightenment, which emphasized reason over faith.³ Neo-Scholasticism was a broad movement comprising many different strands of Thomism (considered neo-Thomists) as well as the devotees of other medieval theologians and philosophers. In contradistinction to the Enlightenment's subjectivism, they argued that objective moral norms were sustainable.

Influenced by neo-scholasticism, and neo-Thomism in particular, moral theologians began to identify objective criteria to evaluate human action in order to discern the rightness or wrongness of particular human actions. The impact of their work was significant due to the importance of the moral theology manuals being used to train priests at the time.

¹ "Scholasticism" is here understood to be the movement founded on a particular method of theological instruction developed at the universities of Paris and Oxford in the twelfth century. The father of the movement, Peter Abelard (d. 1142), employed the custom already use at the time by canon lawyers of "grouping opposed authorities on either side of a clearly established 'either-or' question" and settling the matter through disputation (Gerald A. McCool, *The Neo-Thomists* [Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994]: 3).

² The word "Thomism" refers to a species of scholasticism. The definition of Thomism has been in dispute for a number of years. Fundamentally, it refers to a movement that is in relation, somehow, to the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. However, specifically delineating who qualifies as a Thomist and who does not has been an area of contention [see Romanus Cessario, O.P., *A Short History of Thomism* [Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005]: 11-28]. James Weisheipl has offered a good working definition. For him, Thomism is "a theological and philosophical movement that begins in the thirteenth century, and embodies the systematic attempt to understand and develop the basic principles and conclusions of St. Thomas Aquinas in order to relate them to the problems and needs of each generation" (James A. Weisheipl, "Thomism," in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, [New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967]: 14:126).

³ "Neo-Scholasticism" was a broad movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that included not only a renewed interest in St. Thomas, although this was substantial, but also an interest in the scholastic method generally.

Catholic moral theology and practice was thus dominated from the seventeenth century to the mid-twentieth century by an emphasis on objective moral norms and the evaluation of human action by their physical structure. That is to say, the manualist tradition of the early twentieth century tended to describe human action as it could be observed exteriorly, and without reference to the interior workings or movements of the person. Additionally, following the scholastic emphasis on the absolute authority of nature, the manualists tended to identify the ends (*telos*) of human nature with the physical structures of the body.

Practically, this meant that the moral good in the sexual arena was synonymous with the finality of the procreative organs. The purpose or goal (the *telos*) of these organs is to procreate. Therefore, the manualists held, any act which frustrated this use was intrinsically immoral. And so this emphasis on physical structure of the act and its relationship to nature was easily associated with human biology and its purposes. In time, this exclusive focus on biology would be referred to somewhat pejoratively as “physicalism” or “biologism.”⁴ This focus on biology was most evident in sexual and medical ethics. Masturbation, for example, was thought to be intrinsically evil because it confounded the natural finality of the generative organ. Similarly, the manualists explained that contraception is intrinsically immoral because it also circumvents of the physical or biological *telos* of the procreative organs.

The limitations of this approach were felt well before the introduction of the birth control pill. The pill uses the hormone progesterone, which is natural to a woman’s body. It

⁴ Charles E. Curran was among the first to use the word “physicalism” when, in 1969, he wrote an article responding to Pope Paul VI’s encyclical on birth control, *Humanae Vitae*. He wrote that physicalism is “a natural law methodology which tends to identify the moral action with the physical and biological structure of the act” (Charles E. Curran, “Natural Law and Contemporary Moral Theology,” in Charles E. Curran, ed., *Contraception: Authority and Dissent* [New York: Herder and Herder, 1969]: 159; see also pp. 160-167).

also imitates the natural infertility a woman experiences during her menstrual cycle. Thus, the pill seemingly worked with the biological structures of the body rather than against them. Additionally, its use would not constitute a physical barrier in the conjugal act itself.⁵

In the twentieth century, another philosophical and theological movement arose, which would directly respond to physicalism. Though it is as varied and as multifaceted as scholasticism, personalism is a school of thought that emphasizes the person, rather than nature, as the primary object of moral discourse.⁶ In the Catholic Church, personalism grew within the larger discussion, which began in the early 1920s, on the nature of marriage, conjugal love and procreation. As Catholic theologians and the laity explored new and dynamic presentations of the Church's teaching on marriage, the inadequacy of the traditional, and somewhat physicalist, presentation of marriage was apparent.

Perceiving the imbalance of the Catholic teaching on marriage at the time, some personalists, like Dietrich von Hildebrand, sought to reemphasize the category of the person in moral discourse. Other personalists wanted to revise Church teaching on marriage, some in more extreme ways than others, and thus they may be labeled as revisionists. As I will

⁵ While I will be offering a detailed history of the debate surrounding the birth control pill, John S. Grabowski offers a succinct analysis of these issues and their relation to the manuals of theology. See John S. Grabowski, *Sex and Virtue* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 1-22.

⁶ A movement as broad as personalism with so many varied scholars eludes simple definition. The definition I have offered here is offered only in brief to assist the reader in categorizing the thinkers who will be presented in the first two chapters of the dissertation. As J.A. Mann has noted "any philosophy that insists upon the reality of the person—human, angelic, or divine—may legitimately be classified as personalist, the name personalism more commonly designates a movement of some significance... [that] is usually theistic in orientation, and places great stress on personality as a supreme value and as a key notion that gives meaning to all of reality" (J.A. Mann, "Personalism," in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 11 [New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967]: 172). Not all personalists were so for the same reasons. Some were responding to the philosophical materialism of the nineteenth century, others to evolutionism, and still others to idealism. As will be seen in chapter two, many Catholic personalists were responding to what they perceived to be an exclusive emphasis on human nature at the expense of the human person. What the movements all have in common is this concern for the human person and the attempt to shift discourse to the importance of the human person. Personalism took root in both America and Europe. For brief histories of personalism, see J.A. Mann, "Personalism," 172-174; John Cowburn, *Personalism and Scholasticism* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005): 47-84.

show in chapter two, Herbert Doms would advocate a moderate revision of Church teaching by insisting that the traditional teaching on the hierarchy of the ends of marriage (procreative and unitive) should be reversed, making the unitive aspect of marriage primary. But he was not a wholesale revisionist as Louis Janssens, and, later, Charles Curran and Bernard Häring, would prove to be. These theologians would argue that the human person has complete authority over nature, and, therefore, thought the Church's ban on contraception should be lifted. This was a position to which Herbert Doms never subscribed.

Initially, the debate in the mid-twentieth century surrounding the birth control pill began as a debate between the physicalist and personalist schools. However, as the Church gradually adopted a more personalist approach (as in *Gaudium et spes* and *Humanae Vitae*), the debate shifted to the more fundamental issue: the relationship between person and nature.

This is the context in which I am presenting Karol Wojtyła (d. 2005). I will show that he was committed to both personalism and Thomism. His unique personalism was apparent in his early books, *Love and Responsibility* and *The Acting Person*, the latter being an edited form of his 1953 dissertation.⁷ Wojtyła's Christian personalism is especially dominant in the series of Wednesday catecheses he gave when he became Pope John Paul II. On September 5, 1979, Pope John Paul II began a series of catechetical talks during his Wednesday general audience. These weekly catecheses concluded on November 28, 1984. They were interrupted only during the pope's recovery from an assassination attempt in 1981, during a Holy Year (1983-1984), and for various other intermittent topics. Collectively, these catecheses have been referred to as *The Theology of the Body*. Papal biographer George Weigel has suggested,

⁷ See Karol Wojtyła, *Milosc i Odpowiedzialnosc. Studium etyczne* (Lublin: KUL, 1960). English translation: Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H.T. Willets (1981; reprint, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991) and Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, trans. Andrzej Potocki (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979).

“These 130 catechetical addresses taken together, constitute a kind of theological time bomb set to go off, with dramatic consequences, sometime in the third millennium of the Church.”⁸ Only time will prove the veracity of this claim.

In the *Theology of the Body*, the body becomes the locus of the nature-person relationship. The pope coins the phrase “the spousal meaning of the body,” a central concept of the work. According to John Paul, the body necessarily expresses the gift of self, i.e., of the person. This spousal meaning is rooted in man’s very being and nature. The spousal meaning of the body is most apparent in the conjugal act of spouses and is at the heart of many of the pope’s assertions about man’s existence in the world. This meaning is not limited to marriage. Rather, it is fulfilled in the communion of persons, in which even celibates and virgins can participate, and is perfected in the beatific vision of God. Still, throughout *The Theology of Marriage*, the spousal relationship between man and woman is the prime reference for the spousal meaning of the body.

These catechetical talks were translated into various languages by the Vatican newspaper, *L’Osservatore Romano*. Pauline Books and Media later published the collection of these 130 catecheses in four volumes.⁹ Later, the same publishing company combined these four volumes into one, entitled *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*.¹⁰ The primary difficulty with the *L’Osservatore Romano* translations is that different translators

⁸ George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999), 343.

⁹ John Paul II, *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1981); John Paul II, *Blessed Are the Pure of Heart: Catechesis on the Sermon on the Mount and the Writings of St. Paul* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1983); John Paul II, *The Theology of Marriage and Celibacy: Catechesis on Marriage and Celibacy in Light of the Resurrection of the Body* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1986); John Paul II, *Reflections on Humanae Vitae: Conjugal Morality and Spirituality* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1984).

¹⁰ John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997).

translated different catecheses. As a result, key terms, such as the “spousal meaning of the body” are translated differently throughout the text.¹¹

Michael Waldstein discovered in the Vatican archives the original Polish manuscript on which *The Theology of the Body* was based. Waldstein surmises that the original manuscript had been ready for publication before Wojtyla’s election to the pontificate. Wojtyla brought the manuscript to Rome when he began his pontifical ministry.¹² This manuscript included headings for the text that were previously unknown as well as additional sections that were never publicly delivered. In 2006, Michael Waldstein published his own translation of *The Theology of the Body*. He gave it the title that appeared on the manuscript, *Man and Woman He Created Them*.¹³

This new edition has several benefits over the previous editions. First, it is translated by a single translator and thus it is translated consistently. Second, Waldstein has included the headings from the original manuscript and these reveal the structure of Wojtyla’s argument, allowing the work to be read systematically rather disjointedly as a series of talks. Finally, in some instances the Pope modified the text before delivering it and in some cases he omitted substantial portions. When they differ, Waldstein has included both the original text and the delivered text, using a side-by-side layout so the reader can easily identify the

¹¹ For a summation of the difficulties with the translation of *The Theology of the Body*, see Michael Waldstein, Introduction to John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 11-14 and Michael Waldstein, “The Project of a New English Translation of John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* on Its 20th and 25th Anniversary,” *Communio* 31 (2004): 345-351. Hereafter, *The Theology of the Body* will be referenced as *TOB* in the notes along with an accompanying catechesis number (according Waldstein’s numeration).

¹² See Waldstein, Introduction, 6-11.

¹³ See John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*.

changes. In my opinion, Waldstein's translation is the closest thing to a critical translation of these important catecheses available in any language.¹⁴

One of the concerns of this study is to show that in the 1960s and early 1970s Karol Wojtyla often incorporated references to St. Thomas Aquinas and was seldom critical of Aquinas's theological positions. Nevertheless, he was searching for a way to move beyond Thomistic philosophy and theology in order to include human experience as a theological category. His study of St. John of the Cross and Max Scheler helped him to do this. The philosophical fruit of that quest was *The Acting Person*.

In his articles after the publication of *The Acting Person*, Wojtyla was more likely to be respectfully critical of the Angelic Doctor, even noting, as I will show, that Aquinas's presuppositions were not suitable for a major discussion of human experience and consciousness. Throughout the 1970s, Wojtyla's philosophical and theological writings were more concerned with elaborating the subjective aspect of the human person. This emphasis was brought to bear in his many defense of *Humanae vitae*, the culmination of which is *The Theology of the Body*. According John Paul, *Humanae vitae* was the catalyst for these catecheses.¹⁵ Thus, in my view, *The Theology of the Body* is best read as a continuation of Wojtyla's work on sexual ethics from the 1960s and 1970s. I will show this development in chapter four.

Since Karol Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II before he could publish *Man and Woman He Created Them* and decided instead to deliver the text within the context of the Wednesday catecheses, the provenance and authority of the material is debatable. The text

¹⁴ While Waldstein has changed the title of the work, throughout this dissertation I will continue to refer to the pope's talks as *The Theology of the Body* rather than *Man and Woman He Created Them* to avoid confusion since the former title is more commonly known. I will, however, adopt Waldstein's citation system. He has numbered the catecheses consecutively and number each paragraph in each catechesis. Thus, 'TOB, no. 12:5' refers to catechesis 12, paragraph 5.

¹⁵ See TOB, no. 133.

was written by a private philosopher, Karol Wojtyla, but delivered to the world by the Pope of the Catholic Church, John Paul II. For this reason, when I refer to *The Theology of the Body* catecheses, I will refer to the author as Pope John Paul II, not Karol Wojtyla, even though they are the same person.

The authority of the material however remains a question. In my research, I have not found any theologian who holds that *The Theology of the Body* is magisterially infallible. These catecheses do not meet for an infallible *ex cathedra* papal declaration, an exercise of the extraordinary magisterium. Nor are they an exercise of the Church's ordinary and universal magisterium, which by definition is not teaching of the pope alone but also includes the common teachings of all the bishops in union with him. The pope does, however, have the authority to confirm or declare what is taught by the ordinary and universal magisterium, as when he confirmed that the ordinary and universal teaching of the Church prohibits the ordination of women to the priesthood. He did this in his 1994 Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*. However, neither the medium nor the message of *The Theology of the Body* suggest he is arguing that his conclusions are part of the ordinary and universal magisterium.

In addition to these two exercises of magisterial authority, however, the pope has his own ordinary magisterium: his daily preaching and written statements. Most theologians agree that these do not share in his charism of infallibility. Elements of his ordinary magisterium include: apostolic exhortations, letters, allocutions, homilies, messages, and audiences. Given the forum and intent of the Wednesday audiences, in which John Paul clearly intended to teach, I think Michael Waldstein is right when he says, "The Wednesday catecheses have a certain primacy of place in the ordinary magisterium of the Bishop of

Rome as pastor of the universal Church.”¹⁶ Because John Paul delivered the material of the manuscript during the Wednesday catecheses, the material written when he was private philosopher was subsumed into the ordinary (but not infallible) magisterium of a pontiff.

The pope never renounced metaphysical or ontological categories. On the contrary, in chapter three, I will show that he insisted upon their absolute necessity, even at the end of his life. Still because he presumes ontological conclusions already established in the tradition, he spends little time, for example, arguing for the stability of human nature or describing the nature of human action. And this is apparent in *The Theology of the Body*. So while he argues that man must be true to the natural spousal attribute of the human body, and must convey the meaning of the body, he does not explain exactly how the body has an intrinsic meaning.

During the time of Pope John Paul’s pontificate, there was a renewed interest in the recovery of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas as distinct from his commentators and the interpretations of neo-Thomists. This renewal is characterized by a focus on the works of Aquinas and on the sources he himself used.¹⁷ Though he lived in a different historical era than Pope John Paul, and was responding to different issues, Aquinas formulated his own concepts concerning the relationship between person and nature, of love, of marriage, and of the body. These came to their full fruition in his final work, the *Summa theologiae*, in which he provides a thorough analysis of key theological ideas.

¹⁶ Michael Waldstein, Introduction, 14. For a very thorough study of the concept of the magisterium and the different modes in which it is exercised, see Avery Dulles, S.J., *Magisterium: Teacher and Guardian of the Faith* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2007).

¹⁷ An example of this renewal is certainly the work of Servais Pinckaers, O.P., and Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P. See, for example, Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary Thomas Noble (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995); Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, eds. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 2005); and Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 2 volumes (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1996-2003).

While Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul had good reason to emphasize consciousness and experience in the twentieth century. I believe that in the 21st century many of the ontological and metaphysical categories in which Wojtyla was trained, and which are in the background of *The Theology of the Body*, have faded from the discussion of marriage and sex, even in the excitement over the pope's theology. I suggest that that a mutual interaction between Aquinas and John Paul's *The Theology of the Body* would be beneficial the thought of both.

John Paul II presumed much and so did not elaborate exactly how, ontologically speaking, the body relates to the person and how the human person relates to human nature. Aquinas, on the other hand, did not explore consciousness or human experience in the same way John Paul did. In this dissertation, I will argue that St. Thomas's anthropology, with its rich metaphysical foundation, can support the concept of the spousal meaning of the body articulated by the pope in these catecheses. This is how, I believe, one can locate the semblance of a spousal meaning of the body in the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas's most mature work.

This study will proceed as follows. Since I am suggesting that *The Theology of the Body* is a work personalism was developed in response to the manualist tradition rather than to Aquinas's theology, the first chapter will follow the analysis of several reputable contemporary scholars and historians who have successively shown the descent of manualist theology away from the work of Aquinas himself. The second chapter, then, will turn to the development of personalism within the larger ecclesial discussion on marriage and the debate on birth control. This chapter will trace the development of personalism in the twentieth century as a reaction to the perceived physicalism of the Catholic manuals of moral theology.

Chapter three will survey Karol Wojtyla's moral theory as it exists in his published works before his election to the pontificate. Chapter four will then turn to his ethics of sex and marriage. In chapter five, I will offer an exegesis of the spousal meaning of the body in *The Theology of the Body*.

Beginning in chapter six, the study will turn to St. Thomas Aquinas with an exegesis of his anthropology. Namely, I will explore his treatment of nature, person, and the body in the *Summa theologiae*. Chapter seven will then focus on Aquinas's notion of love and principally the various forms of love and his teaching that love must be rightly ordered. Finally, in chapter eight, I offer an exegesis of the Angelic Doctor's teaching on marriage and the conjugal act. In this concluding chapter, I hope to show how his anthropology has ramifications for his view of the relationship between husband and wife. The sum of these chapters, which I will synthesize in the general conclusion, will offer a reading of the spousal meaning of the body according to the *Summa theologiae*: a Thomistic spousal meaning of the body, if you will.

A brief word about methodology is in order. The first two chapters of this study are essential historical narratives. The chapters concerning my two subjects, Karol Wojtyla and St. Thomas Aquinas, are primarily exegetical. Since much of Wojtyla's published work addresses a wide variety of topics, I have limited myself to those works necessary for our study.¹⁸ The *corpus* of St. Thomas's work is massive. Therefore, I have limited myself to the

¹⁸ This initially proved somewhat difficult since I do not have a working knowledge of Polish and not all of Wojtyla's works have been translated into English. Yet, my knowledge of English, German, French, and Spanish proved sufficient since everything Wojtyla has ever published is available in translation in one or more of these languages. When translations have been available in more than one language, I have checked the translations against each other and I have noted any discrepancies.

Summa theologiae with the presumption that, as his final work, it represents his settled convictions.

I have referred to his other works only inasmuch as they elaborate what he writes in the *Summa theologiae*. These other sources are especially needed since Aquinas did not finish the *Summa theologiae* and his treatment on marriage was relegated to a *supplementum* added on to that work posthumously by his students. I have presumed that Aquinas's opinion on topics he treats in the *supplementum* remained unchanged during his life unless he specifically makes new argument in a later work, which he does in regard to indissolubility and monogamy in the *Summa contra gentiles*. When his later works further elaborate or modify his opinion in the *supplementum*, I offer an exegesis of those texts in this study.

Chapter 1

From Aquinas to the Manualists

Introduction

This chapter begins the study by offering an outline of the historical discontinuity between Aquinas's moral theology and that of the manuals. While the manualists and the theologians upon whom they depended (the Neo-Thomists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century) claimed Aquinas as their mentor, I argue this is not the case. Rather, following the work of Servais Pinckaers, this chapter will show that the manualists are the intellectual descendents, not of Aquinas, but of the nominalism introduced by William of Ockham. While the second half of this dissertation will focus on Aquinas, more thorough studies of his own intellectual heritage are available.¹

The current chapter has two sections. In the first, I will trace the transition from the theological synthesis offered by Aquinas to the nominalism of William of Ockham. The second section will identify significant developments in moral theology after Ockham with the development of the confessional manuals during the Reformation and the birth of neo-Thomism in the late nineteenth century. I will conclude this chapter, then, with a limited

¹ See Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 1-71; Pinckaers, O.P., *Sources*, 104-133, 195-215; and Servais Pinckaers, O.P., "La question des actes intrinsèquement mauvais. Etude historique," in *Ce qu'on ne peut jamais faire: la question des actes intrinsèquement mauvais Histoire et discussion* (Fribourg: 1986), 20-66. An English translation of this article is available, see Servais Pinckaers, O.P., "A Historical Perspective on Intrinsically Evil Acts," translated by Mary Thomas Noble, O.P. and Craig Steven Titus, in *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, eds. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 185-235. See also John A. Gallagher, *Time Past, Time Future: An Historical Study of Catholic Moral Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 5-28; Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 21-136; and Michael Bertram Crowe, *The Changing Profile of the Natural Law* (The Hague: 1977), 52-135; Fergus Kerr, O.P., *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002).

critique of this tradition. It is good to recall the words offered by Michael Sherwin before his own brief historical survey of the manuals. He cautioned,

It is perilous to speak in generalities about the manuals of moral theology. There was not one monolithic type of moral manual. The Church contains within it various different traditions of moral reflection and the manuals, as the product of these traditions, reflect their differences. Also, the perspectives of these traditions developed over time and the manuals were shaped by these developments. Nevertheless, there was a dominant perspective and his perspective shaped the most influential manuals.²

My task is similar to Sherwin's. Whereas he was describing the dominant manualist perspective against which moral revisionists were reacting, I am seeking to describe the perspective against which the personalists of the twentieth century reacted, especially regarding marriage and birth control.

I. From St. Thomas Aquinas to Nominalism

A. The Early Penitentials and Confessionals

The history of Catholic moral theology, and of the manualist tradition in particular, is intrinsically connected to the development of the sacrament of penance and auricular confession, which precedes both Aquinas and Ockham by several centuries. In his book, *The Making of Moral Theology*, John Mahoney provides a detailed history of the sacrament's influence along with a thorough bibliography.³ The Celtic penitential movement, which flourished between the sixth and tenth centuries, was the embryonic catalyst for the development of casuistry and the modern manualist tradition. The practice of repeated

² Michael P. Sherwin, O.P., *By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 1n1.

³ See Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theology*, 1-36.

private confession between confessor and penitent developed in Ireland and was exported to continental Europe in various ways from the sixth to the ninth centuries.⁴

With the increased popularity of repeated confession, a desire for universal standards of penance grew among the clergy. This led to the development of what became known as penitential books or, simply, the penitentials. Given the absence of diocesan or episcopal structure in this early period, the penitentials were generally produced by abbots and monasteries.⁵ The penitentials' "primary function was to provide priests with a tariff of penances to be enjoined for various sins."⁶ They contained definitions of specific sins to assist the confessor in identifying a penitent's sins before listing the specific penances to be imposed for said sins.⁷ As the penitentials developed, they would include precise formulae for celebrating the sacrament.

Because of their purpose, the penitentials were more concerned with sin and vice, instead of beatitude. Still, Mahoney's criticism seems excessively hyperbolic when he complains that the penitentials "constitute at best an unsuccessful attempt to apply with some degree of humanity an appallingly rigid systematized approach to sin, and no one ever appears to have asked the serious theological question to what end (other than social order) all this suffering was really being imposed."⁸ This is a classic temptation for any historian: to judge the past according to a modern standard. John Gallagher, on the other hand, has observed that the Celtic monastic movement, like Celtic Christianity, is more distinctively

⁴ See *ibid.*, 5ff. Cf. Gallagher, *Time Past, Time Future*, 7f. and Jonsen and Toulmin, *Abuse of Casuistry*, 96-100.

⁵ See Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theology*, 5f.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷ A catalog of medieval penitential books has been gathered in John T. McNeil and Helena M. Gamer, eds., *Medieval Handbooks of Penance: A Translation of the Principal Libri Poenitentiales and Selections from Related Documents* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938).

⁸ Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theology*, 7.

influenced by the pre-Christian Celtic culture than it is by Roman Christianity. Confession, austere repentance, and hymnody were all found in pre-Christian Celtic society. “The religious dimension of the culture also provided for spiritual guides who required persons to perform penances proportionate to their sins. The primitive legal system provided for compensations by which restitution could be made to injured parties.”⁹ The penitential movement incorporated these elements with the best of Christian monasticism. In fact, Harold Berman has argued that the penitentials were understood to be primarily concerned with healing the soul, with reconciliation within society, and with holding all things in harmony.¹⁰

The codification of Church law and moral law, which began with the reforms of Pope Gregory VII in 1027, provides a background for the second major development in Catholic moral theology, the publication of the *Summae Confessorum*.¹¹ The codification of canon law was accomplished by collecting and synthesizing the mass of curial decrees that had accrued over the centuries, many of which were case-specific and thus listed the circumstances which gave rise to particular legislation. The collection of these cases would directly impinge upon the practice of confession, especially since “clergy needed to be instructed how to match the complexities of the new canon law to the cases their penitents presented to them.”¹² The *Summae Confessorum*, or the confessional books, served this purpose.

⁹ Gallagher, *Time Past, Time Future*, 9.

¹⁰ See Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 68-78.

¹¹ For a history of Gregory’s reforms and their historical development and impact, see Gallagher, *Time Past, Time Future*, 11-17; Jonsen and Toulmin, *Abuse of Casuistry*, 101-117; and Berman, *Law and Revolution*, 199-224.

¹² Jonsen and Toulmin, *Abuse of Casuistry*, 118.

One of the most influential of such works was authored by the Dominican Raymond of Pennafort beginning in 1221. His *Summa de Poenitentia* was concerned with sins against God, sins against neighbor, and the duties attached to various states of life. “Each section of Pennafort’s *Summa* begins with a proposal about how the matter will be presented, followed by definitions of the principal terms, such as lying or simony. He then relates the ‘true and certain opinions’ on the question under discussion, drawn from earlier writers, followed by those questions and cases about which the received answers are more doubtful.”¹³

Raymond’s method of presentation would be assumed by most of the theologians of his generation, and was the method to which Aquinas responded by attempting to situate morality within the broader context of dogmatic theology and beatitude.

Pennafort was attempting to implement the reforms established by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The Council, convened by Pope Innocent III (d. 1216), produced an astonishing 70 constitutions in under a month and legislated that the faithful “after they have reached the age of discernment, should individually confess all their sins in a faithful manner to their own priest at least once a year.”¹⁴ The decree goes on to insist that the confessor “shall be discerning and prudent, so that like a skilled doctor he may pour wine and oil over the wounds of the injured one. Let him carefully inquire about the circumstances of both the sinner and the sin, so that he may prudently discern what sort of advice he ought to give and what remedy to apply, using various means to heal the sick person.”¹⁵ The Council further insisted that provincial councils be established to monitor the

¹³ Ibid., 120.

¹⁴ Fourth Lateran Council, “*De confessione facienda*,” (30 November 1215), Canon 21, in Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1:245.

¹⁵ Ibid.

observance of its decrees.¹⁶ And bishops were to ensure that priests were well trained in the practice of caring for souls.¹⁷ With this legislation, the Council began a series of provincial diocesan synods as well as chapters in various religious orders to address the implementation of its decrees. This, combined with the growing maturation of speculative theology within the newly established universities, provided the stage for the influence that the Dominican St. Thomas Aquinas would have on theology, and, after him, the Franciscan William of Ockham.

B. The Synthesis of St. Thomas Aquinas

Born in 1224, Thomas de Aquino entered the Order of St. Dominic when he was twenty years old. He quickly ascended in the intellectual life of the Order, initially studying at the University of Paris and then teaching there as a bachelor on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard in 1252. He would become a master of sacred theology four years later in 1256. Throughout his life, he would teach in Paris, Naples, Orvieto, and Rome. Nearly a decade before his death, Aquinas was appointed master of friars in formation for his province in Rome.¹⁸

Aquinas's work in Rome with his student friars can only rightly be understood in the context of his work as a master of sacred theology. A master was, first and foremost, a

¹⁶ Ibid., “*De conciliis provincialibus*,” (30 November 1215), Canon 6, in Tanner, *Decrees*, 1:236-237.

¹⁷ Ibid., “*De instructione ordinandorum*,” (30 November 1215), Canon 27, in Tanner, *Decrees*, 1:248.

¹⁸ Aquinas had been critical of the province's lack of zeal for study and his position as a permanent voting member at provincial chapters probably influenced his appointment. Aquinas was effectively given his own *studium* in Rome to train the best of the friars in formation from all over the province. He retained the right to return them to their priories if they performed less than expected. See Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1:142ff.; Thomas Käppeli, O.P., and Antione Dondaine, O.P., eds., *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica*, vol. 20, *Capitulorum Provincialium Provinciae Romanae* (1243-1344) (Rome, 1941), 32; and Leonard Boyle, *The Setting of the Summa theologiae of Saint Thomas*, Etienne Gilson Series, vol. 5 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982), 15ff.

magister in Sacra Pagina. His three functions were: *legere*, *disputare*, and *praedicare*.¹⁹ The first, *legere*, was to read the sacred scripture and to comment on it verse by verse. This was the work which St. Thomas concerned himself with when he began teaching in Paris in 1256. Many of Aquinas's scripture commentaries were written during this period. The *disputatio* was a form of instruction, in which opposing positions were set against each other and the *magister* would offer his answer. Finally, having read and commented on scripture, having considered subtle and disputed points of theology, the master was ready to preach the truth. Theological study thus lent itself to pastoral practice.

It was precisely this lack of a connection between pastoral practice, theology, and scripture that Aquinas sought to remedy in the Roman province. His task in Rome was to form friars in moral theology and the practice of sacramental confession. Assisting him, "he had at his disposal the manuals published by the first generations of Dominicans; but that predominance of practical theology in the formation of friars... gave them only a partial and narrow view of theology; this resulted in a marked imbalance, to the detriment of dogmatic theology, which could not help but leave Thomas dissatisfied."²⁰ Wanting to maintain the tradition of providing manuals for the friars, St. Thomas, nonetheless, wanted to present moral theology within a larger theological framework. The *Summa theologiae* is the result of that project.

The treatment of morality is centrally placed in the *Summa theologiae*, although it is integrated into the plan of the whole work. The *Summa* is divided into three parts. Beginning the *Summa*, the first part concerns the nature of God, the persons of the Trinity, the angels,

¹⁹ See Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1:54.

²⁰ Ibid., 1:144.

the work of creation, the nature of man and original sin, and, finally, divine providence. The first half of the second part begins by discussing the end (*telos*) of man, and specifically the beatific vision. Only then does the *prima secundae* discuss human action, the passions, *habitus*, virtue, law, and grace. The second half of the second part, the *secunda secundae*, further specifies the work of the first half by devoting particular attention to the three theological virtues and the four cardinal virtues, along with their corresponding vices and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The *secunda secundae* concludes with a treatment of the counsels and consecrated life. The third part of the *Summa*, finally, concerns the incarnation and person of Jesus Christ, his suffering, death, and resurrection, along with the establishment of the Church, the seven sacraments, and, ultimately, the last judgment.

The *Summa theologiae* follows the biblical structure of salvation history. Aquinas brings the student from considering God down through creation and the fall of man to considering man's destiny and human action. From there, the Angelic Doctor leads us to consider virtue, law, and grace. But to achieve to our goal (*telos*), the beatific vision, we need Christ incarnate and the life of grace offered in the Church. St. Thomas, then, presents the path to the final consummation of all things in Christ.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the very first question of the *secunda pars* is on man's last end, and the first article is "Whether it belongs to man to act for an end?" It is only after this treatise on happiness that Aquinas addresses human action and the goodness of human acts. And only upon finishing that discussion does he begin to speak of passion, *habitus*, virtue, and vice. Everything that follows in the *secunda pars* is, in fact, dependent on the worldview established in those first few questions. St. Thomas posits two aspects of

human happiness or beatitude: the objective and the subjective.²¹ Objectively, the *telos* or beatitude of man consists in a good.²² Subjectively, there are specific actions that will make a person blessed.²³ The final two questions of the treatise on happiness concern first those subjective elements of beatitude and then the powers that a person uses to attain beatitude.²⁴ Servais Pinckaers observes, “Beatitude is both objective and subjective. It is objective, because it is caused by a good reality, one which renders [the] person good and blessed. It is subjective, because it corresponds to the desire of man, which carries him toward the good and beatitude.”²⁵

The foundation for St. Thomas’s theory of beatitude rests with his understanding of human nature. In the *tertia pars*, when he explains the relationship between the person of Jesus and his two natures, Aquinas offers an explanation of the word ‘nature.’²⁶ Following Aristotle, he distinguishes between four uses of the word ‘nature’: 1) it can signify the act of generation of living things (since it comes from the word ‘nativity’); 2) later it came to signify the source of this generation; 3) since generation stems from a principle within the generator, it came to signify an interior principle of movement; 4) finally, since the end or *telos* of a thing is implicated in its generation, the word ‘nature’ can also signify the thing’s essence. The third and fourth uses of this term are essential for the Angelic Doctor.

Pinckaers observes that for Aquinas, “What characterizes ‘natural’ action is that it proceeds

²¹ Throughout this study, I will be using the words “beatitude” and “happiness” interchangeably for the state Aquinas describes with the word *beatitudo*.

²² See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 2. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of the *Summa theologiae* are from *Summa theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1948; repr., Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1981). Henceforth, the *Summa theologiae* will be referenced as *ST* in the notes.

²³ See *ibid.*, I-II, q. 3.

²⁴ See *ibid.*, I-II, qq. 4-5.

²⁵ Servais Pinckaers, O.P., “Beatitude and the Beatitudes in Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae*,” in *The Pinckaers Reader*, 119.

²⁶ See *ST*, III, q. 2, a. 1.

from inner principles or sources.... Because of this, nature is linked with the person in view of all the external causalities that may affect him. At the core of the person it forms an essential component of human interiority. This interiority is not only biological or psychological; it is dynamic.”²⁷ For St. Thomas, it is precisely those interior principles which lay at the core of human nature that both guide human action and spontaneously direct the human person to goodness and truth.²⁸

The line running from these interior principles of human nature to beatitude is finality. For St. Thomas, all human action is directed by the agent toward a goal or end, which the agent understands to be good.²⁹ Aquinas characterizes all objects of desire under the rubric of “the good” and “perfection”:

The essence of goodness consists in this, that it is in some way desirable. Hence the Philosopher says: Goodness is what all desire. Now it is clear that a thing is desirable only in so far as it is perfect; for all desire their own perfection. But everything is perfect so far as it is actual. Therefore it is clear that a thing is perfect so far as it exists; for it is existence that makes a thing actual.³⁰

By emphasizing the equivalence of being, goodness/desirability, and action, Aquinas is placing agency squarely within a metaphysical and ontological conception of the universe.

²⁷ Servais Pinckaers, O.P., “Aquinas on Nature and the Supernatural,” trans. Mary Thomas Noble, O.P. in *The Pinckaers Reader*, 361.

²⁸ See *ST*, I-II, q. 63, a. 1. A 20th century commentator on Aquinas highlights the importance of the principles of human nature in relation to virtue and freedom: “The principles of his [man’s] nature, as is true of any reality, make man to be what he is. By the same token they include a direction towards the full realization of this way of being. Because he is human, man by his very nature is bent towards being fully human. This direction is called an inclination—or tendency to act towards the full realization of himself and the perfection of which he does not possess simply by existing. But the principles of his nature are the index to what the fulfillment of himself should be. Again, man is what he is through the principles of his nature. These principles themselves then bespeak of an inclination, an order to human perfection. Since virtue ensures that actions are in conformity to this order of nature, the principles also of themselves mean an inclination to virtue. Nature in its essential principles and in its bent to virtue, then, is not two distinct realities. The distinction is simply between the principles as establishing man in existence and as providing the spring for operations by which he will achieve completion” (Thomas C. O’Brien, “Fallen Nature,” appendix 9, in *Summa theologiae* [New York: McGraw-Hill Books Company, 1965], 26:156f.).

²⁹ See *ibid.*, I–II, q. 1, a. 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, I, q. 5, a. 1.

Daniel Westberg notes the boldness of the claim, “[Aquinas] is speaking not just of persons or animals, but in the broadest way possible, of all substances and potency to act.... The basis for agency in the universe is that beings cannot simply exist, nor are they merely the subjects of events and forces which cause change; they desire their perfection.”³¹ This desire for perfection is synonymous with a thing’s nature.

Everything but God lacks some perfection. All contingent being is in a state of becoming.³² The nature of a thing directs it to perfection, to act in accordance with its abilities (e.g., a plant to grow, an animal to hunt and eat, a human person to think and to love, etc.), and in so doing, to fulfill its nature. Aquinas, like Aristotle, calls this desire for perfection “appetite.” Everything has an appetite toward the fullness of its own nature (its “natural form”):

Now everything has this aptitude towards its natural form, that when it has it not it tends toward it; and when it has it, it is at rest therein. It is the same with every natural perfection, which is a natural good. This aptitude to good in things without knowledge is called natural appetite. Whence also *an intellectual nature* has a like aptitude [*to the good*] as apprehended through its intelligible form; so as to rest therein when possessed, and when not possessed to seek to possess it, both of which pertain to the will.³³

Thus, the Common Doctor is quite clear that all things have fundamental inclinations that are commensurate with what they are. Everything acts with a purpose—the fulfillment of its nature—in either a directed or self-directed manner, as the case may be. The mere fact that everything seeks perfection means that no one thing (except God) is completely perfect in

³¹ Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 45.

³² See *ST*, I-II, q. 18, a. 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, I, q. 19, a. 1 (translation altered by me at italics): “Unde et natura intellectualis ad bonum apprehensum per formam intelligibilem, similiem habitudinem habet.”

itself. Everything must, therefore, come out of itself in search that which perfects it. This, I will show in chapter seven of this study, is the drive of love.

The human person has a rational appetite, the will, and so is able consciously to direct himself in freedom to his final perfection, in other words, to understand the relationship of human action to a final goal. “The difference between the human will and animal appetite,” Westberg writes, “lies not primarily in a wider range of objects open for consideration, but in the ability of the human agent to see actions in relationship to a goal.”³⁴ A human being, may, in fact, choose something that causes immediate pain (surgery, for example) for an end which is good (healing). An animal’s action, on the other hand, is automatically activated by its desires. An animal will necessarily flee from pain, even if a certain amount of pain would bring about a good. “A human being, however, is not immediately moved into action in response to the activation of the sensitive appetite [the passions] (whether to pursue or avoid), but awaits the command of the superior appetite [the will].”³⁵ Aquinas confirms that “the lower appetite [the sensitive appetite] is not sufficient to cause movement [in us], unless the higher appetite [the will] consents.”³⁶ The human person is directed to his goal, to his good, not through the attainment of immediate goods but through deliberate actions of mediate goods directing him to his final perfection.

The fundamental interior principles at work here are those defining the two highest powers of human nature: reason and will. The powers of the soul, Aquinas, says are distinguished by their objects, the goals which they each seek.³⁷ As has already been seen, the will, as an appetite, has the good as its object. The object of the reason is truth and universal

³⁴ Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 74.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁶ *ST*, I, q. 81, a. 3.

³⁷ See *ibid.*, I, q. 77, a. 3.

being.³⁸ St. Thomas further divides reason into the speculative intellect and the practical intellect. The former concerns knowledge of truth as such while the latter concerns human action.³⁹ Since the will is not merely a natural appetite but a *rational* appetite it is always in relationship to the intellect. Thus, the will tends toward the good as apprehended by the intellect.⁴⁰ The fascinating relationship between the intellect and the will in human action is not of immediate concern to us here, though it is essential for understanding St. Thomas's moral theory.⁴¹ We are concerned with the fundamental or first principles of each of these powers.

Aquinas holds that “self-evident first principles” in both the speculative and practical intellects governs all things concerning human action and morality. In the speculative intellect, he designates the first principle as *intellectus*. *Intellectus* is the aptitude that all persons have to understand basic theoretical principles without having to prove them. They are simply given and understood “at once by the intellect [*statim ab intellectu*].”⁴² These principles are encapsulated in such maxims as “the whole is greater than its part” and “things equal to the same thing are equal to one another.” The principle of non-contradiction is also a maxim of *intellectus*. These speculative first principles are the foundation of all scientific reasoning, which progresses from them. Similarly, *synderesis* is the knowledge of first principles in practical matters. St. Thomas writes, “*synderesis* is said to incite to good, and to murmur at evil, inasmuch as through first principles we proceed to discover, and judge what we have

³⁸ See *ibid.*, I, q. 16, a. 1.

³⁹ See *ibid.*, I, q. 79, a. 11.

⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, I, q. 82, a. 3.

⁴¹ A number of scholars have spent much time analyzing the relationship between intellect and will in Aquinas. See, for example, Michael Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 18-63; Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 43-183; Steven A. Long, *The Teleological Grammar of the Moral Act* (Naples, FL: Ave Maria University Press, 2007); Henri Renard, “The Functions of Intellect and Will in the Act of Free Choice,” *Modern Schoolman* 24 (1947): 85-92.

⁴² ST, I-II, q. 58, a. 2. Cf. Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 55.

discovered.”⁴³ *Synderesis* is the capacity to measure our actions as for or against the good of our nature. As such, it is the catalyst of moral action by directing action according to the primary principle of practical reason: “do good and avoid evil.”⁴⁴ The importance of *synderesis* cannot be overestimated in Aquinas.

Pamela Hall rightly notes that *synderesis* insures that “an agent cannot completely lack guidance of the moral life. He or she has even initially some root, an inerrant apprehension of a good with which to begin the moral life and moral deliberation. We begin with at least the necessary conceptual equipment.”⁴⁵ Thus, as Aquinas sees it, the human person is built to desire the good and to seek truth, and is hardwired with the basic faculties for fulfillment of these desires.

Subjectively, however, the spiritual faculties of the human person can be and are mistaken about concrete goods. The will can be led to seek only what is an apparent good. Original sin also plays a role in the operation of the faculties. We are no longer sure of our final end.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, St. Thomas asserts that original sin cannot and does not destroy

⁴³ Ibid., I, q. 79, a. 12.

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2. Cf. *Ibid.*, I, q. 79, a. 12; II-II, q. 47, a. 6.

⁴⁵ Pamela Hall, *Narrative and Natural Law: An Interpretation of Thomistic Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 31.

⁴⁶ St. Thomas held that in original justice, Adam and Eve lived with their “reason being subject to God, the lower powers to reason, and the body to the soul” (*ST*, I, q. 95, a. 1). This original state was a unique gift of grace. In the *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*, written at the same time as the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas goes on to say that because man is a composite being of body and spirit, his intellect could identify several “final ends” when it is hindered by the desires of the flesh. But this is the case only after original sin (see Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de malo*, q. 5, a. 1, c). In original justice, Adam and Eve were completely in harmony with their bodies through the unique gift of grace in which they were created. The rupture in the relationship with God introduces disharmony into their lives. Men and women now find themselves pursuing many different ends as if these were their true and ultimate good. Without the nature-perfecting grace offered Adam and Eve, “human nature with its powers as derived from Adam is now just itself, left to itself; this is how it is disordered” (O’Brien, “Original Justice,” appendix 8, in *Summa theologiae* [New York: McGraw-Hill Books Company, 1965], 152).

the fundamental inclinations of human nature, without which human nature could no longer be defined as human nature as such.⁴⁷

One can glean two important observations from the survey just offered. First, goodness is, for St. Thomas, something which everyone desires. That which is good is that which fulfills human nature. As Pinckaers notes, “for Thomas, as for Augustine, the term *bonum* combines inseparably the ideas of the good and of beatitude: what is good is what makes one blessed.”⁴⁸ Second, since nature is defined by its inclinations, and since the inclinations so central to the human being are the inclinations of reason and will, the moral life is deeply embedded in the interior life of the human person. It is less about the exterior activity and obligations of the person than it is about the fulfillment and perfection of the person himself. A brief word about this last observation is necessary.

Servais Pinckaers notes that the term “*intrinsece malum*” did not occur in Christian moral theory until the sixteenth century.⁴⁹ Though the debate surrounding contraception centered on whether it was to be counted among “intrinsically evil acts,” Pinckaers argues that prior to the sixteenth century, theologians were more concerned with the beatitude of man than with categorized lists of actions. This is not to say that the early Christians were not concerned with evil actions. Rather, as Pinckaers has effectively argued, they were

⁴⁷ See *ST*, I-II, q. 85, a. 1. See also O’Brien, “Fallen Nature,” 159: “Original sin is the loss of all the endowments of original justice. The wounds to nature are the privation of an enhanced moral rightness once enjoyed; and they are interrelated. The principal handicap is man’s natural inability to make the fundamental option of the moral life, the decisive choice of God as the ultimate end of human nature. Since this is beyond him, man is clearly incapable of willing *all* the moral good consonant with his nature. Neither can he fulfill all the dictates of natural law, since the demands they make on him in their ensemble are means to the achievement of a supreme end. Unless he is effectively set on the true end of moral life, the source of all right activity, man will set up other final ends, objectives which appeal to one side or the other of his nature, but out of proportion to the whole order of moral well-being, that is the happiness of the whole man. This will block the acquisition of moral virtue; as a consequence there will be obscurity and distortion in his moral judgments, and failure to reach the more abstract truths about his own destiny” (my emphasis).

⁴⁸ Pinckaers, “Beatitude and the Beatitudes,” 119.

⁴⁹ See Pinckaers, “Historical Perspective,” 186.

concerned with delineating actions which either were conducive either to beatitude or wickedness. Worship of God was in the former, for example, while fornication was in the latter.

Servais Pinckaers summarizes the point:

For St. Thomas reason (or intelligence) and will precede and engender free will and its act, choice. The source of freedom lies in the natural inclinations to truth and to goodness or beatitude, which constitute our spiritual nature and confer on us an opening onto infinite truth and goodness, rendering us free in regard to all limited god. We are free, *not in spite of, but because of* our natural inclination to truth and beatitude. The attraction of the true and the good are the foundation of our freedom and orientate it. We can therefore call it freedom for excellence.⁵⁰

In this view, the role of the law, natural or otherwise, is to serve as “the expression of God’s wisdom and benevolence, revealing to us our spiritual nature orientated to truth and beatitude and prescribing the paths leading thereto.”⁵¹ All of this, however, is on the subjective side of beatitude—discerning which human actions and principles contribute to human happiness. On the objective side, only God himself can fully satisfy the human person. But God is beyond us and therefore we cannot achieve a relationship with God by our own efforts. God’s will to offer the grace of communion with him cannot be forced.⁵²

As capacities for growth in freedom and perfection, the basic inclinations of human nature constitute a *capax Dei*, a “passive capacity to receive the vision of God.”⁵³ Our desire for the universal good and the universal truth, this “natural desire to see God” provides the paradox of grace: “the human person is both capable and incapable of God. We are capable

⁵⁰ Ibid., 212 (my emphasis).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² See *ST*, I, q. 19, a. 4; I-II, q. 112, aa. 3 and 5.

⁵³ Servais Pinckaers, O.P., “Aquinas on Nature and Supernature,” in *Pinckaers Reader*, 362.

of receiving the vision of God, and absolutely incapable of attaining it by ourselves.”⁵⁴ Grace builds on nature. And the structure of the *Summa* itself reveals that the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit give our natural inclinations, and especially *synderesis*, a new source for action at the very core of our being to effect union with God.

The second half of this dissertation will explore more closely these sources for Aquinas’s theology of love, marriage, and the relationship of the body to the soul. Now, we must turn our attention to the subsequent breakdown of St. Thomas’s synthesis with the rise of William of Ockham and Nominalism.

C. William of Ockham and Nominalism

At the risk of oversimplifying the dispute between the Franciscans and the Dominicans, one can observe that the Franciscans were mostly neo-Augustinians, theologians devoted to St. Augustine and Plato’s philosophical system. They were generally suspicious of Aquinas’s use of Aristotle. The difference between Plato and Augustine on the one hand and Aristotle on the other led to an overarching disagreement. “Where St. Thomas affirmed the primacy of the intellect, defining the first and formal element of beatitude in terms of this faculty, as the vision of God, the Franciscans maintained the primacy of the will and made love the essential element of beatitude.”⁵⁵ In the thirteenth century, the neo-Augustinians were considered the institutional conservatives at the University of Paris, the Aristotelians were the radicals. For all intents and purposes, Aristotelianism was regarded as heterodox.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 363.

⁵⁵ Pinckaers, *Sources*, 240.

In the immediate aftermath of Aquinas's death, the bishop of Paris condemned several of his theses and but for the defense offered by his mentor Albert the Great, the interregnum following the death of Pope John XXI, and that the College of Cardinals forbade the bishop of Paris from proceeding further, St. Thomas's work might have been formally and universally censured in 1277. In response, the Dominican Order decreed that no Dominican was to speak ill of St. Thomas and that his works were to be held in high honor. Political and theological struggles raged until the Dominican Order made "Thomism" its official doctrine in 1309. St. Thomas's reputation was finally restored in 1323 when he was canonized by Pope John XXII, who praised the saint's teaching. In 1325, a new bishop of Paris withdrew the condemnations issued in 1277.⁵⁶

William of Ockham was born in 1288, joined the Franciscan Order at a young age and studied at Oxford, probably from 1309 to 1321, although he never attained the degree master of sacred theology, hence his honorific title as the "Venerable Inceptor." Apparently the chancellor of the university was suspicious of some of Ockham's teachings.⁵⁷ Ockham came to prominence at approximately the same time that Aquinas's reputation was being rehabilitated. Just a year after Thomas's canonization, Ockham was summoned to Rome by Pope John XXII to defend some of his questionable doctrines. Knowing that John had already espoused Thomas's theology, Ockham knew his case was compromised and fled to Germany where he entered the service of the emperor, Louis of Bavaria, who was having his own political struggles with the papacy.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ For a more detailed history of this period, see Simon Tugwell, O.P., "Introduction to the Life and Work of Thomas Aquinas," in Simon Tugwell, O.P., ed., *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings*. Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 234-244. Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, 298-326.

⁵⁷ See Pinckaers, *Sources*, 241.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 241.

Ockham is widely credited for initiating the movement eventually called “nominalism,” although his Franciscan elder brother John Duns Scotus (1266-1308) has been labeled a moderate nominalist by some.⁵⁹ Nominalism takes its name from Ockham’s denial of the existence of universal forms independent of human reason. Traditionally, reason was the contact-point between the knower and the known, between the person and reality. Ockham, however, maintained that there was no such thing as universal nature existing outside of the mind. In his commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*, he writes: “No universal is anything existing in any way outside the soul; but everything which is predicable of many things is of its nature in the mind, whether subjectively or objectively; and no universal belongs to the essence or quiddity of any substance whatever.”⁶⁰ This text is part of a larger argument in Ockham’s system in which he argues that the distinctive qualities we ascribe to existing things do not adhere to the things themselves but exist only in the mind. Therefore, our identification of common natures in reality itself is a contradiction.⁶¹

Whereas for Aquinas and others, reason was the highest faculty and the contact point with reality itself, for Ockham reason is thus reduced to only mental distinction. For Ockham, and those that followed him, freedom became the primary category of the human person. Freedom here is “conceived as the will’s power to choose between contraries, between the yes and the no, at each instant—at least in theory.”⁶² The Venerable Inceptor defines freedom as the power “by which I can indifferently and contingently produce an

⁵⁹ Crowe, *Changing Profile*, 192-201.

⁶⁰ William of Ockham, *Super quattuor libros sententiarum subtilissimae quaestiones*, Bk. I, dist. 2, q. 8 (Translation mine).

⁶¹ Ockham’s position is much more subtle than this. See the noted Ockhamist, Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham*, vol. 1, 3-69, 109-141. There Adams explains the logical consistency of Ockham’s objection against Aristotelian realism.

⁶² Servais Pinckaers, O.P., “Conscience and the Christian Tradition,” trans. Mary Thomas Noble, O.P., in *Pinckaers Reader*, 335f.

effect in such a way that I can cause or not cause that effect, without any difference in that power having been made.”⁶³ Whereas for Aquinas freedom stems from the mutual interaction between reason and will, since Ockham reduced the place of reason, the will became the center of the human person, and absolute freedom became the locus of morality. Pinckaers has called this concept of freedom a “freedom of indifference,” which is exercised “independently of all other causes except freedom, or the will itself.”⁶⁴ Ockham thus interpreted Lombard’s dictum, “*Liberum arbitrium est facultas rationis et voluntatis*”⁶⁵ in a way radically opposed to Aquinas and his predecessors. Ockham understood freedom as the power to reason and to will, and, therefore it precedes those two important spiritual faculties of the human person.

Since the freedom precedes the two characterizing faculties of the human person, the reason and the will, and since he has already denied the existence of extramental universal natures, it is not surprising to learn that William of Ockham insisted that the person can choose to disregard any sort of natural inclination. Whereas Aquinas grounded morality and human action in the natural inclinations of the reason and will to truth and goodness and the person to beatitude and happiness, Ockham insists that the will is free even in regard to these:

I say that the will in this state is able to refuse the ultimate end, whether the end is presented in a general sense or in a particular sense. This can be proved thus. The will is able to reject that which the intellect says ought to be rejected. (This is obvious.) But the intellect can believe that nothing is the ultimate end or happiness, and as a consequence, can dictate that an ultimate end or happiness is to be rejected. Secondly, anyone who can reject the antecedent can reject the consequent. A person is able to desire not to be. Therefore, he is able to reject the happiness that he believes follows upon his

⁶³ William of Ockham, *Quodlibeta*, q. 1, a. 16 (Translation mine).

⁶⁴ Pinckaers, *Sources*, 242.

⁶⁵ Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae*, Bk. II, dist. 25, a. 1, q. 2.

existence. Furthermore, I say that the intellect can judge a certain thing to be the ultimate end, but the will can reject that end. This is so because a free power [*potential libera*] is capable of contrary acts. It can order itself in one way or another. The will, as a free power, is cable of rejecting or choosing any object. Therefore, it can choose God, but for the same reason, it can reject God.⁶⁶

This was William of Ockham's decisive claim. He effectively reorients his moral theology away from human nature and toward human freedom. The majority of the tradition before him measured the goodness or wickedness of human action in reference to that action's appropriation of the good sought by the agent, on the subjective side, and the true good of the human person, communion with God, on the objective side. Ockham was postulating that persons are free, in fact, not to desire their own good.

This creates an immediate problem when discussing human action. The finality of the human person, and the relationship of an action's immediate end to that finality were central to Aquinas's theory of morality. By eliminating the influence of the natural inclinations and the importance of the interaction between reason and will, action for Ockham neither stems from interior principles at the core of the human being nor leads to a goal. There is no other cause of human action than self-determination. "From this it followed that each of our voluntary acts becomes a single reality, isolated in time by the very power that enables us to choose between contraries. We could not be bound by a past action or obliged to a future one without losing the radical freedom that is ours at each moment."⁶⁷ There is no character development in Ockham's theory; there is no growth of the human person. Human conduct is nothing but "a succession of individual actions."⁶⁸ Considering human action only in isolated moments with no connection between one action and the next

⁶⁶ Ockham *Super quattuor libros sententiarum*, bk. IV, q. 15, (Translation mine).

⁶⁷ Pinckaers, *Sources*, 243.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

is the immediate precursor for casuistry and the manualist tradition, which emphasized the study of isolated cases of conscience.

Assessing the intrinsic morality of particular actions once freedom is separated from human nature and its inclination to the good is a contradiction. When our natural inclinations no longer provide the *telos* of human action, only some extrinsic principle can determine the morality of action. Hence, Ockham turns to law and obligation, but law understood not as stemming from nature but stemming from the will of the divine legislator, God. He writes, “Evil is nothing else than to do something when one is under an obligation to do the opposite. Obligation does not fall on God, since he is not under any obligation to do anything.”⁶⁹ And, like the human will, the power of the divine will precedes divine reason, and God’s will is bound by no obligation. On the contrary, he can impose seemingly irrational obligations upon us. For example, Ockham insists that “Every will can conform itself to divine precept, but God can command that the created will hate him, and the created will can do this. Therefore, that which can be a right act in this life, can be so in the next [*in patria*], thus just as to hate God can be right act in this life, if it be commanded by God, so can it be a right act in the next life [*in patria*].”⁷⁰ The Franciscan thus establishes the two primal realities of morality: the divine will and the human will. Pinckaers writes, “The origin of morality resides in the law, the expression of the free and sovereign will of God the Creator, which is imposed upon man under the form and with the force of obligation. Human acts, indifferent in themselves, become moral through their connection with legal obligations.”⁷¹ The divine law of God is presented antagonistically to a person’s freedom. We

⁶⁹ Ockham, *Super quattuor libros sententiarum*, Bk. 2, dist. 5 (my translation).

⁷⁰ Ibid., Bk. 4, dist. 15 (my translation.)

⁷¹ Pinckaers, “Conscience,” 336; Cf. Pinckaers, “Aquinas on Nature,” 365; Pinckaers, *Sources*, 247f.

cannot choose what God forbids simply because he forbids it, even if he forbids it for seemingly irrational reasons.

If law and the divine will stands at the polar extreme of absolute freedom, conscience for Ockham is the median between the two. Moral discernment “revolves around assessing the relation of each free act with the law, and this is done primarily through a consideration of the object of the act which harmonizes best with the law as it is verbally expressed.”⁷² The relationship between law and freedom will thus be marked by a certain tension, which is at the heart of Ockham’s freedom of indifference and his morality based on obligation: “Freedom and law are opposed to each other, like two landowners, disputing over the territory of human acts.... The principle task of conscience, as of moralists, will therefore be to mark off the limits between the domain of the law and the domain of freedom. It is a question of what is allowed, what is forbidden; what is obligatory, what remains free.”⁷³ The primary virtue in such a system is the virtue of right action in accordance with law. It is merely “a habit of obeying the law.”⁷⁴

Due to this perpetual tension with the law and the clash of wills, human freedom is unable and unwilling to be obedient to the divine will at all times. Since it is both objective (dictating the law) and subjective (within the person), conscience inevitably “fluctuate[s] between zeal for the law, capable of turning into rigorism, and excessive concern for the subject, which can lead to laxity.”⁷⁵ By definition, the human will is prone to sin if only to affirm occasionally its own self-determination.

⁷² Pinckaers, “Historical Perspective,” 213.

⁷³ Pinckaers, “Conscience,” 336; cf. Pinckaers, “Historical Perspective,” 213f.

⁷⁴ Pinckaers, “Morality and the Movement of the Holy Spirit,” trans. Craig Steven Titus, in *Pinckaers Reader*, 392.

⁷⁵ Pinckaers, “Conscience,” 344.

To be fair, a more sympathetic reading of Ockham is possible, especially when his political writings are considered, which hint of an understanding of natural law.⁷⁶ Some authors argue that, for Ockham, God's divine will is manifest in right reason and when the will chooses to follow right reason, it chooses to follow God's will. God has thus established the structures of right reason and nature according to his will, but, they argue, this does not mean God is merely arbitrary, only that in order to find some logic to God's action one "would have to be able to point to some external standard according to which the will of God is bound to operate."⁷⁷ Otherwise, we run the risk of imposing upon God our own limited human understanding.

Even those who are trying to rehabilitate Ockham's thought admit not only that Ockham argues there is no external standard known to us with which we can measure God's will, but also that he believes there is no such standard in fact. God's freedom is not bound by even his own reason, as high as that is beyond our human understanding. Thus, they admit that while God has willed creation to exist in the way it does, he could just as easily willed a world in which it was righteous to hate him.⁷⁸

We can agree with Servais Pinckaers that there are three long-lasting effects of Ockham's nominalism on the history of moral theology.⁷⁹ First, since every human act is the movement of a freedom that can always and everywhere choose equally between contraries, human action is atomized, and no longer considered within a larger trajectory stemming

⁷⁶ See Crowe, *Changing Profile*, 202f.; Kevin McDonnell, "Does William of Ockham Have a Theory of Natural Law?" *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974): 383-392; and Marilyn McCord Adams, "The Structure of Ockham's Moral Theory," in *Context of Casuistry*, eds. James F. Keenan, S.J. and Thomas A. Shannon (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1995), 25-52.

⁷⁷ McDonnell, "Does William of Ockham Have a Theory of Natural Law," 387.

⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, 392; Adams, "Structure of Ockham's Moral Theory," 43.

⁷⁹ See Pinckaers, "Historical Perspective," 216-217.

from interiority to finality. There is no connection from one action to the next. “This is the logical origin of casuistry, of moral theology viewed as a study of cases.”⁸⁰ Second, morality will be considered primarily as the relation between freedom and the law which determines obligation. This will necessitate a focus on the exterior principles of action, which, in turn, leads to physicalism. Pinckaers writes, “Because he is watching the trajectory of the legal obligation, the moralist will in fact fix his attention on what St. Thomas called the external act in its relation to its matter or object, insofar as it can be directly touched by the law in its imperative or prohibitive expression.”⁸¹

Finally, as Thomists react against nominalism they will, nonetheless, be influenced by it as they attempt to argue for acts which are intrinsically evil based on an understanding of natural law. Unable to escape the influence of this freedom of indifference, “they will not be able to escape the irreducible opposition it establishes between the subject on the one hand, with its radical demand for freedom, and on the other hand the object, law, nature, other subjects as well, and society, which oppose the subject by restricting its freedom.”⁸² In attempting to establish hard boundaries on freedom, moralists will focus less on the human person and interiority, and more on exteriority, law, and nature as objective norms of morality

⁸⁰ Ibid., 216.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 217.

II. After William of Ockham

A. *The Development of Casuistry after the Thirteenth Century*

The works of both Aquinas and Ockham would influence the *confessionals* and the manuals down to the twentieth century. Confessional *summas* were not sufficient to implement fully the reforms of the Fourth Lateran Council. A true renewal of the priesthood through systematic training and formation of the clergy was needed.⁸³ But the formation of the clergy would not be systematized until the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. At the same time, scholasticism experienced its own renewal. Since the sacrament of penance was administered by a semi-literate and ill-formed clergy, Martin Luther's "double charge of perverse laxity in penance and oppressive rigidity in the hearing of confessions" was not unwarranted.⁸⁴

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw no improvement in the practice of confession. The growth of speculative scholastic theology in the universities, while beneficial in many regards, would prove even more alienating to the pastoral work of ordinary clergy. "Theology developed in the universities along the lines of an intensification of the rational procedures of scholasticism: a wider use of dialectic and logic, a stress on speculative orientation, and a proliferation of distinctions, questions, and arguments. A technical vocabulary and specialized terminology developed, along with a penchant for abstraction and

⁸³ Both John Mahoney and William Pantin make this point. See Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theology*, 21 and William A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge: University Press, 1955), 218.

⁸⁴ Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theology*, 22, citing John T. McNeil, *A History of the Care of Souls* (New York: Harper, 1951), 165-6. See Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theology*, 22n89 for his interesting observations on Aquinas's defense of the friars' work in confession as markedly superior to that of the secular clergy.

a growing complexity of problems and discussions.”⁸⁵ Theology was thus relegated to the universities and was the field of specialized clerics who had pursued higher studies.

While speculative theology flourished in the realms of higher education, spiritual or mystical theology connected “with the experience of the life of faith. They attempted to disclose the divine realities perceived in the interior life and the growth of the believing soul.”⁸⁶ The spiritual authors of the period spoke concretely not abstractly and appealed to all Christians, not just to clergy and academics. Pinckaers believes the separation between moral theology and mystical theology was crystallized with the separation between precepts of law and the counsels. “Moral theory dealt essentially with precepts, which determined obligations in various sectors of human activity and were imposed on all without distinction. The counsels were supplementary and dealt with supererogatory actions left to each individual’s free initiative. By this very fact, they were reserved to the chosen few who sought perfection; this was the terrain of asceticism and mysticism.”⁸⁷ This division between the ordinary and obligatory, on the one hand, and the extraordinary and the phenomenal, on the other hand, contributed to the neglect of the universal call to holiness so prevalent in the Church before the Second Vatican Council.

Confessors made do with confessional *summas* which were very popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but it was not until the challenge of the Protestant Reformation that the Council of Trent legislated the establishment of the seminary system to train young men to become priests. The men, the Council decreed, were to “study grammar, singing, keeping church accounts and other useful skills; and they should be versed in holy

⁸⁵ Pinckaers, *Sources*, 255.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 255.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 256f.

scripture, church writers, homilies of the saints, and the practice of rites and ceremonies, and of administering the sacraments, particularly all that seems appropriate to hearing confessions.”⁸⁸ The necessity of textbooks and manuals for new seminary classes on confession emphasized the need for moral theology manuals and *confessionals*.

A second significant development during the Reformation was the flourishing of the Society of Jesus in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and, with it, the renewal of scholasticism.⁸⁹ The Jesuits were concerned to meet the needs of the time by preparing men to engage in pastoral work, and especially in spiritual direction and confession. To that end, a *ratio studiorum* for the Jesuit Order was drawn up and implemented at the end of the sixteenth century. A commission was established in 1586 to discuss what the *ratio* should contain. It was thirteen years later before a draft was implemented in 1599. Albert Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin report that the long debate centered on the relationship between cases of conscience and speculative theology. “Some commentators felt that the rigid separation of practical casuistry from speculative moral theology, as taught from the *Summa theologiae*, was to the detriment of both. The final *Ratio* struck a balance, requiring both an explanation of principles and a study of casuistry for students in the long and short courses alike.”⁹⁰

Jonsen and Toulmin go on to explain the pedagogy employed by the Jesuits of this time:

The rules of the professor of cases established the format: avoidance of speculative questions, succinct presentation of principles, acceptance of probable opinions, and resolution by solid argument. Every member of the Society became familiar with this technique; practiced it in case conferences

⁸⁸ Council of Trent, “*Decreta super reformatione* [Decree on Reform],” (15 July 1563), Canon 18, in Tanner, *Decrees*, 2:751.

⁸⁹ See Pinckaers, *Sources*, 259ff.; Jonsen and Toulmin, *Abuse of Casuistry*, 146-151.

⁹⁰ Jonsen and Toulmin, *Abuse of Casuistry*, 150f.

as a student; heard it weekly for his entire career in the Society and made use of it in his ministry.⁹¹

Servais Pinckaers observes that on the speculative side of the *ratio* only those elements that were necessary for moral theology were taught, and became known as “fundamental moral theology.” Thus, those treatises that were deemed too speculative were dropped from the instruction. The treatises on beatitude and the end of man, grace, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit were among them.⁹² The more concrete treatises on human action, *habitus*, virtue, law, conscience and sin were retained, of course. In addition, the commandments and the precepts of the Church were studied and, eventually, the obligations necessary for each state of life.

Pinckaers identifies the Spanish Jesuit and Roman Professor Juan Azor (1536-1603) as a singularly important influence in this tradition.⁹³ From 1600 to 1611, the Azor’s massive *Institutionum Moralium* was published bearing the subtitle, “in which all questions of conscience are briefly treated.”⁹⁴ Azor introduced a fourfold division of moral theology: first, the ten commandments; second, the seven sacraments; third, ecclesiastical censures, penalties, and indulgences; and, fourth, states of life and last things.⁹⁵ Immediately, we can see that beatitude of the human person was no longer a principle concern of moral theology. Instead, the focus is on command and obligation. Azor, however, did include seven general topics which he claimed were borrowed from St. Thomas’s *Summa*: first, human acts; second, the division of action into good and bad; third, the passions or affections; fourth, *habitus*; fifth, virtues in general; sixth, sins in general (understood as infractions against law and

⁹¹ Ibid., 150.

⁹² See Pinckaers, *Sources*, 260ff.

⁹³ See *ibid.*, 260-262, 265-266.

⁹⁴ Jonsen and Toulmin, *Abuse of Casuistry*, 149f.

⁹⁵ Pinckaers, *Sources*, 261.

rights); seventh, law in all its sense (human, divine, and natural along with the precepts of the Church).⁹⁶ Not surprisingly, given the *ratio* of the Jesuit Order, there was no mention of beatitude, grace, or the Holy Spirit.

The influence of Azor's syllabus and manual is evident in most of the manuals that followed him. Even in the nineteenth century, Jean Gury, the eminent Jesuits casuist, said that Azor "is, among authors, the most commendable for his wisdom, learning and the weight of his reasoning."⁹⁷ The syllabus' success was due first to the authority of the Society but also to the fact that Azor systematically organized the presentation of moral theology. But his logic was clearly in line with what Pinckaers has identified as a morality of obligation by emphasizing the exteriority of action in its relation to the law, he had no concern for the end of man and beatitude or the internal workings of grace and the Holy Spirit. Azor's method was accepted without question. Pinckaers laments that "many believed, with Azor, that in it the moral teaching of St. Thomas, the Catholic moral teaching of all times lay revealed. A mere glance at the *Summa theologiae* and the Church Fathers, a smattering of critical sense, would have shown the profound differences. But the new system was so cogent, its appeal to contemporary ideas so direct, that the possibility of any other line of thought had become quite unimaginable."⁹⁸ This methodology would govern Catholic moral theology well into the twentieth century.

There was a proliferation of manuals of moral theology, all based on this casuistic style, in the seventeenth century. Jonsen reports that end of the sixteenth century there were

⁹⁶ The preceding was outlined by Pinckaers in *Sources*, 261-2.

⁹⁷ Jonsen and Toulmin, *Abuse of Casuistry* 155, quoting Jean Gury in "Azor," *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (Paris, 1922), I, col. 2653.

⁹⁸ Pinckaers, *Sources*, 266.

approximately six hundred volumes of moral theology manuals, all casuistic.⁹⁹ Little separated the manuals of moral theology. Between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, all moral theology textbooks adopted the same structure outlined by Azor for fundamental theology. There were treatises on human acts, conscience, law, and sin. In his review of the manuals, Pinckaers observes that there were some minor variations and even some manualists included a treatise on virtue and man's final end, but, he complains, they did not have any impact on the structure of those manuals. They were included only superficially. The primary concern remained exterior human action in relation to obligations imposed by law. The only difference one can note among moral theologians of this timeframe is their position with regard to questionable opinions of the authorities in the resolution of cases of conscience: whether they were laxist, rigorist, probabilist, probabiliorist, or equiprobablist¹⁰⁰. There is no need to explain these movements here, only to say that they all concern the licit course of action in the face of doubt about the law. Even St. Alphonsus Ligouri, the Doctor of Moral Theology, for all the good he accomplished was caught in the mindset of his time and so had to situate his own theology within this framework, when he coined the equiprobablist position.

This structure would last well into the twentieth century.

⁹⁹ Jonsen and Toulmin, 150.

¹⁰⁰ For a summary of these different modes of casuistry, see Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theology*, 135-143; Pinckaers, *Sources*, 273-277.

B. The Birth of Neo-Thomism

In his magisterial history of Neo-Thomism, Gerald McCool offers a broad definition: “The term Neo-Thomism is generally employed to designate the movement in philosophy and theology which assumed a leading place in Catholic thought in the latter portion of the nineteenth century and retained its dominance until the middle of the twentieth.”¹⁰¹ Neo-Thomism was a part of a third wave of scholasticism in history. The second scholastic movement of Trent had fallen to the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. Jesuit Thomism led by Francisco Suarez (d. 1617) virtually disappeared after the suppression of the Jesuits in 1772. But even the Thomism based on the commentary tradition, the more speculative theological descendants of St. Thomas, was disdained in the face of the rationalism and the secularism of the Enlightenment.¹⁰²

There were several different reactions to Enlightenment rationalism at work in the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century.¹⁰³ There were the traditionalists who exalted faith above reason. Felicite Robert de Lammennais, Joseph de Maistre, and Joseph de Bonald were the most prominent traditionalists. Traditionalism could be found in many Catholic schools in France, Belgium, and Italy. Ontologism could also be found in those schools. Ontologism “claimed its ancestry in the writings of Plato and Augustine and held that all human knowledge implies an immediate intuition of uncreated Truth (i.e., God).”¹⁰⁴ In

¹⁰¹ McCool, *Neo-Thomists*, 1.

¹⁰² See *ibid.*, 20.

¹⁰³ See *ibid.*, 25f.; Romanus Cessario, O.P. *A Short History of Thomism* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 82-88.

¹⁰⁴ McCool, *Neo-Thomists*, 25.

Germany, post-Kantian idealist philosophy was incorporated into Catholic theology. This was itself a distortion of Augustine's theory of illumination.¹⁰⁵

The renewal of Thomism in the face of European rationalism can be attributed to a group of scholars in Italy, many of whom joined the Jesuit Order upon its reestablishment in 1814. One of the most significant of these, Serafino Sordi (d. 1865), "came to recognize the value of Thomism for refuting those philosophical positions that, since they exemplified for the most part either a developed Kantianism or an accommodated Hegelianism, proved ill-suited to elucidate Christian theology."¹⁰⁶ Sordi's own manuals were still in use well into the mid-twentieth century. In 1824, Pope Leo XII returned the Gregorian University to the newly re-founded Society of Jesus and its new rector, the young Luigi Taparelli d'Azeglio, and attempted to unify the faculty by encouraging the study of St. Thomas. But the faculty strongly resisted, following the lead of their champion theologian, Giovanni Perone who "felt none of the hostility toward modern German theology."¹⁰⁷ Thus, the initial effort to spark a Thomistic revival in Rome failed.

The interaction between the Neo-Thomists and the traditionalists was nowhere more clear a half century later than at the First Vatican Council. The Neo-Thomist Jesuit Joseph Kleutgen and the traditionalist Jesuit Johannes Franzelin were commissioned to draft the council's document on faith and reason. Franzelin had little concern for scholasticism or Thomism, "he did not wish to make mediaeval theology the norm for all theology. That might upset the balance of Catholic theology, and it might diminish the important role which

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Cessario, *Short History*, 83.

¹⁰⁷ McCool, *Neo-Thomists*, 26.

the Fathers of the Church should play in it.”¹⁰⁸ Still, Kleutgen’s Thomistic influence can be recognized in the Council’s constitution on faith and reason.¹⁰⁹

While a Jesuit revival of Thomism failed in both Rome and later in Naples.

D’Azeglio was very influential on a young student, Gioacchino Pecci, who “in 1828 was prompted to send home for a copy of the *Summa theologiae* that he remembered seeing on the shelves of his family library.”¹¹⁰ After the death of Pope Pius IX on February 7, 1878, Cardinal Gioacchino Pecci was elected pope the following April. He took the name Leo XIII and it was this pope who issued the landmark encyclical *Aeterni Patris* in 1879, which initiated the institutional revival of Thomism in the Catholic Church. The document bore the subtitle, “On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy According to the mind of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor.” After offering a history of philosophy and its use by Christian theologians, including the Church Fathers, in responding to the needs of their day, it extols the wisdom of St. Thomas and highlights his use to the present day. The encyclical praises the movements which seek to restore the Angelic Doctor’s teaching to its former beauty and pedestal. The pope goes on to insist that the philosophy of St. Thomas would respond most suitably to the needs of the time and, therefore, he instructed all universities to offer his teaching.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ The final paragraph of the chapter on faith and reason in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith (*De Fide Catholica*) explains the relationship between faith and reason in much the same way that the first question of the *Summa theologiae* does. Specifically, the chapter concludes with the observation that the human sciences should be left to operate upon their own principles and methods. Nevertheless, the role of faith is to prevent these sciences from extending beyond their limits or from conflicting with the faith. The principles and conclusions of other science, rightly practiced, can be assumed into the faith by confirming theology’s own fundamental principles: those truths revealed by God. See First Vatican Council, “*De Fide Catholica* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith],” (24 April 1870), Ch. 4, in Tanner, *Decrees*, 1:809; *ST*, I, q. 1, aa. 1, 2, 5, 8; and Lawrence J. Donohoo, O.P., “The Nature and Grace of *Sacra Doctrina* in St. Thomas’s *Super Boetium de Trinitate*,” *The Thomist* 63 (1999): 343-401.

¹¹⁰ Cessario, *Short History*, 85.

McCool reports that the reaction to *Aeterni Patris* was generally favorable by the bishops of the world. They had grown weary of the eclectic and variant forms of philosophy and theology being taught in seminaries and houses of study.¹¹¹ Pope Leo XIII made tactical appointments to guarantee the success of his encyclical. He forced the appointments of Thomists to the official Jesuit journal, *Civiltà cattolica*, and Joseph Kleutgen's appointment as Prefect of Studies for the whole Society. Thomism was thus set in the Society of Jesus before the turn of the century.

The manuals of the twentieth century, some published even on the eve of the Second Vatican Council, took their cue from this revival of Thomism. The twentieth century manualists seem to have little knowledge or concern for the challenges to this initial revival of Thomism that were offered by Etienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain, or Joseph Marechal. Rather, they assumed many of the hallmarks of neo-Thomist theology: the distinctions between the natural and supernatural, nature and grace, faith and reason, body and soul, philosophy and theology, on the one hand, and the unifying theological theme which they took to be St. Thomas's, "the idea of God, considered, in his inner being and his exterior creative and redemptive work."¹¹²

John Gallagher provides a thorough synopsis of the major manualists published in the twentieth century.¹¹³ He notes six theological themes, what he calls "theological indices," found in most of the manuals of the twentieth century, all of which were imported from the

¹¹¹ See McCool, *Neo-Thomists*, 35.

¹¹² See Gallagher, *Time Past, Time Future*, 40, quoting Gerald McCool, S.J., *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), 196.

¹¹³ The manuals Gallagher surveys include those by John A. McHugh, O.P. and Charles J. Callan, O.P.; Aloysio Sabetti, S.J. and Timotheo Barrett, S.J.; Marcellinus Zalba, S.J.; F. Hürth, S.J. and P.M. Abellan, S.J.; Francis J. O'Connell, C.S.S.R.; and, Dominic Prümmer, O.P.

neo-Thomist theology popular in the day.¹¹⁴ The first theme is that moral theology is its own theological discipline. Here, he notes two distinct ideas running through most of the manuals. First, that moral theology has as its goal the attainment of man's end, even though the manuals spoke very little of the content of that end, and second, that moral theology's primary task was "the determination of sins and duties in order to prepare seminarians for the proper administration of the sacrament of penance."¹¹⁵ In a post-Vatican I Church, the sources of moral theology were not just scripture and tradition but also the teachings of previous moralists and the teachings of the Church (and here, Gallagher means the *responsia ad dubia* issued by various offices in the Holy See). In the post-Vatican I Church, the papacy and the Holy See were clearly in control of theological discussion, as is evidenced by the plethora of official responses to theological questions offered in the first half of the twentieth century.¹¹⁶

The second theological theme which Gallagher identifies was the goal of humanity, which "could be adequately known only through revelation and was primarily mediated to the Catholic community through dogmatic theology."¹¹⁷ But even Gallagher notes that the end of the human person was defined so as to emphasize "the religious significance of human acts."¹¹⁸ There is, however, no mention of interiority or the growth in virtue and holiness which was so central to St. Thomas's moral theology. In fact, the end of human nature is itself defined in terms of obligation: "the end of human beings is both an *obligation of* and a perfection of their nature, but its achievement is totally a consequence of God's

¹¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 50-62.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 50f.

¹¹⁶ See Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theology*, 116-174 for a historical review of the impact that magisterial authority had on theologians from the end of the nineteenth century through the twentieth century.

¹¹⁷ Gallagher, *Time Past, Time Future*, 54.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

gratuitous grace.”¹¹⁹ This was the thus the conundrum of the neo-Thomist manualist tradition: the relationship between nature’s obligations and supernatural grace. Hence, the third theme preoccupying the manuals is the question of the relationship between merit and grace, nature and supernature.

The fourth concern, the theological virtues, was also elucidated in terms of obligation and exteriority, even if interior necessity was acknowledged. Here, Gallagher uses the Dominican Prümmer’s manual, one of the last manuals before the Council, to summarize the point:

The gift of the [theological] virtues imposed upon their recipient the obligation of eliciting acts of faith, hope, and charity, as well as the obligation of performing external acts consistent with each of the virtues. An elicited act is one which remains within the will; in itself it does not require any external act. Thus Prümmer argued that there was an obligation to elicit interior acts of faith when God’s revelation had been sufficiently proposed to one, when a dogma of faith was proposed by the church, frequently during life, and probably at the moment of death. The same author proposed that, since human nature was embodied, there was also external acts of faith incumbent upon a Christian: a positive duty to worship and to profess one’s faith when questioned by public authority as well as the negative duty to deny one’s faith. Similar interior and exterior acts, elicited and commanded, were also entailed by the virtues of hope and charity.¹²⁰

This conception of theological virtues and grace figured prominently in the manualists’ view of the new law, the fifth theme Gallagher identifies. The new law of the Gospel has both interior and exterior elements. The interior elements are the grace of the Holy Spirit and the theological virtues. The exterior elements are the required and commanded external acts of the Christian life: works of mercy, the sacramental life of the Church, etc. Gallagher notes the obvious fact, “as one studies the special moral theology of the manualists one begins to

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 55.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 57.

suspect that the primacy of the inner aspect of the new law was being obscured by the requirements of the external law.”¹²¹ The new law of the manualists remained plagued with duty and obligation.

Finally, as was said earlier, sin was a major preoccupation. In true scholastic form, the manualists were certain to distinguish between actual and habitual sin, personal and original sin, mortal and venial sin, and formal and material sin. For the manualists, sin is evil for two reasons. First, because it is a turning away from God as the person’s ultimate end and secondly because it frustrates the divine order, which was the eternal law of God, though the manualists seemed to accept the voluntarist conception that law was primarily in the will of God.¹²²

What Gallagher shows well in his study is, first, that the theological presuppositions which influence the manualist moral theory are in continuity with the tradition of casuistry which Pinckaers has already shown to be traceable more to the nominalist school of William of Ockham rather than to Thomas Aquinas. And, second, even though the twentieth century manualists aligned themselves with the neo-Thomist movements of the time, or perhaps because of this fact, they were steeped in a morality of obligation.

Conclusion

Servais Pinckaers, Romanus Cessario, John Mahoney and John Gallagher all share the same critique of the manualist tradition. Pinckaers’s critique is widely known and begins with Juan Azor’s syllabus in the sixteenth century. Azor was among the first to exclude a

¹²¹ Ibid., 60.

¹²² Ibid., 62.

treatise on beatitude and the happiness of man from his moral system. Doubtless like others of his time, he had come to see the topic as too speculative for moral theology. Pinckaers sees a deeper reason “unclear perhaps to Azor but nonetheless operating in influencing him and his followers, ... that he could no longer see the importance of the treatise on beatitude within the context of his conception of a morality of obligation.”¹²³ Apparently, Azor had intended to include beatitude in the final section of his study on the ends of man but died before completing the work. Nonetheless, by so doing, he inverted the order that St. Thomas himself had followed. “St. Thomas placed the question of happiness at the beginning of moral theology, considering it to be primary and principal.... Finality no longer held a preponderant places in this system. The end, henceforth, was only one element of a moral action—one among others.”¹²⁴

The manualists certainly mentioned man’s last end, and believed it was God himself, but an action was judged according to its extrinsic relationship to norm and law. When considering man’s end, obedience, law, and norm were the primary referents. For example, morality was, according to John McHugh and Charles Callan’s manual, “the agreement or disagreement of a human act with the *norms* that regulate human conduct with reference to man’s last end.”¹²⁵ Similarly, the Aloysio Sabetti and Timotheo Barrett manual instructs, “The essence of morality consists primarily in the condition of the human act to the eternal law which is the divine plan, the will of God ordering natural order to be preserved and condemning its perturbation.... The secondary essence of morality consists in the relation of

¹²³ Pinckaers, *Sources*, 262.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 262, 263.

¹²⁵ Gallagher, *Time Past, Time Future*, 76, quoting Jon A. McHugh, O.P. and Charles J. Callan, O.P., *Moral Theology: A Complete Course Based on St. Thomas Aquinas and the Best Modern Authorities*, vol. 1 (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1929), 23 (my emphasis).

human acts to right reason.”¹²⁶ Even when manualists attempted to introduce a transcendent conception of man’s end, it was still under the rubric of norm and obligation. Gallagher writes, “[Francis] O’Connell proposed that morality meant ‘a transcendental relation of a human act, either of agreement or disagreement, to a norm or rule of goodness and evil, based on man’s nature in its entirety.’”¹²⁷ The manualists were more concerned with whether an act violated God’s divine will expressed primarily in the norms of nature (read: biological processes) and revealed in revelation, than with the question of the reasons why an act would be evil and, therefore, why it would be against nature and God’s will.

This view of morality as obligation is the direct result of the freedom of indifference which sees the will as the primary locus of morality and freedom as the fundamental ability to choose between contraries. This in turn was precipitated and confirmed by nominalism which, as we have seen, held that natures were convenient labels of the mind, but do not exist in reality. The only means of circumscribing freedom in such a view is the imposition of law. St. Thomas’s idea that natural law was an intrinsic image of the eternal law, the *ratio* of God, in the human person had no place in the manualist tradition. Rather, Cessario says, “all law represents something extrinsic to the human person and constitutes a limitation on the person’s God-given autonomy.”¹²⁸

This elimination of beatitude in Catholic moral theory and the exaltation of absolute freedom of indifference led to what both Cessario and Pinckaers have referred to as the atomization of moral action. Since this system “does not directly envision man as set

¹²⁶ Ibid., quoting Aloysio Sabetti, S.J., and Timotheo Barrett, S.J., *Compendium Tebologiae Moralis*, ed., Daniel F. Creeden, S.J., 34th ed. (Neo Eboraci: Frederick Pustet Co., 1939), 27.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 77, quoting Francis J. O’Connell, C.S.S.R., *Outlines of Moral Theology* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1953), 18.

¹²⁸ Romanus Cessario, O.P., *Introduction to Moral Theology* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 238.

between God as the first principle and God as our beatitude, casuistry does not adequately cognize or explain the dynamism of the moral life.¹²⁹ Each human act is an absolute choice between contraries and has no bearing on the acts which follow. Morality was simply the evaluation of particular acts in their relationship to the divine law. Thus, the extrinsic aspects of those acts were emphasized to the detriment of the interior life of the human person.

Pinckaers observes,

The distinction between interior and exterior acts was blurred. The ethicist lost sight of the interior dimension, for he felt that it was necessary to study only the exterior aspects of human acts as found in the legal ordinances. The ethicist focused on the material elements covered by the law; for him, this was objectivity. Whence the danger of objectivism, or the reduction of the moral act to its material object as opposed to all that emanated from the agent.¹³⁰

The concern the manualists had with sin and cases of conscience confirms these criticisms. Identifying sin and an acts in relationship to the law through cases of conscience is a chief identifying characteristic of a system concerned primarily with exteriority.

Finally, the primacy of the freedom of the will in this methodology fostered a certain dualist anthropology. If the will must be absolutely free and under no constraint, then aside from the virtue of obedience to the law, the primary virtue for the human person is stoicism: the command of all forces that might sway the will. This necessarily includes the passions. Cessario speculates that this explains casuistry's "disproportionate interest in regulating sexual morality. No greater threat to the liberty of indifference could be imaged than the sudden upsurge of lust. So every precaution had to be taken to maintain the serene 'indifference' of the will in the face of some *de facto*, especially unexpected, compelling

¹²⁹ Ibid., 237.

¹³⁰ Pinckaers, *Sources*, 271.

good.”¹³¹ Excessive attempts to keep the will in control of all emotion would contribute, at least in part, to the widespread dismissal of traditional moral theology during the sexual revolution of the 1960s.

To summarize, following the work of others, in this chapter I have argued that St. Thomas Aquinas articulated a moral theory that was grounded on God as man's beatitude and end. This fact, he believed, was written into man's nature and provided the sources for human action in the form of natural inclinations that seek the good and the true, which is God himself. Aquinas's synthesis was quickly discarded and replaced by William of Ockham's nominalism and voluntarism. Ockham's rejection of realism, the idea that there are any universal natures outside of the mind, precipitated his exaltation of the will over the intellect. The will was unfettered from human nature and natural inclination. It became simply the power to choose at any given moment between absolute contraries. The only locus of morality in such a worldview is the divine will to which the human will must be obedient. The divine will issues norms that simply must be obeyed. These norms can be seen in revelation and the structures of nature, often understood in purely biological terms.

Thus, I argue that morality was reoriented from its former concern with beatitude and growth in virtue through a succession of acts to a concern for the evaluation of individual and isolated actions and those actions' relationship with law. This meant that moral theologians and confessors were solely concerned with the exterior aspects of the human act, which could be identified and evaluated. This led to a separation between the interior and exterior aspects of the human person, and ultimately to an emphasis on human nature above

¹³¹ Cessario, *Introduction*, 238.

the human person, with human nature “dissolved or reduced to sheer biological facticity.”¹³²

The narrative I am presenting here and in the next chapter suggests that this overemphasis on biological facticity would be exposed as insufficient in the debate on the birth control pill in the twentieth century.

¹³² Grabowski, *Sex and Virtue*, 16.

Chapter 2

Personalism and the Debate on Marriage and Contraception

Introduction

In this chapter, I am going to show how the methodology of moral theology and ethics which emphasized the physical structure of human action in moral evaluation, which I presented in the previous chapter, was challenged substantially in the twentieth century. The manualist emphasis on the natural *telos* of biological processes began to give way to scientific progress which was increasingly efficient in altering those processes for the perceived good of the human person. Responding to this development and the perceived insufficiency of the manuals, some Catholic moral theologians began to favor the notion of the person rather than the purposes of nature as a category of theological discourse. This trend was particularly evident in the birth control movement at the turn of the century, which found sympathy within the Church in the 1960s. At this same time, the Catholic Church experienced a renewal of its understanding of marriage.

These two trends were pivotal in the debate among theologians and laity both before and after the promulgation of Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical *Humanae vitae*. In light of the history offered in chapter one, this chapter will provide a survey of the birth control debate and the rise of the personalist view of marriage. This chapter will thus conclude the historical background necessary to appreciate Pope John Paul's contribution to the discussion on marriage and sexuality which culminated in *The Theology of the Body* and the notion of a "spousal meaning of the body."

The chapter is set out in four sections. The first section will outline the stirrings for change in the Church's teaching on sex and marriage before 1953. The second section will

concentrate on what William Shannon calls the first phase of the birth control debate, beginning with the introduction of the birth control pill in 1953. The third section of the chapter will review the second phase of that debate, which begins with John Rock's book *The Time Has Come* (1963) arguing for the permissibility of the birth control pill and lasts until completion of the work by the papal commission on birth control in 1966. Finally, the fourth section, will provide a glimpse of the immediate aftermath of *Humanae vitae*'s publication. In a way, the Catholic Church is still experiencing the aftermath of the encyclical as a strong majority of Catholic couples reportedly practice contraception. To report the complete reaction to the encyclical from 1968 to the present would be its own study. Rather, the fourth section of this chapter will offer the immediate setting for Karol Wojtyla's unique contribution as a bishop, and eventually as Pope John Paul II.

I. The Stirrings for Change Before 1953

A. The Anglican Communion and Casti connubii

John Noonan is an eminent historian who delivered a lecture to Paul VI's birth control commission on the history of the Church's teaching on contraception.¹ In his magisterial book on contraception, Noonan shows that the Christian Church has, at least until 1930, always taught that contraception was immoral. He summarizes his findings in the introduction, "The teachers of the Church have taught without hesitation or variation that certain acts preventing procreation are gravely sinful. No Catholic theologian has ever taught, 'Contraception is a good act.' The teaching on contraception is clear and apparently

¹ See Robert McClory, *Turning Point: The Inside Story of the Papal Birth Control Commission, and How Humanae vitae Changed the Life of Patty Crowley and the Future of the Church* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995): 68-69.

fixed forever.”² Noonan, however, closes this same introduction with a suggestion that the doctrine might change given “the circumstances in which the doctrine was composed, the controversies touching it, [and] the doctrinal elements now obsolete.”³ Janet Smith observes that Noonan’s prejudice in favor of reversing the prohibition on artificial contraception makes his historical conclusion “particularly forceful,” as he is clearly suggesting a departure from the teaching of the historical Church.⁴ This tradition was ruptured on August 14, 1930 when the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Communion permitted the use of contraception to its members.

The birth rate per thousand persons had been steadily falling since 1771 when it had been 38.6 in France to 1860 when it was just 26.3.⁵ The birth control movement had gone international as early as 1900 with the first international birth control congress in Liège.⁶ By 1935 there were some two hundred mechanical contraceptive devices employed in most Western societies and a vast array of chemical solutions were used.⁷ Standard medical practice began to approve the use of contraception as early as 1905 in France and 1922 in England. This trend was coupled with the overpopulation movement. The overpopulation movement took its cue from Thomas Malthus (d. 1834) who argued that population was increasing faster than the world’s resources for human subsistence (particularly agricultural

² John T. Noonan, *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 6.

³ Ibid.

⁴ See Janet E. Smith, *Humanae vitae: A Generation Later* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991): 3. Noonan would later explicitly argue for a development in the doctrine on contraception. See John T. Noonan, *A Church That Can and Cannot Change: The Development of Catholic Moral Teaching* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

⁵ Noonan, *Contraception*, 387.

⁶ See *ibid.*, 407.

⁷ See *ibid.*, 408.

resources). The competition for basic subsistence, he argued, leads to many of society's ills.⁸

The 1925 international congress on birth control held in New York had precisely the theme, "Overpopulation produces war."⁹

These trends had definite influence on Christians. The Anglican Communion experienced a rapid shift in its teaching. In 1908 and again in 1920 the Lambeth Conference had condemned contraception.¹⁰ But in 1930, with a vote of 193 to 67, the Anglican bishops issued the following resolution:

Where there is a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, the method must be decided on Christian principles. The primary and obvious method is complete abstinence from intercourse (as far as may be necessary) in a life of discipline and self-control lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless in those cases where there is such a clearly-felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, and where there is such a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence, the conference agrees that other methods may be used, provided that this is done in the light of the same Christian principles. The Conference records its strong condemnation of the use of any methods of conception control from motives of selfishness, luxury, or mere convenience.¹¹

The statement provided no methodology for determining when contraception is illicit other than to insist that contraception cannot be used for impure motives.

The Catholic response to this shift in the Anglican Communion was swift. Less than five months later, Pope Pius XI issued his landmark encyclical *Casti connubii* on Christian

⁸ See Thomas R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Samuel Hollander, *The Economics of Thomas Robert Malthus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); William Peterson, *Malthus: Founder of Modern Demography*, 2nd edition (Piscataway, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1998). Malthus had developed the idea of the "Malthusian disaster." He theorized that a series of natural disasters and human troubles eventually equalizes population vis-à-vis resource and thus balancing the supply and demand ratio. Since its publication, a number of scholars have contested Malthus's controversial view. See, for example, Antony Trewavas, "Malthus Foiled Again and Again," *Nature* 418 (8 August 2002): 668-670.

⁹ Noonan, *Contraception*, 408.

¹⁰ See Edward M. East, *Mankind at the Crossroads* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923): vii, 340, 167 and Noonan, *Contraception*, 409.

¹¹ Quoted in Noonan, *Contraception*, 409.

marriage.¹² In his encyclical, Pius XI implicitly refers to the Anglican bishops when he writes, “Openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question.”¹³ In direct contradiction to the Lambeth Conference, Pius XI wrote,

No reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.¹⁴

Casti connubii defends the intrinsic integrity of the conjugal act according to the same principles common to the manualist tradition:

The Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through our mouth proclaims anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is *deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life* is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin.¹⁵

On the one hand, the tone of this paragraph reveals a *contra mundum* tendency. The Church is depicted as “standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her.” On the other hand, when read as a whole, I think the encyclical does more than simply rehash manualist principles.

¹² See Noonan, *Contraception*, 410-414.

¹³ Pope Pius XI, Encyclical “*Casti connubii* [On Christian Marriage],” (31 December 1930), no. 56. Official Latin text: *AAS* 22 (1930): 539-592. English Translation available: www.vatican.va. Accessed: 1 April 2008. Henceforth, this encyclical will be referenced as *CC* in the notes.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 54. (my emphasis).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 56 (my emphasis).

The 1917 Code of Canon Law had declared, “The primary end of marriage is the procreation and education of children; the secondary [end] is mutual support and a remedy for concupiscence.”¹⁶ Interestingly, the code mentioned nothing of the mutual love of the spouses as either a primary or a secondary end. Unlike the Code, Pope Pius XI includes a third object among the secondary ends of marriage, “the cultivating of mutual love.”¹⁷ He says the love between husband and wife “pervades all duties of married life and holds pride of place in Christian marriage.”¹⁸ And that the

mutual molding of husband and wife, this determined effort to perfect each other, can in a very real sense ... be said to be the chief reason and purpose of matrimony, provided matrimony be looked at not in the restricted sense as instituted for the proper conception and education of the child, but more widely as the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange and sharing thereof.¹⁹

John Gallagher has argued that while Pope Pius XI uses physicalist language to condemn contraception, he is not using the language in the same mode as the manualists and older moral theologians. “In the content of the whole encyclical, however, it seems that what is ‘according to nature’ is to be determined not by considering the physical aspect by itself but by looking at the nature and purpose of matrimony.”²⁰ Indeed, the encyclical speaks more of the nature of marriage as established by God and unalterable by man than it does about the nature of the conjugal act.²¹

¹⁶ *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1917), can. 1013, §1. Unofficial English translation: Edward N. Peters, *The 1917 Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law in English Translation with Extensive Scholarly Apparatus* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001): 352.

¹⁷ *CC*, no. 59.

¹⁸ *CC*, no. 23.

¹⁹ *CC*, no. 24.

²⁰ John Gallagher, “Magisterial Teaching from 1918 to the Present,” in *Human Sexuality and Personhood*, Proceedings of the Workshop for the Hierarchies of the United States and Canada Sponsored by the Pope John Center Through a Grant from the Knights of a Columbus (Braintree, MA: Pope John Center, 199): 196.

²¹ See *CC*, nos. 6, 49, 50, 95.

This is why Pope Pius XI explicitly allows couples to engage in sexual intercourse even when they know the wife is not fertile. There are other goods to be gained—mutual aid, the cultivation of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence—that the couple are permitted to seek “so long as they are subordinated to the primary end [procreation] and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved.”²² Gallagher may be right that Pius XI was attempting to express an idea, for which the theology of the day did not yet have an adequate vocabulary.²³ In effect, Pius XI’s attempt to articulate the importance of the spouses’ life of love, even if he was relegated to the terminology of primary and secondary ends, was just the beginning of a shift to an emphasis on the personalist value of marriage.

B. Personalism and Marriage: Dietrich Von Hildebrand and Herbert Doms

The shift to a personalist understanding of marriage began years before the promulgation of *Casti connubii*. One of the most notable lay scholars on marriage in the twentieth century was Dietrich von Hildebrand, a professor of philosophy at the University of Munich. While a detailed review of von Hildebrand’s theology of marriage is beyond the scope of this study, it should be noted that von Hildebrand stood diametrically opposed to the physicalist methodology which he thought was at work in most of the Catholic theology of his day.²⁴ He lamented that “our epoch is characterized by a terrible anti-personalism, a progressive blindness toward the nature and dignity of the spiritual person.... Human life is

²² *CC*, no. 59.

²³ See Gallagher, “Magisterial teaching,” 195.

²⁴ See Dietrich von Hildebrand, *In Defense of Purity: An Analysis of the Catholic Ideals of Purity and Virginity* (1931; repr., Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1962).

considered exclusively from a biological point of view and biological principles are the measure by which all human activities are judged.”²⁵

In 1928, he wrote that the marital act is “not only a function, the generation of children; it also possesses a significance for man as a human being—namely to be the expression and fulfillment of wedded love and community of life—and, moreover, it participates after a certain fashion in the sacramental meaning of matrimony.”²⁶ Noonan notes that “for the first time, a Catholic writer taught that love was a requirement of lawful, marital coition. He tied this novel demand to an ancient term—*fides*, fidelity. Fidelity required that persons meet person in a giving of self.”²⁷ For von Hildebrand, the sex act has not only an objective end (the procreation of children) but also an intrinsic significance for the couple, “The act of wedded communion has indeed the object of procreation, but in addition the *significance* of a unique union of love.”²⁸

Von Hildebrand was perhaps the first to distinguish between the end and meaning of marriage. In his book on marriage, he wrote, “Love is the primary *meaning* of marriage just as the birth of new human beings is its primary *end*.”²⁹ He argued that conjugal love is not simply advancement on the love of friendship that now included sensuality, but rather he suggested that conjugal love is a unique self-gift of one person to another, an “I-thou communion.”³⁰ Marriage establishes the community in which this communion is fully actualized, while the conjugal act expresses the meaning of that communion.³¹

²⁵ Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Marriage* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1942), v.

²⁶ Von Hildebrand, *Defense*, 20.

²⁷ Noonan, *Contraception*, 495.

²⁸ Von Hildebrand, *Defense*, 22 (original emphasis).

²⁹ Von Hildebrand, *Marriage*, 4 (original emphasis).

³⁰ See *ibid.*, 5-8.

³¹ See *ibid.*, 25f.

Von Hildebrand's obvious disposition in favor of the implications of the conjugal act for the persons involved did not deter him, however, from condemning contraception, which he viewed as a rupture between the biological objective and the personal significance of the act. Thus, von Hildebrand was one of a new breed of Catholic scholars who, in the words of John Grabowski, "strove to balance the primacy of procreation as the end of marriage by delineating a new category—that of meaning—in which love could be accorded primacy. Each value was seen as having primary importance in its own sphere. Hence the natural value of procreation was balanced by the new focus on personal self-giving love."³² The interaction between the meaning of personal self-giving love and the natural ends of marriage, traditionally understood, would occupy the thought of many of the Catholic moral theologians in the twentieth century who are concerned with marriage and contraception.

This development in thinking about marriage was not an enterprise restricted to professional theologians and philosophers. William Shannon has pointed out that the laity increasingly viewed marriage as a vocation, their love expressed through sexual intercourse as a means to sanctity, and were increasingly realizing that marriage was better characterized as self-gift rather than merely a juridical contract. This sentiment was catalyzed by various lay movements of the time.³³ Shannon concludes, "In the context of this growing appreciation of the personal values of married life and married love, it seemed increasingly unrealistic to

³² John S. Grabowski, "Person or Nature? Rival Personalisms in 20th Century Catholic Sexual Ethics," *Studia Moralia* 35 (1997): 306.

³³ The Family Renewal Association was founded in the early 1940s in New York City by Fr. John P. Delaney, S.J. During their meetings, married couples heard conferences on the vocation of marriage, the love of spouses, and the meaning of sexuality in marriage. This initial association was followed upon by the Cana Conference Movement and the Christian Family Movement. All of these movements tended to emphasize the personalist dimensions of marriage instead of juridical notions. See William H. Shannon, *The Lively Debate: Response to Humanae vitae* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1970): 15-17.

think that the nature of marriage could be adequately expressed in the impersonal categories of primary and secondary purposes.”³⁴

Publishing after von Hildebrand, Herbert Doms further developed the personalist view of marriage. Here, only a summary Doms’s major contribution to the twentieth century shift to a personalist understanding of marriage will suffice to continue my survey.

Doms was critical of the emphasis placed on the procreation and education of children as the primary meaning of marriage. While not denying this *end* or *purpose* of marriage, he believed the *meaning* of marriage, which is the union of the spouses, was primary.³⁵ Doms also suggests that because the meaning of marriage is the union of spouses, “The principal and primary purpose of marriage is not the child, but the mutual forming and perfecting of husband and wife in the metaphysical, natural and, above all supernatural orders.”³⁶ Therefore, he argued the Church should abandon all reference to primary and secondary ends in marriage.³⁷

For Herbert Doms, marriage and sexual desire is fundamentally about the completion and fulfillment of persons. “Men and women are drawn together by their desire for completion. They want as persons only to fulfill each other. But thanks to nature they tend, when they do this, to procreate new human beings.”³⁸ The sexual instinct, although natural, is not merely natural but personal. Moreover, “The sexual act is always a result of

³⁴ Shannon, *Lively Debate*, 16-17.

³⁵ Doms, *Meaning of Marriage*, 87. He says here, for example, “Marriage... fulfills its primary and secondary *purposes* through the realization of its *meaning*” (original emphasis). In *Love and Responsibility*, Karol Wojtyla would argue along similar lines that love should not be confused with the purpose of mutual help of the spouses (*mutuum adiutorium*) lest it be set in competition with the primary purpose of procreation. Rather, he said, love is what “norms” the ends or purposes of marriage (see Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 68-69). Doms likewise insisted that the union of the spouses not be confused with *mutuum adiutorium* (see Doms, *Meaning of Marriage*, 88).

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ See *ibid.*

³⁸ Ibid., 36.

the power of the personality to make a free gift of itself.”³⁹ It is able to communicate the total gift of self in an act that creates the “two-in-oneness” of the couple.⁴⁰

The benefits of the Doms’ approach are many and they have been enumerated.⁴¹ However, John Grabowski has argued that Doms’s view in *The Meaning of Marriage* was not entirely consistent or complete.⁴² While in some places Doms suggests personal union is primary only in the subjective sphere, leaving open the possibility that procreation is primary in the biological sphere, ultimately Doms argues that given the time separation between intercourse and conception, procreation cannot be a primary end.⁴³ By reversing the order of the ends of marriage, and in some way abolishing them, Grabowski believes Doms “anticipates the trajectory of much revisionist personalism over the course of the century.”⁴⁴

As regards family planning and contraception, Doms generally resorts to a voluntarist defense of the integrity of the sexual act. Since the human person cannot control the natural processes of insemination once the act is complete, “we have to recognize that nature itself imposes certain limits on human rights.... If they [the married couple] do interfere with these [natural] movements, they are presuming to that state of sovereignty which God has manifestly reserved for Himself.”⁴⁵ Though Doms attempts to argue that there is a relationship between the biological end of sex and the personalist meaning, Grabowski notes he does not use this argument consistently.⁴⁶ In many parts of the book he

³⁹ Ibid., 32f.

⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, 33f.

⁴¹ See Noonan, *Contraception*, 498.

⁴² See Grabowski, “Person or Nature,” 287f.

⁴³ See Doms, *Meaning of Marriage*, 175-76, 183-84.

⁴⁴ Grabowski, “Person or Nature,” 288.

⁴⁵ Doms, *Meaning of Marriage*, 72f. See also Doms, *Meaning of Marriage*, 88, 165-166; Grabowski, “Person or Nature,” 288.

⁴⁶ See Grabowski, “Person or Nature,” 288.

appeals to the voluntarist defense such as the one just mentioned.⁴⁷ His voluntarist appeal “is clearly a weak defense of many of the conclusions which he attempts to defend. Such arguments would unravel quickly when subjected to the pressure of later developments.”⁴⁸ The most significant challenge to this view will be the development of the progesterone pill in 1953, which seemingly works with the biological processes of a woman’s body.

C. *The Roman Rota and Pope Pius XII*

On January 22, 1944, the Roman Rota issued a decree on the nature of marriage.⁴⁹ The document clarifies the meaning of the word “end (*finis*)” in the Church’s language about marriage. When the word *finis* is used in Canon Law, it “is taken in a technical sense and means a benefit which is meant to be obtained both on the part of nature and by the deliberate intention of the agent.”⁵⁰ Following traditional Thomistic language, the decree goes on to speak of both a *finis operis* and a *finis operantis* in marriage. The *finis operis* in marriage “is that *good (bonum)* which matrimony tends of its very nature to obtain, and which God the Creator gave to the institution of matrimony.”⁵¹ The *finis operantis* is that which the person intends in the action, in this case in marriage or in the conjugal act. This is the subjective aspect of marriage. It is why people subjectively choose to marry and can be as

⁴⁷ See also Doms, *Meaning of Marriage*, 88, 165-166.

⁴⁸ Grabowski, “Person or Nature,” 288f. See also 307.

⁴⁹ See *AAS* 36 (1944):179-200. The whole of this document is not pertinent to the discussion on marriage. The relevant texts were extracted and translated by Odile Liebard. See Odile M. Liebard, *Love and Sexuality* (Wilmington, NC: McGrath Publishing Company, 1978): 71-83. Unless otherwise noted, English translations in this dissertation are from the Liebard text.

⁵⁰ Liebard, *Love and Sexuality*, 71-72.

⁵¹ Ibid. (Translation altered at italics by me). See *AAS* 36 (1944): 184: “«Finis operis» in matrimonio est illud bonum in quod obtinendum matrimonium tendit ex natura sua, quam Deus Creator instituto matrimonii indidit.”

varied as the couples themselves: personal fulfillment, a desire for a family, economic advantage, etc.

The secondary ends mentioned in the Code of Canon Law—mutual help and the remedy for concupiscence—are each a *finis operis*, but they are secondary ends contingent upon the primary end of procreation and education of children. The procreation and education of children cannot properly be carried out without the mutual life of the spouses and a remedy for concupiscence.⁵² The decree of Roman Rota is here primarily concerned with the relationship between the various ends of marriage—the primary and secondary ends (*finis operis*) and the intention of the spouses (*finis operantis*). The *finis operantis* need not always coincide with the *finis operis*. Indeed, the decree recognizes the two are not often aligned. Sometimes the “*finis operantis* is completely *extra* or *praeter* to the *finis operis*.”⁵³ However, a marriage entered into in which the *finis operantis* is contrary to any of the three *finis operis* is invalid and immoral, as is any conjugal act.⁵⁴ A *responsio ad dubium* by the same Roman Rota on April 1, 1944 would confirm that when the ends of marriage are equated, the relationship between them becomes confused.⁵⁵

Though Pope Pius XII never wrote an encyclical on marriage, a number of his addresses to various groups concerned marriage and sexuality.⁵⁶ The limited scope of this chapter prevents a full summary of each address.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, some significant themes are

⁵² See *ibid.*, 77.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁵⁴ See *ibid.*

⁵⁵ See *AAS* 36 (1944): 103.

⁵⁶ English translations of most of these addresses are collected in Liebard, *Love and Sexuality*, 84-134, 160-243.

⁵⁷ For a summary of Pius XII's teaching on marriage, see: Paulette Huber, Ad.PP.S., *The Teachings of Pius XII on Marriage and the Family*, (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1950); Noonan, *Contraception*, 451-475; Donald P. Ascì, *The Conjugal Act as a Personal Act* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002): 45-61; Gallagher, “Magisterial Teaching,” 199-200; Shannon, *Lively Debate*, 24-39.

apparent in his allocutions. For example, in one of his central addresses on the topic, the October 29, 1951 address to midwives, he emphasizes the importance of the secondary ends of marriage but insists they have “been placed by the will of nature and the Creator at the service of the offspring.”⁵⁸ Sometimes he uses biologicistic or physicalist language to argue for non-interference in the conjugal act as when he speaks early in his pontificate, in 1944, to the Italian medico-biological union of St. Luke.⁵⁹ But in the 1951 address he argues from the nature of marriage itself.⁶⁰

Pope Pius XII repeats Pope Pius XI’s permission for couples to have sexual intercourse during the woman’s infertile period for “serious reasons” such as “medical, eugenic, economic and social grounds, [which] can exempt from that obligatory service [of procreation] even for a considerable period of time, even for the entire duration of marriage.”⁶¹ He warns, however, that if there are no serious objective reasons “deriving from external circumstances” then “the habitual intention to avoid the fruitfulness of the union, while at the same time continuing fully to satisfy sensual intent, can only arise from a false appreciation of life and from motives that run counter to true standards of moral conduct.”⁶²

Finally, he mentions to the midwives the development of a theology grounded on “personal values” in which “the bodily union is the expression and actuation of the personal and affective union.”⁶³ He concludes that if the rise of personalism is only a matter of

⁵⁸ Pope Pius XII, Address to Midwives (29 October 1951), in Liebard, *Love and Sexuality*, 117. Original Italian text available, see *AAS* 43 (1951): 850. See also Pope Pius XII, Address to the Second World Congress on Fertility and Sterility (19 May 1956), *AAS* 48 (1956): 469-470. Unofficial English translation in Liebard, *Love and Sexuality*, 175-76.

⁵⁹ See *ibid.*, 92. Official Italian text: *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi di Sua Santità Pio XII* (Rome: Tipografia Poligotta Vaticana, 1944): 6:192.

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, 116.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 115.

emphasis, then it is a welcome contribution. His concern is apparently not with personalism itself but with the conclusions of some personalists who place the mutual affection of spouses over the procreation of children.⁶⁴ The primary end God instituted for marriage is procreation. All other ends are subordinate to that primary end. Even sterile couples are ordered to that primary end even though because of their condition they are never capable of procreating.⁶⁵

II. The First Phase of the Debate (1953-1962)

A. *The Hesperidin Pill and the Principle of Double Effect*⁶⁶

The first commercially available oral contraceptive in the form of a pill that was developed by Benjamin Sieve.⁶⁷ This first pill was phosphorylated hesperidin, which is an enzyme that occurs naturally in many citrus fruits. In Sieve's study three hundred couples experienced a suspension of fertility if both the men and women took the pill as directed. He hypothesized that the pill worked by making the ovum impenetrable, thus eliminating the possibility of fertilization.

The Jesuit John Lynch was one of the more prominent critics of Sieve's pill. In an August 1953 article, he not only condemned this pill as direct sterilization, but insisted it was

⁶⁴ Though Pius XII does not mention Herbert Doms, it was Doms's position that he was criticizing.

⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, 115-117.

⁶⁶ Much has been written on the origins of the controversy surrounding the birth control pill and contraception in the Catholic Church in the mid-twentieth century. John Noonan's book, *Contraception*, is an invaluable resource. Other books written in the same era include Shannon, *Lively Debate* and Ambrogio Valsecchi, *Controversy: The Birth Control Debate 1958-1968*, trans. Dorothy White (Washington: Corpus books, 1968). See also Robert Blair Kaiser, *The Politics of Sex and Religion* (Kansas City, MO: Leaven Press, 1985). Valsecchi's book is especially helpful for the impressive bibliography he catalogues and analyzes. The next two sections are indebted to these scholars' historical review.

⁶⁷ Benjamin Sieve, "A New Anti-Fertility Factor," *Science* 116 (October 10, 1952): 373-385.

a violation of the fifth commandment.⁶⁸ A more thorough reading of Lynch's argument reveals a moral viewpoint excessively dependent on the exteriority of human action, the finality of biological mechanisms, and the sovereign will of God. Citing *Casti connubii*, which says, that persons have limited dominion over their bodies, he goes on to offer a rebuttal grounded in the purposes (or *telos*) of nature.

Lynch rightly argues that we are stewards of our lives and our bodies, and, he says, of our bodies members.⁶⁹ He continues, "As stewards therefore we must respect the exclusive right of God over bodily integrity, guarding as His, and not as our own, the members and faculties with which we have been entrusted."⁷⁰ Only if the body as a whole is threatened, may a faculty or member be sacrificed in virtue of the principle of totality. In fact, such a sacrifice would be make us "responsible caretakers of the inviolable property of another."⁷¹ Lynch's definition of mutilation is consistent with his perspective. Inasmuch as mutilation violates God's dominion over life, it violates the fifth commandment. While acknowledging the existence of possible therapeutic uses for the pill, and accepting the possibility of its use according the principle of double effect, Lynch nonetheless equates the oral contraceptive with much more physical procedures of sterilization and mutilation.⁷²

Hesperdin was never widely used as a contraceptive pill. There was no evidence that it worked as reliably as Sieve had hoped. Its fate on the commercial market was sealed by the more successful and more widely promoted progesterone pill, which was developed in 1953 and was legalized in the United States in 1960. Because its primary mechanism was the

⁶⁸ See John Lynch, S.J., "Fertility Control and the Moral Law," *Linacre Quarterly* 20 (1953): 83-89.

⁶⁹ See Lynch, 85.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² See John Lynch, S.J., "Another Moral Aspect of Fertility Control," *Linacre Quarterly* 20 (1953): 120-

hormone progesterone, the introduction of this second contraceptive pill would prove to be an overwhelming catalyst for the debate on birth control and the subsequent interventions of Pope Pius XII and Pope Paul VI.

B. The Therapeutic Uses of the Progesterone Pill

In its first stage, the debate on progesterone revolved primarily around legitimate therapeutic uses for the pill in virtue of the principle of double effect. The primary concern of this period of the debate was determining the appropriate use of biology at the service of the person. Some moral theologians were more permissive than others, though all agreed that direct sterilization was wrong because of its intentional circumvention of the natural finality of the procreative process. Moreover, they were concerned with isolating those legitimate reasons in which the good of the person might justify the temporary sterilization caused by the pill.

John Lynch had already accepted the possibility of therapeutic uses for contraceptive pills, although he did not identify any use in particular.⁷³ In 1957, another Jesuit, William Gibbons further argued that pill must be distinguished from chemical or physical contraception precisely because it does not interfere with copulation as such.⁷⁴ While he himself does not support direct contraception, this is the first suggestion that the pill will have to be rebutted using argumentation that does not solely rely on the finality of the sexual act.

⁷³ In agreement with Lynch's observation, but likewise not identifying any particular therapeutic uses were: André Snoeck, "Fecundation inhibée et morale Catholique," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 75 (1953): 690-702 and Francis J. O'Connell, C.S.S.R, provides the same simple moral criteria in "The Contraceptive Pill," *The American Ecclesiastical Review* 137 (1953): 50-51.

⁷⁴ See William J. Gibbons, S.J., "Antifertility Drugs and Morality," *America* 98 (1957): 346-348.

Returning to the debate in 1958, John Lynch maintained his earlier distinction of the licit therapeutic uses of the pill from the illicit contraceptive uses.⁷⁵ In addition, he identifies several infertility disorders that might legitimize the use of the pill. Lynch argued that these treatments could not be considered the suspension of sterility, and in any sense of the word, since the woman had already been proven to be sterile in the first place.⁷⁶

The correction of menstrual and fertility disorders were not the only licit therapeutic uses identified by the literature of the time. Two other possibilities were mentioned, but without universal agreement. The first, generally more accepted, suggested the use of the pill for the regulation of a woman's ovulatory cycle. Though Gibbons had suggested the validity of such a use, to my knowledge, its first explicit endorsement came from Louvain theologian Louis Janssens in a 1958 article.⁷⁷ Mentioning nothing of the contraceptive purposes of the pill, Janssens focuses entirely on its possible therapeutic uses and identifies a principle whereby the pill corrects pathologies to the natural mechanisms of a woman's body. He writes, "*Salvo meliore iudicio*, je suis porté à croire que ces indications se réalisent, *quand on intervient pour soutenir des mécanismes naturels qui sont en défaut ou pour redresser des situations pathologiques*."⁷⁸ That being the case, the pill could legitimately be used, he argued, to regularize a women's fertility cycle.

Janssens suggested another, more controversial, therapeutic use. In his article, he noted that typically a woman is sterile during the period of lactation following a pregnancy.

⁷⁵ See John Lynch, S.J., "Pregestational Steroids: Some Moral Problems," *Linacre Quarterly* 25 (1958): 93-99.

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, 98f. For a brief summary of the preceding articles, see Valsecchi, *Controversy*, pp. 1-11.

⁷⁷ See Louis Janssens, "L'inhibition de l'ovulation est-elle moralement licite?" *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 34 (1958): 357-360; Gibbons, "Antifertility Drugs and Morality," 348.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 359 (Original emphasis): "*Salvo meliore iudicio*, I am inclined to believe that this saying is realized *when one intervenes to support natural mechanisms which are defective or to correct pathological situations*" (my translation).

This “natural mechanism” is sometimes lacking in women, who then experience fertility while nursing their new infants. Janssens argues, therefore, that the use of the progesterone pill during the period of lactation is therapeutic and morally licit in order to ensure the new mother is, in fact, sterile during those months following the birth of her child.⁷⁹ He identified this as an exercise of the principle, “licit corrigere defectus naturae.” The position was not universally supported.⁸⁰

Valsecchi summarizes the debate as it existed in September, 1958:

Almost all the authors agree in rejecting the deliberately anti-ovulatory use of progestational drugs, which they deem to be direct sterilization: Janssens alone is silent about this. All agree in justifying their therapeutic use (concerning which an interesting discussion is now taking place) on the grounds of the two principles of double effect and total good. The therapeutic use, moreover, is enlarged to include interventions aiming and the regulation of the female cycle, at least when the irregularities in question are of a pathological nature. But the opinion is being put forward that it is licit to administer progestational drugs also *in order to effect what nature herself requires but which for some unknown reason she seems unable to procure* [as in the case of sterility during lactation].⁸¹

Pope Pius XII’s address to the Seventh International Congress of Hematology takes up these issues.⁸² Pius XII accepts the legitimacy of reasoning from the principle of double effect and the principle of totality to allow the use of progesterone drugs for therapeutic purposes as long as the sterilization is not within the intention of the person. He warns, however, that it is “necessary to reject the view of a number of doctors and moralists who permit these practices when medical indications make conception undesirable.... In these

⁷⁹ See *ibid.*

⁸⁰ For a summary of the responses to Janssens position, see Valsecchi, *Controversy*, 1-6.

⁸¹ Valsecchi, *Controversy*, 6 (my emphasis).

⁸² See Pope Pius XII, Address to the Seventh International Hematological Congress (12 September 1958), *AAS* 50 (1958), 732-740. Unofficial English Translation in Liebard, *Love and Sexuality*, 234-243.

cases the use of medication has as its end the prevention of conception by preventing ovulation. They are instances, therefore, of direct sterilization.”⁸³

Pope Pius XII furthermore raises cautions concerning the use of the principle “*licet corrigere defectus naturae*” in what seems to be an implicit warning against the use of progesterone to suspend sterility during lactation. During the address, he said,

In an attempt to justify such sterilization, a principle of morality, correct in itself but badly interpreted, is often cited: ‘*licet corrigere defectus naturae*.’ And since in practice it suffices, for the application of this principle, to have a reasonable probability, ...it is still necessary to examine the means by which natural defects are corrected and to avoid the violation of other principles of morality.⁸⁴

The intervention of Pope Pius XII did nothing to quell the debates that had begun in the early 1950s. Since the address was imprecise, many moral theologians proceeded along the same paths they had already begun. The late 1950s and early 1960s would see the emergence of the distinction between the good of the person and the finality of human nature in the debate regarding various uses of the birth control pill. This trend would achieve its full import in the years leading to and following upon *Humanae vitae*.

C. The Emergence of Personalist Arguments in the Birth Control Debate

The emergence of personalist arguments in the birth control debate was the result of continued discussion of the possible therapeutic uses of the pill, and the expansion of scenarios of those uses. Most moral theologians continued to support the use of the

⁸³ Pius XII, Address to the Seventh International Hematological Congress, in Liebard, *Love and Sexuality*, 238.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

progesterone pill to increase fertility.⁸⁵ A much different case was the possibility of using the pill to regulate a woman's menstrual cycle. In this case, the woman was not already sterile and so, at least, the temporary suspension of ovulation would in theory be required to regularize her cycle. Because of this, a number of moral theologians were against such therapeutic use since it required the frustration of the finality of biological processes.⁸⁶

Here, it should be noted with Valsecchi that the arguments for or against the imposition of order on a woman's menstrual cycle were fundamentally about "whether this kind of action belongs to a human being's legitimate control over his own body, or whether it exceeds this and constitutes an illicit interference in 'natural' bio-physical processes."⁸⁷ This more fundamental issue was most evident in the ongoing debates on progesterone therapy during lactation and the suspension of fertility in the case of cyesophobia, which is the fear of pregnancy. The position a particular Catholic scholar took on the question of artificial contraception was largely determined by his or her answer to this central question.

The issue that would close the first phase of the debate was whether the pill could be used licitly simply to defer menstruation if it were convenient to do so. Such a use would be condemned by those same theologians who disagreed with the suspension of sterility except in cases of true pathology. Others, however, saw the intervention as simply the suspension of menstruation (i.e., the suspension of the shedding of the endometrium). Marcelino Zalba was the most forthright in his suggestion that the human person has complete control over

⁸⁵ See Valsecchi, *Controversy*, 16-17. Even though at that time, it was still unknown whether the progesterone would serve this purpose.

⁸⁶ See *ibid.*, 17-21.

⁸⁷ See *ibid.*, 19.

the nature of his sexual organs. He wrote that “no intervention is forbidden to man.”⁸⁸ For Zalba, Valsecchi observes, “the sexual organs, although given to man ‘primarily for the sake of the species and not for his own personal and individual use’ do in fact exist in the individual as a part to be controlled for the good of his own person.”⁸⁹

The physicalist methodology that so dominated Catholic moral theology at the beginning of the twentieth century, which tended toward a moral evaluation based on the physical structure of human action and an identification of the purposes of nature with biophysical processes had underemphasized the notion of the person. Retrieving the notion of the person as a concrete instance of human nature, Janssens, Zalba and others were defending of what they believed to be legitimate therapies which placed the purposes of nature at the service of the person. In this first period of the debate, those who maintained the traditional stance against contraception, except in the most absolutely pathological necessity, were arguing from an older methodology. Even the American Jesuit Paul Quay who in a 1961 article attempts to make a solidly personalist defense of the traditional teaching inevitably resorts to an unannounced emphasis upon nature’s purposes instead of the person.⁹⁰

Before 1963, the increased interest in the person vis-à-vis nature led the debate and the conclusions reached by some of these theologians prepared for the position announced

⁸⁸ Marcelino Zalba, S.J., “Casus de usu artificii contraceptive,” *Periodica de re morali, canonica et liturgica* 51 (1962): 176 (My translation).

⁸⁹ See Valsecchi, *Controversy*, 25, citing Marcelino Zalba, S.J., “Casus de usu artificii contraceptive,” 176-177.

⁹⁰ See Paul Quay, “Contraception and Conjugal Love,” *Theological Studies* 22 (1961): 18-40. For a summary and a critique of Quay’s argument, see Grabowski, “Person and Nature,” 297-300, 308. Grabowski shows that while Quay evokes the language of personalism, he ultimately believes the person is only fulfilled by working in virtue of his nature (see Quay, “Contraception,” 26). Grabowski’s critique is subtle and penetrating. Nevertheless, given the era in which Quay wrote this article, his idea of sex as language was prescient of similar ideas in Pope John Paul’s own thought.

by John Rock in his 1963 book *The Time Has Come* that progesterone pill was natural as was its contraceptive effect.

III. The Second Phase of the Debate (1963-1968)

A. John Rock and the Widening of the Birth Control Debate

In 1963, John Rock, a Catholic medical doctor, explicitly rejected an exclusive emphasis on the biophysical processes of the human body in favor of an emphasis on the needs of the person and of the couple.⁹¹ He had already expressed support for anti-ovulant use of the progesterone pill, which he helped develop, in an article in 1961.⁹² His position was criticized by a number of theologians, including John Lynch.⁹³ He was undeterred.

In his book, *The Time Has Come*, Rock's argument in favor of the use of the pill to regulate births begins with a redefinition. Rather, than a contraceptive or artificial birth control, he said that the use of the pill was analogous to the rhythm method, which was already approved by Pope Pius XI in 1930. Progesterone is the natural hormone, secreted by the ovaries, which suspends ovulation during the "safe period" of a woman's menstrual cycle. Rock concluded there is no moral difference between the natural safe period and the pill induced safe period.⁹⁴ By noting the "naturalness" of the pill, John Rock was responding to a physicalist or biologist view of morality. Rock effectively used physicalist terminology against the physicalist arguments for the traditional condemnation of contraception.

⁹¹ See John Rock, *The Time Has Come: A Catholic Doctor's Proposals to End the Battle over Birth Control* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963).

⁹² See John Rock, "We Can End the Battle over Birth Control," *Good Housekeeping* (July, 1961): 44-45, 107-109.

⁹³ See John Lynch, S.J., "Notes on Moral Theology," *Theological Studies* 23 (1962): 242. See also Shannon, *The Lively Debate*, 44.

⁹⁴ See Rock, *Time Has Come*, 168f.

Furthermore, he notes, “the pills, when properly taken, are not all likely to disturb menstruation, nor do they mutilate any organ of the body, nor damage any natural process.”⁹⁵

Both Pope Pius XI and Pope Pius XII supported the possibility of the use of the periodic continence—the abstinence from intercourse during the “safe period” of a woman’s cycle—in certain circumstances.⁹⁶ Since the discernment of the presence of these conditions in a couple’s life is the role of the intellect, Rock writes, “It is difficult not to believe that God gave man his intellect to safeguard him whenever his inner biology is inadequate.”⁹⁷ Thus, John Rock furthered the distinction between person and nature by highlighting the traditional Catholic emphasis on the uniqueness of human reason.

Rock was met with instant criticism in the United States.⁹⁸ John Lynch’s response was emblematic. He argued that imitating natural occurrences is not always within our rights as in the case of the natural circumstances surrounding death. “It is quite obvious, for example, that death from natural causes is a very common occurrence. But that biological fact does not justify one’s anticipating nature in this respect by deliberately and directly terminating innocent human life.”⁹⁹ But if Rock’s ideas were initially rejected in the United States, they would receive more than a fair reception in Europe.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 169.

⁹⁶ See CC, no. 59; Pius XII, Address to Midwives, in Liebard, *Love and Sexuality*, 113. Pope Pius XI does not mention periodic continence specifically as a means of birth regulation, nor does he countenance the idea that a couple may have reason to avoid giving birth. He does, however, make clear that couples are free to make use of their “marital right” to the conjugal act even if they know that procreation is not possible “on account of natural reasons either of time or of certain defects” (CC, no. 59).

⁹⁷ Rock, *Time Has Come*, 169f.

⁹⁸ See Joseph S. Duhamel, “The Time Has Come” (Review), *America* 108 (April 27, 1963): 610; John J. Lynch, “The Time Has Come” (Review), *Marriage* 45 (June, 1963): 16-17; John C. Ford and Gerald Kelly, *Contemporary Moral Theology*, Vol. 2 (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1964): 376-377. See also Shannon, *Lively Debate*, 46-47; Noonan, *Contraception*, 468-469.

⁹⁹ John Lynch, S.J., review of *The Time Has Come*, by John Rock, *Marriage* 45 (June, 1963): 16-17.

Months before the publication of *The Time Has Come* on March 21, 1963, William Bekkers, the bishop of the diocese of 'sHertogenBosch in Holland gave a televised speech in which he suggested that a marriage must be morally evaluated within the entire “kaleidoscope” of a life lived together in love. From this perspective, the regulation of births can be seen as a responsibility of a couple to each other and to their children. The means used, the bishop said, should be left to the couple.¹⁰⁰

Louis Janssens resurfaced in 1963 with a lengthy article arguing that the anti-ovulant use of the pill to regulate child births is permissible.¹⁰¹ Following a long exposition of the history of the Church’s teaching from St. Augustine to his own time, he argues that the use of the pill is no different than sexual intercourse during a woman’s infertile period of her menstrual cycle. The permissibility of the rhythm method reveals, says Janssens, that procreation need not be a positive intention in every act of sexual intercourse provided the act itself maintains its own integrity.

The distinction between periodic continence and the use of chemical or physical contraceptives is the difference the two make for the integrity of the sex act. Janssens writes, “Il suffit de noter que la pratique de la continence périodique exclut positivement la procréation: elle crée un obstacle d’ordre *temporel* par le choix exclusif des rapports sexuels durant les seules periods d’agenèse, tout comme l’usage de moyens anticonceptionnels mécaniques constitue un obstacle d’ordre *spatial* en élevant une cloison matérielle entre les

¹⁰⁰ Excerpts from this televised speech along with excerpts from an article which the bishop published in his diocesan paper the same month can be found in Leo Pyle, ed., *The Pill and Birth Regulation* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1964): 5-8. See also Shannon, *Lively Debate*, 47-49 and Noonan, *Contraception*, 469.

¹⁰¹ See Louis Janssens, “Morale conjugale et progesogènes,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 39 (1963): 787-826. Abstracts translated into English can be found in Pyle, *The Pill*, 14-19. See also Valsecchi, *Controversy*, 38-41; Shannon, *Lively Debate*, 50-51; Noonan, *Contraception*, 470-472.

organs des époux.”¹⁰² Precisely because the Church has already accepted the possibility of intentionally excluding procreation in a particular conjugal act for specific reasons, Janssens argues, therefore, the nature of the act itself is more than simply procreative. It is rather an “expression et incarnation de l’amour conjugal.”¹⁰³

This conjugal love is a mutual self-giving of the spouses, without reserve and without restriction (*sans réserve et sans restriction*). The incarnation of this unreserved and unrestricted love is the “intrinsic meaning” (*le sens intrinsèque*) of the conjugal act. To introduce any reservation, any restriction, any barrier is to vitiate the act by abandoning this intrinsic meaning.¹⁰⁴ The pill introduces no barrier nor does it interfere with the self-gift of the spouses. In this way, Janssens argues, it is no different than the rhythm method.¹⁰⁵ Janssens was not alone in his early support of the use of anti-ovulant pill to regulate child birth.¹⁰⁶

Initial response to Janssens in Europe was generally favorable, even if some authors expressed some reservations on the logical conclusions that might be drawn.¹⁰⁷ In the United States, however, the initial response was as critical to Janssens’s article as it was to the work of

¹⁰² Janssens, “Morale conjugale et progesogènes,” 817 (original emphasis): “It suffices to note that the practice of periodic continence positively excluded procreation: it creates an obstacle in the *temporal* order through the choice to engage in sexual relations exclusively during the periods of infertility. Similarly, the use of artificial conception constitutes an obstacle in the *spatial* order by erecting a material wall between the organs of the spouses” (my translation).

¹⁰³ Ibid., 819: “an expression and incarnation of conjugal love” (my translation).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 820-821. Janssens goes on to argue, following the lead of John Rock, that the use of the progesterone pill may be more suitable than the rhythm method since it prevents the release of ova from the ovaries which are inevitably expelled and thus destroyed in the natural course of a woman’s cycle if they are not fertilized. If one were to accept that the destruction of ova should not be the norm, then the use of the progesterone pill would seem a better option. Secondly, both Janssens and Rock argue that the use of progesterone actually increases a woman’s fertility when she ceases using it, an idea that would later be proved false. See Janssens, “Morale conjugale et progesogènes,” 822-823; Rock, *The Time Has Come*, 172-173.

¹⁰⁶ See W. van der Marck, O.P., “Vruchtbaarheidsregeling. Posing tot antwoord op een nog open vraag,” *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 3 (1963): 379-413; J.M. Reuss, “Eheliche Hingabe und Zeugung: Ein Diskussionsbeitrag zu einem differenzierten Problem,” *Tübinger Theologische Quartalschrift* 143 (1963): 454-76. An English translation of abstracts from the latter appears in Pyle, *The Pill*, 8-13. For a concise summary of the arguments of these two articles see Valsecchi, *Controversy*, 41-45 and Noonan, *Contraception*, 470-471. Louis Janssens is the most-often cited of the three Belgium theologians supporting an expanded use of the pill.

¹⁰⁷ See Valsecchi, *Controversy*, 47-48 for a bibliography and summary of arguments.

John Rock.¹⁰⁸ All of the respondents reject Janssen's tenuous link between periodic continence and the pill. An editorial in the April 25, 1964 issue of *America* provided a standard reply. The difference between the rhythm method and the pill was "non-performance of the conjugal act during the fertile period.... No amount of word juggling can make abstinence from sexual relations and the suppression of ovulation one and the same thing."¹⁰⁹ The respondents likewise all commented that the Church's teaching had not changed and, therefore, that Catholics were not free to use the contraceptive pill.

A younger generation of Catholic moral theologians, more favorable to contraception, also began publishing at this time. Many of these would play a significant role in the aftermath of the promulgation of *Humanae vitae*.¹¹⁰

B. *The Second Vatican Council*

Three months after the close of the Second Vatican Council's first session, in March, 1963, Pope John XXIII established a commission to discern the question of contraception. The pope died three months later but his successor, Pope Paul VI, decided that the commission should continue its work. It would meet from 1963 to 1966.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ See Gerald Kelly, S.J., "Confusion: Contraception and 'the Pill,'" *Theology Digest* 12 (1964): 123-30; John Lynch, S.J., "Notes on Moral Theology. The Oral Contraceptives," *Theological Studies* 25 (1964): 237-49; Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., "Is Contraception Intrinsically Wrong?" 150 (1964): 434-439. See also Shannon, *Lively Debate*, 52-54; Noonan, *Controversy*, 49-53.

¹⁰⁹ "Time Bomb" editorial, *America* (May 25, 1965): 563.

¹¹⁰ The most notable of these was Charles Curran. See Charles Curran, "Christian Marriage and Family Planning," *Jubilee* 12 (August, 1964): 8-13.

¹¹¹ There have been few detailed histories of the commission's work. Shannon devotes a chapter in his book, *The Lively Debate* to the commission and correlates all the material published up to the time of the book's publication (see Shannon, *Lively Debate*, 76-104). Janet Smith offers a brief outline of the commission's work and an analysis of the two reports issued by the commission (see Smith, *Humanae vitae*, 11-35). Finally, Robert McClory offers a popular history of the "inside story of the papal birth control commission." Besides his own research, McClory follows the account offered by Patty Crowley, a founder of the Christian Family Movement and among the lay married persons added to the commission in 1964. According to McClory's own depiction, Crowley makes no secret of her disappointment with *Humanae vitae* and accepts the fact of dissent to the papal

In the fall of 1965, during its fourth and final session, the Second Vatican Council was reviewing *Schema XIII*, the document on the Church in the modern world that would eventually be known as *Gaudium et spes*. The fathers were divided whether the schema should reference the traditional primary and secondary ends of marriage. In his historical survey of this session of the council, Gilles Routhier summarizes that “a number of the fathers did regard conjugal love as the reality that ought to be the basis for thinking about marriage.”¹¹² The struggle between those who wanted a more personalist approach to marriage, which emphasized conjugal love as primary, and those who wanted a more traditional approach that would reference primary and secondary ends was central to the debate on marriage.

The council’s subcommission on marriage completed its work on the final draft of the schema on November 20 and thus began a tumultuous time of debate in the mixed commission, which was responsible for the agenda of the council.¹¹³ On November 24, as the mixed commission began to consider the final draft of the schema, a letter from the secretary of state, Amleto Cardinal Cicognani. It proposed “in the name of a higher authority” four amendments (*modi*) to the text. It was clear to everyone in the room that the higher authority was Pope Paul VI.¹¹⁴ When the mixed commission descended into argument

teaching. McClory agrees with her sentiments, which is a prejudice that colors his presentation of the commission (see McClory, *Turning Point*, 38-137). My brief review of the commission’s work is dependent on these sources.

¹¹² Gilles Routhier, “Finishing the Work Begun: The Trying Experience of the Fourth Period,” in Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, eds., *History of Vatican II*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 2006): 5:155.

¹¹³ See Peter Hünnermann, “The Final Weeks of the Council,” in Alberigo and Komonchak, eds., *History of Vatican II*, 5:406, 408.

¹¹⁴ See Shannon, *The Lively Debate*, 85. For a summary of the papal *modi*, their history, the debate in the mixed commission, and its resolution, see Hünnerman, “Final Weeks,” 408-419; Shannon, *The Lively Debate*, 84-87; Kaiser, *Politics*, 115-121; McClory, *Turning Point*, 83-85. The text of Cicognani’s letter and the four papal *modi* are available at AS V/3, 604-606. In article 47 of the schema, practices such as polygamy, divorce, free love, selfishness, and hedonism would be condemned as against the nature of married love. The first papal *modus* asked that contraceptive practices (*artes anticonceptionales*) be included in this list. The second *modus* wanted the phrase on the preeminent place the gift of children has for a marriage. The third *modus* wanted

on the papal modi, a second letter from Cicognani arrived only two days later, which indicated that the four amendments were only “counsels” and the commission was free to discern their merit and their incorporation into the text.¹¹⁵

Rather than insert birth control in the list of dangers against marriage found in the early paragraphs of the schema, as the pope suggested, the commission used instead the words “illicit practices contrary to conception.”¹¹⁶ The mixed commission agreed with the pope that a paragraph of the schema was ambivalent on the ends of marriage, so the mixed commission accepted the pope’s advice to insert a reference to children as the preeminent gift of marriage. Without mentioning the ends of marriage, the commission added that sharing lovingly in the work of the Creator and Redeemer was the orientation of marriage “without prejudice to the other ends of marriage.”¹¹⁷ The text thus refers to the ends of marriage without establishing a hierarchy of those ends.¹¹⁸

In deference to the third *modus*, a footnote reference to *Casti connubii* and to Pius XII’s address to midwives was added to the schema’s discussion of legitimate methods of birth control. Additionally, another footnote (the famous footnote 14) was added that referred directly to the papal commission on birth control. The council deferred to the pope’s decision on birth control once the papal commission concluded its work and, therefore, the footnote said “the council is not aiming immediately to propose specific

the document to condemn all birth control practices that “are” proscribed or “will be” proscribed, as well as a direct reference to *Casti connubii* and Pius XII’s address to midwives. The final *modus* wanted chastity discussed in the section of the document that concerns the difficulties married couples face.

¹¹⁵ For the text of this second letter, see AS V/3, 610.

¹¹⁶ See Second Vatican Council, “*Gaudium et spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World]”, no. 47, in Tanner, *Decrees*, 2:1100: “*illicitis usibus contra generationem.*” The official Latin text of *Gaudium et spes* is available in *AAS* 58 (1966): 1025-1115. Hereafter, this document will be referenced as *GS* in the notes.

¹¹⁷ See *GS*, no. 50. English translation from Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, (Washington, Georgetown University Press, 1990): 2:1103.

¹¹⁸ See Hannerman, “Final Weeks,” 415.

solutions.”¹¹⁹ Finally, “the commission wanted to avoid giving the impression that conjugal chastity was the only possible means of birth control. For this reason the reference to conjugal chastity that the pope had requested in his fourth *modus* was introduced at a different place than the one called for.”¹²⁰

Once the mixed commission completed its work, the finalized amended text was presented to the fathers of the council and was promulgated on December 7, 1965. It was the final document the council issued. The chapter on marriage, while not overturning the traditional teaching on marriage, offers a fresh presentation. The central point of the constitution’s treatment of marriage is the notion of conjugal love. John Gallagher notes that “as a matter of human will, this love is much more than physical desire, but it includes physical expression.”¹²¹ Conjugal love, the Council asserted, “embraces the good of the entire person and is therefore capable of endowing human expressions with a particular dignity and of ennobling them as special features and manifestations of married friendship.”¹²²

It is this conjugal love and the institution of marriage that is directed to the procreation of children:

The institution of marriage and *conjugal* love are, of their nature, directed to the *procreation* and *education* of children and they find their culmination in this. Thus it is that a man and a woman, who “are no longer two but one flesh” (Mt 19:6) in their marital covenant, help and serve each other in their intimate union of persons and activities, and from day to day experience and increase their sense of oneness. Such intimacy, as a mutual giving of two

¹¹⁹ See Tanner, *Decrees*, 2:1104: “Quaedam quaestiones quae aliis ac diligentioribus investigationibus indigent, iussu summi pontificis, commissioni pro studio populationis, familiae et natalitatis traditae sunt, ut postquam illa munus suum expleverit, summus pontifex iudicium ferat. Sic stante doctrina magisterii, s. synodus solutiones concretas immediate proponere non intendit.”

¹²⁰ Hünemann, “Final Weeks,” 415.

¹²¹ Gallagher, “Magisterial Teaching,” 201.

¹²² *GS*, no. 49. Translation from Tanner, *Decrees*, 2:11-2

persons, as well as the good of their children require complete faithfulness between the partners, and call for their union being indissoluble.¹²³

Here, Gallagher rightly notes, “the council fathers are arguing not from a narrowly biological basis. It is the nature of marriage itself and of conjugal love to be oriented toward procreation.”¹²⁴ One could go further and say that the Council has insisted that while marriage and conjugal love are directed to the procreation of children, the existence of children in the marriage further confirms and strengthens that love. This is why *Gaudium et spes* reaffirms later that marriage and married love are “directed towards the begetting and bringing up of children” and goes on to say “Children are the supreme gift of marriage and they contribute greatly to the good of their parents.”¹²⁵ While the primary concern of *Gaudium et spes* is conjugal love and the institution marriage, the conjugal act along with procreation is certainly not absent from the document. Rather, these are presented in their relationship to conjugal love and marriage.

The document does not present an argument against contraception, though it does speak against “illicit practices against conception” at the request of Pope Paul VI. It simply said that methods of birth regulation should be decided by objective criteria according to “the nature of the person and its acts” with the understanding the faithful may not choose a means proscribed by the magisterium.¹²⁶ More importantly, it does not mention the distinction between the primary and secondary ends of marriage. Nor does it mention the

¹²³ *GS*, no. 48 (Tanner translation altered by me at italics). See Tanner, *Decrees*, 2:1101: “Indole autem sua naturali, ipsum institutum matrimonii amorque *coniugalis* ad *procreationem* et *educationem* prolis ordinantur iisque veluti suo fastigo coronantur. Vir itaque et mulier, qui foedere coniugali ‘iam non sunt duo, sed una caro’ (Mt 19:6), intima personarum atque operum coniunctione mutuum sibi adiutorium et servitium praestant, sensumque suae unitatis eperiuntur et plenius in dies adipiscuntur. Quae intima unio, utpote mutual duarum personarum donation, sicut et bonum liberorum, plenam coniugum fidem exigent atque indissolubilem eorum unitatem urgent.”

¹²⁴ Gallagher, “Magisterial Teaching,” 201.

¹²⁵ *GS*, no. 50.

¹²⁶ *GS*, no. 51, in Tanner, *Decrees*, 2:1104.

idea of mutual help of spouses as subordinate to the procreation and education of children. Some have speculated that this omission means that the Council intended to overturn the traditional teaching of the Church, and intended to accord equal status to the ends of marriage.¹²⁷ Others have said that the document does not overturn the traditional hierarchy of ends, but only reformulates its expression.¹²⁸ The promulgation of *Gaudium et spes* with its dynamic presentation of marriage and the inclusion of the legendary footnote 14 increased speculation on the results of the work of the papal commission on birth regulation. The world awaited eagerly for the pope's decision on the matter.

C. The Reports of the Papal Commission

The papal commission on birth control met five times between 1963 and 1966. At each meeting, more members were added to the group.¹²⁹ Its final meeting began on April 18, 1966 and concluded three months later on June 28. Moreover, the structure of the group was reconstituted. In February, Pope Paul VI appointed sixteen bishop members to form an executive committee to the commission.¹³⁰ Only these bishops would have a vote on the

¹²⁷ See James P. Hanigan, *What Are They Saying about Sexual Morality?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982): 33; Grabowski, "Person and Nature," 308n107. While the other authors argue generally from silence, Grabowski offers a cogent argument in three points. "First, it is not the reading of most scholars [that *Gaudium et spes* did not repudiate the hierarchy of the ends marriage utilized in the 1917 Code of Canon Law]. Second, it ignores the theology of covenant present within the Pastoral Constitution which serves as the vehicle for its embrace of personalist ideas. Third, it overlooks the fact that subsequent magisterial documents, including *Humanae vitae* (esp. no. 12), effectively settle the question by treating the two ends as not only equally important but inseparable."

¹²⁸ See Janet Smith, *Humanae vitae*, 47-48; Ramón García de Haro, *Marriage and the Family in the Documents of the Magisterium: A Course in the Theology of Marriage*, trans. William E. May (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989): 195-198, 241-245; William E. May, *Marriage: The Rock on which the Family is Built* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995): 109-115; and Asci, *Conjugal Act*, 68-71. Pope John Paul II suggested that the hierarchy was reaffirmed by both *Gaudium et spes* and *Humanae vitae* but reoriented their relationship in reference to conjugal love. See *TOB*, no. 127.

¹²⁹ For a list of the various members added for each meeting, see McClory, *Turning Point*, 188-190.

¹³⁰ See Shannon, *Lively Debate*, 88; McClory, *Turning Point*, 96-97. The sixteen members of the executive committee were: Archbishop Leo Binz (United States), Bishop Carlo Colombo (Vatican), Archbishop

deliberations of the commission. In effect, those members of the commission who had labored in the previous four meetings were reconstituted as advisors (*periti*) to this executive committee. The work of the papal commission came to an end on June 25, 1966. On June 28, Cardinal Julius Doepfner and Fr. Henri de Riedmatten presented the commission's work to Pope Paul VI.

Three principal documents emerged from the papal commission, which were subsequently leaked to the media. First, a Minority Report written by four theologians who were against a change in the Church's condemnation of contraception. A schema, which was approved by a majority of the bishops on the executive committee, advocated a change of the teaching. Finally, there was a Majority Rebuttal of the Minority Report.¹³¹ Very brief observations on each of the reports is in order before the discussion of the encyclical.

The Minority Report relies fundamentally on the strength of the Church's tradition in condemning contraception. After defining the terms of the question, the report goes on to provide a brief survey of the Church's teaching on contraception and marriage, focusing especially on the twentieth century. Referencing Noonan's book, the report says, "One can find no period in history, no document of the Church, no theological school scarcely one

John Dearden (United States), Juilies Cardinal Doepfner (Germany), Archbishop Claude Dupuy (France), Valerian Cardinal Gracias (India), John Cardinal Heenan (England), Joseph Cardinal Lefebvre (France), Archbishop Thomas Morris (Ireland), Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani (Vatican), Lawrence Cardinal Shehan (United States), Leo Joseph Cardinal Suenens (Belgium), Archbishop José Rafael Pulido-Méndez (Venezuela), Bishop Joseph Reuss (Germany), Archbishop Karol Wojtyla (Poland), and Archbishop Jean Baptiste Zoa (Cameroon). Wojtyla, however, did not attend this final meeting having been denied an exit visa from the Communist government in Poland (see Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 207).

¹³¹ The shorthand references to these three documents vary depending on the authors consulted. For the sake of clarity, I will be following Janet Smith's nomenclature. In this dissertation the paper drafted by the minority theologians will be referred to as the "Minority Report;" the paper intended as a draft of a final document will be referred to as "The Schema;" and, the rebuttal prepared by the majority theologians as the "Majority Rebuttal." All three of these reports were never meant for public consumption. But they were leaked and published in the spring of 1967 in both the *Tablet* and the *National Catholic Reporter*. The translation published in the *National Catholic Reporter* is available in Leo Pyle, ed., *Pope and Pill: More Documentation on the Birth Regulation Debate* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1969): 257-305. All references to these reports in this dissertation will be from Pyle's compilation.

Catholic theologian, who ever denied that contraception was always seriously evil. The teaching of the Church in this matter is absolutely constant. Until the present century this teaching was peacefully possessed by all other Christians.”¹³² Acknowledging the evolution of Church’s presentation of marriage and sexuality away from an excessively juridical emphasis toward a more personalist view that sees marriage as its own means to holiness, the Minority Report then responds to the typical arguments advanced in favor changing the Church’s teaching on contraception.

When the Minority Report address positive arguments in favor of the Church’s teaching, it admits, “If we could bring forward arguments which are clear and cogent based on reason alone, it would not be necessary for our commission to exist, nor would the present state of affairs exist in the Church as it is.”¹³³ It is in this section that the minority theologians defend the Church’s teaching against the charge of physicalism. The inviolability of intercourse has always been taught because it is generative, and “this inviolability is always attributed to the act and to the process, which are biological; not inasmuch as they are biological, but inasmuch as they are human, namely inasmuch as they are the object of *human acts* and are destined by their nature to the good of the human species.”¹³⁴ The report also argues that the teaching cannot be based on a faulty medieval notion of “nature,” because “the teaching of the Church was first fully formulated and handed down constantly for several centuries before scholastic philosophy was refined.”¹³⁵ Also, theology has never

¹³² See “Minority Report,” in Leo Pyle, ed., *Pope and Pill: More Documentaiton on the Birth Regulation Debate* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1969): 275-276.

¹³³ “Minority Report,” 278-279.

¹³⁴ “Minority Report,” 279 (original emphasis).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 278.

argued for the inviolability of nature generally, but the inviolability of human generative process “precisely because they are generative of new *human life*.”¹³⁶

The reason the teaching is irreformable, according to the report, is that the teaching has been stated as true by the Church constantly and consistently. If error is admitted, “the authority of the ordinary magisterium in moral matters would be thrown into question.”¹³⁷ This is why, the minority theologians argue, that those who seek to change the teaching have redefined the notions of the magisterium and its authority.

The report then summarizes the philosophical foundations for those arguments in favor of changing the Church’s teaching. One finds a brief summary of the debate of the twentieth century presented from the perspective of those defending the traditional teaching.¹³⁸ The foundations are by now familiar: a reverence for God, an emphasis on the person over nature, and the duty of humanizing nature according to reason. The report disagrees with the view that nature is “a complex of physical and psychic powers in the world, granted to the dominion of man, so that he can experience them, foster change, or frustrate them for his own earthly convenience.”¹³⁹ The minority report concludes by suggesting the consequences of changing the teaching on contraception (an increase in premarital sex, masturbation, illicit acts of copulation within marriage, and sterilization).

The Majority Rebuttal begins by placing the condemnation of contraception in *Casti connubii* in its historical context. Specifically, the majority theologians suggest that the tone of the encyclical was appropriate for the context in which it was issued, that is, immediately following the Anglican declaration at the Lambeth Conference and amid fears of the

¹³⁶ Ibid. (original emphasis).

¹³⁷ Ibid., 281.

¹³⁸ See *ibid.*, 285-289.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 289-290.

possibility of population decline with the use of contraception. It says, “Today no one holds that the solemn declaration of the encyclical *Casti connubii* constitutes a true doctrinal definition.”¹⁴⁰ Similarly, the rebuttal seeks to contextualize the constant condemnation of contraception in the Church’s history, insisting those condemnations were made for larger dogmatic concerns that are no longer problematic in the Church.¹⁴¹ The problem with the natural law argument offered against contraception is that “the gifts of nature are considered to be immediately the expression of the will of God, preventing man, also a creature of God, from being understood as called to receive material nature and to perfect its potentiality.”¹⁴²

The rebuttal notes that in fact the Church’s teaching on marriage and the conjugal act has evolved over the twentieth century with an emphasis on conjugal love as expressed in the act of intercourse. The rebuttal offers many reasons for the development: social changes in marriage, the differing roles of women, advances in science, and the growing consensus of the faithful, to name just a few. A change in teaching would be nothing more than an acknowledgement of this evolution.¹⁴³

The rebuttal’s rejection of any natural law argument lies upon the authors’ emphasis on the person and human freedom over nature. The dignity of man consists in “that God wished man to share in his dominion. God has left man in the hands of his own counsel.... Therefore the dominion of God is exercised through man, who can use nature for his own perfection according to the dictates of right reason.”¹⁴⁴ Thus, man recognizes his dignity “when he uses his skill to intervene in the biological processes of nature so that he can

¹⁴⁰ “Majority Report,” in Pyle, 297.

¹⁴¹ See *ibid.*, 298.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ See *ibid.*, 300.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 301.

achieve the ends of the institution of matrimony in the conditions of actual life, than if he would abandon himself to chance.”¹⁴⁵ For all that, though, the rebuttal insists that there are moral criteria that must be respected. Specifically, actions must be in conformity with rational nature and respect the ends to which nature has things ordered, although the document is vague as to its meaning on this point.¹⁴⁶

In a decisive shift in favor of the notion that the human person, rather than human nature, should be considered normative, the rebuttal argues that persons, not natures, are the sources of life. It is up to married persons to exercise reason in appropriate planning of children. “In virtue of this decision [on the planning of children] they use the sexual organs to gain the predetermined goal, but the organs themselves are not *per se* the sources of life. The biological processes in man is not some separated part (animality) but is integrated into the total personality of man.”¹⁴⁷ After recounting the now typical emphasis on the conjugal act as an expression of conjugal love, the rebuttal concludes there is no difference between acts which are fertile and acts which are infertile. From this perspective, the rebuttal argues the reasonable intervention in fertility is completely within the limits of classical doctrine. A person is not excluding fertility permanently but only regulating it reasonably in order to direct the whole marriage toward conjugal union and fecundity.¹⁴⁸ The rebuttal concludes by disagreeing with the Minority Report’s grim predictions of a future with contraception. It reaffirms the majority’s condemnation of both abortion and the unreasonable or selfish use of contraception.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 301.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 302.

¹⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 302-305.

With Janet Smith, then, we can identify four major areas of fundamental disagreement between the two documents.¹⁴⁹ First, the documents disagree on the meaning and purpose of the Church's traditional condemnation of contraception. Second, they differ on the impact a change in the teaching would have the moral authority of the Church. Third, the understanding of natural law differs in the documents. Finally, they each offer their own outlook on a future in which contraception is universally accepted and practiced.

The Schema begins with the striking observation, "In creating the world God gave man the power and the duty to form the world in spirit and freedom and, through his creative capacity, to actuate his own personal nature."¹⁵⁰ In the first part, then, the Schema turns to the impact this lofty vocation of man has on marriage. Emphasizing the value of conjugal love as mutual self-giving, the Schema nevertheless asserts that married life is not complete merely with self-gift. "Married people know well," it says, "that they are only able to perfect each other and establish a true community if their love does not end in a merely egotistic union but according to the condition of each is made truly fruitful in the creation of new life."¹⁵¹ In this view, the procreation and education of children is only reasonable when the community of self-gift already exists in the parents, a community which the presence of children confirms and strengthens. Thus, "conjugal love and fecundity are in no way opposed, but complement one another in such a way that they constitute an *almost* indivisible unity."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ See Smith, *Humanae vitae*, 14. For a thorough comparison of the Minority Report and the Majority Rebuttal from the perspective of a scholar supportive of *Humanae vitae*, see Smith, *Humanae vitae*, 14-30.

¹⁵⁰ "The Majority View," in Pyle, 257.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 260.

¹⁵² Ibid., 260 (emphasis mine). The strength of the union between the procreative and unitive aspects of the conjugal act was precisely what was at issue. The Majority believed that the two aspects were only

The Schema then goes on suggest the many ways in which parenthood has become a more difficult responsibility. One of the major difficulties presented to conjugal love and parenthood is the “new possibilities for the education of children.”¹⁵³ Other conditions may be economic, psychological, and physical. Regulation of fertility appears, therefore, to be necessary. Because the good of the children requires the existence of a stable and loving familial community, the Schema argues “the morality of sexual acts between married people takes its meaning first of all and specifically from the ordering of their actions in a fruitful married life, that is one which is practiced with responsible, generous and prudent parenthood. It does not then depend upon the direct fecundity of each and every particular act.”¹⁵⁴

The Schema follows this argument with an explanation of the reasons for the development of the doctrine, following along the same lines as the Majority Rebuttal. Then, before concluding the section on the fundamental principles, the Schema offers four criteria to discern the various means of contraception.¹⁵⁵ First, following from *Gaudium et spes* (no. 51), the “action must correspond to the nature of the person and of his acts so that the whole meaning of the mutual giving and of human procreation is kept in a context of true love.”¹⁵⁶ Second, the means chosen “should have an effectiveness proportionate to the degree of right or necessity of averting a new a conception temporarily or permanently.”¹⁵⁷

“almost” indivisible. Pope Paul VI will disagree in *Humanae vitae* (no. 12) by insisting that the two are simply inseparable. See below, p. 37.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 261.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 263.

¹⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, 267.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. It is unclear what exactly this criteria means. What is clear, however, is that it represents a furtherance of the position put forth by many progressive theologians that the permanent prevention of conception would be immoral, a position that was seemingly adopted earlier in the same Schema which insisted that married life cannot be entirely complete without the complement of children. Janet Smith rhetorical

Third, the means chosen should be the one “which carried with it the least possible negative element, according to the concrete situation of the couple.”¹⁵⁸ The Schema here refers to a certain amount of “physical evil” which the couple “more or less” seriously feels. It can be biological, hygienic, or psychological, among other things. Finally, the choice often “depends on what means may be available in a certain region or at a certain time or for a certain couple; and this may depend on the economic situation.”¹⁵⁹ Exactly how this final statement qualifies as a moral criterion and not a mere indicative statement is unclear.

The second part of the Schema on pastoral necessities concerns only the need for various reforms and renewals in the Church and in society, which while important, does not offer any new insight into the majority’s thinking on the morality of contraception itself. The commission’s report was presented to Pope Paul VI in June, 1966. It would be two years before he would make a decision on the issue.

IV. *Humanae Vitae* and the Aftermath

A. *The Encyclical*

Humanae vitae was signed by Pope Paul VI on July 25, 1968 and released to the public four days later.¹⁶⁰ The document represented the careful and prudent reflection of the pontiff, having received the report of the papal commission more than two years earlier. The encyclical follows the same structure as the Schema submitted by that commission. It is

suggestion that the second criterion “seems to mean that if the spouses are very determined not to have a child, they should use the most effective means possible” is probably misplaced (Smith, *Humanae vitae*, 33).

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ See Pope Paul VI, Encyclical, “*Humanae vitae* [On the Regulation of Birth],” (25 July 1968), in *AAS* 60 (1968): 481-503. Unless otherwise noted all English translations are from the Vatican website: www.vatican.va. Last accessed on: January 6, 2009. Another English translation is available in print: Paul VI, “On Human Life (*Humanae vitae*),” (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1968). Unless otherwise noted this encyclical be referred to as *HV* in the notes.

divided into three parts. The first part serves as an introduction. The second part presents the relevant doctrinal principles. The final part offers some pastoral directives.

After reaffirming the authority of the Church to interpret matters of the natural moral law and alluding to the difficulty of his own discernment of the question which was compounded by the lack of unanimity on the papal commission, the second part of the encyclical on doctrinal principles begins in such a way that Paul VI suggests fundamental agreement with the personalist view of marriage which had begun in the 1920s and which many were using to advocate for the use of contraception.¹⁶¹ In these opening paragraphs, he writes that marriage is a “provident institution of God the Creator.”¹⁶² It is in marriage that “husband and wife, through that mutual gift of themselves, which is specific and exclusive to them alone, develop that union of two persons in which they perfect one another, cooperating with God in the generation and rearing of new lives.”¹⁶³ Married love, he says, is “fully human” and not merely a question “of natural instinct or emotional drive.” It is a total and “very special form of personal friendship.”¹⁶⁴ Married love is “faithful and exclusive of all other, and this until death.”¹⁶⁵ Finally, married love is fecund. “It is not confined wholly to the loving interchange of husband and wife; it also contrives to go beyond this to bring new life into being.”¹⁶⁶ Here, the pope inserts a direct quote of paragraph 50 of *Gaudium et spes*.

What follows is a discussion on responsible parenthood.¹⁶⁷ Recognizing the recent emphasis on the obligations of responsible parenthood, the pope addresses biological

¹⁶¹ See *HV*, nos. 6, 8-9.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, no. 8

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 9

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ See *HV*, no. 10.

processes and says that “responsible parenthood means an awareness of, and respect for, their proper function. In the procreative faculty the human mind discerns biological laws that apply to the human person.”¹⁶⁸ The encyclical acknowledges the necessity of rational control over “innate drives and emotions” along with the possibility of not having “additional children for either a certain or an indefinite period of time.”¹⁶⁹ It encourages couples to maintain the “right order of priorities, [and] recognize their own duties toward God, themselves, their families and human society.”¹⁷⁰

So similar are the sentiments, which are expressed in these early paragraphs of the encyclical to those of the papal commission Schema that William Shannon observes “up to this point, i.e., the second last paragraph of Article 10, the encyclical could have moved in either direction—toward a change in the Church’s teaching on contraception or toward a reaffirmation of the norms of the past.”¹⁷¹ But the encyclical makes a decisive shift in the last paragraph of this article:

From this it follows that they [the married couple] are not free to act as they choose in the service of transmitting life, as if it were wholly up to them to decide what is the right course to follow. On the contrary, they are bound to ensure that what they do corresponds to the will of God the Creator. The very nature of marriage and its use makes His will clear, while the constant teaching of the Church spells it out.¹⁷²

The pope shifts to the traditional argument from the ends of nature, both the ends of the conjugal act and the ends of marriage itself.

¹⁶⁸ Here the encyclical cites St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2.

¹⁶⁹ *HV*, no. 10.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Shannon, *Lively Debate*, 108.

¹⁷² Here the encyclical refers again to *GS*, nos. 50-51.

The next article continues this trend with a brief discussion on natural law.¹⁷³ There, the pope acknowledges that involuntary infertility does not affect the moral status of the conjugal act because of “its natural adaptation to the expression and strengthening of the union of husband and wife is not thereby suppressed.” He also acknowledges the fact that “new life is not the result of each and every act of sexual intercourse.” These natural occurrences are the result of God, who “has wisely ordered laws of nature and the incidence of fertility in such a way that successive births are already naturally spaced through the inherent operation of these laws.” Nevertheless, the encyclical reaffirms the Church’s teaching that “each and every marital act must of necessity be intrinsically ordered [*per se destinatus*] to the procreation of human life.”¹⁷⁴ Here the pope footnotes both *Casti connubii* and Pope Pius XII’s 1951 address to midwives.

The following article, article 12, has been the subject of much speculation and disagreement. In full, it reads:

This particular doctrine, often expounded by the magisterium of the Church, is based on the *inseparable* connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance [i.e., meaning] and the procreative significance [i.e., meaning] which are both inherent to the marriage act.

The reason is that the fundamental nature of the marriage act, while uniting husband and wife in the closest intimacy, also renders them capable of generating new life—and this is a result of laws written into the actual nature of man and of woman. And if each of these essential qualities, the unitive and the procreative, is preserved, the use of marriage fully retains its sense of true mutual love and its ordination to the supreme responsibility of parenthood to which man is called. We believe that our contemporaries are

¹⁷³ See *HV*, no. 11.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., English translation altered by me. See *HV*, no. 11, in *AAS* 60 (1968): 488: “Vermumtamen Ecclesia, dum homines commonet de observandis praeceptis legis naturalis, quam constanti sua doctrina interpretatur, id docet necessarium esse, ut *quilibet matrimonii usus* ad vitam humanam procreandam per se destinatus permaneat” (original emphasis.)

particularly capable of seeing that this teaching is in harmony with human reason.¹⁷⁵

This article is significant for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that Paul VI here definitively decides against the majority of bishops and theologians on his own commission. Whereas the Schema had indicated the connection between the two aspects of the conjugal act were “almost indivisible,” Paul VI holds they are simply inseparable. This is precisely the issue of the debate—the connection between the unitive and procreative aspects of the conjugal act—and the centrally unique contribution of the encyclical to the discussion.

Humanae vitae 12 is a capstone of the development of the Church’s presentation of marriage, which began in the 1920s and was implicitly manifest in *Gaudium et spes*. Donald Asci has noted that the novelty is evident in the lack of any citation in the article to previous magisterial teaching.¹⁷⁶ John Gallagher’s observation that Pope Paul VI’s rejection of the commission and his affirmation of the ban on contraception is primarily the result of a loyalty to the magisterium is thus misplaced.¹⁷⁷ The encyclical as a whole reveals that Paul VI had clearly taken a turn toward a more personalist presentation of marriage while maintaining the traditional position on one issue: the inseparability of the procreative and unitive meanings of the conjugal act.¹⁷⁸ He expresses his fundamental disagreement with the

¹⁷⁵ *HV*, no. 12 (my emphasis). See *AAS* 60 (1968): 488-489: “Huiusmodi doctrina, quae ab Ecclesiae Magisterio saepe exposita est, in nexu indissolubili nititur, a Deo statuto, quem homini sua sponte infringere non licet, inter significationem unitatis et significationem procreationis, quae ambae in actu coniugali insunt. Etenim propter intimam suam rationem, coniugii actus, dum maritum et uxorem artissimo sociat vinculo, eos idoneos etiam facit ad novam vitam gignendam, secundum leges in ipsa viri et mulieris natura inscriptas. Quodsi utraque eiusmodi essentialis ratio, unitatis videlicet et procreationis, servatur, usus matrimonii sensum mutui verique amoris suumque ordinem ad celsissimum paternitatis munus omnino retinet, ad quod homo vocatur. Putamus nostrae aetatis homines aptissimos esse ad perspicendum, quam haec doctrina sit humanae rationi consentanea.”

¹⁷⁶ See Asci, *Conjugal Act*, 111.

¹⁷⁷ Gallagher, “Magisterial Teaching,” 206-207.

¹⁷⁸ In his general audience on July 31, 1968, the Pope stated that when he was writing the encyclical he “willingly adopted the personalist concept which is proper to the Council’s doctrine on conjugal society and

majority of the theologians of his commission which held only that the conjugal love and fecundity were *almost* an indivisible unity.¹⁷⁹

What is true is that the pope offers no arguments for why it is the case that unitive and procreative meanings of the conjugal act are inseparable. He simply states that an honest reflection on the nature of marriage will reveal “that an act of mutual love which impairs the capacity to transmit life which God the Creator, through specific laws, has built into it, frustrates His design which constitutes the norm of marriage, and contradicts the will of the Author of life... and is consequently in opposition to the plan of God and His holy will.”¹⁸⁰

Paul VI clearly sides with the minority theologians on a number of other points. First, the idea that reason does not have absolute dominion over nature. Man does not have complete dominion over his body let alone his sexual faculties because “these are concerned by their very nature with the generation of life, of which God is the source.”¹⁸¹ Second, no action can be chosen “which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation—whether as an end or as a means.”¹⁸² Third, against the majority’s invocation of the principle of totality, the encyclical asserts a lesser evil cannot be chosen in preference to a greater one. Nor can it be held that contraceptive intercourse could “merge with procreative acts of past and future to form a single entity, and so be qualified by exactly the same moral goodness as these.”¹⁸³ *Humanae vitae* considers

which gives to the love that generate and nourishes it the preeminent place that befits it in the subjective evaluation of marriage” (See *AAS* 60 [1968]: 529; English translation from “Church in the Word,” *The London Tablet* 222 [August 10, 1968]: 803).

¹⁷⁹ It should be noted here that Paul VI introduces the word “unitive” to describe the conjugal meaning of the sexual act. Donald Asci has provided a thorough investigation of this development as well the difference between the notions of end, purpose, and meaning. See Asci, *Conjugal Act*, 240-269.

¹⁸⁰ *HV*, no. 13.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *HV*, no. 14.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

contraceptive intercourse evil and, traditionally, one may never do evil that good may come of it. “Consequently, it is a serious error to think that a whole married life of otherwise normal relations can justify sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive and so intrinsically wrong.”¹⁸⁴

After recognizing the moral permissibility of therapies that result (but do not intend) infertility, the encyclical promotes recourse to infertile periods as a legitimate means for spacing births. Moreover it identifies the difference between this method and contraception. “In the former the married couple rightly use a faculty provided them by nature. In the latter they obstruct the natural development of the generative process.”¹⁸⁵ The encyclical then turns to the consequences of the use of artificial contraception.¹⁸⁶ It restates the themes written in the Minority Report: a rise in marital infidelity, a lowering of moral standards, an irreverence toward women, and government sponsored population control. The limits of man’s reason and power “are expressly imposed because of the reverence due to the whole human organism and its natural functions.”¹⁸⁷

Before turning to the pastoral directives, with which this study is not properly concerned, the doctrinal section concludes by anticipating that “not everyone will easily accept this particular teaching.”¹⁸⁸ But the Church cannot change the moral law. “It could never be right for her to declare lawful what is in fact unlawful, since that, by its very nature, is always opposed to the true good of man.”¹⁸⁹ The Holy Father clearly understood the

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ *HV*, no. 16.

¹⁸⁶ See *HV*, no. 17.

¹⁸⁷ *HV*, no. 17.

¹⁸⁸ *HV*, no. 18.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

ramifications of the encyclical. It is difficult to know whether he anticipated the heated reaction it would receive.

B. *Reactions to the Encyclical*

Immediately following upon the encyclical's release, episcopal conferences around the world issued statements to supplement the encyclical.¹⁹⁰ Just under half of the episcopal conferences that issued statements expressed clear and unmitigated agreement with the encyclical. Other conferences emphasized the priority of conscience and the non-infallibility of the encyclical. Still other statements seemed uncertain in their approach.¹⁹¹ Since one of

¹⁹⁰ In a popular summary of the debate surrounding birth control, Robert Hoyt reports that *Humanae vitae* included a cover letter from Cardinal Cicognani in which he asked the bishops to give their full report. Hoyt quotes the letter as stating, "And now, he (the Pope) turns to his brothers, the bishops of the Catholic world, asking them to stand beside him more firmly than ever... and to help present this delicate point of the church's teaching to the Christian people, to explain and justify its reasons" (Robert G. Hoyt, ed., *The Birth Control Debate: The Interim History from the Pages of The National Catholic Reporter* [Kansas City, MO: National Catholic Reporter Publishing Co., 1968]: 143). Unfortunately, Hoyt does not cite his source for this letter and I have been unable to locate the original text even in the *Acta Apostolicis Sedis*.

¹⁹¹ Most of these statements are collected in John Horgan, ed., *Humanae vitae: The Encyclical and the Statements of the National Hierarchies* (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1972). In his doctoral dissertation, Joseph Selling categorizes the various episcopal conference statements into three categories based on their reaction to *Humanae vitae*. There were statements which exhibited "clear acceptance" of the encyclical; statements which offered "clear mitigation;" and, statements which were "uncertain" and offered elements of both of the previous categories. Though some conferences issued more than one statement with variant positions, ultimately Selling identifies sixteen conferences in the category of "clear acceptance," thirteen in "clear mitigation," and eight that are "uncertain" (see Joseph Selling, *The Reaction to Humanae vitae: A Study in Special and Fundamental Theology* [PhD diss., Catholic University of Louvain, 1973]: 26-27, appendix B3). Philip Kaufman disagreed with both Selling's approach and conclusion. He thinks it is too simplistic to assert that 42% of the world's episcopal conferences clearly accepted the encyclical. Rather, he suggests that Selling's study be interpreted as though the conferences were an electoral college. Thus, Poland's clear acceptance would be mitigated in the light of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) which is an umbrella organization of over twenty national episcopal conferences. Poland's 26 dioceses (and, therefore, twenty-six votes) would pale in comparison to CELAM's 442 dioceses/votes. Additionally, Kaufmann challenges Selling's categorization of the United States of America as "uncertain" and he places the U.S.A. (with its 159 dioceses/votes) in the category of "critically mitigating/" Furthermore, he subsumes Brazil (192 dioceses/votes), Colombia (45 dioceses/votes), and Mexico (66 dioceses/votes) under the CELAM mitigation vote. Selling had placed none of these three conferences in that category. Using this process, he concludes that only 17% of the world's *bishops* clearly accepted *Humanae vitae* (see Philip S. Kaufmann, *Why You Can Disagree and Remain a Faithful Catholic*, rev. ed. [New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1995]: 96).

His conclusion is questionable. Kaufmann not only shuffles the conferences differently than Selling without explanation, his method is fundamentally flawed. Episcopal conferences do not normally issue

the Vatican spokesmen, who introduced the encyclical to the press, that is, Monsignor Ferdinando Lambruschini specifically noted that the encyclical is not infallible, many of these statements noted that for serious reason a Catholic may dissent from its teaching in good conscience provided his conscience was properly and honestly formed.¹⁹² This distinction between fallible and infallible teaching, along with the priority of conscience, was significant to the responses offered by various theologians around the United States.

For theologians around the world who had disagreed with the conclusions of the encyclical, the freedom of conscience and the right to dissent from non-infallible magisterial teaching was used to buttress their more fundamental objections to the document. The case of the American theologians led by Charles Curran, then professor of moral theology at the Catholic University of America, is the most well known. Having obtained a copy of the encyclical on the day of its publication, by three o'clock in the morning they had obtained the signatures of eighty-seven theologians from around the country for a statement expressing dissent from the encyclical.¹⁹³ Citing the non-infallible nature of the encyclical, the statement goes on to say that "history shows that a number of statement of similar or even

statements with unanimous approval. Sometimes a statement requires only a simple majority to be approved. Suggesting that because a conference has issued a statement, therefore all of its bishops were in agreement with that statement is akin to suggesting that every voter in Illinois voted for John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election simply because he received the state's 21 electoral votes.

¹⁹² The ten conferences of the twenty that made this distinction and point are: Holland, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Canada, Scotland, Scandinavia, the United States, and Switzerland. An English translation of extracts from Lambruschini's speech on the presentation of the encyclical is available in Pyle, *Pope and Pill*, 101-105.

¹⁹³ For a history of the drafting of this statement and its repercussions for those involved, see Charles E. Curran, Robert E. Hunt, et al., *Dissent In and For the Church: Theologians and Humanae vitae* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969) and Larry Witham, *Curran vs. Catholic University: A Study of Authority and Freedom in Conflict* (Riverdale, MD: Edington-Rand, 1991). The statement was presented to the press on July 30, 1968. It was subsequently published in various media outlets. The full text of the statement is still available in numerous books on the topic of the response to the encyclical. Quotations from the text in this study are taken from Charles Curran, et al., "Statement by Catholic Theologians, Washington, D.C., July 30, 1968," in Charles Curran, and Richard A. McCormick, eds., *Readings in Moral Theology*, no. 8, *Dialogue About Catholic Sexual Teaching* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993): 135-137.

greater authoritative weight have subsequently been proven inadequate or even erroneous.”¹⁹⁴ It ends with the observation, “It is common teaching in the Church that Catholics may dissent from authoritative, non-infallible teachings of the magisterium when sufficient reasons for so doing exist,” and, therefore, that Catholic couples should feel free to decide according to their own conscience the path they would take.¹⁹⁵

The statement offers many reasons for dissent. First, the theologians believe the ecclesiology of the encyclical is deficient. It does not take into consideration the experience of Catholic couples nor of non-Catholic Christians. Second, by rejecting the findings of the papal commission and “the conclusions of a large part of the international Catholic theological community,” the encyclical betrays a positivistic view of papal authority. Third, the conclusion on contraception is “based on an inadequate concept of natural law.”¹⁹⁶ Additionally, the statement includes a paragraph, which reads more as an angry diatribe, that includes no less than six faults of the encyclical. One of those faults is the “overemphasis on the biological aspects of conjugal relations as ethically normative.”¹⁹⁷ In subsequent days, the statement was sent to theologians and teachers of theology all over the United States. The list of signatures grew to over six hundred.¹⁹⁸

In addition to this statement and the debate it generated in the pages of the *National Catholic Reporter*, a number of theologians initially began publishing articles in theological

¹⁹⁴ Curran, “Statement,” 135.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 136.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. The *National Catholic Reporter* (NCR) served as a sounding board for scholars on both sides of the American theologians’ statement. These statements were collected by Robert G. Hoyt in his book, *The Birth Control Debate* (pp. 181-197). John T. Noonan, Albert C. Outler, and Richard A. McCormick each offered the NCR analyses in support of the statement. While Austin Vaughn and Charles R. Meyer published responses to the theologians.

¹⁹⁸ See Shannon, *Lively Debate*, 150.

journals expressing their dissent.¹⁹⁹ Generally, the articles dissenting from the teaching of *Humanae vitae* focused on two over-arching themes. First, many of the theologians argued for the right in conscience to dissent, with good reason, from non-infallible magisterial teaching. Second, some theologians said that the methodology employed in the encyclical was based on a faulty view of natural law that emphasizes the physical structure of the conjugal act to the detriment of personal and familial obligations.

The second of these themes concerns this study more directly. Two principal proponents of this theme in particular were Charles Curran and his teacher Bernard Häring.²⁰⁰ Häring praises the encyclical for recognizing the “positive value of the marital act as expressive of conjugal love” and thus eliminating the necessity for every conjugal act to include the specific intention to procreate.²⁰¹

Nevertheless, Häring questions the internal consistency of the encyclical’s conclusion on birth control since it accepts the positive value of the sexual act for infertile couples. As he sees it, *Humanae vitae* argues from the presupposition that “biological laws... [are] absolutely binding on the conscience of men.”²⁰² But this would seem to reduce human action to a mere natural instinct shared with animals. Like most personalists arguing for change, Häring argues that man’s reason elevates him above natural instinct. “The absoluteness of biological laws can apply to the human person to the extent that he *knows*

¹⁹⁹ For initial articles, see Richard A. McCormick, “Notes on Moral Theology,” *Theological Studies* 29 (1968): 732-741; Bernard Häring, “Statement in the *National Catholic Reporter*” *National Catholic Reporter* (August 7, 1968); and Louis Janssens, “Considerations on *Humanae vitae*,” *Louvain Studies* 2 (1969): 231-253. See also the collection of essays edited by Charles Curran, *Contraception: Authority and Dissent* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969). The collection includes essays by Curran himself, Noonan, Joseph A. Komonchak, Daniel C. Maguire, and Bernard Häring.

²⁰⁰ See Charles E. Curran, “Natural Law and Contemporary Moral Theology,” in *Contraception: Authority and Dissent*, 151-175 and Bernard Häring, “The Inseparability of the Unitive-Procreative Functions of the Marital Act,” in *Contraception: Authority and Dissent*, 176-192.

²⁰¹ Häring, “The Inseparability,” 177.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 180.

them.”²⁰³ The basic question is whether man is subject absolutely to biological laws or if he is, rather, their steward.

Medicine, Häring says, is “generally based on the principle that biological functions may be interfered with and even destroyed if it is necessary for the well being of the *person*. It is evident that the final perspective of an anthropologically grounded medicine is not the mere restoration of the *organism* but the wholeness of a *person* in community.”²⁰⁴ The Catholic solution to personal difficulties within a marriage through recourse to periodic continence already acknowledges that the human person has some authority over his use of nature. From this personalist perspective, the prohibition against the birth control pill is incomprehensible to society. “Today man thinks much more in terms of the good of the whole person than in terms of absolutely sacred but often dysfunctional ‘natural laws and rhythms.’”²⁰⁵

Finally, Häring argued that had the relationship between the unitive and procreative aspects of the conjugal act received more attention in theology in the decades before 1968, the encyclical may have been worded differently. In line with the majority of the theologians on the papal commission, he thinks, “There is and must be a close linkage of the two meanings, and great care must be exercised never to separate them unduly or totally in any aspect of sex morality.”²⁰⁶ Again, the fundamental disagreement between Pope Paul VI and so many theologians appears. The pope thought the connection between the two aspects of the conjugal act was simply inseparable.

²⁰³ Ibid. (my emphasis).

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 193 (original emphasis).

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 185.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 188.

Charles Curran carries Häring's dispute with the encyclical's natural law methodology further by naming it as "physicalism." Curran writes, "Christian ethics cannot absolutize the realm of the natural as something completely self-contained and unaffected by any relationships to the evangelical or supernatural."²⁰⁷ A Christian theory of natural law, he argues, must include reference to creation and sin, on the one hand, and the incarnation and redemption of Christ, on the other. Natural law is, for the Christian, Christocentric.²⁰⁸ The encyclical fails in this regard by not recognizing the corrupting influence of sin on human reason and nature, both of which are the foundational to any natural law theory.

He claims that *Humanae vitae* employs a physicalist methodology "which tends to identify the moral action with the physical and biological structure of the act."²⁰⁹ Curran thus condemns the methodology of the manualist tradition, especially in the area of medical ethics, sexuality, reproduction, moral conflicts, killing, abortion, euthanasia, and divorce. The manualists "have tended to define the moral action in terms of the physical structure of the act considered in itself apart from the person place the act and the community of persons within which he lives."²¹⁰ Actions which the manualists prohibit definitively because of their intrinsic immorality are usually grounded in the physical structure of the act. Curran suggests that the harsh reaction to *Humanae vitae* is the result of this physicalist approach. It is in response to physicalism, Curran believes, that theologians have adopted a personalist approach which "always sees the act in terms of the person placing the act."²¹¹ These new

²⁰⁷ Curran, "Natural Law," 154-155.

²⁰⁸ See *ibid.*, 155. Curran no doubt learned this from Häring himself, who was Curran's professor. See, for example, Bernard Häring, *The Law of Christ: Moral Theology for Priests and Laity*, 3 vols., trans. Edwin G. Kaiser (Paramus, NJ: Newman Books, 1961-1966).

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 159.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 161.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 172.

approaches are not simply added to the natural law theory but affect the conclusions arising from that theory. These new approaches “logically lead to the conclusion that artificial contraception can be a permissible and even necessary means for the regulation of birth within the context of responsible parenthood.”²¹²

Curran effectively set the boundaries for the birth control debate. Those who wanted to preserve the Church’s traditional prohibition against artificial contraception and to defend the conclusions of the encyclical were thus required to rearticulate their natural law methodology. Otherwise, they would easily be dismissed as “physicalist,” a word whose negative connotations were quickly assumed by scholars. Nobody would want to be labeled a physicalist.

Conclusion

In the first chapter, I explained the historical genesis of the manualist methodology, which was the moral theology dominant in the Catholic Church at the beginning of the twentieth century. Following Servais Pinckaers and others, I contend that prior to the advent of nominalism in the fourteenth century Catholic moral theologians were primarily concerned with the virtue and beatitude of the person. The influence of nominalism would lead to a more juridical understanding of the moral life, based fundamentally on law, obligation, and conscience. With the spiritual principles of the human person thus reduced, the manualists were left with only the manifest physical structure of the human action and its relationship to natural finality to determine the morality of human action. This is the

²¹² Ibid., 175.

physicalism which Dietrich von Hildebrand, Herbert Doms, Louis Janssens, Bernard Häring, and Charles Curran were criticizing.

In the twentieth century, the Church was confronted with three interlocking trends that focused its attention on the nature of marriage and birth control. The first was the advent of a new approach to morality that focused on the person as the locus of moral evaluation and concern. This new approach was most evident in new theological presentations of marriage. Secondly, married couples were actually reading personalist theologians and discovering a dynamic view of marriage that appealed to them. Finally, the progress of science and the advent of the birth control pill forced the Catholics to contend with the relationship of the person to the purposes of nature.

Some personalists argued that the good of the person supersedes natural finality. Therefore, they argued for a change in the traditional prohibition against birth control. Among them were Janssens, Häring, and Curran, and I have categorized them as revisionists for this reason. Curran effectively set the boundaries for the birth control debate. Those who wanted to preserve the Church's traditional teaching on artificial contraception and to defend the conclusions of the encyclical were thus required to rearticulate their natural law methodology. Otherwise, they would easily be dismissed as "physicalist," a word whose negative connotations were quickly assumed by scholars. Still, there were a number of theologians who attempted to articulate a personalist, or at least a non-physicalist, defense of *Humanae vitae* in response to the criticisms of the revisionist personalist—theologians like

von Hildebrand, Paul Quay, Mary Joyce, and, eventually, William May—even though were not entirely successful.²¹³

Among the latter personalists, one has to include the Archbishop of Krakow, Karol Wojtyla, the man who in 1978 would become Pope John Paul II. Relatively unknown in the West in the early 1960s, he was even then working in Poland to re-present marriage in a more dynamic and personalist mode while remaining true to the Church's constant teaching. Moreover, he was concerned to reconnect theology with the lived experience of the human person while exploring the relationship between the categories of human nature and the human person. This was a project he would carry throughout his pontificate. In this study I am focusing on *Theology of the Body* catechesis and, specifically, on his notion of the spousal meaning of the body as a particularly poignant contribution to that project.

²¹³ See, for example, William E May, *Contraception: "Humanae vitae" and Catholic Moral Thought* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1984); Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Encyclical Humanae vitae—A Sign of Contradiction: An Essay on Birth Control and Catholic Conscience* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1969); Mary Rosera Joyce, *Love Responds to Life: The Challenge of Humanae vitae* (Kenosha, WI: Prow, 1971); Quay, *Meaning of Christian Sexuality*.

Chapter 3

The Moral Theory of Karol Wojtyla

Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I offered a historical narrative on the development of the manualist tradition in the early twentieth century and the subsequent challenge to this tradition by the birth control movement. Pope Paul VI's encyclical on the regulation of birth, *Humanae Vitae*, appeared after a long debate on the subject of birth control. The encyclical, however, did not settle the question for many Catholics, whether lay, cleric, or theologian. This, finally, brings this study to the first principal subjects of this study—Karol Wojtyla (1920-2005)—who would make a significant contribution to that discussion.

Born in 1920 in Wadowice, Poland, Wojtyla lived through some of the worst horrors not only in the history of his native land but in the history of the world. In his younger years, Poland endured not only occupation by the Nazi army during World War II but subsequently fell under the control of the Soviet Communist regime until 1989. Wojtyla's young life was filled with a depth of experience, both rich and tragic. His innate ability to articulate those experiences in the arts—poetry, prose, and theater—proved a saving grace for both him and his friends. The purpose of this chapter is not to provide a historical narrative of Wojtyla's life.¹ However, the importance of these early experiences would affect

¹ This work has already been done. George Weigel has written what many consider to be the definitive biography of Pope John Paul II. See Weigel, *Witness to Hope*. Another important biography of note was written by Wojtyla's childhood friend and seminary classmate. It provides several personal accounts known to the biographer alone. Its only weakness is that it was written shortly after Wojtyla's election to the papacy. See Mieczyslaw Malinski, *Pope John Paul II: The Life of Karol Wojtyla*, trans. P.S. Falla (New York: Seabury Press, 1979). Several books have been written, which are less biographical and more concerned with the development of Wojtyla's thought. This chapter is indebted, in part, to the work of these scholars. See Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla: The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II*, trans. Paolo Guietti and Francesca Murphy (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997); Kenneth L. Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II* (Washington: The Catholic University of America

Karol Wojtyla, later Pope John Paul II, for the remainder of his life. He became a man dedicated to the dignity of the human person, having witnessed atrocities committed against that dignity in his youth.²

What I hope to show in this chapter and in the next is that Wojtyla's interest in love and marriage, his defense of *Humanae Vitae*, and his explication of the spousal meaning of the body in the *Theology of the Body* catecheses, while concrete matters, are not isolated elements of his thought. They are practical applications of his general moral theory. Karol Wojtyla was just as concerned as other theologians, philosophers, and pastors with the experience of human persons in the context of love and marriage, but unlike the others, he was not willing to abandon magisterial teaching or metaphysical ontology in the defense of those experiences. He was unwilling to disconnect the philosophical category of the human person from the category of human nature. On the contrary, though he spent much of his life before his pontifical election focusing on the philosophical categories of experience and the human person, he never abandoned ontology, and specifically Aristotelian-Thomistic ontology. He cannot be accused of subjectivism, however much he regards subjective experience.

This chapter will outline the development of Wojtyla's thought from the first moments he began to study Thomism through to his introduction of the phenomenology of Max Scheler to his final works on philosophy and ethics before his election to the See of

Press, 1993); Jaroslaw Kupczak, O.P., *Destined for Liberty: The Human Person in the Philosophy of Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000); and, George Hunston Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981).

² In 1994, Pope John Paul II once commented that the Marxists took specific note of his 1969 book, *Osoba i Człowiek*, precisely because its subject was the human person. While the Marxists thought it was a direct attack on their philosophy, John Paul indicated, rather, it stemmed from his deeply held interest in the philosophical category of the human person. See John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, ed. Vittorio Messori (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994): 198-199.

Peter. What this survey will show is that Wojtyla consistently attempts to supplement ontology with phenomenology and phenomenology with ontology. Though his emphasis shifts to one or the other at various moments in his career, he abandons neither.

I. Karol Wojtyla's Early Studies

A. Experience and Theology: Wojtyla Studies St. John of the Cross

The first chapter of this study recounted briefly the trends in twentieth century Thomism, which, in their different ways, were attempting to respond to the Enlightenment and modernity. Wojtyla's first encounter with Aristotelian Thomism occurred during his years in the underground seminary in Cracow led by Cardinal Adam Sapieha. In September, 1942, he was assigned to read Kazimierz Wais' book on metaphysics, *Ontologia czyli metafizyka* (*Ontology and Metaphysics*).³ Wais' text was influenced by the transcendental Thomism of Louvain's Désiré Mercier, which attempted to place St. Thomas's thought in relation to that of Immanuel Kant.⁴ It was unlike anything Wojtyla had read before and it initially presented a significant challenge.⁵ Wojtyla's background in the humanities had not initially prepared him to handle the difficult scholastic theses he was expected to learn. But eventually, he would later admit, that the metaphysics he learned in that text gave confirmation to what he had previously only known intuitively by experience.⁶

³ Kazimierz Wais, *Ontologia czyli metafizyka* (Lwow: 1926).

⁴ See Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 87; Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 31; Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 69-71.

⁵ He admitted at the time to his friend, Mieczyslaw Malinski, "It's hard going. I sit beside the boiler and try to understand it – I feel it ought to be very important to me" (Malinski, *Pope John Paul II*, 47).

⁶ In a book length interview in 1982, Pope John Paul confessed, "My literary training, centered round the humanities, had not prepared me at all for the scholastic theses and formulas with which the manual was filled. I had to cut a path through a thick undergrowth of concepts, analyses and axioms without even being able to identify the ground over which I was moving. After two months of hacking through this vegetation I came to a clearing, to the discovery of the deep reasons for what until then I had only lived and felt.... In my view the new vision of the world which I had acquired in my struggle with that metaphysics manual was more

The young Wojtyla was ordained a priest on November 1, 1946 and was immediately sent to the Angelicum in Rome for doctoral studies. While there, he would continue to develop his conviction that Thomistic philosophical and theological categories can aid in both confirming and articulating experience. The topic for his doctoral dissertation was the question of faith according to St. John of the Cross.⁷ His director was Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., who was himself an expert on the Mystical Doctor.⁸ Wojtyla's dissertation follows not only upon Garrigou-Lagrange's work but also two other authors, who were concerned with the differences between St. John of the Cross and the scholastics on the nature of faith, Jane Baruzi and Michel Labourdette, O.P.⁹ Whereas scholasticism viewed faith as a virtue residing in the intellect, St. John's emphasis on the dark night of faith, in which the intellect can say nothing about God, placed more emphasis on the experience of God. The difference here is between dogmatic faith (or those intellectual propositions about God) and mystical faith (the experience of God).

valuable than the mark which I had obtained [in the class].... What intuition and sensibility had until then taught me about the world found solid confirmation" (John Paul II and André Frossard, *Be Not Afraid! Pope John Paul II Speaks Out on His Life, His Beliefs, and His Inspiring Vision for Humanity*, trans. J.R. Foster [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984], 17).

⁷ Karol Wojtyla, *Doctrina de fide apud S. Joannem a Cruce* (S.T.D. Diss., Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, 1948). English translation: Karol Wojtyla, *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross*, trans. Jordan Aumann, O.P. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981). Wojtyla had been introduced to the Carmelite mystics long before entering the seminary by Jan Tyranowski, a layman who eventually led the youth group of young Wojtyla's parish (see Weigel, *Witness*, 58-62). But it was Fr. Ignacy Rozycki, a professor of Sapieha's underground seminary, who first suggested to Wojtyla not only that he was competent to write a doctoral dissertation but that it should be on the subject of faith according to St. John of the Cross (see Malinski, *Pope John Paul II*, 88-89).

⁸ Garrigou-Lagrange had published several books and articles on the relationship between faith and experience, and one book, in particular, on St. John's understanding of the relationship between faith and experience. For a brief summary of these works and a bibliography, see Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 103-104.

⁹ In the 1920s, Jean Baruzi argued that dogmatic faith and mystical faith were simply opposed to one another. Therefore, St. John's conception of faith opposed that of St. Thomas (see Jean Baruzi, *Saint Jean de la Croix et le problème de l'expérience mystique* [Paris: Felix Alcan, 1924]). In the following decade, however, Michel Labourdette, O.P. argued for reconciliation of the two concepts of faith (see Michel M. Labourdette, O.P., "La foi théologique et la connaissance mystique d'après S. Jean de la Croix," *Revue Thomiste* 42 [1937]: 16-57). See also Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 45-46.

In his dissertation, Wojtyla also hoped to show that mystical faith and dogmatic or intellectual faith were not opposing concepts but different aspects of a single virtue. In the introduction to the dissertation, he writes:

The doctrine we shall study is a testimony of experience. It is expressed in scholastico-mystical language, using words and concepts well known in Scholastic theology, but its primary value and significance is a witness of personal experience. It is there, in fact, that we can discover the living and dynamic reality of the virtue of faith, its activity in the human intellect, its corollaries and the effects on the movement of the soul toward union with God. For that reason we take the experiential witness of St. John of the Cross as the material for our investigation. It will be our task to discover the concept of faith that can be gleaned from that witness and the theological precisions that are latent in it.¹⁰

Later in the same introduction, he writes, “We should emphasize that the texts not only expound a theology based on experience, but to a great extent they do so in a descriptive manner. The description is often couched in Scholastic terminology, but the experience that is described will often give a different nuance or a new meaning to that technical terminology.”¹¹

Faith According to St. John of the Cross is divided into two parts. The first and more substantial part analyzes the passages concerning faith and love in St. John’s four major works, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, *The Spiritual Canticle*, and *The Living Flame of Love*. After this analysis, Wojtyla offers a synthesis of his conclusions on the nature of faith in the works of St. John of the Cross. The dissertation also includes a very brief appendix, which attempts to correlate St. John’s understanding of faith with that of St. Thomas.

¹⁰ Wojtyla, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, 23.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

According to Wojtyla, faith for St. John of the Cross is itself an “essential likeness” to God, which by the power of an “excessive light” is able to create a proportion between man’s intellect and God so that man can be united to God.¹² Our union with God exists both ontologically and psychologically. Ontologically, the virtue of faith alters the natural operation of the intellect. Reverting to scholastic language, Wojtyla notes that the intellect naturally attains knowledge through the senses and the formation of intentional species. And he says, there is an “incapacity of the intellect to attain such knowledge of the divine object by means of an intentional species.”¹³ God cannot be known through sense impressions, and the intellect cannot contain the divine as an object of knowledge through intentional species.

Faith, therefore, provides an ontological transcendence in which the intellect is proportioned so as to be capable of uniting with God.¹⁴ Faith, however, is not union with God, not even intellectually. Faith involves “no clear apprehension of the divine essence in the intentional order, no ‘substance as understood.’”¹⁵ Does St. John of the Cross believe that the intellect is therefore frustrated by the virtue of faith? No, Wojtyla responds:

The senses fail to form a species because that which is given in revelation is totally inaccessible to the senses. As a result, the agent intellect lacks material or sense species on which it can focus, so that the revealed truths seem doomed to remain only words or meaningless names of an unknown object. But the virtue of faith is infused into the intellect, and with faith the intellect receives the excessive light by which it is attracted to the revealed truths and united with them. This was explained in chapter 3, book II of *The Ascent*.¹⁶

This ascent to revealed truths, however, cannot provide a clear and distinct object to the intellect, principally because the intellect remains limited, even with the virtue of faith, by its

¹² See *ibid.*, 238-239, 265.

¹³ See *ibid.*, 242f.

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 245.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 241.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 245.

natural tendency toward intentional species. So this adherence is always somewhat obscure and dependent on general knowledge since “adherence to particular and clear truths introduces a natural element of knowledge that is psychologically satisfying, but precisely because of that, it lacks the required proportion to the substance of revealed truths [which is the divine essence].”¹⁷

Wojtyla concludes his study with a brief appendix which collects references from Aquinas’s works to show that both St. John of the Cross and St. Thomas had a similar understanding of faith. Faith is a means of union for Aquinas, not directly, but through adhering to revealed truths.¹⁸ He also observes that faith, for Aquinas, likewise involves an element of purgation.¹⁹ However, Wojtyla notes that whereas St. John of Cross places the complete intellectual purification from intentional species in the realm of the faith as commanded by charity, Aquinas “with greater theological precision” identifies this task with the gift of understanding.²⁰

Wojtyla’s engagement of St. John’s texts shows his belief that union with God is more than simply an intellectual enterprise of theological expertise. It is a dynamic process. He writes, “all the elements that contribute to union will be discovered, not through an abstract and theoretical consideration, but as actuated in the unifying process itself.”²¹ Wojtyla identifies, and seems to agree with, his subject’s preference for love which draws the

¹⁷ Ibid., 253.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, 269-271. See also, Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 1, a. 2 and ad 2; Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 8, ad 5; q. 14, a. 12; Aquinas, *In III Librum Sententiarum*, dist. 24, a. 1, q. 2, ads. 1 and 2; *In VI Metaphysica*, 8 and ad 3.

¹⁹ See *ibid.*, 271. See also Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 7, a. 2 and ad 2.

²⁰ See *ibid.*, 272. See also Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 8, a. 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 110.

person into a real ontological and psychological union with God.²² We may also note Wojtyła's observation that for St. John of the Cross God is objective but not objectivizable to the intellect lends itself to the personalistic norm that will eventually hold pride of place in Wojtyła's thought. Like the person of God, no human person can ever be a mere object of our actions but must be understood in relationship.²³

B. Experience and Philosophy: Wojtyła Studies Max Scheler

Wojtyła furthered his interest on experience and the person in his habilitation thesis, *An Evaluation of the Possibility of Constructing a Christian Ethics on the Basis of the System of Max Scheler*.²⁴ In this thesis, Wojtyła was concerned with Max Scheler's work, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die material Wertethik*.²⁵ Scheler was primarily responding to Immanuel Kant's ethical system founded upon a pure rationalism and the notion of duty. With his assertion that the person cannot perceive the foundation behind reality (the *noumena*) but only phenomena passing through *a priori* categories in the mind, Kant effectively disallowed for any experience

²² For example, See *ibid.*, 99ff.

²³ This is the insight of Rocco Buttiglione (see Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyła*, 52). Buttiglione is himself an accomplished philosopher. This strength is also a weakness for his survey of Wojtyła's thought. It is not always clear when he is analyzing Wojtyła's observations or when he is offering his own thought. The difficulty is compounded by his inconsistent use of source citations.

²⁴ Karol Wojtyła, *Ocena możliwości zbudowania etyki chrześcijańskiej przy założeniach systemu Maksxa Schelera* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1959). There is no English translation of this work available. In this study, I will be using the Spanish translation: Karol Wojtyła, *Max Scheler y la etica cristiana*, (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1982). It is not entirely clear why Wojtyła chose Scheler as the subject of his habilitation thesis. It was most likely Fr. Ignacy Rozycki, the same professor who had recommended St. John of the Cross to Wojtyła, who now suggested Scheler. Rozycki was himself influenced by Roman Ingarden, who like Scheler, was a student of Edmund Husserl. Through Ingarden, Rozycki would have been aware of the attractiveness of Scheler's philosophy for Catholic moral theologians (see Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 115, 124f.). Wojtyła was not entirely unfamiliar with Scheler, however. He had heard at least one lecture by Max Scheler in 1938, his first year at the Jagiellonian University (see Tad Szulc, *Pope John Paul II: The Biography* [New York: Scribner, 1995], 88f.).

²⁵ See Max Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die material Wertethik* (Bern: 1966). English Translation: Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, trans. Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

of reality apart from these rational categories. Phenomenology sought to reconnect experience with access to the world beyond the mind.²⁶ The fact that he opposed Kant and emphasized the mind's access to reality made Scheler a natural candidate for Catholic moral theologians struggling to respond to Kant's system.²⁷

In the opening section of the thesis, Wojtyla makes clear that Scheler's system is not Christian even though he at times employs New Testament texts. After noting that the role of the Catholic moralist to present revealed truths using philosophy, Wojtyla writes that Scheler's is "a philosophical system, constructed according to the premises of phenomenology and axiology, in order to describe and explain all moral facts and ethical problems."²⁸ Scheler is not interested in defending the norms of Christian morality. Wojtyla, on the other hand, wanted to know whether Scheler's system could be used by a Christian philosopher for that purpose. This is the goal of his habilitation thesis.²⁹

According to Wojtyla, the New Testament presumes that the person is the cause of his actions.³⁰ Moreover, these actions have a direct effect on the person's character. Good actions make man good, bad actions make him bad.³¹ In Wojtyla's reading, Scheler does not and cannot acknowledge this.

Nevertheless, by grounding his ethical system upon experience, which he thinks is accessible to the faculties of the human person, Scheler was attempting to situate ethics within an objective realm without the rigor of Kant's formalism. "For Scheler, the subject

²⁶ See Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 116f. for a brief description of the agenda of phenomenology.

²⁷ See Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 55-57; William, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 124.

²⁸ Wojtyla, *Max Scheler*, 40 (my translation): "...un sistema filosófico construido de acuerdo con las premisas de la fenomenología y de la axiología, que pretende servir para reunir y explicar todos los hechos morales y todos los contenidos éticos...."

²⁹ See *ibid.*

³⁰ See *ibid.*, 109.

³¹ See *ibid.*

recognizes value in the experience of objects. What we have here is a materialist ethics of values.”³² In the *Formalismus*, Scheler identifies two types of values: material values and ethical values. Jaroslaw Kupczak summarizes the difference, “Values that stand as goals for intentional acts of a person are material values. Right and wrong are ethical values.”³³

Interestingly, Scheler did not believe that ethical values should be chosen for their own sake. He insisted that only material values could be actively chosen, whereas ethical values can only be experienced and even then, only accidentally.³⁴ Ethical values are always experienced under the rubric of love or hate, with varying intensity.³⁵ For Wojtyla, this understanding of ethical value is the direct result of Scheler’s emotionalist reaction to Kant’s ethics of duty.³⁶ Since value is only experienced emotively, the desire for an ethical value is, for Scheler, the desire “to experience one’s own ethical righteousness.”³⁷ Scheler refers to this as moral “pharisaism” and rejects it.³⁸ This presented somewhat of a paradox since Scheler set out to present an ethical system for the moral perfection of the person.

Wojtyla isolates the problem of the paradox in Scheler’s inability to explain human causality. In the Aristotelian-Thomistic system, the intellect presents goods to the will for selection.³⁹ But Scheler’s system reduces the role of the intellect by emphasizing, almost

³² Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 55.

³³ Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 11.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ See *ibid.*; Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 126.

³⁶ See Wojtyla, *Max Scheler*, 117-119.

³⁷ Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 11.

³⁸ See Wojtyla, *Max Scheler*, 117-119.

³⁹ While there are disagreements between Thomists on the interpretation of minor points in Aquinas’s theory of action, all are agreed on this point. For a detailed analysis on action according to Aquinas, see Lawrence Dewan, O.P., “St. Thomas and Moral Taxonomy,” in *Wisdom, Law, and Virtue: Essays in Thomistic Ethics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 444-477; Joseph Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions in St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*.

entirely, the role of the emotions and the will, which alone discerns value. Thus, intellectual representation has no role to play in human action for Scheler.⁴⁰

As Wojtyla reads him, since Scheler identifies love as an ethical value, which, therefore, cannot be part of any causal tendency in the person, there is no way left to inform the will in human choice. He writes,

An intentional emotional feeling of value is a sort of knowledge that originates in the depth of the person's emotional life. The source of this knowledge is love, in which the subject experiences values in a purely emotional way. Precisely for this reason, according to Scheler's teaching, love has absolutely nothing in common with any element of tendency.⁴¹

This has several ramifications in Wojtyla's view. "As a result of this understanding, any element of choice or decision disappears from Scheler's account of human action. Since the will's participation in the acts of willing is totally passive, the human person cannot be a cause of his own actions.... One does not know how the person can become morally right or wrong."⁴²

Furthermore, since emotion alone discerns value, Scheler allows the conscience no role in ethical action. Rather, the role of conscience is nothing more than the guardian of a person's ethical ideal.⁴³ The point is summarized by Kupczak, "The individual will choose his own moral goods from the moral values he encounters, making them part of his own ethical ideal and moral ethos. The moral values that the person chooses as his own are summarized in the conscience. Therefore, the conscience guards and preserves the moral identity of the

⁴⁰ See Wojtyla, *Max Scheler*, 121-122.

⁴¹ See Wojtyla, *Max Scheler*, 123-124 (my translation): "...la percepción afectiva intencional de los valores es un conocimiento que se genera en lo profundo de la vida emocional de la persona. La fuente de este conocimiento es el amor, en el que el sujeto experimenta el valor de un modo puramente emocional. Pero, precisamente por esto, el amor – siempre según la doctrina de Scheler – excluye en sí mismo todo elemento de apropiación."

⁴² Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 13.

⁴³ See Wojtyla, *Max Scheler*, 132-133.

person and ethical ideal.”⁴⁴ This is in stark contrast to the New Testament understanding of conscience which is presented as an “inner conviction about the moral goodness or badness of a specific deed.”⁴⁵ For Christians, the judgment of conscience is a subjective norm for the morality of human action.⁴⁶ It is this subjective conviction concerning the goodness or badness of an action that obliges the person to perform or to avoid the action, as the case may be. Thus, “The conscience as a conviction shows us the practical character of moral values; the conscience as an obligation shows directly the causal relation of the person in respect to the good and the bad.”⁴⁷

Scheler’s reduction of the role of conscience in moral action is the result of his reaction to Kant’s theory of moral obligation. Wojtyla writes, “Scheler attempts to suppress obligation from his ethical system because he wants to suppress any source of negativism from ethics.”⁴⁸ Since Scheler reduced causality to a passive willing of material value, he was unable to ascribe a positive role to obligation. For Scheler the human person is nothing more than one who experiences values, and since values indicate no tendency toward human fulfillment, the Christian notion of obligation as a pedagogical means toward human perfection is simply absent. Wojtyla notes that “an obligation always manifests itself when we experience the nonexistence of a specific positive value that ‘should be’, or the existence

⁴⁴ Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 14.

⁴⁵ Wojtyla, *Max Scheler*, 136 (my translation): “La conciencia consiste en la convicción íntima sobre el bien o el mal moral de una determinada acción.”

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, 136-137.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 138 (my translation): “...la conciencia, como «convicción», nos demuestra el carácter práctico de los valores morales; la conciencia como «obligación» demuestra inmediatamente la relación causal de la persona con respecto al bien o al mal.”

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 139 (my translation): “Scheler quiere suprimir el deber en su sistema ético, puesto que para él se trata de suprimir la fuente de toda negatividad.”

of a negative value that ‘should not be’ in our experience.”⁴⁹ But this description of positive values that ‘should be’ or negative values that ‘should not be’ is simply not possible without a robust conception of the human person dependent on something more than emotion and feeling.

Wojtyla offers two theses in the conclusion of his study of Max Scheler. The first is, “The ethical system of Max Scheler is fundamentally inadequate for the scientific formulation of the Christian ethic.”⁵⁰ Revealed Christian ethics identify the human person as the source of his own actions, and, moreover, Wojtyla insists that persons actually experience themselves as the agents of their actions, both the good and the bad.⁵¹

Nevertheless, while Scheler’s phenomenology may be inadequate to justify and defend Christian ethics, it may still serve as “an aid in a scientific study of the Christian ethic. Concretely, it facilitates for us the analysis of the ethical facts in the phenomenological and experiential plane.”⁵² Phenomenology, Wojtyla argues, allows us to explore the dynamism of experiencing values and how they mold the human person. Mary Shivanandan has isolated Wojtyla’s point: “Through the phenomenological experience we are able to discover how moral good and bad shape the experience of the person but we cannot define through the phenomenological method what makes an act of the person morally good or bad.”⁵³

⁴⁹ Ibid., 144 (my translation): “...el deber en la experiencia se manifiesta siempre cuando experimentamos la inexistencia de un determinado valor positivo que «debe estar», o también la existencia de un valor negativo que «debe no estar» en nuestra experiencia.”

⁵⁰ Wojtyla, *Max Scheler*, 206 (my translation): “El sistema ético de Max Scheler resulta fundamentalmente inadecuado para la formulación científica de la ética cristiana.”

⁵¹ See Wojtyla, *Max Scheler*, 206-208. Wojtyla would explain the human person’s experience of his own action further in *The Acting Person*.

⁵² Ibid., 214 (my translation): “...puede servirnos como auxiliar para un estudio científico sobre la ética cristiana. Concretamente, nos facilita el análisis de los hechos éticos en el plano fenomenológico y experimental.”

⁵³ Mary Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage in the Light of John Paul II’s Anthropology* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999): 27.

In the closing pages of his thesis, Wojtyla asserts that it is the task of ontology and metaphysics to identify objectively what makes an act good or bad. These philosophical fields “define the revealed Christian order of moral good and bad in the light of an objective principle.”⁵⁴ Though phenomenology has a vital role in identifying the values present in a given experience, it is secondary to ontology’s role, which is to discover the objective moral value of human actions.⁵⁵ Thus, at the end of his first major study of phenomenology, Wojtyla shows himself favorable to its method but keenly aware of its limitations. Just as with his doctoral dissertation on St. John of the Cross, he reveals an interest in the theological and philosophical system of St. Thomas Aquinas and supplementing it with a system more concerned with experience.

II. Wojtyla’s Early Teachings

A. *The Lublin Lectures: The Relationship of Phenomenology and Ontology*

By the fall of 1953, Wojtyla had completed the thesis and all requirements for receiving the university degree of docent. The communist regime, however, began to forbid the granting of degrees by the Jagellonian University in Cracow in early 1954, and months later disbanded the faculty.⁵⁶ This formality notwithstanding, Wojtyla went on to teach at the Catholic University of Lublin. As we will see, in the early lectures and articles of this time, Wojtyla further clarifies his concerns about phenomenology, the use of its method, and the need for ontology in ethics.

⁵⁴ Wojtyla, *Max Scheler*, 217 (my translation): “...definir el orden cristiana revelado del bien y del mal moral a la luz de un principio objetivo.”

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, 218.

⁵⁶ See Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 23f.

Karol Wojtyła began teaching at the Catholic University of Lublin in the fall of 1954. That academic year he delivered the first of his Lublin lectures, “Ethical Act and Ethical Experience.” The following year, he delivered another lecture entitled, “Good and Value.” Finally, in the 1956-57 academic year, he turned his attention to “The Problem of Norm and Happiness.”⁵⁷

At the time, the university’s department of philosophy was developing a new school of Thomism under the Dominican Mieczysław Albert Krapiec. Jarosław Kupczak nicely summarizes the principles of this new school of Thomism: “First, all [the contributors to Lublin Thomism] were convinced that metaphysics had primacy of place in the realm of philosophy. Second, they emphasized the importance of anthropological reflection. Third, they strongly opposed irrational trends in contemporary philosophy. And fourth, they all felt a need for historical analysis of philosophical problems.”⁵⁸ Wojtyła would find a sounding board in this school in which he could continue the development of his own vision of the human person, action, and morality.⁵⁹ It should be noted that as early as 1949, Wojtyła was already publishing articles in two Catholic journals: *Tygodnik Powszechny* and *Znak*.⁶⁰ He was not entirely unknown when he arrived at the university.

⁵⁷ Though they bear the name “lectures,” these lectures were more akin to courses. Thus the first lecture is 53 pages of published text. These three lectures, or courses, by Wojtyła were later published. See Karol Wojtyła, *Wykłady lubelskie* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego: 1986). A German translation is available: Karol Wojtyła, *Erziehung zur Liebe* (München: Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, 1981). I have been provided an unpublished manuscript of an English translation of the original Polish by the translator himself, Hugh McDonald. Unless otherwise noted, all citations to Wojtyła’s Lublin Lectures will be to the original Polish edition, while all translations will be McDonald’s.

⁵⁸ Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 28.

⁵⁹ Kenneth Schmitz has suggested that Wojtyła’s habilitation thesis and his Lublin lectures are important hermeneutical keys to understanding Wojtyła’s later work. He expresses disappointment at their dismissal by most scholars of John Paul’s work, especially in the English speaking world. Yet, this dismissal by English speaking scholars is likely due to the fact that neither has been published in English. See Schmitz, *At the Center*, 41f.

⁶⁰ Most of these articles have been collected and translated into French. See Karol Wojtyła, *En esprit et en vérité: Recueil de textes 1949-1978*, trans. Gwendoline Jarczyk (Paris: Le Centurion, 1978).

The first year's lecture, "Ethical Act and Experience," developed many of the same themes that Wojtyla had already established in his dissertation thesis. In the first part of the lecture, he summarizes Scheler's philosophy of ethics and then offers a critique, which is not much different than his critique in the habilitation thesis. He goes further in the lecture, however, by incorporating modern psychology's empirical observation that human persons experience their own volition (hence, we use words, "I want," "I should," or "I must").⁶¹ Scheler's system denies even the possibility of experiencing efficacy from causing one's actions. Wojtyla writes,

This efficacy of the will, its causal relation to the person's activity, may be experientially affirmed, it is manifest in experience – to speak in the language of the phenomenologist. If Scheler failed to perceive this fact, then we are dealing with a consequence of his whole conception of the person, which conception, as has been stated, is emotionalistic. Thus, however, the conception gives the lie to experience instead of taking experience into account and serving the interpretation of experience.⁶²

Wojtyla reasserts his criticism that Scheler's rejection of causal efficacy reduces the person to a mere subject of experiences. He writes of Scheler,

The person as an efficient cause does not fit within the boundaries of the phenomenological inspection. In his view the person does not realize anything, he merely feels the values that flow through him in various directions.... One consequence of Scheler's phenomenology... is that he loses the entire dynamic character of the being of the person. The person remains merely a subject of experiences and properly speaking, a passive subject, but he is not the efficient cause of acts, he does not act.⁶³

This failure to recognize human causality is precisely why Scheler does not and is not able to explain what makes an act good or bad.

⁶¹ See Karol Wojtyla, *Wykłady*, 35.

⁶² Ibid. (McDonald Translation)

⁶³ Wojtyla, *Wykłady*, 32f. (McDonald Translation)

In the conclusion of his first lecture at Lublin, Wojtyla notes the similarities between Thomas Aquinas's approach to the will and contemporary psychology's approach. Granted, there are differences in suppositions between the two. Contemporary psychology studies the act of the will phenomenologically and empirically as "an experiential living experience."⁶⁴ Whereas St. Thomas, "constructs his doctrine of the will on his metaphysical suppositions, the suppositions of the philosophy of being."⁶⁵ He continues by outlining Aquinas's understanding of the interplay between reason and will in human action.⁶⁶ Specifically, while the will is attracted to the good *quoad exercitium*, it still requires the representations of the specific goods by the intellect in order to pursue those specific goods *quoad specificationem*.⁶⁷

Wojtyla is quick to assert that Aquinas is not giving power over the will to reason, as Kant had done. For St. Thomas, the command of reason alone "would be without strength.... The reason, being after all also under the efficacious influence of the will *quoad exercitium*, presents to the will only various good objects according to the reason of the good proper to itself, and in this way it makes it possible for the will to realize the inclination it bears within itself by nature."⁶⁸ It is this relationship between reason and will that Wojtyla identifies as the proof that the human person always seeks ethical values, that is to say ethical fulfillment, in each human action, contrary to what Scheler thought.

⁶⁴ Wojtyla, *Wojtyla*, 36. (McDonald Translation)

⁶⁵ Ibid. (McDonald Translation)

⁶⁶ See Wojtyla, *Wojtyla*, 64-65.

⁶⁷ Wojtyla cites *ST*, I-II, q. 1 and q. 10; q. 9, a. 3, ad 3 and a. 5.

⁶⁸ Wojtyla, *Wojtyla*, 66. (McDonald Translation)

B. *Development from the Lublin Lectures to Love and Responsibility*

From the time he began delivering his lectures in Lublin until he published *Love and Responsibility* in 1960, Wojtyla produced several articles that advance the project begun in the habilitation thesis and the Lublin lectures.⁶⁹ In all but one of these articles, Wojtyla summarizes Scheler's philosophical system of an ethics based on value.⁷⁰ In each of these articles, Scheler's thought is presented in contradiction to Immanuel Kant's. Generally, he contrasts Immanuel Kant with Scheler, but at least once Scheler is presented his own terms.⁷¹ Only once does Wojtyla use contemporary psychology to criticize Kant and Scheler, and that is in the first article published after he began his professorship at Lublin.⁷² It reads as a summary of Wojtyla's first Lublin lecture, "Ethical Act and Experience." But in every one of these early articles following his habilitation thesis, Wojtyla judges Scheler's, Kant's,

⁶⁹ These articles have been translated into English in: Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Teresa Sandok (New York: Peter Lang, 1993). The following are the articles that I am concerned with here. Karol Wojtyla, "Zagadnienie woli w analizie aktu etycznego," *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 5.1 (1955-57): 111-135. English translation: Karol Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Will in the Analysis of the Ethical Act," in *Person and Community*, 3-22. Karol Wojtyla, "Problem oderwania przeżycia od aktu w etyce na tle poglądów Kanta i Schelera," *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 5.3 (1955-57): 113-140. English translation: Karol Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Separation of Experience from Act in Ethics in the Philosophy of Immanuel Kant and Max Scheler," in *Person and Community*, 23-44. Karol Wojtyla, "W poszukiwaniu podstaw perfekcjonizmu w etyce," *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 5.4 (1955-57): 303-317. English Translation: Karol Wojtyla, "In Search of the Basis of Perfectionism in Ethics," in *Person and Community*, 45-56. Karol Wojtyla, "O kierowniczej lub służebnej roli rozumu w etyce na tle poglądów Tomasza z Akwinu, Hume'a i Kanta," *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 6.2 (1958): 13-31. English translation: Karol Wojtyla, "On the Directive or Subservient Role of Reason in Ethics in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant," in *Person and Community*, 57-72. Karol Wojtyla, "O metafizycznej i fenomenologicznej podstawie normy moralnej (w oparciu o koncepcje św. Tomasza z Akwinu oraz Maksza Schelera)," *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne* 6.1-2 (1959): 99-124. English translation: Karol Wojtyla, "On the Metaphysical and Phenomenological Basis of the Moral Norm in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and Max Scheler," in *Person and Community*, 73-94. Karol Wojtyla, "Natura ludzka jako podstawa formacji etycznej," *Znak* 11 (1959): 693-697. English translation: Karol Wojtyla, "Human Nature as the Basis of Ethical Formation," in *Person and Community*, 95-99.

⁷⁰ See Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Will," in *Person and Community*, 8-11; Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Separation," in *Person and Community*, 32-39; Wojtyla, "In Search of the Basis," in *Person and Community*, 51-54; Wojtyla, "On the Metaphysical and Phenomenological Basis," in *Person and Community*, 81-87.

⁷¹ See Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Will," in *Person and Community*, 7-8; Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Separation," in *Person and Community*, 25-32; Wojtyla, "In Search of the Basis," in *Person and Community*, 49-51; Wojtyla, "On the Directive or Subservient Role of Reason," in *Person and Community*, 67-69.

⁷² See Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Will," in *Person and Community*, 4-7, 12.

and, in one place, David Hume's various philosophies of ethics to be inadequate in the face of Aristotle's, and especially Aquinas's, philosophy of being.⁷³

The fundamental problem Wojtyla identifies in Kant's system in these articles is his separation of experience from reality in his famous phenomena-noumena distinction. Wojtyla writes, "Kant believes that empirical knowledge provides us with only a chaos of impressions, whereas it gives us no basis for such concepts as substance or cause. There are, in Kant's opinion, categories that derive solely from reason, and so they are completely *a priori*."⁷⁴ Anything we experience in human action is subject to this distinction for Kant, thus in our empirical experience "we find no trace of this free will in the human being."⁷⁵ For Kant, the *a priori* categories of theoretical reason are simply given through which reason organizes all empirical data. Practical reason, too, has an *a priori* category—duty to law.⁷⁶

Wojtyla isolates two problems in Kant's system. The first is that he "removed the very essence of ethical life from the realm of personal experience and transferred it to the noumenal, trans-empirical sphere."⁷⁷ Second, "he crystallized the whole ethical experience of the personal subject into a single psychological element: the feeling of respect for the law."⁷⁸

Wojtyla's criticism of Scheler is now familiar. Scheler thought he was rejecting only Kant's exaltation of moral duty and denigration of experience. In fact, by emphasizing value

⁷³ See Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Will," in *Person and Community*, 14-21; Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Separation," in *Person and Community*, 24, 40-43; Wojtyla, "In Search of the Basis," in *Person and Community*, 46-49, 53-55; Wojtyla, "On the Directive or Subservient Role of Reason," in *Person and Community*, 58-61, 69-70; Wojtyla, "On the Metaphysical and Phenomenological Basis," in *Person and Community*, 74-81, 88-93. The sixth article "Human Nature as the Basis of Ethical Formation" (in *Person and Community*, 94-99) is a short summation of a lecture Wojtyla delivered in February 1959 and is concerned mostly with Aquinas. It has no mention of Scheler or Kant.

⁷⁴ Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Separation," in *Person and Community*, 26.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, 27.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 31.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

as emotion, “he did not manage effectively to extricate himself from Kant’s assumptions, which entails the divorce of experience from the norm and the reduction of the whole of ethics to logic and psychology.”⁷⁹ For Scheler, “Ethical value manifests itself in the background (*auf dem Rücken*), and the very act, the very realization, in which (if we go by experience) this value actually arises remains outside this experience of ethical value.”⁸⁰

Wojtyla wonders outright whether there are, in fact, “remnants of Kantian noumenalism in his [Scheler’s] ethics.”⁸¹

Wojtyla employs the ethics of Aristotle, and moreover of St. Thomas Aquinas, to refute the fallacies of Kant and Scheler. He claims numerous times that Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s view of human action is dynamic and right. He even says that “their view of the ethical act is the only proper and adequate description of ethical experience.”⁸² Just as in his lectures in Lublin, Wojtyla explains again the will’s dual motion (*quoad exercitium* and *quoad specificationem*) in relationship to reason and the emotions in St. Thomas’s work.⁸³

The importance of the Aristotelian-Thomistic ontological distinction between act and potency cannot be underestimated in Wojtyla’s reading of the Angelic Doctor. Wojtyla observes, “A conscious human act is for St. Thomas not merely a stage upon which ethical experience is enacted. It is itself an ethical experience because it is an act of the will. An act of the will is for St. Thomas a passage from potency, since the will is a faculty (*potentia*) of the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 42.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Wojtyla, “The Problem of the Separation,” in *Person and Community*, 43. Cf. Ibid., 24; Wojtyla, “The Problem of the Will,” in *Person and Community*, 16.

⁸³ See Wojtyla, “The Problem of the Will,” in *Person and Community*, 14f.; Wojtyla, “In Search of the Basis,” in *Person and Community*, 47

soul.”⁸⁴ It is this dynamism in the human person—the movement from potency to act—that Wojtyła identifies as the purpose of human action.⁸⁵ This is why Wojtyła also insists, contrary to Scheler, that “human fulfillment is brought about by moral perfection.”⁸⁶

A series of short articles on “Elementary Ethics” published in the weekly Catholic journal, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, represent another step in Karol Wojtyła’s intellectual journey, which sought to reconcile ontology and phenomenology.⁸⁷ For example, in the very second article of the series, “The Problem of Scientific Ethics,” Wojtyła notes that it is only by “an honest reflection on the human being and on his finality” that a true scientific ethic, based on an authentic knowledge of good and evil, can be achieved.⁸⁸ Beyond merely natural principles, Wojtyła goes on to say, that revealed Christian principles do not contradict reason but must, nonetheless, be given a “character of science” by incorporating within it “all that human thought has gained or is gaining in the domain of ethics.”⁸⁹ Wojtyła singles out Aquinas’s incorporation of Aristotle as a particularly fine example of this trend.⁹⁰

Wojtyła maintains the observation from his habilitation thesis that ethics is fundamentally a system of norms.⁹¹ Still, this system of norms must be grounded in reality.

⁸⁴ Wojtyła “The Problem of the Will,” in *Person and Community*, 20.

⁸⁵ Wojtyła will clarify this point in *The Acting Person* (original emphasis).

⁸⁶ Wojtyła, “In Search of the Basis,” in *Person and Community*, 47.

⁸⁷ These articles were collected and published in 1979. See Karol Wojtyła, *Aby Chrystus sie name poslugival* (Cracow: 1979). French Translation: See Wojtyła, *En esprit et en vérité*, 103-159.

⁸⁸ Wojtyła, *En esprit et en vérité*, 108 (my translation): “Il doit en être ainsi, étant donné que sans réflexion explicite concernant l’être humain et sa finalité, l’on ne peut ériger de science fondée concernant ce qui moralement est bien ou mal, c’est-à-dire l’éthique.”

⁸⁹ Wojtyła, *En esprit et en vérité*, 110 (my translation): “...il s’agissait de s’approprier tout ce à quoi, dans le domaine de l’éthique comprise comme science.”

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ See *ibid.*, 111.

In fact, the whole system must stem from the basic principle, “in all your activity be in accord with objective reality.”⁹² He goes on to say,

This reality is made up, on the one hand, of the acting subject endowed with a rational nature, and on the other hand, it is made up of the whole series of objective beings which this subject encounters in his activity, each one of which has its own nature. This fundamental principle, the principle of being in accord with reality, both objective and subjective reality, is the guarantee of realism in the whole of practical philosophy, and in particular ethics. Ethical norms are based in reality.⁹³

Wojtyla reveals here a fundamental trust, contrary to the moderns, in the ability of reason to grasp reality. This is more than a remnant of his assimilation of Aquinas.

Wojtyla’s understanding of natural law (in his short essay, “The Law of Nature”) is remarkably similar to Aquinas’s.⁹⁴ Natural law has for its purpose the perfection of man.

Wojtyla begins to incorporate in his published works the notion of human perfection. The essay, “Nature and Perfection,” proves an excellent summary of the *prima secundae* of St.

Thomas’s *Summa theologiae*, namely the treatise on happiness and human action.⁹⁵ Here,

Wojtyla provides a lucid and succinct analysis of the role of reason and activity in the perfection of being. He writes, “The being acts and becomes to a greater degree itself. In this process of the being’s becoming more itself there is contained the fundamental good of every being.”⁹⁶ The same process occurs in man. “Various kinds of goods become the end of his desires and activities in the measure that they contribute to man’s perfection in one or

⁹² Ibid., 114 (my translation): “Que tout ton agir soit en accord avec la réalité objective.”

⁹³ Ibid. (my translation): “Cette «réalité», c’est d’une part le sujet agissant doué d’une nature rationnelle, d’autre part une série d’êtres objectifs que le sujet rencontre dans son agir, et dont chacun possède une nature propre. Ce principe fondamental, qui tient dans l’accord avec la réalité aussi bien subjective qu’objective, est le garant du réalisme de toute philosophie pratique, et en particulier de l’éthique. Les normes éthiques se fondent sur la réalité.”

⁹⁴ See *ibid.*, 123-126.

⁹⁵ See *ibid.*, 116-119. I am grateful to Schmitz, *At the Center*, 55 for suggesting the similarities between these two articles and St. Thomas’s thought.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 117 (my translation): “L’être agit, et devient par là davantage lui-même. Dans ce fait de devenir davantage soi-même est contenu le bien fondamental de chaque être.”

another respect.... Among all these goods only the moral good perfects human nature itself: through the moral good a man becomes simply a better man.”⁹⁷

Wojtyla clarifies the distinction between perfectionism and normativism in ethics in a scholarly article written contemporaneously with his elementary ethics texts.⁹⁸ The perfectionist aspect of ethics “consists in emphasizing that the person who acts well is perfected morally.... [It] is not identical in ethics with the normative aspect, which concerns only the definition of what is morally good and evil.”⁹⁹ All ethical norms always concern perfection. “Ethics is always in some way about the human being.... Norms, therefore, do not have full meaning apart from the human being, who, by living according to them, simply lives in a good way and is perfected as a human being, or, in the opposite case, deteriorates and loses value.”¹⁰⁰ In this essay, Wojtyla goes on to argue that the connection between norm and perfection is adequately understood only when the assumptions of ontology are accepted in ethics.

According to the assumptions of ontology, action in and of itself is not necessarily perfective and fulfilling. In the Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy of being “the good is that which constitutes the object of an aim, i.e., an end—the good is that which perfects a being.”¹⁰¹ Thus for Aristotle and Aquinas, ethics “is a science about human beings, who, in striving for various goods, must seek above all the good most suited to their rational

⁹⁷ Ibid, 117-118 (my translation): “Tel ou tel bien deviant la fin de son désir et de son activité, dans la mesure où il contribue à son perfectionnement sous tel ou tel rapport.... Parmi tous ces biens, seul le bien moral perfectionne l’humanité comme telle: par lui, l’homme deviant simplement un homme meilleur.”

⁹⁸ See Wojtyla, “In Search of the Basis...”, in *Person and Community*, 45-56.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 46.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 47.

nature.”¹⁰² Aquinas reinforces the strict connection between goodness and being. As Wojtyla reads Aquinas, the emphasis on moving from act to potency results from Aquinas’s perspective that “the actualization of potency consists in the real coming-into-existence of something previously only existed in potency.”¹⁰³ Therefore, “every perfection or good consists in existence.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, a being is only truly good (*bonum simpliciter*) when it not only exists (*ens simpliciter*) but when it is brought to perfection with all the qualities necessary for fulfillment (*entia secundum quid*).¹⁰⁵

C. Love and Responsibility

Even though in this early period Karol Wojtyla had clearly concluded that ontology (and the ontology of Aristotle and St. Thomas specifically) is necessary for ethics, he had certainly not given up his project of developing an understanding of the human person and human experience. His 1960 book, *Milosc i Odpowiedzialnosc* (*Love and Responsibility*), brings these moral categories—the person and experience—back to the fore of Wojtyla’s thought as he further attempts to do that which he vowed to do when he was studying in Rome: to move beyond St. Thomas to his own philosophy.¹⁰⁶ Rocco Buttiglione notes that in *Love and Responsibility* we find “Wojtyla’s first positive attempt to build an ethic which would create an organic synthesis of ontology and phenomenology.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 48.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*. While studying at the Angelicum in 1947, Wojtyla wrote to a friend regarding Aquinas: “His entire philosophy is so marvelously beautiful, so delightful, and, at the same time, so uncomplicated. It seems that depth of thought does not require a profusion of words. It is even possible that the fewer words there are the deeper the meaning.... But I still have far to travel before I hit on my own philosophy” (George Blazynski, *John Paul II: A Man from Krakow* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979], 57).

¹⁰⁷ Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 83.

Unlike the previous published works of Wojtyla I have been considering in this section, *Love and Responsibility* is concerned with the particular issues surrounding love and marriage rather than general moral theory. This aspect of the book will be considered more thoroughly in the next chapter. Presently I want to follow Buttiglione's lead and show that *Love and Responsibility* marks the first positive step on the part of Wojtyla to synthesize ontology with an experienced-based methodology (i.e., with phenomenology).

Wojtyla's opening chapter, an analysis on the verb "to use," begins with an important observation on the world. After noting that the world we live in is a world of many objects and the word "object" is the same as "entity," Wojtyla writes,

This is not the proper meaning of the word, since an 'object', strictly speaking, is something related to a 'subject'. A 'subject' is also an 'entity' – an entity which exists and acts in a certain way. It is then possible to say that the world in which we live is composed of many subjects. It would indeed be proper to speak of "subjects" before 'objects'. If the order has been reversed here, the intention was to put the emphasis right at the beginning of the book on its objectivism, its realism. For if we begin with a 'subject', especially when that subject is man, it is easy to treat everything which is outside the subject, i.e. the whole world of objects, in a purely subjective way, to deal with it only as it enters into the consciousness of a subject, establishes itself and dwells in that consciousness. We must also, then, be clear right from the start that every subject also exists as an object, an objective 'something' or 'somebody'.¹⁰⁸

In this opening paragraph, Wojtyla immediately sets himself against all modern philosophies that draw a hard distinction between subject and object.¹⁰⁹ Here, Wojtyla's appropriation of St. Thomas's philosophy of being serves him well since both subject and object are beings.

Nevertheless, in his closing sentence, Wojtyla clarifies that the objects (which are also subjects) that occupy this world are not only 'somethings' (as a philosophy of being tends to

¹⁰⁸ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 21.

¹⁰⁹ Buttiglione summarizes just a few of the positions to which Wojtyla's opening comment responds. See Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 84-86.

imagine them) but sometimes they are ‘somebodies.’ This is the beginning of a phenomenological method that is also deeply personalist. While all things in the world of being can be categorized as members of genus and species, for man such taxonomy is not entirely satisfactory. This is the case since “there is something more to him, a particular richness and perfection in the manner of his being, which can only be brought out by the use of the word ‘person.’ The most obvious and simplest reason for this is that man has the ability to reason, he is a rational being, which cannot be said of any other entity of the visible world, for in none of them do we find any trace of conceptual thinking.”¹¹⁰ Therefore, Wojtyla believes that Boethius’s definition of the person as an “individual substance of a rational nature” (*individual substantia rationalis naturae*) captures the distinctive character of the human person and differentiates him from “the whole world of objective entities.”¹¹¹

Wojtyla then turns to the experience of the human person by noting that the presence of reason means “the person as a subject is distinguished from even the most advanced animals by a specific inner self, an inner life, characteristic only of persons.”¹¹² Cognition and desire come together in the human person in a spiritual manner, Wojtyla says, assisting in the formation of a “genuine interior life.”¹¹³ For him, the interior life is the spiritual life, and it is centered upon truth and goodness. The two problems central to the interior life are: the ultimate cause of everything and the way to be good. The first of these, Wojtyla says, concerns cognition. The second concerns desire.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 22.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 23.

The interior life of the human person is primary for Wojtyla. However, he does not ignore the world of objects, but the person's contact with the world must go beyond the natural or physical contact he has through his body:

It is true that a human person's contact with the world begins on the 'natural' and sensual plane, but it is given the form proper to man only in the sphere of his interior life. Here, too, a trait characteristic of the person becomes apparent: a man does not only intercept messages which reach him from the outside world and react to them in a spontaneous or even purely mechanical way, but in his whole relationship with his world, with reality, he strives to assert himself, his 'I', and he must act thus, since the nature of his being demands it.¹¹⁵

Wojtyla goes on to say that the nature of man's being fundamentally differs from animals because of free-will. Free-will demands self-determination flowing from choice.¹¹⁶

This insight provides Wojtyla with the foundation for the Latin maxim that the person is *alteri incommunicabilis*. The point, Wojtyla says, "is not that a person is a unique and unrepeatable entity, for this can be said just as well of any other entity.... The incommunicable, the inalienable, in a person is intrinsic to that person's inner self, to the power of self-determination, free will. No one else can want for me."¹¹⁷ This observation flows directly to Wojtyla's understanding of the personalistic norm: "Nobody can use a person as a means toward an end – no human being, not even God the Creator. On the part of God, indeed, it is totally out of the question, since, by giving man an intelligent and free nature, He has thereby ordained that each man alone will decide for himself the ends of his activity."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 24.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 27.

Integrating the Kantian categorical imperative, but now understood through the lens of a realist ontology and the biblical commandment of love of neighbor, Wojtyla offers a basic axiom that will guide his moral thought: “Whenever a person is the object of your activity, remember that you may not treat that person as only a means to an end, as an instrument, but must allow for the fact that he or she, too, has, or at least should have, distinct personal ends. This principle, thus formulated, lies at the basis of all the human freedoms, properly understood, and especially the freedom of conscience.”¹¹⁹ This is an important insight that provides a key to much of Wojtyla’s moral writings, both before his election to the pontificate and after. His were not forceful exhortations that sought to impose but rather to convert. Buttiglione observes,

Whereas the objectivist view, holding as it does to the idea of the primacy of objective truth, can go so far as wanting to impose it on those who do not recognize it, the personalistic view, which is rooted in a genuine philosophy of being, maintains that while the person indeed has the moral duty to adhere to the truth, he cannot be made to do so by overriding the choice of his freedom and his conscience.¹²⁰

As we will see in the next section, for Wojtyla the ethical substance of love consists of the union of two wills, two freedoms, in the pursuit of a common good.

III. A Philosophy Matures

A. The Shift after Love and Responsibility

Following the publication of *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla’s articles bear a different tone concerning the ontology of St. Thomas Aquinas than before. While maintaining a reverence for the Angelic Doctor, Wojtyla is more likely to point to Aquinas’s deficiencies in

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 28.

¹²⁰ Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 90-91.

confronting the modern world.¹²¹ For example, in an article published the year following *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla suggests what a “Thomistic Personalism” might look like.¹²² Wojtyla explains succinctly that St. Thomas’s understanding of the person, developed in a different historical era, depends more on theology than philosophy. Indeed, St. Thomas uses the word “person” only in treatises on the Trinity and the incarnation. Nevertheless, Wojtyla says, given Aquinas’s understanding of the person as an individual substance of a rational nature along with his understanding *compositum humanum* allows later Thomists to identify the concrete human individual as a person.¹²³

Still, in what appears to be his first explicit critique of Aquinas, Wojtyla says that a Thomistic view of the human person is necessarily too objectivistic and it allows no room for consciousness and self-consciousness. Wojtyla writes,

According to St. Thomas, consciousness and self-consciousness are something derivative, a kind of fruit of the rational nature that subsists in the person, a nature crystallized in a unitary rational and free being, and not something subsistent in themselves. If consciousness and self-consciousness characterize the person, then they do so only in the accidental order, as derived from the rational nature on the basis of which the person acts.¹²⁴

While Aquinas presents a full view of the objective activity of the human person, accomplished in the faculties of the soul, Wojtyla believes that in Aquinas’s “objectivistic view of reality” there is no place to examine the subject.¹²⁵

¹²¹ This shift already began in *Love and Responsibility*. For example, while Wojtyla’s analysis of sexual desire follows Aquinas’s treatises on the concupiscent appetite and the passions (see *Love and Responsibility*, 147-54), he nonetheless believes Aquinas is mistaken to place chastity under the virtue of temperance rather than under charity (see *Love and Responsibility*, 166-74).

¹²² See Karol Wojtyla, “Personalism tomistyczny,” *Znak* 13 (1961): 664-675. English Translation: Karol Wojtyla, “Thomistic Personalism,” in *Person and Community*, 165-175.

¹²³ See Wojtyla “Thomistic Personalism,” in *Person and Community*, 167-169.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

Four years later in “The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics,” Wojtyla will openly declare that because modernity has withdrawn from teleology, an ethical theory based on the notion of final ends, as Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s is, is no longer tenable.¹²⁶ The contemporary shift was caused “on the one hand, by a new, more critical attitude toward metaphysics, and, on the other—and this, in my opinion, is the more important cause—by a more basic grasp of the moral facts themselves, by a reestablished contact with moral experience.”¹²⁷ Rather, the dialogue with modernity requires moral theology to likewise move to the normative approach of ethics that characterizes this shift away from metaphysics and toward moral experience.

Wojtyla does not argue for the abandonment of teleology in ethics. He suggests only that it be supplemented by a normative approach.¹²⁸ When moral theology assumes the methodology of normative science, it concerns properly the “norms of morality contained in divine revelation and proclaimed by the magisterium of the Church in solemn and ordinary teachings.”¹²⁹ The task of the moral theologian, Wojtyla continues, “is to scientifically interpret these norms and, above all, to justify them in the light of reason and revelation. A justification of the norms of morality is more than interpretation of them.... To justify the norms of morality means to give reasons for their rightness.”¹³⁰ Wojtyla calls this process a

¹²⁶ See Karol Wojtyla, “The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics: Reflections and Postulates,” in *Person and Community*, 279-280. This is Theresa Sandok’s English translation of Karol Wojtyla, “Zagadnienie katolickiej etyki seksualnej: Refleksje i postulaty,” *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 13.2 (1965): 5-25.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 280.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

“justifying interpretation.”¹³¹ He goes on to say that the justification requires a complete vision of the reality of revelation in which the norms are situated.

Two years later, Wojtyla will argue that teleology is not enough to justify revealed norms.¹³² Even though scripture testifies to the possibility of knowing some revealed norms by reason alone, Wojtyla will by then argue that “such a purely rational interpretation of revealed norms involves a certain ‘compression’ and ‘abbreviation’ of them.”¹³³ Only a full view of revelation can provide a substantial justification of Christian moral norms. Wojtyla writes, “Without theology, there is no way to give a fully adequate interpretation of moral norms or of the so-called theological virtues.”¹³⁴ Here, we see Wojtyla explicitly turning away from any sort of purely naturalistic or ontological morality to one dependent primarily, if not exclusively, on revealed principles. However, it was still necessary for him to present his understanding of the human person. He did this with the publication in 1969 of *Osoba i Czyn* (*Person and Act*) which was published in English in 1979 under the title *The Acting Person*.¹³⁵

B. The Acting Person

In *The Acting Person* we see the full fruition of Karol Wojtyla’s many years of labor of studying the phenomenology of Max Scheler and contrasting it with ontology. Finally, Wojtyla was relieved “from the patient work of philosophical reconstruction and of theoretical comparison.”¹³⁶ His philosophy is “mature enough to propose itself as an

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² See Karol Wojtyla, “Etyka a teologia moralna,” *Znak* 19 (1967): 1077-1082. English translation: Karol Wojtyla, “Ethics and Moral Theology,” in *Person and Community*, 101-106.

¹³³ Wojtyla, “Ethics and Moral Theology,” in *Person and Community*, 105.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*.

¹³⁶ Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 118.

interpretation of the being of man in the world and of the meaning of his being-person.”¹³⁷

There is no doubt that Wojtyla intended this work to be a synthetic presentation of phenomenology and ontology. He writes in one of the two prefaces to the English edition,

The first question which was born in the mind of the present student of St. Thomas (certainly a very poor student) was the question: What is the relationship between action as interpreted by the traditional ethic *actus humanus*, and the action as an experience. This and other similar questions led me gradually to a more synthetic formulation in the present study *The Acting Person*.¹³⁸

Unlike his previous work, which seemed to set phenomenology and ontology more in contradiction, *The Acting Person* is an explicit attempt to synthesize the two philosophies into a coherent whole that will compensate for the limitations of each.

Thus, we find our author less critical of Scheler in this work. In the first preface, he says, “Granted the author’s acquaintance with traditional Aristotelian thought, it is however the work of Max Scheler that has been a major influence upon his reflection.”¹³⁹ But this is not a reversal of his previous position on Scheler, for Wojtyla’s appropriation of Scheler is a critical one. Though there is less explicit reference to Aquinas in *The Acting Person*, Wojtyla’s criticisms of Scheler remain. The prime issue of the post-Cartesian era, according to Wojtyla, is the fracturing of the human person from reality, including the reality of the person.¹⁴⁰

He believes, therefore, that it is imperative for every philosopher to seek the unity of the human person. Thus far, modernity has been unsuccessful. “In fact, in spite of the fundamental Schelerian, and for that matter generally phenomenological, efforts conducive to the cognition of the complete man, this unity, its basis, as well as its primordial

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Wojtyla, *Acting Person*, xiii-xiv.

¹³⁹ Ibid., viii.

¹⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, viif.

manifestation, are still missing in the present-day philosophical conception of man.”¹⁴¹

Wojtyla goes on to say that for Aristotle, “it was the very conception of the ‘human act’ which was seen as the manifestation of man’s unity as well as its source.”¹⁴² Essentially, he reverses the traditional analysis of Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy (or any philosophy of being, for that matter), which begins with metaphysical presuppositions about the agent before moving to action. Wojtyla begins with action to reveal the person who acts. But also he flips the Cartesian move, which held that only in thinking does man know his existence. Wojtyla wants to say that it is in all sorts of actions that the person is revealed, both to the world and to himself.

Our author maintains his realist position by insisting, in opposition to Immanuel Kant, that experience is a direct connection with objective reality. It need not pass through Kantian *a priori* categories.¹⁴³ Moreover, experience includes a basic understanding without first having to pass through consciousness.¹⁴⁴ Here we see Wojtyla purposefully separating himself from the fundamental facet of Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology, which viewed consciousness as constitutive of experience and reality.

For Wojtyla, cognition is distinct from consciousness. Our experience and apprehension stems from an “intrinsic cognitive dynamism.”¹⁴⁵ Wojtyla’s presentation of cognition appropriates the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of apprehension. This cognitive dynamism consists in the “comprehension and knowledge [which] contribute in an

¹⁴¹ Ibid., viii.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ See *ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 3-5.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 32.

intentional way to the formation of the object.”¹⁴⁶ Whereas for the phenomenologists, consciousness is always intentional, which is to say, consciousness is actually constitutive of the object to be experienced, for Wojtyla this process is left to cognition itself.¹⁴⁷ Consciousness, therefore, is not intentional for Wojtyla. On the contrary, consciousness is “the understanding of what has been constituted and comprehended” by cognition.¹⁴⁸ With that, Wojtyla brings to the role of consciousness, exalted by the phenomenologists and largely ignored by the scholastics, to even keel with the other faculties of the soul.

In this system, consciousness has two primary functions: mirroring and reflectivity. Consciousness mirrors objects that are apprehended through cognition. This mirroring is more than simple duplication. The consciousness “interiorizes in its own specific manner what it mirrors, thus encapsulating or capturing it in the person’s ego.”¹⁴⁹ The reflective aspects of consciousness concern our action. The reflexive function of consciousness allows us “to *experience* one’s self as the subject of one’s own acts and experiences.”¹⁵⁰ This experience, Wojtyla says, is quite different from being the subject of action, on the hand, and cognizing oneself as the subject of one’s action, on the other. In some ways, being the subject of action is the result of our natural dynamisms.¹⁵¹ To cognize oneself as a subject of action is to reflect upon oneself as an object of knowledge. Reflection, however, bears upon the *experience* being a subject.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Wojtyla explains this nicely in *ibid.* 303n16.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 35. Wojtyla also notes that emotions and passions can affect the consciousness, interfering with this mirroring function. See *ibid.*, 50-56.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 44. Emphasis original.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 44-45.

This reflection on the experience of our own subjectivity creates the link in Wojtyła's system between action and ontology. This experience allows the concrete man

to designate himself by means of the pronoun *I*. We know *I* to be a personal pronoun, always designating a concrete person. However, the denotation of this personal pronoun, thus also of the *ego*, appears more comprehensive than that of the autonomous individual being, because the first combines the moment of experienced subjectiveness with that of ontic subjectiveness, while the second speaks only of the latter, of the individual being as the ground of existence and action.¹⁵²

The phenomenologists before him would have missed this jump that Wojtyła makes. They had not accepted any sort of knowledge other than the intentionality of consciousness. They had failed to incorporate human action into their systems.

The reflective function of consciousness reveals two types of experiences. The experience of action (*agere*) and the experience of being acted upon (*pati*). "When acting I have the experience of myself as the agent responsible for this particular form of the dynamization of myself as the subject. When there is something happening to me, then the dynamism is imparted without the efficacious participation of my ego."¹⁵³ The possibility of experiencing these dynamisms, both acting and being acted upon, flows from our very being.¹⁵⁴ The potentialities of our nature, in the Aristotelian-Thomistic sense, give rise to the various dynamisms we experience.¹⁵⁵

It is this very same nature that gives rise to the cognitive dynamism which allows us to apprehend the world, upon which consciousness and its reflective function depends. Left to itself, Wojtyła argues, phenomenology would not be able to hold the two fundamental

¹⁵² Ibid., 45.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 66 (original emphasis).

¹⁵⁴ See *ibid.* 72-73.

¹⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, 88-87.

dynamisms (*agere* and *pati*) together.¹⁵⁶ This is an obvious point since phenomenology does not provide the person with the unity and consistency of experience that Wojtyla's notion of reflective consciousness does. When the person acts, the ego "has the experience of its own efficacy in action." When it is acted upon, the ego "does not experience its own efficacy... but it does have the experience of the inner identity of itself."¹⁵⁷ This experience of unity and identity is the experience of being, and it is more basic than a mere collection of experiences.¹⁵⁸ The fact that nature grounds this experience eliminates, for Wojtyla, any hard separation between nature and person, even if both concepts must be suitably distinguished.¹⁵⁹

In the middle section of the work, Wojtyla outlines his vision of human action and self-determination in an analysis of the transcendence of the human person.¹⁶⁰ The very act of willing some good means that agent is himself also determined. Self-determination is not willed but is the "return" from what is willed back on to the agent.¹⁶¹ This understanding of self-determination is protected from falling into relativism by Wojtyla's constant insistence that volition is guided by self-knowledge and knowledge of reality, which is provided by cognition.¹⁶² The role cognition plays also guarantees that both consciousness (which provides a subjective experience of action) and reality (objectivized by cognition) are always in relation.¹⁶³ By calling attention to the transcendence of the person, Wojtyla means only to

¹⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 80

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, 81, 91.

¹⁵⁹ See *ibid.*, 80-83.

¹⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, 105-116.

¹⁶¹ See *ibid.*, 109.

¹⁶² See *ibid.*, 113-114.

¹⁶³ See *ibid.*, 114. Truth is always the criterion for moral choice according to Wojtyla (See *ibid.*, 135-143). The function of conscience is to provide the truth of the value of the goods presented by the cognition to the will (See *ibid.*, 151-161).

assert that the person is more than volition, since no one action perfects the human person.¹⁶⁴

In Wojtyła's anthropology, integration complements transcendence. Since the human person experiences more than agency, transcendence "does not... exhaust all the contents of the dynamic reality of the person."¹⁶⁵ The person is also acted upon. The person must integrate the experiences of being acted upon, whether those be the natural dynamisms of the body or of the psyche.¹⁶⁶ *The Acting Person* closes with a brief chapter on the idea of intersubjectivity and participation in community.¹⁶⁷ As Wojtyła sees it, participation in community avoids both individualism and collectivism, neither of which respect the value of the person upon which society and community must be based.¹⁶⁸ Kenneth Schmitz identifies the Wojtyła's point, "Human relationships are possible only insofar as personal reality is present and operative in the relationships."¹⁶⁹

Wojtyła is interested to show in this final chapter that action is always within a community of persons and so there is a "genuinely personalistic structure of human existence in a community."¹⁷⁰ The personalist value of action must always, therefore, be respected. For Wojtyła, this personalist value is the self-fulfilling aspect of action that he has

¹⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, 111.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, 191-192 for an understanding of this integration. See *ibid.*, 196-202 for Psychosomatic unity and *Ibid.*, 220-231 on the *psyche* and the *soma*. Wojtyła also has something to say in this section of *The Acting Person* on the relation of the body to action and as an expression of the person, but this will be more properly dealt with in the next chapter (see *AP*, 203-206).

¹⁶⁷ See *ibid.*, 261ff. The English edition of *The Acting Person* provides two versions of this last chapter since Wojtyła was unable to review modifications made by the editions editor Anna-Teresa Tymienicka. The literal translation of the final chapter as in the 1969 *Osoba i Czyn* can be found on pp. 317-357.

¹⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, 271-276.

¹⁶⁹ Schmitz, *At the Center*, 87.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 282.

spent the whole of the book developing.¹⁷¹ In a concluding word to the work, Wojtyła turns to the commandment of love and to the idea of neighbor, insisting that interaction must be more than individuals within a community but individuals identified in terms of love and neighborliness.¹⁷²

In the short postscript to the book, the author acknowledges that the final chapter is a mere sketch of an ongoing project. Wojtyła admits to some limitations given the limited scope of his project which was “to extract from the experience of action everything that would shed some light on man as a person, that would help, so speak, to visualize the person.”¹⁷³ His aim, he says, “was never to build a theory of the person as a being, to develop a metaphysical conception of man. Even so, the vision of man who manifests himself as the person in the way which we have tried to disclose in our analyses seems to confirm sufficiently that his ontic status does not exceed the limits of his contingency – that he is always a being.”¹⁷⁴

C. *After* The Acting Person

In December, 1970, the Catholic University of Lublin held a conference to discuss *Osoba i Człowiek*. George Williams records that at the conclusion of his introductory remarks, Wojtyła surprisingly renounced “any attempt at combining these two philosophies [Thomism and Phenomenology].... Such a melding is completely out of the question.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ See *ibid.*, 270.

¹⁷² See *ibid.*, 292-99.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 300.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 300.

¹⁷⁵ Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 196. This is a surprising comment since in prefaces to the English edition, Wojtyła seemingly claims otherwise as I reported above. See Williams, 378n23: “*Analecta*

Williams summarizes the conference.¹⁷⁶ The conference included nineteen commentators who were given permission by the author himself to discuss the issues freely and frankly.

Williams summarizes the basic critique of the commentators. They were as follows:

That the book was neither a rounded anthropology nor a developed ethics of action; that it mingled without due care to discrimination the intersecting vocabularies of two philosophical languages, Thomist and phenomenological; that the author too readily equated Aristotle and Thomas on man in the phrase Aristotelian-Thomist, not giving full recognition to the differences between the historic Aristotle and the historic Thomas free from glosses; that the author was, despite the two sets of terminology, Aristotelian-Thomist and phenomenological, often more involved in “the etymological hermeneutics of words than in the hermeneutics of the realities signified”; ... and, indeed, that the author was not himself clear or consistent in his efforts to integrate the two main philosophical terminologies of the book.¹⁷⁷

The difficulties with *Osoba i Czyn* would become more pronounced with the problematic English translation, *The Acting Person*. The connection with Thomism is no longer readily apparent, since traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic language is paraphrased rather than translated, or even transliterated.¹⁷⁸ Given Wojtyła’s phenomenological style, it is difficult to follow his line of argument. Perhaps most frustrating of all is that he never actually explains what good and evil are, and how to properly evaluate particular human actions as good and evil.¹⁷⁹ Perhaps he should be offered some latitude in this final criticism because his scope was more anthropological and epistemological rather than ethical and moral.

Cracoviensia, Vols. 5 and 6 (1973-74), pp. 49-272, with resumés in French, pp. 256-77; the quoted renunciation of a melding is on p. 249.”

¹⁷⁶ See Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 196-197.

¹⁷⁷ Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 196f.

¹⁷⁸ Oceans of ink have been poured on the English translation of *Osoba i Czyn*. Most often *The Acting Person* was criticized for not rendering faithfully Wojtyła’s Polish (and when he uses it, Latin) into English. Wojtyła’s English collaborator, Anna-Teresa Tymienicka often bears much of the brunt of this criticism, and is charged with overly paraphrasing key concepts in Wojtyła’s original. As a result, the intellectual ancestry of Wojtyła’s terms is not readily apparent to the English reader. For more details on this dispute, as well as a bibliography of articles and sources on the translation, see: Kupczak, *Destined*, 67n55; Schmitz, *At the Center*, 58-60; Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 197-218, 378-381.

¹⁷⁹ See Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 203.

Much of Wojtyła's writing after *The Acting Person* sought to further the project of the final chapter of that book: a phenomenological description of the human person within community and as the subject of his own self-determination.¹⁸⁰ For our present purposes, three articles merit special mention.

Wojtyła published two articles in 1969 following upon the publication of *Osoba i Czyn*: "The Problem of Experience in Ethics" and "The Problem of the Theory of Morality."¹⁸¹ In the first of these articles, our author recounts much of the argument from *Osoba i Czyn* on the nature of experience in the life of the human person. He goes on to argue that morality is grounded in the experience of self-determination, that is, the subjective experience of our action and its effects on our person.

In the second article, however, Wojtyła moves beyond experience itself in an attempt to identify the source of moral norms for good and bad actions. He locates the validity of these norms in the experience of happiness and guilt.¹⁸² We experience happiness when our actions are good and make us good. We experience guilt or shame when they are evil, and make us evil. The articulation of moral norms are beyond experience and result from

¹⁸⁰ See Karol Wojtyła, "Uczestnictwo czy alienacja," *Summariusm* 7.27 (1978): 7-16 [From a paper originally presented in 1975]. English translation: Karol Wojtyła, "Participation or Alienation?" in *Person and Community*, 197-207. Karol Wojtyła, "Podmiotowosci i 'to, co nieredukowalne' w człowieku," *Ethos* 1.2-3 (1988): 21-28 [From a paper originally presented in 1975]. English translation: Karol Wojtyła, "Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being," in *Person and Community*, 209-217. Karol Wojtyła, "Osoba: Podmiot i wspólnota," *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 24.2 (1976): 5-39. English Translation: "The Person: Subject and Community," in *Person and Community*, 219-261. Karol Wojtyła, "The Intentional Act and the Human Act, that is, Act and Experience," *Analecta Husserliana* 5 (1976): 269-280. Karol Wojtyła, "Problem konstytuowania się kultury poprzez ludzką praxis," *Ethos* 2.8 (1989): 38-49 [From a paper originally presented in 1977]. English translation: Karol Wojtyła, "The Problem of the Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis," in *Person and Community*, 263-275.

¹⁸¹ See Karol Wojtyła, "Problem doswiadczenia w etyce," *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 17.2 (1969): 5-24. English translation: Karol Wojtyła, "The Problem of Experience in Ethics," in *Person and Community*, 107-127. Karol Wojtyła, "Problem teorii moralności," *W nurcie zagadnień posoborowych* (Warszawa: 1969): 3:217-249. English translation: Karol Wojtyła, "The Problem of the Theory of Morality," in *Person and Community*, 129-161.

¹⁸² See Wojtyła, "The Problem of the Theory of Morality," in *Person and Community*, 137-139.

teleology, but without considering the experience of the human person, Wojtyła fears teleology becomes too objectivist.¹⁸³

Finally, in the 1974 article, “The Personal Structure of Self-Determination,” Wojtyła makes direct reference to the December 1970 colloquium on *Osoba i Czyn* discussed above.¹⁸⁴ He notes that the commentators at the Catholic University of Lublin were most concerned with his appropriation of Thomism in the book. In this short article, Wojtyła asserts that his phenomenology remains connected to Aquinas’s ontology.¹⁸⁵ He suggests that Aquinas would agree with the concept of action affecting not only the object but the subject as well.¹⁸⁶

Conclusion

This chapter intended to show that Karol Wojtyła cannot be understood properly if he is understood as a philosopher concerned only with the philosophical categories of the human person and human experience. Indeed, he understands the modern situation and the alienation of persons from their own selves. For that reason, he argues repeatedly that Christian ethics must restore a sense of personal experience in its justification of moral norms.

However, to assume that for this reason Wojtyła abandons ontology would be to falsify grossly his published writings. Even though he had clearly begun to emphasize the phenomenological method and the human person in his writings immediately before his

¹⁸³ See Wojtyła, “The Problem of the Theory of Morality,” in *Person and Community*, 147-150.

¹⁸⁴ See Karol Wojtyła, “The Personal Structure of Self-Determination,” in *Person and Community*, 187f. This is the Theresa Sandok’s English translation of Karol Wojtyła, “Osobowa struktura samostanowienia,” *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 29.2 (1981):5-12. [From a paper presented in 1957]

¹⁸⁵ See Wojtyła, “The Personal Structure,” in *Person and Community*, 190.

¹⁸⁶ See Wojtyła, “The Personal Structure,” in *Person and Community*, 191.

election to the pontificate, he always felt the need to refer to the basic necessity of St. Thomas's philosophical system. He knew that without a realist ethic grounded in a philosophy of being, we cannot properly evaluate good and evil.

He would hold this position throughout his life. In his last published work, *Memory and Identity: Conversations at the Dawn of a Millennium*, Pope John Paul II would write:

If we wish to speak rationally about good and evil, we have to return to Saint Thomas Aquinas, that is, to the philosophy of being. With the phenomenological method, for example, we can study experiences of morality, religion, or simply what it is to be human, and draw from them a significant enrichment of our knowledge. Yet we must not forget that all these analyses implicitly presuppose the reality of the Absolute Being and also the reality of being human, that is, being a creature. If we do not set out from such "realist" presuppositions, we end up in vacuum.¹⁸⁷

It is a different question, beyond the scope of this study, whether Wojtyla was ultimately successful incorporating Thomism and phenomenology together, or whether the two can, in fact, be so incorporated. However, what this final quote reveals is Wojtyla's conviction that realist philosophical presuppositions include not only a philosophy of being but also an acknowledgement of a Creator.

It is this conclusion that propels Wojtyla's moral work. I have noted that for Wojtyla the task of the moral theologian is to justify moral norms revealed in Scripture and taught by the magisterium. The theologian is to use whatever philosophical and theological are tools at his disposal to present a "justifying interpretation" those norms. The Church's teaching on sexual morality provided an apt opportunity for Wojtyla to put his theory into practice. In the next two chapters, I will survey Wojtyla's grand defense of the Church's norms on love and marriage, culminating in his notion of the spousal meaning of the body.

¹⁸⁷ John Paul II, *Memory and Identity: Conversations at the Dawn of a Millennium* (New York: Rizzoli, 2005): 12.

Chapter 4

Karol Wojtyla's Ethics of Sexuality

Introduction

This fourth chapter continues the trajectory begun in the second chapter with the discussion of personalism in the debate on marriage and contraception. There I surveyed the gradual introduction of a focus on the dignity of the person in the Church's teaching on marriage along with the impact this shift had for the debate on contraception. This chapter continues that discussion by introducing the reader to the lines of Karol Wojtyla's ethics of sexuality. In the course of this chapter, I hope it will be clear that Wojtyla's sexual ethics is a practical application of his general moral theory, which I surveyed in the previous chapter.

This chapter is the final chapter before I offer an exegesis of the spousal meaning of the body in John Paul's *Theology of the Body* catecheses. It is intended to show the intellectual lineage in Karol Wojtyla's pre-pontificate publications for that concept. Relying on *Love and Responsibility*, *The Acting Person*, and articles written from 1953 to 1978, I hope to show that relevant themes present in *The Theology of the Body* were more or less with Karol Wojtyla from the beginning of his published writings on love, sexuality, and marriage.

The particular themes I will be exploring in this chapter are: the personalistic norm, the sexual instinct, the gift of man and woman to each other and its impact on parenthood, the role of the conjugal act in this gift, and the body as a means of self-communication. What will be clear is that in the ethics of sexuality, Wojtyla continues his larger project of balancing personalism and attendant focus on the human person with realist ontology and its focus on human nature.

To that end, this chapter will first survey Wojtyla's thought on sexuality and marriage. It will then consider his thought on the human body in these early works of his career. Finally, I will explore Wojtyla's vigorous defense and exegesis of Pope Paul VI's encyclical on birth control, *Humanae vitae*. This final section will bring this study to the year of Wojtyla's election to the papacy, the tenth anniversary of *Humanae vitae*.

I. Sexuality and Marriage

A. *The Personalistic Norm and Sexual Instinct*

The previous chapter mentioned Wojtyla's use of the personalistic norm only briefly. This norm can be found in the opening pages of his 1960 book, *Love and Responsibility*. The human person's rich inner life, which stems from the gift of reason and free-will, distinguishes him from all other animals.¹ This is the foundation for Wojtyla's insistence that each person is incommunicable (*alteri incommunicabilis*). It is not that the person is simply ontologically unrepeatable, this is true of every being. Rather, "The incommunicable, the inalienable, in a person is intrinsic to that person's inner self, to the power of self-determination, free will. No one else can want for me."² In one place, Wojtyla formulates the personalistic norm a way that is reminiscent of Kant: "Whenever a person is the object of your activity, remember that you may not treat that person as only the means to an end, as an instrument, but must allow for the fact that he or she, too, has, or at least should have, distinct personal ends."³

¹ See Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 22, 24. George Williams argues that this reveals an Aristotelian-Thomistic connotation in Wojtyla's notion of person (see Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 152f.).

² Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 24.

³ Ibid., 27. Wojtyla also asserts that not even God can use a person as a means to an end. He writes, "On the part of God, indeed, it is totally out of the question, since, by giving man an intelligent and free nature,

The personalist norm rests on the unique interior life of the human person:

A person must not be *merely* the means to an end for another person. This is precluded by the very nature of personhood, by what any person is. For a person is a thinking subject, and capable of taking decisions: these, most notably, are the attributes we find in the inner self of a person. This being so, every person is by nature capable of determining his or her aims. Anyone who treats a person as the means to an end does violence to the very essence of the other, to what constitutes its natural right.⁴

In his excellent summary of Pope John Paul's vision of love and marriage, Walter Schu provides the only conclusion possible for this norm in the context of love. "A young man may come to fall deeply in love with a young woman and reach the conclusion that he can never be happy without her. But if he truly loves her, he realizes that he must respect who she is as a person, what she desires in life. He cannot treat her simply as a means to his own happiness. He cannot compel her to love him or to marry him."⁵ Between persons, love must replace use. Love is the positive reformulation of the personalistic norm: "the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love."⁶

According to Wojtyla, love begins between persons when both accept a common end. "If this happens," he writes, "a special bond is established between me and this other

he has thereby ordained that each man alone will decide for himself the ends of his activity, and not be a blind tool of someone else's ends. Therefore, if God intends to direct man towards certain goals, he allows him to begin to know these goals, so that he may make them his own and strive towards them independently. In this amongst other things resides the most profound logic of revelation: God allows man to learn His supernatural ends, but the decision to strive towards an end, the choice of course, is left to man's free will. God does not redeem man against his will" (ibid., 27). This understanding of the verb *to use* (as a means to an end) is only the first sense that Wojtyla describes. He goes on to describe a second sense of the word in which something is used (i.e., enjoyed) for the purposes of pleasure (ibid., 31ff.). In this sense, too, if a person of the opposite sex is used only to obtain pleasure and avoid pain, "then that person will become only the means to an end," which reverts to *use* in the first sense (ibid., 33).

⁴ Ibid., 26-27 (original emphasis).

⁵ Walter J. Schu, *The Splendor of Love: John Paul II's Vision of Marriage and Family* (New Hope, KY: New Hope Publications, 2002), 57.

⁶ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 41. Wojtyla also compares Christ's commandment to love with the personalistic norm, in which he states that only the personalistic norm can justify such a commandment (ibid., 31). He will return to this theme five years later in an article on Catholic sexual ethics. See Wojtyla, "The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics: Reflections and Postulates," 279-299.

person: the bond of a *common good* and of a common aim. This special bond does not mean merely that we both seek the common good, it also unites the persons involved internally, and so constitutes the essential core round which any love must grow.”⁷ For Wojtyla, the pursuit of a common good puts two people on the equal footing necessary to build a relationship.

The pursuit of a good, however, does not guarantee that a particular person is capable of love or that a relationship is grounded in love. This instinct to the good is present even in animals.⁸ Rather, “Man’s capacity for love depends on his willingness consciously to seek a good together with others, and to subordinate himself to that good for the sake of others, or to others for the sake of that good. *Love is exclusively the portion of human persons.*”⁹ This is an important element in Wojtyla’s sexual anthropology. For Wojtyla, marriage is the realm in which the principle of seeking the common good is applied to the relationship of a man and a woman.

Pursuing certain ends prevents a man and a woman from using each other, even in the relationship of marriage, and this guarantees love. The ends a couple pursue should exclude the possibility of selfishness. “Such an end, where marriage is concerned, is procreation, the future generation, a family, and, at the same time, the continual ripening of the relationship between two people, in all the areas of activity which conjugal life includes. These objective purposes of marriage create in principle the possibility of love and exclude the possibility of treating a person as a means to an end as an object for use.”¹⁰

⁷ Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 28 (original emphasis).

⁸ See *ibid.*, 29.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 29 (original emphasis).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

The drive of man toward woman and woman toward man in the pursuit of a common good and the relationship of love manifests itself in what Wojtyla refers to as the “sexual urge.”¹¹ The sexual urge is more than mere instinct. Since man has reason and free-will, he is capable of self-determination. Therefore, “*Man is by nature capable of rising above instinct in his actions.*”¹² When he speaks of the sexual urge, he is speaking less of an innate instinct than as “a certain orientation in man’s life implicit in his very nature.”¹³

The sexual urge is rooted in the division of humanity into two sexes: male and female. The person recognizes specific values in a person of the opposite gender. Wojtyla says that “we may therefore speak of sexual values which are connected with the psychological and physiological structure of man and woman.”¹⁴ The sexual urge, therefore, compels the person not to the other sex abstractly but to particular human being. And “it is because it is directed towards a particular human being that the sexual urge can provide the framework within which, and the basis on which, the possibility of love arises.”¹⁵ Since a person cannot be used, even for self-completion, love of the other must transcend the urge.¹⁶

The sexual urge is not properly satisfied in the absence of another person (as in the case of the solitary sin of masturbation) or in violence to another person (as in the case of sexual assault).¹⁷ For Wojtyla, the sexual urge is only rightly understood in the light of the existential significance of the complementarity of two sexes. Indeed, the reason sexual

¹¹ See *ibid.*, 45ff.

¹² *Ibid.*, 46 (original emphasis).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, 50.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, 52.

relations are often nuisances “is certainly the fact that in his mind, in his reason, man often accords the sexual urge a merely biological significance and does not fully realize its true, existential significance.”¹⁸ Unless man and woman consciously recognize the importance of love as the end of the sexual urge, and that urge’s natural disposition to procreation, their love will not grow according to the natural and metaphysical order.¹⁹

B. Love and the Gift of Self

Wojtyla begins his metaphysical analysis of love with the observation that “*love is always a mutual relationship between persons.*”²⁰ Since this relationship is directed toward the good, Wojtyla suggests that some metaphysical distinctions on the nature of love are necessary before exploring the psycho-physiological and bio-psychological aspects of love. He writes of love in three aspects: love as attraction, love as desire, and love as goodwill. Although, these elements are accessible in love between various persons, our author limits himself to the love between man and woman.

As the name implies, love as attraction is the recognition of another person as a good. The sexual urge catalyzes attraction as a natural force that is raised to the consciousness of one person for another person.²¹ Attraction entails seeing the other person

¹⁸ Ibid., 53. The theme of the existential significance of sexuality reappears during Wojtyla’s pontificate. It is explicitly mentioned in his 1981 apostolic exhortation on the family in the modern world: “Sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is not something simply biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and woman commit themselves totally to one another until death” (John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, “*Familiaris consortio* [On the Family in the Modern World],” (22 November 1981), no. 11. English translation available: John Paul II, “*Familiaris consortio*: On the Family in the Modern World” (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1981). The official Latin text of *Familiaris consortio* is available in *AAS* 74 (1982): 81-191.

¹⁹ See *ibid.*

²⁰ Ibid., 73 (original emphasis).

²¹ See *ibid.*, 74f.

not as a good, but as a certain good to be possessed.²² Alluding to the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of cognition and discernment of goods, Wojtyla notes that attraction is more than mere cognition; it involves emotions and the will.²³

The richness of a person's emotional life lies precisely in the dynamic at work in attraction. Specifically, a person finds himself, more or less, attracted to variant goods of the whole person, not just one aspect of this person. Hence, "*Attraction is of the essence of love and in some sense is indeed love, although love is not merely attraction.*"²⁴ In fact, attraction can be entangled by emotive reactions such that values may be projected on to the person who is the object of our attraction, which may in fact not actually be present in this person.²⁵ This is why Wojtyla will insist that attraction be measured by the truth of the other person, not merely by the genuineness of emotion for the other.²⁶

Love as desire differs from the love of attraction in that love of attraction identifies goods simply speaking. Love as desire includes love as attraction but is directed toward the lover's own completion. This is especially manifest in the relationships of the sexes:

The human person is a limited being, not self sufficient and therefore—putting it in the most objective way—needs other beings. Realization of the limitation and insufficiency of the human being is the starting point for an understanding of man's relation to God.... A human being, a human person, is either man or woman. Sex is also a limitation, an imbalance. A man therefore needs a woman, so to say, to complete his own being, and woman needs man in the same way. This objective, ontological need makes itself felt through the sexual urge.²⁷

²² See *ibid.*, 75.

²³ See *ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 76 (original emphasis).

²⁵ See *ibid.*, 78.

²⁶ See *ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

Unlike love as attraction, love as desire “originates in a need and aims at finding a good which it lacks.”²⁸ Wojtyla goes on to note that love as desire is different from sensual desire itself. Sensual desire recognizes deficiency and seeks to remedy that lack. In the case of persons, this can devolve into the use of another for one’s own satisfaction (which is contrary to the personalistic norm). Love as desire, on the other hand, moves beyond mere sensuality to the whole person, to whom the lover says “I want you because you are good for me.”²⁹

Wojtyla continues his analysis, finally, with the love of goodwill. He writes, “Love between man and woman would be evil, or at least incomplete, if it went no farther than love as desire. For love as desire is not the whole essence of love between persons. It is not enough to long for a person as a good for oneself, one must also, and above all, long for that person’s good.”³⁰ Wojtyla claims that the love of goodwill is completely selfless. It has no ulterior motive, and as a complete act of selflessness, perfects both the lover and the beloved.³¹ The love between man and woman necessarily includes the love of desire, but, for Wojtyla, this love must eventually move to a love of goodwill. Every love should be develop into a love of goodwill and this, he says, is especially true in marriage. It is important to note that love of goodwill does not compete with desire but purifies it.³²

Authentic love demands reciprocity for its durability and security. It is only when love is returned that two persons become an acting “we.” Love exists not only in the subjects but also between two subjects. Wojtyla writes, “The fact is that a person who

²⁸ Ibid., 81.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 83.

³¹ See *ibid.*, 83f.

³² See *ibid.*, 84.

desires another as a good desires above all that person's love in return for his or her own love, desires that is to say another person above all as co-creator of love, and not merely as the object of appetite."³³ The very interpersonal character of love means for Wojtyla that to seek reciprocity is not, in fact, an act of selfishness since reciprocity is in the very nature of love.

This reciprocity must be tied to an enduring good. Reciprocity may not be self-interested or pragmatic; it cannot tend simply toward mutual sensual pleasure. Wojtyla astutely notes,

A woman and a man can afford each other pleasure of a sexual nature, can be for each other the source of various enjoyment. However, mere pleasure, mere sensual enjoyment is not a good which binds and unites people for long.... A woman and a man, if their "mutual love" depends merely on pleasure or self-interest, will be tied to each other just as long as they remain a source of pleasure or profit for each other. The moment this comes to an end, the real reason for their "love" will also end, the illusion of reciprocity will burst like a bubble.³⁴

This proves, for Wojtyla, that love must be understood not only according to its psychological aspects but also according to its ethical import. Ignoring the importance and dignity of the human person results in a less than stable form of reciprocity.³⁵ Ultimately, couples need to move from an emotive love of one another (what Wojtyla calls "sympathy") to true friendship in which each can say to the other, "I desire your good as if it were my own good."³⁶

When a couple has moved into the "love of goodwill," charged by a love of desire and friendship, they find themselves at the threshold of betrothed love which is distinct

³³ Ibid., 85f.

³⁴ Ibid., 87f.

³⁵ See *ibid.*, 88.

³⁶ Ibid., 90f.

from all other forms of love. Betrothed love exists when a man and a woman become gift to one another. This does not necessarily contradict Wojtyla's earlier claim that the person is incommunicable. He confirms that "the very nature of the person is incompatible with such a surrender."³⁷ However, he goes on to say, "what is impossible and illegitimate in the natural order and in a physical sense, can come about in the order of love and in a moral sense. In this sense, one person can give himself or herself, can surrender entirely to another, whether to a human person or to God."³⁸

The Gospels, in fact, calls for such self-gift.³⁹ For Wojtyla, it is an uncompromising gift of love in which the inalienable "I", incommunicable and non-transferable, is surrendered to the other.⁴⁰ This self-gift is more than sexual. A sexual offering without the gift of self is vacuous and utilitarian, whereas an authentic sexual offering, as we will see, becomes a means of expression of the true gift of self.⁴¹

C. The Nature of Marriage

In Wojtyla's sexual ethics, the mutual self-gift of a man and woman, along with the sexual relationship it entails, is only properly ordered within the institution of marriage.⁴² For Wojtyla, marriage is not only an intrapersonal reality but a social concern. As an institution, marriage protects not only the persons involved from becoming objects one to the other,

³⁷ Ibid., 96.

³⁸ Ibid., 96f.

³⁹ See, for example, Matthew 10:39: "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Revised Standard Version, 2nd Catholic Edition).

⁴⁰ See Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 96. He argues on this same page that such an act cannot be taken. It is, rather, an act of the whole person, determined to dispose himself in love in a particular way to another.

⁴¹ See *ibid.*, 99.

⁴² See *ibid.*, 211.

but it also justifies the consequence of their relationship: their progeny.⁴³ Society is itself dependent upon marriage for its existence and, therefore, is interested (or at least should be interested) in protecting the family.⁴⁴

Marriage legitimizes and protects the unique love between a man and a woman. As their love matures through courtship, it “must also gain acceptance by other people.”⁴⁵ This is why marriage is necessary, “to signify the maturing of the union between a man and a woman, to testify that there is a love on which a lasting union and community can be based.”⁴⁶

Here, he returns the order of nature to the conversation and the relationship of reason to that order. Reason allows each person to understand his dependence on the Creator for his existence. The justification of marriage is that “it creates an objective framework for a lasting union of persons.”⁴⁷ But this justification is not only for the union itself, but also for each sexual act between the spouses. “Every such act must have its own internal justification, for unless justice is done there can be no question of a union of persons.”⁴⁸ Each sexual act between the spouses cannot violate their dignity; it cannot violate the personalistic norm.

Wojtyla insists that in the sexual act the order of nature and the personal order meet. By the order of nature, Wojtyla means more than simply a biological order. For him, “The

⁴³ See *ibid.*, 216f.

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 217.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 219.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

order of nature is above all that of existence and procreation.”⁴⁹ In the order of nature, the primary purpose of the sexual act is procreation. “Looked at objectively the marital relationship is therefore not just a union of persons, a reciprocal relationship between a man and a woman, but is essentially a union of persons affected by the possibility of procreation.”⁵⁰ The two orders cannot be separated since they depend on each other.⁵¹ This conclusion reverts back to Wojtyla’s earlier analysis of the sexual urge and the difference between animals and human persons.

The correct attitude to procreation is a condition of the realization of love. In the animal world there is only reproduction, which is achieved by way of instinct. In that world there are no persons, hence there is no personalistic norm to proclaim the principle of love. In the world of persons on the other hand instinct alone decides nothing, and the sexual urge passes, so to speak, through the gates of the consciousness and the will, thus furnishing not merely the conditions of fertility but also the raw material love.⁵²

Following this passage, Wojtyla goes on to say that consciousness, and conscious choice, is foundation of love and procreation between persons. Spurred on by the sexual urge, when a couple chooses to marry they are also choosing the possibility of procreation.

Parenthood, therefore, is intricately bound to the unique love that exists between a man and woman. Becoming a parent, Wojtyla says, is “not merely a biological fact but also a personal significance.... It has profound effects upon the ‘interior’ of a person.... For human parenthood implies the whole process of conscious and voluntary choice connected with marriage and with marital intercourse in particular.”⁵³ The full value of sexual relations between the two persons is not fully guaranteed, Wojtyla argues, unless there is conscious

⁴⁹ Ibid., 226. See chapter 1 of this study on difference between biological order and the order of nature.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 227.

acceptance of the possibility of procreation. The two orders, the personal order and the order of nature, thus reaffirm each other.⁵⁴ In fact, when the possibility of procreation is excluded from the marital relationship, the “danger arises that objectively speaking there will be nothing left except ‘utilization for pleasure’, of which the object will be the person.”⁵⁵

Wojtyla further clarifies the relationship between the order of nature and the order of the person in his 1965 article, “The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics: Reflections and Postulates.”⁵⁶ In the last chapter, I noted this article was among those written after *Love and Responsibility* that called for a more normative approach to Catholic sexual ethics without abandoning a teleological view.⁵⁷ Admittedly, the task of incorporating the personalistic norm is more difficult in the realm of sexual ethics since it is very easy only to consider the biological or physiological aspects of sex itself.⁵⁸

The fact that the sexual urge is rooted in human nature is itself not remarkable for Wojtyla. What he does find significant, however, is the fact that “human nature actually exists always in a concrete *suppositum* that is a person. Consequently, the sexual properties and the sexual urge in humans are always and in every instance attributes of a person.”⁵⁹ It is the person who acts sexually, not human nature. Wojtyla reaffirms here that marriage is the consequence of this fact.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ See *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁵⁶ See Karol Wojtyla, “The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics,” 279-299.

⁵⁷ Recall that for Wojtyla, “*Moral theology is a science that, in the light of revelation, makes justified statements concerning the moral value, or goodness or badness, of human actions*” (Wojtyla, “The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics,” 279 [original emphasis]). His project is to justify revealed norms using whatever philosophical system (or combination of different systems) serves that end. As the previous chapter showed, over the course of his early career, he became increasingly interested in presenting a phenomenological and personalist justification combined with an ontological realism.

⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, 284.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, 285.

Revelation reveals that marriage “is not just a sexual union of a man and a woman in which these persons use the urge to realize the ends of marriage, particularly its primary end—procreation. Marriage is also a genuine union of persons, a union that, according to revelation, bears the mark of indissolubility. This union arises from a mutual choice, and, according to Catholic teaching, the interpersonal relationship expressed and realized in this choice ought to be true love.”⁶¹ Again, in this article, Wojtyla affirms the need for free and conscious acceptance of both the natural purpose of the sexual urge (procreation) and the personal purpose of the sexual urge (love). This acceptance must be “ongoing, systematic, [and] habitual.”⁶² Accepting one without the other, renders the sexual relationship loveless and it denigrates into mutual use of one person by the other.⁶³

In the last chapter, I noted that for Wojtyla norms are vacuous if they are not grounded in an ontological view of reality. This remains true for sexual norms as well. Without a view of the human person as a substance (such as in the Kantian or Schelerian anthropology), Wojtyla says, the person becomes merely a “‘source’ of experiences, and not really even a source, but just a background.”⁶⁴ Ontologically speaking, “every being—or, more precisely, the essence, or nature, of every being—can serve as the basis of an ethical norm and of the positing of norms. A being’s essence, or nature, determines how free we are to behave with respect to that being, how we should or ought to behave when that being is an object of our activity.”⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ See *ibid.*, 290.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 286

⁶⁵ Ibid., 287.

Recalling that the human person is a highly organized being with reason, Wojtyla insists that “all norms, including the personalistic norm, as based on the essences, or natures, of beings, are expressions of the order that governs the world. This order is intelligible to reason, to the person.”⁶⁶ Wojtyla makes appropriate use here of the scholastic adage that the person participates in the eternal law and is conscious of a natural law (“*particeps legis aeternae et conscia legis naturae*”).⁶⁷ The person is able to perceive the normative force of his human nature, and, therefore, the natural purpose of the sexual urge: procreation.

But this natural purpose is necessarily supplemented by the personalistic norm since the sexual urge requires a person of the opposite sex for its fulfillment. Wojtyla writes,

The necessity of combining these two norms into one—which involves, of course, the necessity of properly situating the norm that emerges from an understanding of the purpose of the sexual urge within the objective content of the personalistic norm—is indispensable for preserving the order of nature.... In integral theological (as well as philosophical) reasoning in Catholic sexual ethics, the aims of nature must always come together with the value of the person.⁶⁸

Thus, it is easy to understand why in *Love and Responsibility*, our author insisted that “The proper way for a person to deal with the sexual urge is, on the one hand, consciously to make use of it for its natural purposes, and on the other to resist it, when it threatens to degrade the relationship between two persons to a level lower than that of love, lower than the level on which the value of the person is affirmed in a union with a truly personal character.”⁶⁹ Far from subordinating the person to nature, Wojtyla argues that this challenge

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ See *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Ibid., 288.

⁶⁹ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 229.

instead assists the person in adapting himself to the dynamic of nature. Nature, he insists, is not conquered by violating its laws.⁷⁰

Still, any Catholic presentation that fails to incorporate the personalistic norm runs the risk of slipping into a physicalism, or what Wojtyla calls “naturalism” which would reduce ethical discourse to mere biological and physiological requirements.⁷¹ Finally, incorporating the personalistic norm in our understanding of the sexual urge requires that the person be considered in any explanation of the traditional ends of marriage. The primary end of marriage, procreation, is the natural purpose of the sexual urge. Likewise, the two secondary ends, mutual aid of the spouses and the remedy of concupiscence, cannot be understood by a wholly naturalistic or excessively juridical interpretation.⁷² Rather, the Gospel command of love must “shape the realization of all the ends of marriage—and do so according to that objective hierarchy over which the Church keeps watch.”⁷³

⁷⁰ See *ibid.*

⁷¹ Wojtyla, “The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics,” 290f.

⁷² In this article, Wojtyla notes that the hierarchy of these ends has not changed and that the Church has resoundingly rejected any attempt to do so. Attempting to place the mutual aid of the spouses above procreation, he writes, “would not be in keeping with the plan of the Creator either in the order of nature and in the light of reason or in the order of grace and in the light of revelation” (See *ibid.*, 291). This article, however, was published the same year that *Gaudium et spes* was promulgated by the Second Vatican Council. I noted in Chapter 2 of this study (see above, pp. 85-87) that some have argued that the Council intended to overturn the Church’s traditional language of the hierarchy of the ends of marriage. Wojtyla’s statement here cannot in any way be read as a response to such arguments. Indeed, in this article Wojtyla gives no evidence of having read *Gaudium et spes*. However, as pope, he suggested that the hierarchy was reaffirmed by both *Gaudium et spes* and *Humanae vitae*, but that it was deepened by referring it to conjugal love. See *TOB*, no. 127.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 291. Wojtyla goes on to dispute any theologian who would translate *mutuum adiutorium* as ‘love’ and thereby establish a competition between procreation, love, and a remedy of concupiscence (See *ibid.*). One wonders if he has in mind here the attempt made by Herbert Doms in the 1930s, which was discussed in the first chapter of this study. Interestingly, in his 1969 article, “The Teaching of *Humanae vitae* on Love,” he seems to reverse this position by referring to *mutuum adiutorium* explicitly as “conjugal love,” while maintaining his insistence that the ends of marriage cannot be placed in opposition to each other: “I should also point out at the very outset that neither the conciliar constitution nor the encyclical anywhere explicitly mentions the traditional view concerning the hierarchy of the ends of marriage. In that view, the primacy of *procreatio* (procreation) over *mutuum adiutorium* (which today we would call conjugal love) was always emphatically stressed. Neither the conciliar constitution nor the encyclical appeals to such a hierarchy of the ends of marriage, *much less places these ends in opposition to one another*” (Karol Wojtyla, “The Teaching of *Humanae vitae* on

Before turning to the particular difficulty of contraception in the early thought of Karol Wojtyla, and particularly to his early exegesis of *Humanae vitae*, it will be necessary to explore the role the human body plays in Wojtyla's early works on sexual ethics.

II. The Body in Wojtyla's Early Works

A. *The Religious Experience of Purity*

One of the earliest published articles by Karol Wojtyla that discusses the importance of the body is an article he published in 1953, "The Religious Experience of Purity."⁷⁴ It has been suggested recently that this article "contains the nucleus of *The Theology of the Body*, which our author [Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II] would develop thirty years later."⁷⁵ It also has many themes similar to *Love and Responsibility*. The article begins by noting that Christianity is fundamentally a personal religion, in which a personal God reveals his interior life to man and engages man in a personal relationship with himself.⁷⁶ According to Wojtyla, only a personalistic view of religion can clarify the virtue of purity.⁷⁷

Just as God is a person who is inviolable and incommunicable, so also is the human person. The locus of the connection between religion and purity is this notion of the person:

Love," in *Person and Community*, 302 [original emphasis]. Originally published as Karol Wojtyla, "Nauka encykliki 'Humanae vitae' o miłości," *Analecta Cracoviensia* 1 [1969]: 341-356).

⁷⁴ See Karol Wojtyla, "Religijne przezywanie czystosci," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 6 (1953): 1-12. French Translation: Karol Wojtyla, "L'expérience religieuse de la pureté," in Karol Wojtyla, *En Esprit et en Vérité: Recueil de texts 1949-1978*, trans. Gwendoline Jarczyk (Paris: La Centurion, 1980), 46-55. Spanish Translation: Karol Wojtyla, "La experiencia religiosa de la pureza," in Karol Wojtyla, *El don del amor: escritos sobre la familia*, 2nd ed., trans. Antonio Esquivias and Rafael Mora (Madrid: Ediciones Palabra, 2001), 69-81. I am grateful to a recent doctoral dissertation by Ailbe Michael O'Reilly for suggesting this article's importance in understanding the importance of the body in Wojtyla's later works. See Ailbe Michael O'Reilly, "Conjugal Chastity in Pope Wojtyla," (PhD diss., Pontifical University of St. Thomas, 2007).

⁷⁵ O'Reilly, "Conjugal Chastity," 195.

⁷⁶ See Wojtyla, "La experiencia religiosa de la pureza," 69-70.

⁷⁷ See *ibid.*, 70.

Anybody can easily confirm the fact that man experiences in a profound way the fundamental inviolability of his person. He is conscious of belonging to himself, of possessing his own interior world of things, of plans, of decisions and of feelings, a whole interior life of which he is the owner and to which nobody else has access. He experiences his own personal individuality, autonomy, and unique character, and all come together in the profound consciousness of the inviolability of the person. For this reason, we can speak of the *virginity* of the human person. Man is a *virgin* by nature, in the sense that he possesses his own interior world, his own interior life which he himself shapes and which he alone is responsible.⁷⁸

In this passage, there is an initial but expanded formulation of what Wojtyla eventually refers to as the personalistic norm. Each person has his own rich interior world which is unique and unrepeatable. No other person has a right to access that world.⁷⁹

In his doctoral study, Ailbe Michael O'Reilly notes that man's interior life is inviolable not because he is man but because he is a person. And if this is true, then it is also true of angels.⁸⁰ According to Wojtyla, the uniqueness of the human person's inviolability (vis-à-vis that of God and of the angels) is located, at least in part, in the body: "The totality of the human person also includes the body, where, on the one hand, the acts of the interior life have their origin and, on the other hand, find expression and resonance. Because of this strict union between the human body and the person, the natural virginity of man, his claim to this natural inviolability that he experiences interiorly, finds a particular mode of

⁷⁸ Ibid., 76 (my translation, original emphasis): "Cualquiera puede constatar fácilmente que el hombre experimenta de una manera profunda la inviolabilidad fundamental de su persona. Tiene conciencia de pertenecerse, de poseer su universo interior de pensamientos, de planes, de decisiones, de sentimientos, toda una vida interior de la que es dueño y a la que nadie más tiene acceso. Experimenta su diferencia personal, su autonomía y su carácter único, y todo ello concurre a la profunda conciencia de la inviolabilidad de su persona. Por todo esto, se podría hablar de la *virginidad* de la persona humana. El hombre es *virgin* por naturaleza, en el sentido de que posee su universo interior; esa vida interior que conforma él mismo y de la que responde."

⁷⁹ Wojtyla goes on to say, however, that God, as the Infinite Person, has the right to possess the content of lesser person's inviolable world. See *ibid.*, 77.

⁸⁰ See O'Reilly, "Conjugal Chastity," 197.

expression.”⁸¹ From this passage it is clear that for Wojtyla the interior life of the person begins with the body, but he does not here explain exactly how the interior life originates in the body.

The import of this observation for Wojtyla’s later work in sexual ethics is clear. This union between the body and the soul means “that physical relations between man and woman acquire an interior motivation. The unity that exists between the human person and his body implies that physical (sexual) relations should always be an expression of that which is truly interior, of that which is personal.”⁸² The relationship between the person and the body in sex must be one of gift.⁸³ When the two, person and body, are not aligned in self-gift, that is to say, when the offering one’s person is not the interior motivation of sex, the other experiences the worst violence done to “the entire human person, and not only on his body.”⁸⁴ This, Wojtyla says, is infallible proof that “man experiences in his body the fundamental right to virginity and to personal inviolability.”⁸⁵

The remainder of the article is devoted, then, to the conclusion that the self-gift of man and woman to each other in marriage necessarily includes their gift of body to each other. He goes on to contrast this with the gift of physical virginity that the religious person makes to God in correspondence with his gift of self. It is precisely the gift of the body in

⁸¹ Wojtyla, “La experiencia religiosa de la pureza,” 76f. (my translation): “Esta totalidad de la persona humana abarca también el cuerpo, donde los actos de la vida interior, por una parte, se originan y por otra encuentran expresión y resonancia. En razón de esta unión estrecha entre el cuerpo humano y la persona, la virginidad natural del hombre, su derecho a esa inviolabilidad natural que experimenta en su interioridad, encuentra un modo particular de expresarse.”

⁸² O’Reilly, “Conjugal Chastity,” 197.

⁸³ See Wojtyla, “La experiencia religiosa de la pureza,” 77.

⁸⁴ Ibid. (my translation): “La relación carnal se considera impuesta, cuando en su base no se encuentra un acto personal de don de sí mismo y todo hombre imputa ese tipo de relación, como la peor clase de violencia que se pueda ejercer sobre la persona humana, y no sólo sobre su cuerpo.”

⁸⁵ Ibid. (my translation): “Aquí se encuentra un criterio infallible para saber que el hombre experimenta en su cuerpo el derecho fundamental a la virginidad y a la inviolabilidad personales.”

consummation that is not accessible to the person giving himself over to God in vowed celibacy or consecrated virginity.⁸⁶ The point here is that though a human person is inviolable in his interior life and in his body, he is able to communicate his interior life through the body to another. In that unique betrothed relationship between a man and a woman, a person “can allow another person to enter into his or her most physically intimate sphere. Through personal consent, there can exist total personal self-giving in the sphere of human sexuality.”⁸⁷ In *The Theology of the Body*, Wojtyla will expand on the corporal aspects of the self-gift between husband and wife, especially those aspects that can illegitimate or obscure the meaning communicated by the body.

B. *The Body in Love and Responsibility*

Wojtyla’s understanding of the body is important in *Love and Responsibility*. The sexual urge discussed above, which provides the initial foundation upon which love is based, finds its origin in the body and in natural instinct.⁸⁸ The instinct is directed toward particular persons of the opposite sex.⁸⁹ The need for persons of the opposite sex is a primal recognition of the complementarity of the sexes.⁹⁰

This orientation toward the other is the foundation for what Wojtyla calls “love as attraction.”⁹¹ But for love to be authentic, it has to move beyond simple attraction to the

⁸⁶ See *ibid.*, 77-81, 80f.

⁸⁷ O’Reilly, “Conjugal Chastity,” 199.

⁸⁸ See Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 45-51.

⁸⁹ Wojtyla notes that attraction to persons of the same sex is the homosexual deviation (see Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 49).

⁹⁰ See *ibid.*, 106-107.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 74f.

body and find its true *terminus* in love the person.⁹² For love of attraction to grow into that betrothed love in which the gift of self in sexual relations is authentically manifest, it has to be integrated by the virtue of chastity. Wojtyla notes that man is blessed above all of material creation with the gift of reason and free will. The integration of attraction into reason and freedom is the work of chastity, and this is a difficult work.

Wojtyla's reliance on Aristotelian-Thomistic anthropology is evident in his explanation of sensuality as sensory experience and impression. He writes, "Any immediate contact between a woman and a man is always the occasion of a sensory experience for both of them. Each of them is a 'body', is therefore exposed to the senses of the other and creates some impression."⁹³ Wojtyla further states that sensuality is directed to the enjoyment of the other as body. It is a "consumer orientation" – it is directed primarily and immediately towards a 'body': it touches the person only indirectly, and tends to avoid direct contact."⁹⁴ When sensuality and love as attraction are allowed to progress unchecked and in a disintegrated fashion, the person is not loved but only objectified. True beauty is, for Wojtyla, an object of "contemplative cognition" which is apprehended sensually but is integrated by the virtue of chastity.⁹⁵

Love will not mature if it "is dominated by an ambition to possess, or more specifically by concupiscence born of sensual reactions, even if these are accompanied by intense emotion."⁹⁶ Love "*develops on the basis of the totally committed and fully responsible attitude of*

⁹² See *ibid.*, 123.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁹⁵ See *ibid.*, 105-106.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

*a person to a person, erotic experiences are born spontaneously from sensual and emotional reactions.”*⁹⁷

Chastity is the ability to transcend the spontaneity of erotic reactions that characterizes man and woman and their attraction to one another. The virtue of chastity takes hold of these spontaneous reactions so that the other person may not be used merely for the enjoyment of his or her body but actually loved in who he or she is. Far from suppressing the value of the body, Wojtyla writes, the “essence of chastity consists in quickness to affirm the value of the person in every situation, and in raising to the personal level all reactions to the value of ‘the body and sex.’”⁹⁸

All of this means that for Wojtyla the gift of self has deeper origins than sexual differentiation and the sexual urge. The innate desire of each person to offer himself is first of all found in the spiritual and metaphysical nature of the person created in the image of a God who is love.⁹⁹ Only in betrothed love, the love between husband and wife, is the innate desire for the other fulfilled in this world. In betrothed love, neither the man nor the woman wishes to possess the other nor to be entirely self-possessed. Rather, in betrothed love “the lover ‘goes outside’ the self to find a fuller existence in another.”¹⁰⁰

This mutual self-surrender is an interior movement of the will. In this 1960 book, then, Wojtyla continues the theme from his 1953 article, “The Religious Experience of Purity.” What is happening in the body, sensually and emotionally, should correspond to the interior movements of the person. “The sensual and emotional experiences which are so vividly present in the consciousness form only the outward expression and also the outward gauge of what is happening, or most certainly should be happening, deep inside the persons

⁹⁷ Ibid. (original emphasis)

⁹⁸ Ibid., 171.

⁹⁹ See *ibid.*, 249-255.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 126.

involved.”¹⁰¹ Sexual intercourse finds its proper place within marriage, the institution that guarantees the mutual self-surrender of spouses, because it serves as an expression of that betrothed love.¹⁰²

In 1960, Wojtyla reaffirmed the conclusions at which he had already arrived in 1953:

- a) that love involves the body but must transcend it, integrate it, and grow into self-gift; and,
- b) that sexual intercourse is morally legitimate only when it serves as an expression in marriage of the betrothed love of the spouses. He also reaffirmed the incommunicability of the person and the possibility of radical self-communication in sexual intercourse. Still, he had yet to concern himself with the possibilities of miscommunication, so to speak, of the sexual act—elements that might hamper or alter exactly what is communicated in the conjugal act.

C. *The Body in The Acting Person*

In the previous chapter, I mentioned briefly Wojtyla’s understanding of human action and dynamism in *The Acting Person*.¹⁰³ For Wojtyla, the human person has two basic experiences: action (*agere*) and passion (*pati*), or being acted upon.¹⁰⁴ When the person is acting, he acts intentionally, and his act moves outward but when he is acted upon he is the subjective ego receiving the action.¹⁰⁵ When a person is acted upon, various potentialities

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² See *ibid.*, 126-127.

¹⁰³ See pages 145-148 above.

¹⁰⁴ See Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 66, 71.

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, 71.

(which Wojtyla refers to as “dynamisms”) are actualized and the person finds himself in one way or another in a state of becoming.¹⁰⁶

The previous chapter also showed that for Wojtyla personal agency also invokes a certain dynamism in the subject. Wojtyla writes, “When acting I have the experience of myself as the agent responsible for this particular form of the dynamization of myself as the subject.”¹⁰⁷ What is willed by the agent is reflected back on the agent so that what is willed affects not only an object exterior to the person but it also affects the person himself. Action is self-determining.¹⁰⁸ For Wojtyla, self-determination is the unique hallmark of the transcendence of the human person. The human person is determined not only by the purposes of nature but also by his own free actions.¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, in the latter chapters of *The Acting Person*, Wojtyla goes on to write, “The notion of the ‘transcendence of the person in action’ does not, however, exhaust all the contents of the dynamic reality of the person.”¹¹⁰ The self-determination that characterizes transcendence requires, according to Wojtyla, that the person have both self-possession and self-governance. This is the case since “only the things that are man’s actual possessions can be determined by him; they can be determined only by the one who actually possesses them.”¹¹¹

When Wojtyla speaks of the *pati* of the human person, of things happening to him, he is referring not only to action upon the person from the outside but also things that

¹⁰⁶ For Wojtyla’s understanding of dynamism as potentiality, see Wojtyla, *Acting Person*, 86-87. For the actualization of dynamism as “becoming” see Wojtyla, *Acting Person*, 96.

¹⁰⁷ Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 66.

¹⁰⁸ See *ibid.*, 105, 109.

¹⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, 105-116.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

happen within man. These dynamisms are intrinsically bound up with the body. Jaroslaw Kupczak explains:

Wojtyla's theory of transcendence led him into a dialogue with the nineteenth- and twentieth-century German philosophy of human freedom. He was aware, however, that a large part of this philosophy treats the human person from a dualistic and idealistic perspective. What is required, therefore, for a complete and successful explication of his theory of the acting person is an account of the human body and an explanation of the role that human biology and physiology play in *actus humanus*.¹¹²

In *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla introduced the notion of integration of the body with human action and love, in *The Acting Person* he further explains the dynamisms present in the body and their necessary integration in action.

Wojtyla identifies two dynamisms that are beyond the control of the human person: the somato-vegetative dynamism and the psycho-emotive dynamism.¹¹³ The somatic refers directly to the human body. The dynamisms of the soma, Wojtyla writes, are primarily reactive to stimuli.¹¹⁴ The somatic dynamisms have two aspects because the body has two aspects: an interiority and an exteriority. When he writes of the exteriority of the body, Wojtyla means that "the body is material, it is a visible reality, which is accessible to sense; the access to it is first of all from the 'outside.'" ¹¹⁵ This exteriority serves a twofold purpose. On the one hand, the image of the body contributes to the self-image of the person, but also the body is the means of the person's expression and communication. Wojtyla writes, "It is generally recognized that the human body is in its visible dynamism the territory where, or in a way even the medium whereby, the person expresses himself."¹¹⁶

¹¹² Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 132.

¹¹³ See Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 88-90.

¹¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 200.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 204.

Any description of the body, or of the somatic dynamisms, is not exhausted by the material appearance of the body. The body has its own interior dynamisms which constitute what we call the “human organism” according to Wojtyla.¹¹⁷ He chooses this specifically biological language because the interiority of the body refers to “the system and the joint functioning of all the bodily organs.”¹¹⁸ The functioning of this interior somatic dynamism is largely beyond the person’s consciousness unless the organism of the body breaks down in some way or another.¹¹⁹

In this way, Wojtyla incorporates an understanding of nature in his treatise on the acting person. He writes:

Because of his body, the man-person genuinely belongs to nature. This implies, on the one hand, his similarity to the rest of nature and, on the other, his partaking in the whole of the external conditions of existence that we also refer to as “nature”.... The close connection existing between the human organism and nature, so far as nature constitutes the set of conditions of existence and life, helps us to define the somatic dynamism of man. It seems that this dynamism may be contained and expressed in the concept of reactivity and also by the attribute *reactive*.... The human body has the ability to react like other bodies in nature.¹²⁰

The body is reactive to other bodies and to the transcendent volition of the person (i.e., in the willed movements and expressions of the body). It is also, in a certain sense, reactive to natural instincts, which concern more than just the soma but also the psyche.¹²¹

The words *psyche* or *psychical*, according to Wojtyla, “apply to the whole range of manifestations of the integral human life that are not in themselves bodily or material, but at

¹¹⁷ See *ibid.*, 201.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 201. See *ibid.*, 207.

¹¹⁹ See *ibid.*, 89-90.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 208 (original emphasis).

¹²¹ See *ibid.*, 15ff.

the same time show some dependence on the body, some somatic conditioning.”¹²² The psyche for Wojtyla is not the equivalent of the soul. Rather, the psyche, which although immaterial, is dependent on the soma. The psyche is the conscious awareness of emotion in the human person.¹²³

Wojtyla is most concerned to explain the soma’s (and by necessary connection, the psyche’s) reaction to the natural instincts of self-preservation and reproduction. He writes that these “instinctive reactions are indicative of a dynamization that is appropriate to nature itself, while instinct with its inherent drive tells of nature’s dynamic orientation in a definite direction.”¹²⁴ These two instincts have a specific “emotive urge” in the psyche.¹²⁵ They are of particular import because they concern the human being as a whole. The instinct for self-preservation, for example, governs and motivates all aspects of the somatic-psychical life of the human person—feelings of hunger, urges to eat, to defend oneself, as well as somatic functions that enable these, such as eating, digestion, and bodily movement.¹²⁶

Wojtyla claims the instinct for reproduction lies deeper than the soma as even a brief analysis of sexuality reveals.¹²⁷ Recalling his conclusions from *Love and Responsibility*, our author reaffirms that “the drive of sex, which relies on the momentous division of mankind into male and female individuals, stems from the somatic ground and also penetrates deeply into the psyche and its emotivity, thereby affecting even man’s spiritual life.”¹²⁸ He goes on to say that the while the instinct for self-preservation arises from a basic desire to maintain

¹²² Ibid., 201.

¹²³ See *ibid.*, 222-223.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 215.

¹²⁵ See *ibid.*, 216.

¹²⁶ See *ibid.*, 217-218.

¹²⁷ See *ibid.*, 218.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

personal preservation, the sexual instinct develops from “the desire for sharing with another human being.”¹²⁹ Simultaneously, the sexual instinct is also the source of reproduction.¹³⁰

The sexual urge is powerful. However, it is not beyond control.

The reproductive, procreative trait is most clearly manifested at the somatic level of the instinctual dynamism, the dynamism manifesting itself in strictly defined reactions of the body that to some extent automatically or spontaneously *happen* in man. In spite of all their specificity and automatism, however, these reactions remain sufficiently conscious to be controllable by man. Essentially, this control consists in the adaptation of the body’s instinctual dynamism of sex to its proper end.¹³¹

Here, Wojtyla claims that like other dynamisms, the sexual instinct must be directed by the person to its proper end. The sexual dynamism presents itself to the consciousness, by passing through the psyche, so that the person is aware of the sexual instincts within. Controlling the sexual instinct is implicit in the larger process of the integration of the human person.

The integration of the person is, according to Wojtyla, complementary to the transcendence of the human person. In fact, without integration, the self-determination that characterizes transcendence is not possible.¹³² In Wojtyla’s system, integration is synonymous with self-possession and self-governance.¹³³ Integration’s *sine qua non* relationship to transcendence is clear: one cannot determine that which one neither possesses nor governs. Integration is the “subordination of the subjective ego to the transcendent ego—that is to say, the synthesis of efficacy and subjectiveness.”¹³⁴ The self-governance and self-possession that characterizes integration primarily regards the dynamisms of the psyche and the soma,

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ See *ibid.*

¹³¹ Ibid. (original emphasis).

¹³² See *ibid.*, 106ff., 189-190, 220.

¹³³ See *ibid.*, 189-199.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 196.

and bringing those dynamisms into line with human action.¹³⁵ The importance of this integration in Wojtyla's thought cannot be overestimated.¹³⁶

Finally, failure to achieve self-governance and self-possession generally leads to the disintegration of the person. Although personal disintegration may manifest itself in varying degrees of intensity, a disintegrated person "appears to be completely destitute of the specifically 'personal' structures manifested in and with the action."¹³⁷ Disintegration is the "insubordinateiveness' or 'unpossessibility' of the subjective ego."¹³⁸ This insubordination of the psychosomatic element of the person impinges upon cognition's function. Cognition is unable to make the correct associations and this, in turn, leads to an inability to make correct choices.¹³⁹

The understanding of self-possession, self-governance, and self-determination is important for the purposes of this study. It is now apparent that according to Wojtyla persons can act without first integrating nature. This is to say that persons can, and do, act in contradiction to the purposes of nature but such action is disintegrated. Moreover, in an article following upon the publication of the original Polish edition of *The Acting Person*, Wojtyla notes that "both self-possession and self-governance imply a special disposition to

¹³⁵ See *ibid.* 198-199.

¹³⁶ Kenneth Schmitz notes that in Wojtyla's thought, "The structure of the human person... is such that the individual human being is called to integrate his or her complex dynamisms and to redeem the promise of what is both a received human nature and a unique personal project. The realization of the value of one's person comes through actions that are responsible, that are self-determined and yet responsive to the enlarged sense of reality in which both the subjective and objective sides of human existence are in play" (Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama*, 89).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 193-194.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹³⁹ See *ibid.*, 195. Here we see another indication of Wojtyla's attempt to bring St. Thomas Aquinas and Max Scheler into dialogue: "Regarding Aquinas, Wojtyla shares with him the conviction that emotions should be subjected to the will guided by the intellect and that his subjection is the function primarily of proficiencies and virtues. Scheler, on the other hand, helped Wojtyla to appreciate the richness of human emotions and their role in the process of value cognition. Balancing the Thomistic emphasis on human rationality and Scheler's emphasis on human affectivity, Wojtyla, in *The Acting Person*, presents a convincing understanding of soma and psyche" (Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 140).

make a ‘gift of oneself,’ this is a ‘disinterested’ gift. And only if one governs oneself can one make a gift of oneself.”¹⁴⁰ In my exegesis of the spousal meaning of the body in *The Theology of the Body* catechesis, this theme will be repeated and amplified: the authentic and spousal meaning of the body can be subverted by a disintegrated use of sexuality.

III. Karol Wojtyla’s Analysis of *Humanae Vitae*.

With his publication of *Love and Responsibility* in 1960, Karol Wojtyla inserted himself into the debate on love and sexuality. Pope Paul VI was aware of the book and had appointed Wojtyla to the papal commission on birth control before its final meeting in 1966, but he was prevented from attending the meeting because he was denied a passport by the Polish Communist government.¹⁴¹ Throughout the 1960s, he was well aware of the difficulties in the Church’s understanding of sexual ethics.¹⁴² In 1966, he established his own diocesan commission in Krakow to study the question of birth control and conjugal love. When this commission completed its work, a memorandum entitled “The Foundations of the Church’s Doctrine on the Principles of Conjugal Love” was sent to Paul VI by Wojtyla in February 1968.¹⁴³

As early as January 1969, almost six months after the publication of *Humanae vitae*, Karol Wojtyla began publishing a series of articles that both defended and explained the

¹⁴⁰ Karol Wojtyla, “The Personal Structure of Self-Determination,” 194. Original Polish: Karol Wojtyla, “Osobowa struktura samostanowienia,” *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 29.2 (1981): 5-12.

¹⁴¹ See Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 207. Weigel reports this based on a personal conversation with Pope John Paul II. This account contradicts Tad Szulc’s claim that Wojtyla had purposely missed the meeting. See Szulc, *Pope John Paul II*, 254.

¹⁴² One example of this is his 1965 article, “The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics.”

¹⁴³ See Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 207. See also “Les fondements de la doctrine de l’Eglise concernant les principes de la vie conjugale,” *Analecta Cracoviensia* I (1969): 194-230.

document's teaching.¹⁴⁴ On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of *Humanae vitae*, the same year he would be elected to the papacy, Wojtyla published two important articles on the document.¹⁴⁵ These were his last published works on the issue of conjugal love before beginning the *Theology of the Body* catecheses.¹⁴⁶

In his exegesis of *Humane Vitae*, we see the basic elements of Wojtyla's anthropology and ethics come together in practical conclusions. First, conjugal love and responsible parenthood are ontologically connected. Second, a man and woman must be fully integrated to understand the significance and meaning of the conjugal act.

¹⁴⁴ See Karol Wojtyla, "La verità dell'Enciclica «*Humanae vitae*»," *L'Osservatore Romano* (5 January 1969): 1-2; Spanish Translation: Karol Wojtyla, "La verdad de la Encíclica *Humanae vitae*," in Karol Wojtyla, *El don del amor: Escritos sobre la familia*, 2nd ed., trans. Antonio Esquivas and Rafael Mora (Madrid: Ediciones Palabra, 2001), 185-199; French Translation: Karol Wojtyla, "Réflexions sur la vérité de l'encyclique «*Humanae vitae*»," in Philippe Delhay, Jan Grootaers, and Gustave Thils, *Pour relire «Humanae vitae»: Déclarations épiscopales du monde entier* (Gembloux: Éditions Duculot, 1970): 185-193. See also Karol Wojtyla, "Wprowadzenie do Encykliki «*Humanae vitae*»," *Notificationes e curia Metropolitana Cracoviensi* 1-4 (1969): 1-3; Spanish Translation: Karol Wojtyla, "Introducción a la Encíclica *Humanae vitae*," in *El don del amor*, 201-204. See also Karol Wojtyla, "Nauka encykliki 'Humanae vitae' o miłości," *Analecta Cracoviensia* 1 (1969): 341-356; English Translation: Karol Wojtyla, "The Teaching of the Encyclical *Humanae vitae* on Love: An Analysis of the Text," in *Person and Community*, 301-314; Spanish Translation: Karol Wojtyla, "La enseñanza sobre el amor de la encíclica *Humanae vitae*," in *El don del amor*, 163-183. Finally, see, Karol Wojtyla, "Crisis in Morality," in *Crisis in Morality: The Vatican Speaks Out* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1969): 1-7. I have been unable to ascertain whether this final article is a translation of an original. The edition does not mention whether this is a translation. However, I have not found this article in any of the collected works of John Paul in English, French, Spanish, or German to which I have access.

¹⁴⁵ The first article was an address given to an international congress in Milan. See Karol Wojtyla, "Amore fecondo responsabile, a dieci anni della *Humanae vitae*," in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale a Milano, 21-25 Giugno 1978* (Milan: Centro Internazionale Studia Famiglia, 1979): 9-18; English Translation: Karol Wojtyla, "Fruitful and Responsible Love," in Karol Wojtyla, *Fruitful and Responsible Love with Contributions* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979): 12-34. See also Karol Wojtyla, "La vision anthropologica della *Humanae vitae*," *Lateranum* 44 (1978): 125-145; Spanish Translation: "La vision antropologica de la *Humanae vitae*," in *El don del amor*, 301-330. An English translation of the original Italian by William E. May is forthcoming in *Nova et Vetera*.

¹⁴⁶ If Michael Waldstein's research is accurate, Wojtyla may indeed have had the manuscript of *Man and Woman He Created Them* finished by the time these articles were published. This manuscript was left unpublished after Wojtyla's election to the pontificate and became the basis for the *Theology of the Body* catecheses. See Michael Waldstein, Introduction to *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* by John Paul II (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 6-11.

A. Conjugal Love and Responsible Parenthood

As Wojtyla reads *Humanae vitae*, after acknowledging the difficulties of the family, Paul VI places conjugal morality squarely within an ontologically integral vision of man in order to resolve the question of artificial contraception and parenthood (see *Humanae vitae* [HV], 8).¹⁴⁷ This ontology is not purely philosophical but, in fact, begins with the love of God. Wojtyla notes that Paul VI begins the document with the fundamental premise that God is love and that conjugal love enables spouses to participate in that love.¹⁴⁸

In his analysis, Wojtyla focuses on *Humanae vitae*'s emphasis on the connection between conjugal love and responsibility (see HV, 7 and 14), having already treated a similar theme in *Love and Responsibility*. The connection between conjugal love and responsible parenthood is found in the notion of the gift of self that comprises love (see HV, 8).¹⁴⁹

The responsibility that is inherent in conjugal love, Wojtyla writes, “finds its expression in an abiding consciousness of having received that gift of love and at the same time in discerning and appreciating the tasks which accompany the gift.”¹⁵⁰ Love comes to us both as a gift and a task in response to the gift. Marriage is a communion of persons according to *Humanae vitae* 8 and 9. Moreover, this conjugal love “requires in husband and wife an awareness of their mission of ‘responsible parenthood’” (HV, 10). Wojtyla notes, “*The proper parenthood of the love between persons is a responsible parenthood.* We can say that in the

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, Wojtyla, “The Teaching of *Humanae vitae* on Love,” 313; Wojtyla, “La vision antropologica de la *Humanae vitae*,” 301.

¹⁴⁸ See “The Teaching of *Humanae vitae* on Love,” 303; Wojtyla, “La verdad de la Encíclica *Humanae vitae*,” 194; Wojtyla, *Fruitful and Responsible Love*, 16;

¹⁴⁹ See also GS, no. 51.

¹⁵⁰ See Wojtyla, *Fruitful and Responsible Love*, 19.

encyclical *Humanae vitae* responsible parenthood becomes the proper name of human procreation.”¹⁵¹

Yet, responsible parenthood is not simply about procreation. According to *Humanae vitae*, responsible parenthood is “either... the thoughtful and generous determination either to have a large family, or... the decision to avoid a new birth provisionally or even for an indeterminate time” (HV, 10). Wojtyla draws the conclusion that

if conjugal love is a fecund love, that is to say orientated to parenthood, it is difficult to think that the meaning of responsible parenthood... can become identified only with the limitation of births. Responsible parenthood can be achieved by the couple who, by their thoughtful and generous decision, decide to bring up numerous offspring, but equally so by those who determine to restrict this parenthood “for serious motives and respecting moral law” (HV, 10).¹⁵²

Given the communion of persons that comprises conjugal love and orients it to responsible parenthood, one the central tasks of love according to Wojtyla, is to “resolve itself into an incessant effort which tries to personalize sexual values, and not the opposite.”¹⁵³

Responsible parenthood and the values from which it stems, values grounded in the person and in the communion between persons, cannot be exchanged for a scientific technique.¹⁵⁴ In fact, the conjugal act loses its character as a personal act between persons with the intervention of artificial methods of contraception. Wojtyla writes,

¹⁵¹ Wojtyla, “La verdad de la Encíclica *Humanae vitae*,” 188-189 (my translation, original emphasis): “La paternidad propia de un amor de personas es paternidad responsable. Se puede decir que en la encíclica *Humanae vitae* la paternidad responsable se convierte en el nombre propio de la paternidad humana.”

¹⁵² Ibid., 189 (my translation): “Si el amor conyugal es un amor fecundo, es decir, orientado a la paternidad, es difícil pensar que el significado de la paternidad responsable, deducido de sus propiedades esenciales, pueda indentificarse solamente con la limitación de nacimientos. La paternidad responsable, por tanto, se realice tanto por los cónyuges que gracias a una ponderada y generosa deliberación deciden procrear una prole numerosa, como por aquellos que llegan a la determinación de limitarla «por graves motives y dentro del respeto a la ley moral» (HV, 10).

¹⁵³ See Wojtyla, “Crisis in Morality,” 5.

¹⁵⁴ See Wojtyla, “La verdad de la Encíclica *Humanae vitae*,” 189-190; Wojtyla, *Fruitful and Responsible Love*, 26; Wojtyla, “Crisis in Morality,” 6.

Man who is a person cannot in such a personal matter and at the same time inter-personal act as the conjugal act, the act of love, renounce the attitude of self-control. If he thinks that he can be replaced by artificial methods and means, he ought to know at the same time that he is ridding himself of his basic values, namely, those values which determine his dignity as a person and the authenticity of his love for the other person and their mutual communion.¹⁵⁵

The importance of this assertion is fully apparent in relation to what Wojtyla had already written on the values of the human person, specifically, his understanding of self-determination and self-possession in the gift of self as articulated in *The Acting Person*. Wojtyla argues that an “integral view” of the person is necessary for responsible parenthood.¹⁵⁶ More than a view, however, a person himself must be integrated in order to experience conjugal love and responsible parenthood properly.

B. Integration and the Conjugal Act: Its Signification and Meaning

Karol Wojtyla’s analysis is particularly focused on Pope Paul VI’s reliance on the meanings of the conjugal act and their inseparable unity. Recall that in *Humanae vitae* 12, Paul VI asserts there is an “inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning” (*HV*, 12). The encyclical’s reference to the will of God certainly represents for Wojtyla a nod to the purposes of nature.¹⁵⁷

However, the overriding import of this paragraph is that Pope Paul VI does not emphasize the purposes of nature in the discussion. Wojtyla notes,

By appealing to the meaning of the conjugal act, the Pope places the whole discussion not only and not so much in the context of the nature of this act,

¹⁵⁵ See Wojtyla, “Crisis in Morality,” 6.

¹⁵⁶ See *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ See Wojtyla, “The Teaching of *Humanae vitae* on Love,” 308

but also and even more in the context of human awareness, in the context of the awareness that should correspond to this act on the part of both the man and the woman—the persons performing the act. One can detect in this part of the encyclical *a very significant passage from what some might call a “theology of nature” to a “theology of the person.”*¹⁵⁸

As Wojtyla reads it, *Humanae vitae*, while not dismissing the nature of the act, brings, rather, the subjectivity of the acting persons into the discussion. The meanings of the conjugal act must be present in the consciousness of the couple.

For Wojtyla, *Humanae vitae* 12 finds its intellectual lineage in *Gaudium et spes* 51, which speaks of the “nature of the human person and his acts” in reference to conjugal morality, insisting upon the preservation of “the integral sense of mutual donation and of human procreation in the context of true love.”¹⁵⁹ Both the Second Vatican Council and *Humanae vitae* encourage an analysis not only of the nature of action but of the human person also. He writes, “If we wish to analyze action, we are unable to do so without separating the person as the subject, who is at the same time conscious of the meaning of his acting.”¹⁶⁰

Wojtyla thinks that Pope Paul VI is “not only writing about the meaning of the conjugal act, which results from its nature, *he is also writing on the intended meaning and the sign* [of the conjugal act].”¹⁶¹ In fact, Wojtyla believes that “a man or a woman is not only conscious

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 308 (original emphasis).

¹⁵⁹ GS, no. 51 (my translation): “Moralis igitur indoles rationis agendi, ubi de componendo amore coniugali com responsabili vitae transmissione agitur, non a sola sincera intentione et aestimatione motivorum pendet, sed obiectivis criteriis, ex personae eiusdemque actuum natura desumptis, determinari debet, quae integrum sensum mutuae donationis ac humanae procreationis in contextu very amoris observant; quod fieri nequit nisi virtus castitatis coniugalis sincere animo colatur” (Tanner, 2:1104).

¹⁶⁰ Wojtyla, “La vision antropológica de la *Humanae vitae*,” 317 (my translation): “Si queremos analizar la acción, no podemos hacerlo sin separarla de la persona como sujeto, sujeto que es al mismo tiempo consciente del sentido de su actuar.”

¹⁶¹ Wojtyla, “La enseñanza sobre el amor de la encíclica *Humanae vitae*,” 174 (my translation, original emphasis): “Sin embargo, no solo escribe sobre significado del acto conyugal que resulta de su naturaleza, *también escribe sobre el significado buscado y sobre el signo.*” The English translation of this article found in *Person and Community* provides the following: “Moreover, not only does he write of the meaning of the conjugal act that results from an understanding of its nature, *but he also writes of intended meaning and sign*” (Wojtyla, “The Teaching of *Humanae vitae* on Love,” 308). I have chosen to provide my own translation of the Spanish version of this

of this meaning [of the conjugal act], but that in realizing this act, can and must give it this precise meaning and no other, can and must intend this sign and no other.”¹⁶² While the authentic meanings of the conjugal act follows from its nature, and it is this meaning that should be in the couple’s intention, they can give the act another meaning.

In his 1978 article, “The Anthropological Vision of *Humanae vitae*,” Wojtyla further explains the difference between the objective meaning and the intended meaning. For Wojtyla, *Humanae vitae* 12 advances the anthropological vision of *Gaudium et spes*. He writes, “Indeed, it seems that in engaging in an analysis of the action, or better, of the cooperation of the spouses ordinarily called the ‘conjugal act,’ *Humanae vitae* 12 emphasizes even more [than *Gaudium et spes*] the subjectivity of the cooperating persons.”¹⁶³ *Humanae vitae* in Wojtyla’s reading presupposes the objective dimension of the “action-cooperation (*acción-*

article because I believe the phraseology of this English translation is confusing. Throughout his writing, Wojtyla speaks of the nature of the conjugal act and the objective meaning that stems from that nature, on the one hand, and here in introduces the possibility of other meanings intended by the couple. There is nothing to suggest in his writing, or in the Spanish, that when he speaks of the nature of the act and its objective meaning (rather than the subjective meaning intended by the couple) that this meaning results from the couple’s “understanding of its nature” as the English phraseology implies, but which is not present in the Spanish.

¹⁶² Wojtyla, “La enseñanza sobre el amor de la encíclica *Humanae vitae*,” 174 (my translation): “El sujeto personal de este acto, un hombre o una mujer, no sólo es consciente de su significado, sino que al realizarlo puede y debe darle ese preciso significado y no otro, puede y debe buscar ese signo y ningún otro.” Again, I revert to a translation of the Spanish, but here even the English translation confirms my observations of the English phraseology in the previous note: “The personal subject of this act—a man or a woman—is not only aware of its meaning, but in performing this act can and should give it precisely this and not some other meaning, can and should signify only this and not something else by it” (Wojtyla, “The Teaching of the *Humanae vitae* on Love,” 308). The English here suggests that the objective meaning of nature does exist apart from the couple’s understanding and, therefore, that they should align their subjective meaning with this objective meaning. This is, in fact, what Wojtyla argues as the article proceeds.

¹⁶³ Wojtyla, “La visión antropológica de la *Humanae vitae*,” 317 (my translation): “Si afirmamos que *HV* 12 representa un cierto progreso con respecto a *GS* 51, lo hacemos porque las formulaciones de la encíclica parecen precisar y promover el análisis antropológico o, por lo menos, le proporcionan premisas explícitas. De hecho parece que, al emprender el análisis de la acción, o mejor, de la cooperación de los esposos que comúnmente se llama *acto conyugal*, *HV* 12 subraya aún más la subjetividad de las personas cooperan.”

cooperación)” of the spouses while stressing the “subject moment proper to this action-cooperation.”¹⁶⁴

The objective dimension of the action-cooperation is the unitive and procreative meaning of love and the conjugal act is naturally a sign signifying both these meanings.¹⁶⁵ But Wojtyla insists that *Humanae Vitae* is concerned just as much, if not more, with the subjectivity of the conjugal act “simultaneously as an act effected and experienced.”¹⁶⁶ In his very lucid analysis, Wojtyla writes:

The author of *Humanae vitae* does not limit himself to confirm what this act objectively signifies, this singular action-cooperation of the man and the woman, but rather broadens his analysis to the “meaning” that the man and the woman are able and ought to attribute the act as subjects who are acting and cooperating. The author of the encyclical therefore confirms that in the subjective dimension of this action-cooperation, “man is not able to separate on his own initiative (the connection) between the two meanings of the conjugal act.” There must be a harmony between that which the conjugal act signifies objectively and the meaning that the spouses... attribute to it in the subjective dimension of their action-cooperation.¹⁶⁷

This harmony is achieved when the couple intends the authentic (or objective) meaning (the union of procreative and unitive) of the conjugal act. In 1969, Wojtyla wrote the same thing: “They can and should intend by it precisely what it means essentially. It means both a special

¹⁶⁴ See *ibid.* (my translation): “El texto de la encíclica *Humanae vitae*, suponiendo toda la dimensión objective de la visión antropológica que está en la base de la acción-cooperación de los esposos, pone de manifiesto el momento subjetivo propio de esa acción-cooperación.”

¹⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, 317f.: “A esta dimensión objetiva de la acción (cooperación) de los esposos responde «el significado unitivo y el significado procreativo». Objetivamente, por su misma naturaleza, el acto conyugal «significa» uno y otro, «según leyes inscritas en el ser mismo del hombre y de la mujer».”

¹⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, 318 (my translation): “Sin embargo, ese mismo acto es considerado en *HV* 12 como un acto realizado subjetivamente por personas concretas, hombre y mujer, como un acto efectuado y a la vez vivido.”

¹⁶⁷ See *ibid.*, 318 (my translation): “El autor de la *Humanae vitae* no se limita a constatar lo que significa objetivamente ese acto, ese singular acción-cooperación del hombre y la mujer, sino que amplía su análisis al «significado» que el hombre y la mujer pueden y deben atribuirle como sujetos que actúan y cooperan. El autor de la encíclica constata, por tanto, que, en la dimensión subjetiva de esa acción-cooperación, «el hombre no puede romper por su propia iniciativa (la conexión) entre los dos significados del acto conyugal». Debe dars una concordancia entre lo que el acto conyugal significa objetivamente y el significado que los esposos, las personas que actúan y coopera, le atribuyen en la dimensión subjetiva de su acción-cooperación.”

union of persons and, at the same time, the possibility (not the necessity!) of fecundity, of procreation. *If, in acting jointly, this is precisely what they intend to signify by their activity, then the activity is intrinsically true and free of falsification.*”¹⁶⁸

Periodic continence as a means of ethical regulation of birth differs from contraception in precisely this way. “The former does not undermine the order of meanings contained in the conjugal act, whereas the latter does.... *In the ethical regulation of birth, spouses can signify by their activity in the conjugal act what this activity essentially means, whereas contraception makes this impossible.*”¹⁶⁹ Since the meaning of union cannot be separated from the meaning of procreation, when procreation is intentionally limited from the act, the meaning of union is not properly expressed. An “active undermining of the ‘meaning and purpose’ that corresponds to the plan of the Creator *must work against the ‘intimate union’ of the spouses.* One could say... the conjugal act *then lacks the value of a true union of persons.*”¹⁷⁰ Undermining the objective significance or meaning of the conjugal act necessarily undermines whatever subjective meaning the spouses intend. They are acting at cross purposes with nature.

¹⁶⁸ Wojtyła, “The Teaching of *Humanae vitae* on Love,” 309. (original emphasis). This idea reappears in *Familiaris consortio*: “The innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality.... The difference, both anthropological and moral, between contraception and recourse to the rhythm of the cycle... involves in the final analysis two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality” (John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 32).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 309-310 (original emphasis).

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 311 (original emphasis). Wojtyła is here commenting on *HV* 13. See also Wojtyła, “La Verdad,” 194-195: “El hombre domina la naturaleza y la subordina a sí mismo en varios campos, mediante los medios artificiales. El conjunto de esos medios equivale al progreso y a la civilización. Sin embargo, en el campo en que se debe actuar con el acto conyugal, es decir, el amor entre persona y persona, es donde la persona debe darses auténticamente a sí misma (aquí dar también quiere decir recibir recíprocamente). [In many domains, man dominates nature and subordinates it by using artificial means. All of these means is the equivalent of progress and civilization. But nonetheless, in this domain, he must engage in the conjugal act, that is, in love between persons, where the person must authentically give of himself (here, to give also means to want to receive reciprocally). The use of artificial means is the equivalent of an alteration of the act of love.]”

This subjective element in the conjugal act, as with all of the conjugal life and responsible parenthood, “above all implies a more profound relationship to the objective moral order established by God, of which a right conscience is the faithful interpreter” (HV, 10). Recalling themes from *The Acting Person*, Wojtyla insists that a right conscience “decides according to the maturity and fullness of human subjectivity. It judges because it is ‘the faithful interpreter’ (rather: the truthful interpreter) ‘of the objective moral order established by God.’”¹⁷¹ He believes that this mature subjectivity entails “equitable objectivity” in keeping the hierarchy of values in conjugal life.¹⁷²

More importantly, Wojtyla concludes that it is the true objectivity of a right conscience that “allows the spouses to establish an authentic harmony between what the conjugal act objectively signifies and the meaning that the spouses themselves attribute to it in their own inner attitude, in their subjective action and in their intimate experience.”¹⁷³ The two aspects, the objective and the subjective (otherwise referred to by Wojtyla as the ethical aspect and the psychological aspect, respectively) must be integrated.¹⁷⁴ In fact, for a love to be a truly honest and human love, “its psychological value must be integrated with its ethical value.”¹⁷⁵

When he speaks of integration, Wojtyla is referring once again to the composite of the human person—body and soul—and insisting that the somatic processes must be

¹⁷¹ Wojtyla, “La vision antropologica de la *Humanae vitae*,” 318: “La recta conciencia decide sobre la madurez y plenitud de la subjetividad humana. La determina es «fiel intérprete» (preferiría que dijese: veraz intérprete) «del orden moral objetivo establecido por Dios.»”

¹⁷² See *ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 318-319: “Esta objetividad verdadera, objetividad de la conciencia recta, consiente a los esposos establecer una concordancia auténtica entre lo que el acto conyugal *significa* objetivamente y el *significado* que ellos mismos le atribuyen con su actitud, con su acción subjetiva y en su experiencia íntima.”

¹⁷⁴ See Wojtyla, “The Teaching of *Humanae vitae* on Love,” 311; Wojtyla, “La vision antropologica de la *Humanae vitae*,” 313.

¹⁷⁵ Wojtyla, “The Teaching of *Humanae vitae* on Love,” 312.

included in such integration. The body cannot be regarded simply as biological organism that may be manipulated by technique.¹⁷⁶ *Humanae vitae*, he argues, understands the body not as an autonomous being but “as a component of the whole man in his personal constitution.... The respect due to the body, particularly in its procreative functions—functions rooted in the whole specific somatic quality of sex—is respect for the human being, i.e., for the dignity of the man and the woman.”¹⁷⁷ Only with this integrated view of the human person, in which the soma, the psyche, and the soul are seen as one, can the scientific interventions of bio-physiological techniques be evaluated, “those techniques that interfere efficiently in the bio-physiological processes themselves.”¹⁷⁸ This imposes a limit on man’s dominion over his own body which is rooted “in the profound structure of personal being.”¹⁷⁹

Here again, finally, Wojtyla has recourse to the theme of self-mastery (self-dominion). He writes, “Man cannot exercise power over his own body by means of interventions or techniques that, at the same time, compromise his authentic personal dominion over himself and that even, in a certain way, annihilate this dominion.”¹⁸⁰ Artificial

¹⁷⁶ See Wojtyla, “La vision antropologica de la *Humanae vitae*,” 323.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 323-324: “Si el autor de la encíclica recuerda «los límites insuperables a la posibilidad de dominio del hombre sobre el propio cuerpo y sus funciones», argumentado que «esos límites no pueden estar definidos más que por el respect debido a la integridad del organism humano y sus funciones», eso quiere decir que considera el cuerpo no como ser autónomo, con una propia estructura y dinámica, sino como un component del hombre total, en su constitución; aplicando de ese modo el «principio de integridad» en el context de la visión global del hombre. El respeto debido al cuerpo, y en modo particular a sus funciones procreativas, funciones que están basadas en la especificidad somatic del sexo, es respeto que se refiere al ser humano, es decir, respeto de la dignidad personal del hombre y de la mujer.”

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 324: “Solamente sobre la base de esa vision global podemos juzgar correctamente cualquier técnica de acción (en nuestro caso se trata de las técnicas anticonceptivas), que se asiente en el campo de técnicas particulares, por ejemplo, interfiriendo eficazmente en el ámbito de los procesos bio-fisológicos.”

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 324: “Estos límites insuperable del dominio del hombre sobre el propio cuerpo se enraízan en la estructura profunda del ser persona y están en relación con su valor específico, es decir, con el valor personal del hombre.”

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.: “El hombre no puede ejercitar el poder sobre el propio cuerpo por medio de intervenciones o de técnicas que comprometan el auténtico dominio personal de sí mismo e incluso, en cierto modo, la eliminen.”

contraception subverts that self-mastery.¹⁸¹ And self-mastery continues to be necessary for the authentic gift of self to another person.¹⁸²

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to provide a glimpse of the intellectual pedigree of John Paul's notion of the spousal meaning of the body as articulated in *Theology of the Body* catecheses. The salient themes that have emerged here are: a) his understanding of the relationship of conjugal love as a self-gift and responsible parenthood in the institution of marriage; b) the possibility of the body serving in the self-communication of that self-gift in the conjugal act; c) the idea that there is both an objective meaning or significance and a subjective meaning or significance in the conjugal act; and, d) his view that integration of the psyche and soma is necessary for an authentic self-gift and the proper alignment of meanings in the conjugal act.

Wojtyla knew the difficulties the teaching on contraception presented to the world. He knew the anxieties married couples faced.¹⁸³ In his view, *Humanae vitae* was an exercise of the magisterium's vocation to serve the faithful in distinguishing between opinion and truth.¹⁸⁴ In 1965, three years before the publication of *Humanae vitae*, Wojtyla argued that four circumstances militated against the Church's presentation of the issue: "1) The habit of thinking and judging in a utilitarian way; 2) the inclination to judge the value of an act solely on the basis of its effects; 3) the enormous pressure exerted by the subjective, emotional

¹⁸¹ See *ibid.*, 325.

¹⁸² See *ibid.*, 325; Wojtyla, "La verdad de la encíclica *Humanae vitae*," 195f.

¹⁸³ See, for example, Wojtyla, "La verdad de la encíclica *Humanae vitae*," 197-199; Wojtyla, "Crisis in Morality," 3-4; Wojtyla, *Fruitful and Responsible Love*, 32-34.

¹⁸⁴ See Wojtyla, "Introducción a la Encíclica *Humanae vitae*," 202-203.

element; and 4) the whole set of difficulties, real or illusory, connected with the use of natural methods of birth control.”¹⁸⁵

After reading *Humanae vitae*, he saw that “a comprehensive ontology of marriage, an integral vision of the human being, a vision of man and woman as persons” was absolutely necessary.¹⁸⁶ He believed that *Humanae vitae* was a first step to this presentation inasmuch as “it points to the possibility and even necessity, of in some way transforming the optics of the issue, while at the same time preserving—and even for the sake of preserving—a more precise identity of doctrine.”¹⁸⁷ One way of reading *The Theology of the Body* is to read it as Karol Wojtyla’s attempt to transform “the optics of the issue” at work in *Humanae vitae* and in the twentieth century ecclesial debate on marriage and sexuality in general. And, indeed, in the very last catechesis of *The Theology of the Body* series, John Paul suggests this interpretation.¹⁸⁸ The next chapter will offer an exegesis of one of the central themes of those catecheses, one of the principal subjects of this study, namely, the spousal meaning of the body.

¹⁸⁵ Wojtyla, “Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics,” 294.

¹⁸⁶ Wojtyla, “The Teaching of *Humanae vitae* on Love,” 314.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. (original emphasis).

¹⁸⁸ See *TOB*, no. 133.

Chapter 5

The Spousal Meaning of the Body in *The Theology of the Body*

Introduction

As I mentioned in the general introduction of this study, Pope John Paul II's Wednesday catecheses that eventually became known as *The Theology of the Body* were largely based on an unpublished manuscript entitled *Man and Woman He Created Them*. In his new critical translation of the catechetical lectures, Michael Waldstein has incorporated the original headings from that unpublished manuscript. These headings reveal the systematic nature of Wojtyła's project by offering an outline of the work as a whole. For the first time, readers can approach *The Theology of the Body* not as a work of disjointed talks but as a complete whole.¹

The headers of the manuscript divide the work into two parts. The first part concerns the words of Christ. Here, the pope focused on three "words": the beginning, the human heart, and the resurrection. Each "word" represents a chapter. Following Christ's response to the Pharisee's that divorce was not present in the beginning (Mt 19:3-8), in the first chapter the John Paul offered a catechesis on creation. Then, he turns to our Lord's word that adultery may be committed in the heart and not only in the flesh (Mt 5:27-28). Building upon his analysis of Genesis, the pope lays out his moral teaching on concupiscence and love. The third chapter of this first part concerns Christ's words about

¹ Charles Curran can be excused for his criticism to the contrary since it was made before the publication of Waldstein's translation. See Charles Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 167: "The talks occasionally cite philosophers and other secular thinkers; the talks also come complete with footnotes. But the theology of the body is not developed in a systematic way. The very nature of short talks presented every week to a different audience militates against a totally systematic approach. Because the talks are not a complete and systematic presentation of the pope's teaching on marriage, many aspects remain somewhat unclear and certainly less developed than they would be in a truly systematic presentation."

the body and the resurrection (Mt 22:24-30). In this chapter, the pope addressed the role of the body in the resurrection and continence for the kingdom of God.

The second part of *The Theology of the Body* is about the sacrament of marriage itself. It also is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is an exegesis on the words of scripture, primarily of the prophets, the Gospels, and St. Paul on the dimension of the covenant and grace at work in the sacrament. The second chapter concerns the dimension of sign, specifically the sign of consent in marriage and the sign or language of the body. The final chapter is a direct commentary on *Humanae vitae* in light of the language of the body that John Paul develops throughout the work. This final chapter, which John Paul refers to as seemingly a third part, is central to the whole work.² Indeed, *Humanae vitae* was central to the pope's thought when writing the catecheses.³ From the pope's own words, it can be surmised that the whole of *The Theology of the Body* is intended to "face the questions raised by *Humanae vitae* above all in theology, to formulate these questions, and to look for an answer to them."⁴

The previous two chapters of this study have surveyed Wojtyla's thought on a number of relevant issues: nature, the person, the body, and the conjugal act. Given the trajectory of his thought and the turmoil after the promulgation of *Humanae vitae*, it is unsurprising that Wojtyla was prepared to publish a book not only defending the 1968 encyclical but, in a sense, re-reading it in the light of a biblical and theological anthropology.

² It should be noted that in his final Wednesday audience, Pope John Paul II identified three main parts to his catechetical lecture. The first two mentioned above, and the part concerning *Humanae vitae* (see TOB, no. 133:1-2, 4). This differs from the headings of the unpublished manuscript upon which the audiences were based. For an analysis of this difference, see Michael Waldstein, Introduction to John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 105-128

³ See TOB, no. 133:4..

⁴ Ibid.

In this work, which as pope he converted to the catechetical lectures, John Paul clarifies several aspects of his moral theology which are central to an understanding of his view of the spousal meaning of the body. Many of the themes found in *The Theology of the Body* recur throughout the pontificate of John Paul II in his writings on marriage and the family.⁵

The purpose of this chapter is not to provide a complete survey of *The Theology of the Body*. As I mentioned in the general introduction of this study, that work has largely been accomplished. Rather, this chapter is concerned to show John Paul's understanding of several key features important to this study, not the least of which is the pope's articulation of the spousal meaning of the body. Since the pope nowhere provides a precise definition of the spousal meaning of the body, it will be necessary for this chapter to provide an exegesis of the key concepts John Paul uses to support his understanding of the spousal meaning of the body. These concepts include: man's unique position in creation, the role and language of the body in this position, the impact of sin on the human person and the body, the redemption of the body by Christ, and, finally, the import of all this for understanding *Humanae vitae* and the spousal union of a married couple.

To that end, this chapter has four sections. First, I will discuss John Paul's analysis of creation and man's place in it. In the second section, I will turn to the fall and redemption: the effects of sin, shame, and concupiscence on the body along with the impact the redemption of Christ has on the body. In the third section, I will explore John Paul's

⁵ The second part of the 1981 post-synodal apostolic exhortation on marriage and the family, *Familiaris consortio*, follows the same outline as *The Theology of the Body*. See John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, nos. 11-17; Official Latin text: *AAS* 74 (1982): 81-191. Similar themes can also be found in his 1988 apostolic letter on the dignity and vocation of women: John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris dignitatem* [On the Dignity of Women], (15 August 1988); Official Latin text: *AAS* 80 (1988): 1653-1729. His 1994 Letter to Families and his 1995 Letter to Women also contain themes culled from these Wednesday catecheses. See John Paul II, Letter, "Gratissimam Sane [Letter to Families]," (2 February 1994); Official Latin text: *AAS* 86 (1994): 868-925. See also John Paul II, "Letter to Women," (29 June 1995); Official Italian text: *AAS* 87 (1995): 803-812.

understanding of the language of the body as it is lived in marriage and articulated in *Humanae vitae*. In the conclusion of this chapter, then, I will offer a summary view of what Pope John Paul means by the spousal meaning of the body so that it will be evident exactly which elements of his understanding can be found in St. Thomas Aquinas's mature thought.

I. The Analysis of Creation

A. *Creation and Original Solitude*

At the very beginning of his catechetical talks, John Paul continues a trend that he began with his doctoral dissertation on St. John of the Cross. Namely, he continues to emphasize the subjective element of human experience while respecting the objective and ontological categories of the Christian theological tradition. For example, he writes that the first scriptural account of creation (Gen 1:1-2:4) "is concise, free from any trace of subjectivism: it contains only the objective fact and defines the objective reality."⁶ And again, "The first account of the creation of man... contains hidden within itself a powerful metaphysical content."⁷ After explaining the traditional metaphysical distinction between being (*ens*) and existence (*esse*), the pope concludes "that the first chapter of Genesis has formed an incontrovertible point of reference and solid basis of a metaphysics and also for an anthropology and an ethics according to which '*ens et bonum convertuntur*' [being and good are convertible]. Of course, all of this has its own significance for theology as well, and above all for the theology of the body."⁸ Metaphysics and ontology are consistently implicit in *The Theology of the Body*, even if they are not always fully explained.

⁶ *TOB*, no. 2:4.

⁷ *TOB*, no. 2:5.

⁸ *Ibid.* (italics original)

Regarding the second account of creation (Gen 2:4-25) and the story of the fall (Gen 3:1-24, however, John Paul is clear. They differ from the first account in more ways than their authorship. He writes, “We must observe that the whole text, *in formulating the truth about man, strikes us with its typical depth*, different from that of the first chapter of Genesis. One can say this depth is above all subjective in nature and thus in some way psychological. Chapter 2 of Genesis constitutes in some way the oldest description and record of man’s self-understanding and, together with chapter 3, it is the first witness of human consciousness.”⁹

It is this subjective and psychological aspect, the biblical record of human consciousness, with which John Paul is concerned in *The Theology of the Body*. The pope declares that “theology has built *the overall image of man’s original innocence and justice before original sin* by applying the method of objectivization specific to metaphysics and metaphysical anthropology. In the present analysis, we are trying rather to take into account the aspect of human subjectivity.”¹⁰ Here John Paul states explicitly that he is purposely not employing a metaphysical and teleological method in *The Theology of the Body*. This is not surprising since, as I noted in chapter three, in the 1970s he began to turn to phenomenology as a means of discourse on moral norms, even though he continued to assert the value of natural teleology and metaphysics for any moral theory.

If the previous two chapters of this study have shown anything, it is that John Paul does not deny the importance of objective and metaphysical categories. One of the motivating aspects of this chapter is to highlight the places in *The Theology of the Body* where that which is objective, metaphysical, and ontological is a part of the account of the spousal

⁹ *TOB*, no. 3:1 (original emphasis).

¹⁰ *TOB*, no. 18:1 (original emphasis).

meaning of the body even though John Paul is more concerned to incorporate human experience into theology. John Crosby has astutely noted that Wojtyła spent much time explaining and defending the norms of *Humanae vitae* from an experiential perspective because the encyclical represents a vaster truth about man and because the faithful more easily follow the truth when they understand the truth.¹¹ From this perspective, it is true, that John Paul presents modest critiques of theologians who rely primarily on a metaphysical account, including St. Thomas Aquinas.¹² In these catecheses, he is more concerned with the “*biblical, theological sphere*.”¹³

The primal experience of man revealed in the Genesis narrative is solitude, or “original solitude” as John Paul calls it. In Genesis 2:18, the Lord God speaks the words that identify this solitude: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”¹⁴ And God brings all the animals to the man. The pope draws two conclusions from this. First, “*created man* finds himself from the first moment of his existence *before God* in search of his own being, as it were; one could say, in search of his own definition; today one would say, in search of his own definition; today one would say, in search of his own ‘identity.’”¹⁵ Here, John Paul brings together both the objective and the subjective elements of his study by introducing the *subjective* search for the identity of one’s *objective* being. His

¹¹ See John F. Crosby, “The Personalism of John Paul II as the Basis of His Approach to the Teaching of ‘*Humanae vitae*,’” *Anthropotes* 5 (1989): 48-49.

¹² In *TOB*, no. 54, for example, John Paul disagrees with Aquinas’s conception that purity “consists above all in holding back the impulses of sense-desire.” See also *TOB*, no. 130.

¹³ *TOB*, no. 133:4 (original emphasis).

¹⁴ Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition.

¹⁵ *TOB*, no. 5:5 (original emphasis). This theme of man finding himself appears throughout Pope John Paul’s theological writings. A leitmotif of his pontificate was the theological idea that in man’s search for his identity, Christ reveals not only God but also man to himself. This idea was explicitly stated by the Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*), no. 22. This is one of the principle themes of the pope’s first encyclical, published in 1979, *Redemptor hominis*. See *AAS* 71 (1979): 257-324. See also John Paul II, “*Gratissimam Sane*,” no. 9.

“anthropology calls man to *become* what or who he is by accepting and living out the identity and vocation that God has inscribed in his very being.”¹⁶

The second conclusion is this:

Self-knowledge goes hand in hand with knowledge of the world, of all visible creatures, of all living beings to which man has given their names to affirm his own dissimilarity before them. Thus, consciousness reveals man as the one who *possesses the power of knowing* with respect to *the visible world*. With this knowledge, which makes him go in some way outside his own being, *man* at the same *reveals himself to himself in all the distinctiveness of his being*. . . . Man is alone because he is “different” from the visible world, from the world of living beings.¹⁷

This idea that man is unique in all of creation, and that he is in search of his own identity, will play a significant role in John Paul’s understanding of the conjugal act and the spousal meaning of the body. It also relies on the blending of the two categories: the objective and the subjective. As John Paul sees it, this experience of original solitude in creation is the effect of man’s ontological uniqueness. But that uniqueness is the direct result of man being created in the image of God.

The pope argues that being created in the image of God is the equivalent of being called to a community of persons (*communio personarum*).¹⁸ Mary Shivanandan has effectively shown the uniqueness of John Paul’s thought on this point. Man’s solitude in creation reveals a directionality to the other, to a *communio*, and a capacity for union with others. This

¹⁶ Donald P. Asci, *The Conjugal Act*, 124. This chapter will bear out the veracity of Asci’s later argument that John Paul is no voluntarist. Citing the pope’s 1993 encyclical, *Veritatis splendor*, he writes, “Self-determination is a hallmark of the person [according to Pope John Paul II] and allows for the development of character over and above the performance of good and evil acts. However, in the light of John Paul II’s doctrine of freedom, law, and conscience in *Veritatis splendor*, it is apparent that man’s self-determination does not mean the ability to determine himself in a wholly autonomous way (that is, apart from the law). Instead, self-determination consists in the dynamic and existential development of human nature, which entails a final end and a vocation (indicated by the law written on man’s heart) that direct man to God himself” (Asci, 127, italics original; cf. *Veritatis splendor*, nos. 35 and 71).

¹⁷ *TOB*, no. 5:6 (original emphasis).

¹⁸ See *TOB*, no. 9:2-9:3.

directionality, as this chapter will show below, is part and parcel of man's fundamental existence. Here the pope does not disparage the tradition of seeing the *imago Dei* only in the intellectual faculties of intellect and will. Rather, he supplements the tradition by incorporating a biblical anthropology which he has drawn from his reading of the Genesis narrative.¹⁹ The *communio personarum* to which man is called ultimately is the Trinitarian communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And so John Paul is clear that though man has self-consciousness and even self-determination, these exist within him the parameters of a relationship with the Almighty.

The nature of the relationship is expressed in the primordial command not to eat of the tree of knowledge (Gen 2:16-17). According to the pope, because man is made in the image of God, he is

a subject constituted as a person, constituted according to the measure of “partner of the Absolute,” inasmuch as he must consciously discern and choose between good and evil, between life and death. The words of the first command of God-Yahweh (Gen 2:16-18), which speak directly about the submission and dependence of the man-creature on his Creator, indirectly reveal precisely this level of humanity as subject of the covenant and “partner of the Absolute.” *Man is “alone”: this is to say that through his own humanity, through what he is, he is at the same time set into a unique, exclusive, and unrepeatable relationship with God himself.*²⁰

¹⁹ See Mary Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage in the Light of John Paul II's Anthropology* (Washington: CUA Press, 1999), 72-80.

²⁰ TOB, no. 6:2 (original emphasis). The final sentence here hints of *Gaudium et spes*, no. 24 in which the Council declares, “Man is the only creature on earth whom God has willed for his own sake, he is unable to find himself except through a sincere gift of himself” (my translation: “Haec similitudo manifest hominem, qui in terries sola creatura est quam Deus propter seipsam voluerit, plene seipsum invenire non posse nisi per sincerum sui ipsius donum”). See Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, “*Gaudium et spes*,” no. 24 in Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2:1083-1084 (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1990). This paragraph of the Council's Pastoral Constitution is another theme of the pope's pontificate. See Pascal Ide, “Une théologie du don: Les occurrences de *Gaudium et spes*, n. 24, §3 chez Jean-Paul II,” *Anthropotes* 17 (2001): 149-178; 313-344. Almost ten years after he began *The Theology of the Body* catecheses, John Paul issued an apostolic letter on the dignity of women, *Mulieris dignitatem*. In this latter, he further elaborates the nature of the self-gift of spouses to each other in reference to their mutual subjection out of reverence for Christ. John S. Grabowski has argued that John Paul's teaching in that apostolic letter constitutes an authentic development of Catholic doctrine concerning marriage and the relationship of the spouses by grounding that relationship in a Trinitarian understanding of the human person.

Self-determination exists within a covenantal relationship with God. Freedom is not absolute or autonomous. This is a foundational point in John Paul's anthropology and moral theology.

The body plays a significant role in man's awareness of solitude, of being alone in the world. The pope writes, "The body, by which man shares in the visible created world, makes him at the same time aware of being 'alone.' Otherwise he would not have been able to arrive at this conviction, which in fact he reached (as we read in Gen 2:20), if his body had not helped him to understand it, making the matter evident to him."²¹ Man learns his own solitude by recognizing the structure of his body; through which he recognizes that his being differs from other creatures.

B. The Body in Creation

At the beginning of creation, John Paul says, the body was a visible sign of man's transcendence, of being different from the animal kingdom.²² But the body's structure also reveals man's subjectivity, just as much as self-consciousness and self-determination do. He writes, "Man is a subject not only by his self-consciousness and by self-determination, but also based on his own body. *The structure of the body is such that it permits him to be the author of genuinely human activity.* In this activity, the body expresses the person."²³ This is the leitmotif

See John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris dignitatem* (August 15, 1998), *AAS* 80 (1988): 1653-1729. English translation available from Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1988. Cf. John S. Grabowski, "Mutual Submission and Trinitarian Self-Giving," *Angelicum* 74 (1997): 489-512.

²¹ *TOB*, no. 6:3. Cf. *TOB*, no. 27:3.

²² See *TOB*, no. 27:3.

²³ *TOB*, no. 7:2 (original emphasis).

of John Paul's catecheses, the body expresses the person.²⁴ It reappears in different ways throughout the Wednesday audiences. He says later that "the body, as the expression of the person, was the first sign of the presence of man in the visible world. In that world, from the very beginning, man was able to distinguish himself, to identify himself, as it were—that is, to confirm himself as a person—also through his body."²⁵

In the last chapter, I surveyed the importance of the body in Wojtyła's moral theory, especially his account of sexual ethics. That the body expresses the person was already manifest in his writings before *The Theology of the Body*. This is not surprising given his own Thomistic background. Throughout these catecheses, the pope routinely affirms the importance of the body and obedience to nature as morally normative. Yet, part of the delicate balance of his method in *The Theology of the Body* is not to so subordinate the freedom of the human person to the dynamics of nature that he becomes guilty of the same pure naturalism that he had criticized in the past (as I noted in the previous two chapters). John Paul wants to hold for man's uniqueness but at the same time the pope articulates man's indebtedness to the Creator of nature who has given him the gift of existence. This

²⁴ This is repeated several times throughout the catechetical lectures, in some way or another. The body "expresses" the person, it "manifests" man. See, for example, *TOB*, nos. 12:4, 12:5, 14:5, 27:3, and 123:4. It also appears throughout John Paul's other magisterial writings. See, for example, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 11; "Gratissimam sane," no. 19; John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, (6 August 1993), nos. 46 and 48; John Paul II, Encyclical, *Evangelium vitae*, (25 March 1995), no. 23. The official Latin text of *Veritatis splendor* is available: see *AAS* 85 (1993): 1133-1228. The official Latin text of *Evangelium vitae* is available: see *AAS* 87 (1995): 401-522. With this idea, John Paul reaps the fruit of his previous work, specifically in *The Acting Person*. The person is not separable from the body; the body is no mere raw datum for manipulation. Both the person and his body are part of nature. Michael Waldstein surmises, "The main reason why it is difficult for people in the modern age, and particularly for modern intellectuals, to understand the Catholic vision of sex... is—biology. The restricted mechanist image of nature produced by natural science, and particularly by biology, obscures our vision for the order of living nature in all its richness and therefore prevents us from understanding and living sex in its full meaning. The nature of sex has become invisible through our Cartesian glasses" (Waldstein, introduction, 97). See also Richard A. Spinello, *The Genius of John Paul II: The Great Pope's Moral Vision* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 2007), 57-88 for an illuminating study of the pope's attempt to reconnect the human person with human nature and the body.

²⁵ *TOB*, no. 27:3.

indebtedness to nature, as I will show below, is key not only to a proper understanding of the spousal meaning of the body but also to its effective communication between persons.

The recognition of the man's uniqueness, of his solitude, leads to the creation of the woman (Gen 2:21-22).²⁶ The man's immediate reaction, "This is at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23) is instructive.²⁷ According to the pope, the man recognizes not the somatic differences between him and the woman, but that she is a person. This means that "bodiliness and sexuality are not simply identical. Although in its normal constitution, the human body carries within itself the signs of sex and is by its nature male or female, *the fact that man is a 'body' belongs more deeply to the structure of the personal subject than the fact that in his somatic constitution he is also male or female.*"²⁸

The solitude experienced by man is experienced by both males and females. They are "two 'incarnations' of the same metaphysical solitude before God and the world—*two reciprocally completing ways of 'being a body' and at the same time of being human*—as two complementary dimensions of self-knowledge and self-determination and, at the same time, *two complementary ways of being conscious of the meaning of the body.*"²⁹ Here, Pope Wojtyla

²⁶ In *TOB*, no. 5:2 and again in 8:3, John Paul notes that until the creation of the woman, the Hebrew word used for "man" is '*adam*', which denotes the whole human race. The words for "male" and "female," '*is*' and '*issab*', are not employed until after the creation of the woman. Regarding the creation of the woman, the pope observes that the "sleep" into which Adam is cast is less "sleep" as it a torpor—an almost going out of existence—so that the creation of the woman is, in fact, a reemergence of man in his "double unity as male and female" (*TOB*, no. 8:3). '*Adam*' is recreated as '*is*' and '*issab*'.

²⁷ Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition.

²⁸ *TOB*, no. 8:2 (original emphasis). Cf. John Paul, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 11. This passage is somewhat problematic, it seems to contradict the point of *The Theology of the Body* catecheses, which is to emphasize the complementarity of man and woman in the spousal meaning of the body. This is an isolated statement in the catecheses, and should be considered in that context.

²⁹ *TOB*, no. 10:1 (original emphasis).

introduces the concept of reciprocal complementarity between the sexes, which he articulated in his earlier writings.³⁰

When the two sexes unite in the conjugal act, the union “*carries within itself a particular awareness of the meaning of that body in the reciprocal self-gift of the persons.*”³¹ The catalyst of self-gift is deeper than sexual difference. Self-gift lies in the metaphysical fact that creation itself is a gift:

Rereading the first chapters of Genesis introduces us into the mystery of creation, that is, of the beginning of the world by the will of God, who is omnipotence and love. Consequently, every creature bears within itself the sign of the original and fundamental gift.... In the account of the creation of the visible world, giving has meaning only in relation to man. In the whole work of creation, it is only about him that one can say, a gift has been granted: the visible world has been created “for him....” *Creation is a gift, because man appears in it, who, as an “image of God,” is able to understand the very meaning of the gift in the call from nothing to existence.*³²

One of the definitions the pope gives to the body is “*a witness to creation as a fundamental gift, and therefore a witness to Love as the source from which this same giving springs.*” Masculinity-femininity—namely, sex—is the original sign of a creative donation and at the same time <the sign of a gift that> man, male-female, becomes aware of as a gift lived so to speak in an original way. This is the meaning with which sex enters into the theology of the body.”³³

The somatic (i.e., bodily) differences between men and women are not unimportant in *The Theology of the Body*. He writes, that “sex is not only decisive for man’s somatic

³⁰ This concept is also present in the *Familiaris consortio* (no. 19) and the 1995 “Letter to Women” (no. 7).

³¹ *TOB*, no. 10:4 (original emphasis). See also *Familiaris consortio*, no. 18; *Mulieris dignitatem*, no. 7; “*Gratissimam sane*,” no. 11.

³² *TOB*, no. 13:4 (original emphasis).

³³ *TOB*, no. 14:4 (original emphasis, text in angled brackets supplied by Waldstein from the Polish manuscript.)

individuality, but at the same time it defines his personal identity and concreteness.”³⁴ Later, he writes, “Woman’s constitution differs from that of man; in fact, we know today that it is different even in the deepest bio-physiological determinants.”³⁵

The somatic difference of the sexes concerns procreation, it is true. But for John Paul the body’s meaning and value goes beyond biological procreation to the expression of love, of communion: “The human body, oriented from within by the ‘sincere gift’ of the person [*Gaudium et spes*, 24:3], reveals not only its masculinity or femininity on the physical level, but reveals also such a *value* and such a *beauty that it goes beyond the simply physical level of ‘sexuality.’*”³⁶ The value that the pope speaks of here is the spousal meaning of the body, which is itself connected to the procreative aspect of the body.³⁷ Marriage is intended not only for biological procreation, but to propagate the gift of creation, the gift of self, from one generation to the next.³⁸

This is why the pope insists that from the beginning the union of husband and wife was intended to be subordinate to procreation, understood as a fruitfulness of life. He writes, “This communion had been intended to make man and woman mutually happy through the search of a simple and pure union in humanity, through a reciprocal offering of themselves, that is, through the experience of the gift of the person expressed with soul and body, with masculinity and femininity—‘flesh of my flesh’ (Gen 2:23)—and finally through

³⁴ *TOB*, no. 20:5.

³⁵ *TOB*, no. 21:4.

³⁶ *TOB*, no. 15:4 (original emphasis). See also *Familiaris consortio*, no. 11; “Letter to Women”, no. 8.

³⁷ See *TOB*, nos. 14:6, 15:1.

³⁸ See *TOB*, no. 96:7: “As for marriage, one can deduce that—instituted in the context of the sacrament of creation in its totality, or in the state of original innocence—it was to serve not only to extend the work of creation, or procreation, but also to spread the same sacrament of creation to further generations of human beings, that is, to spread the supernatural fruits of man’s eternal election by the Father in the eternal Son, the fruits of man was endowed with by God in the very act of creation.”

the subordination of such a union to the blessing of fruitfulness with ‘procreation.’”³⁹ I note the pope’s use of quotation marks around the word ‘procreation’ to distinguish his meaning from a mere biologism.

It is instructive how John Paul describes the “spousal meaning of the body” the first time the word appears in his catechetical lectures. Referring to the original condition in which man and woman felt no shame in their nakedness, which John Paul calls “original innocence,” he writes:

Seeing and knowing each other in all the peace and tranquility of the interior gaze, they “communicate” in the fullness of humanity, which shows itself in them as reciprocal complementarity precisely because they are “male” and “female.” At the same time, they “communicate” based on the communion of persons in which they become a mutual gift for each other, through femininity and masculinity. In reciprocity, they reach in this way a particular understanding of the meaning of their own bodies. The original meaning of nakedness corresponds to the simplicity and fullness of vision in which their understanding of the meaning of the body is born from the very heart, as it were, of their community-communion. We call this meaning “spousal.”⁴⁰

From this passage, two points are evident.

First, for Wojtyla, there must be an awareness of the meaning of the body in the consciousness of the acting person. Crosby clarifies the importance of this: “Spousal self-donation [self-gift] is by its very nature something consciously lived through; spouses could not possibly perform this self-donation without being aware of it; they are necessarily present to themselves as donating themselves to each other.”⁴¹ Indeed, just following the quoted passage above, John Paul notes “The man and the woman in Genesis 2:23-25 emerge, precisely at the very ‘beginning,’ with this consciousness of the meaning of their

³⁹ *TOB*, no. 30:3.

⁴⁰ *TOB*, no. 13:1.

⁴¹ Crosby, “The Personalism of John Paul II,” 52.

own bodies.”⁴² Later in this chapter, I will explore the pope’s insistence that this original consciousness of the spousal meaning of the body is lost with sin and must be reacquired through a “re-reading” of the body in the truth.⁴³

The fact that meaning must be in the consciousness of the acting person does not mean that nature and the body have no objective qualities that contribute to the meaning (whether the spousal meaning of the body or any other meaning). The body itself, according to Wojtyła, contains “the ‘spousal’ attribute, that is, *the power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift* and—through this gift—fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence.”⁴⁴

This brings me to the second conclusion from John Paul’s understanding of the spousal meaning of the body. Because man is free, he is not entirely dominated by nature. Somatic sexual difference is only the beginning in understanding the uniqueness of each human person: “One must keep in mind that each of them, the man and the woman, is not only a passive object, defined by his own body and his own sex, and in this way determined ‘by nature.’ On the contrary, precisely through being man and woman, each of them is ‘given’ to the other as a unique and unrepeatable subject, as ‘I,’ as person.”⁴⁵ Precisely because the “body *manifests* man,” and allows for the communication of a communion between man and woman, “any ‘naturalistic’ criterion is bound to fail, while the

⁴² TOB, no. 13:1. See also TOB, no. 19:1: “If ‘they did not feel shame,’ this means that they were united by the consciousness of the gift, that they had reciprocal *awareness of the spousal meaning of their bodies*, in which the freedom of the gift is expressed and *the whole inner richness of the person as subject is shown*” (original emphasis).

⁴³ See, for example, TOB, no. 19:2: “After original sin, man and woman were to lose the grace of original innocence. The discovery of the spousal meaning of the body was to cease being for them a simple reality of revelation and of grace.”

⁴⁴ TOB, no. 15:1 (original emphasis).

⁴⁵ TOB, no. 20:5. Cf. TOB, no. 21:1.

‘personalistic’ criterion can be of great help.”⁴⁶ From this standpoint, he notes that Genesis tells us “relatively little about the human body in the naturalistic and contemporary sense of the word.”⁴⁷ Nevertheless, in the third section of this chapter it will be apparent that John Paul still insists, as he did in *Love and Responsibility*, that the person must be obedient to nature in order to communicate love.⁴⁸

The shape of the pope’s project in these catecheses now begins to be clear. The human person, man and woman, is created in the image of God through a gratuitous gift from that same Creator God. This gift, imprinted within the *imago Dei* in which they are made, gives men and women a uniqueness in all of creation as free persons since they are called to communion with each other and with God (who is himself a *communio Personarum*). Human existence, while characterized by an original solitude separating man from all other creatures, is, nonetheless, marked by this drive for the other. This drive is manifest in the human body just as much as it is written in man’s very existence. This drive for the other, the capacity for love and self-gift, is this spousal meaning of the body which is the fulfillment of man’s existence. But this capacity for self-gift, in John Paul’s view, was threatened by sin and concupiscence. The spousal meaning of the body, the capacity for self-gift, was redeemed by Jesus Christ.

⁴⁶ *TOB*, no. 12:5 (original emphasis). Cf. *TOB*, no. 55:2

⁴⁷ *TOB*, no. 23:4.

⁴⁸ This insight is argued forcefully in the work of Mary Shivanandan and Michael Waldstein. See Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love*, 107f. and Michael Waldstein, “John Paul II: A Thomist Rooted in St. John of the Cross,” *Faith & Reason* 30(2005): 199. Cf. Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 30.

II. The Meaning of the Body after the Fall

A. Sin, Shame, and Concupiscence

One of the fundamental tenets of *The Theology of the Body* detailed above is that the body expresses the person, the body bears a meaning, and the conjugal union is more than sexuality but is an expression of love. In John Paul's own words, the body is a sort of "primordial sacrament" of the image of God at work in the human person.⁴⁹ He goes on to say, "The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus be a sign of it."⁵⁰

After the fall, the relationship between male and female changes with the introduction of concupiscence. The body ceases to express the person simply. John Paul notes that in the lapsarian state

the body is not subject to the spirit as in the state of original innocence, but carries within itself a constant hotbed of resistance against the spirit and threatens in some way man's unity as a person, that is, the unity of the moral nature that plunges its roots firmly into the very constitution of the person. The concupiscence of the body is a specific threat to the structure of self-possession and self-dominion, through which the human person forms itself. . . . In any case, *the man of concupiscence does not rule his own body in the same way, with the same simplicity and "naturalness" as the man of original innocence.*⁵¹

The threat to self-possession and self-dominion means also that concupiscence threatens the self-mastery which, as Wojtyla had written previously and as he reaffirms in these catecheses,

⁴⁹ See *TOB*, no. 19:4 (original emphasis).

⁵⁰ *TOB*, no. 19:4. To my mind, the pope in no way intends to denigrate the sacraments of Christ and his Church. Rather, he is suggesting that "in man, created in the image of God, the very sacramentality of creation, the sacramentality of the world, was thus in some way revealed" (*TOB*, no. 19:5). The sacraments "work" as they do because the body-soul composite of men and women. The Catholic principle of sacramentality is that invisible grace is communicated through material signs. Man is the primordial example of this.

⁵¹ *TOB*, no. 28:3 (original emphasis).

is necessary for the self-gift that characterizes spousal union.⁵² Concupiscence brings about “the loss of the interior freedom of the gift.”⁵³ Concupiscence “limits and restricts self-mastery from within, and thereby *in some sense makes the interior freedom of the gift impossible*.”⁵⁴

Analyzing the effects of original sin from the scriptural perspective, John Paul takes special note of Genesis 3:16 (“Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over [dominate] you”).⁵⁵ The pope writes, “On the one hand, the ‘body,’ which is constituted in the unity of the personal subject, does not cease to arouse the desires for personal union, precisely due to masculinity and femininity (‘Your desire shall be for your husband’); on the other hand, concupiscence itself simultaneously directs these desires in its own way; this is confirmed by the expression, ‘he will dominate you.’”⁵⁶ Whereas in original innocence the man and woman existed in a state of communion, with concupiscence this relation “*is replaced by a different mutual relationship, namely, by a relationship of possession of the other as an object of one’s own desire*.”⁵⁷

The relationship of domination carries with it the further consequence that the conjugal union becomes unsatisfying. The man and the woman “are no longer only called to union and unity, but are also *threatened by the insatiability of that union and unity*, which does not cease to attract man and woman precisely because they are persons.”⁵⁸ Since the union is

⁵² See *TOB*, no. 15:2 on the relationship of self-mastery to self-gift.

⁵³ *TOB*, no. 32:6.

⁵⁴ *TOB*, no. 32:6 (original emphasis).

⁵⁵ Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition.

⁵⁶ *TOB*, no. 31:3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* (original emphasis). See also *Mulieris dignitatem*, 10.

⁵⁸ *TOB*, no. 30:5 (original emphasis).

both insatiable and redefined as domination, the body becomes a “‘terrain’ of appropriation of the other person.”⁵⁹

In the union of their bodies, and in their relationship with each other, the man and the woman now experience a fundamental disorder in their humanity. This disorder, caused by concupiscence, is marked by shame. “That shame,” the pope writes, “which shows itself without any doubt in the ‘sexual’ order, reveals *a specific difficulty in sensing the human essentiality of one’s own body*, a difficulty man had not experienced in the state of original innocence.”⁶⁰ The inability to recognize the humanity of one’s own body, or the essential relationship between soul and body (that both together constitute the “I” of the person), results in an alienation of the person from his body.⁶¹ Later, John Paul will argue that this separation between person and the body is the fundamental reason secular culture does not understand the Church’s teaching on marriage and contraception.⁶²

In the opening catecheses on the theology of the body, Pope John Paul II insists that there is continuity between the original order of innocence and the fallen order of sin and concupiscence. He draws this conclusion based on our Lord’s words in Matthew 19:1-12, in which Jesus references the “beginning” to answer the Pharisees’ question about divorce.⁶³ More importantly, in his answer to the Pharisees’ question, Jesus notes that Moses had allowed divorce only because of the hardness of the human heart (Mt 19:8). John Paul

⁵⁹ TOB, no. 33:3.

⁶⁰ TOB, no. 28:2 (original emphasis).

⁶¹ See TOB, no. 29:4: “‘That which is in the world,’ *namely, concupiscence*, brings with it an almost constitutive *difficulty in identifying oneself with one’s own body*, not only in the sphere of one’s own subjectivity, but even more so *in regard to the subjectivity of the other human being*, of woman for man and man for woman” (original emphasis).

⁶² See *Familiaris consortio*, no. 32: “In the context of a culture which seriously distorts or entirely misinterprets the true meaning of human sexuality, because it separates it from its essential reference to the person, the Church more urgently feels how irreplaceable is her mission of presenting sexuality as a value and take of the whole person, created male and female in the image of God.”

⁶³ See TOB, no. 3:2-3.

asserts that Jesus' movement to go behind the Mosaic law "means that this order [the original order of innocence] has not lost its force, although man has lost his primeval innocence. *Christ's answer* is decisive and clear. For this reason, *we must draw the normative conclusions from it.*"⁶⁴

In original innocence, the body communicates the person and the spousal meaning of the body simply. But after original sin "the discovery of the spousal meaning of the body was to cease being for them a simple reality of revelation and grace."⁶⁵ The spousal meaning of the body, however, is not entirely lost. It is only distorted. "In fact, in the whole perspective of his own 'history,' man will not fail to confer a spousal meaning of his own body. Even if this meaning does undergo and will undergo many distortions, it will always remain [on] the deepest level, which demands that it be revealed in all its simplicity and purity and manifested in its whole truth as a sign of the 'image of God.'"⁶⁶ A person's experience of this truth in his own life affects the meaning he expresses with his body.

The communion of man and woman "had been intended to make man and woman mutually happy through the search of a simple and pure union in humanity, through a reciprocal offering of themselves...and finally through the subordination of such a union to the blessing of fruitfulness with 'procreation.'"⁶⁷ After the fall, man no longer intuitively experiences the simple meaning of his own body, and so it becomes difficult to communicate its spousal meaning to the other. "What disappears is the simplicity and 'purity' of their original experience, which helped to bring about a singular fullness of mutual self-communication. Obviously, the first parents did not stop *communicating with each other*

⁶⁴ *TOB*, no. 3:4 (original emphasis).

⁶⁵ *TOB*, no. 19:2.

⁶⁶ *TOB*, no. 15:5.

⁶⁷ *TOB*, no. 30:3.

through the body and its movements, gestures, and expressions; but what disappeared was the simple and direct self-communion connected with the original experience of reciprocal nakedness.”⁶⁸ Similarly, the procreative attribute of the union was darkened by original sin.⁶⁹ Thus, after sin, “man and woman must reconstruct the meaning of the reciprocal disinterested gift with great effort.”⁷⁰ This is both the gift and the task of redemption.

B. The Redemption of the Body

In Matthew 19, the foundational passage for John Paul’s reflections, Christ appeals to the beginning of creation to emphasize the force of the order of original innocence even though historical man lives with the effects of original sin. But the Lord Jesus, the pope insists, brings hope because historical man “participates not only *in the history of human sinfulness*, as a hereditary, and at the same time personal and unrepeatable, subject of this history, but he also participates *in the history of salvation*, here too as its subject and co-creator. He is thus not merely shut out from original innocence due to his sinfulness, but also at the same time open to the mystery of the redemption realized in Christ and through Christ.”⁷¹ In fact, John Paul goes on to say here that had Christ only spoken of the beginning, of original innocence, without opening up the possibility for redemption, his answer would have been incomprehensible. Historical man would have been left with no resources to recapture the order of original innocence. But Christ reveals in his own person, and especially in his suffering and resurrection, the possibility of redemption for man and a redemption for the body. In fact, it is “precisely this *perspective of the redemption of the body* [that] *guarantees the*

⁶⁸ TOB, no. 29:2 (original emphasis).

⁶⁹ See TOB, no. 97:1.

⁷⁰ TOB, no. 22:4.

⁷¹ TOB, no. 4:3 (original emphasis).

continuity and the unity between man's hereditary state of sin and his original innocence, although within history this innocence has been irremediably lost by him."⁷²

Pope John Paul clarifies that the Christian idea of the "redemption of the body" in no way legitimizes the Manichean notion that the body is evil.⁷³ Rather, the redemption "points only to *man's sinfulness*, by which *he lost*, among other things, *the clear sense of the spousal meaning of the body*, in which the interior dominion and freedom of the spirit expresses itself."⁷⁴ This follows logically from John Paul's anthropology in which there is not only "the objective reality of the body" but also a "subjective consciousness as well as the subjective 'experience' of the body."⁷⁵

The scriptural warrant for John Paul's understanding of the redemption of the body is the well known passage from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians (5:21-33) where we read that the relationship of Christ to his Church is analogous to the relationship of husband and wife. This scriptural connection between the marriage, Christ, and his Church is the foundation for the concept of the redemption of the body. Simply put, Christ's gift of himself on the Cross for his bride, the Church, reveals the true nature of the self-gift of marriage. The pope writes, "That gift of self to the Father through obedience to the point of death (see Phil 2:8) is at the same time, according to Ephesians, an act of 'giving himself for the Church.' In this expression, *redeeming love* transforms itself, I would say, *into spousal love*."⁷⁶

⁷² Ibid. (original emphasis). This also finds its way into the *Familiaris consortio* (see *Familiaris consortio*, no. 13).

⁷³ See *TOB*, no. 44:5-45:5.

⁷⁴ *TOB*, no. 45:2 (original emphasis).

⁷⁵ *TOB*, no. 60:1.

⁷⁶ *TOB*, no. 90:6 (original emphasis). See *Mulieris dignitatem*, nos. 23-25 for a similar exegesis of Ephesians.

What this means, according to Wojtyla, is that the resurrection of Christ and the redemption of the body concerns more than mere bodiliness:

The resurrection, according to Christ's words reported by the synoptics, means not only the recovery of bodiliness and the reestablishment of human life in its integrity, through the union of body and soul, but also a wholly new state of human life itself. ... There is no doubt that already in the answer given to the Sadducees [concerning marriage in the Kingdom of God, cf. Mt 22:30], Christ reveals the new condition of the human body in the resurrection, and he does so precisely by proposing a reference to and a comparison with the condition in which man shared from the "beginning."⁷⁷

Later, the pope says that in this new human reality the spousal and redemptive dimensions of love "penetrate together with the grace of the sacrament [of matrimony] into the life of the spouses."⁷⁸ He goes on to say, "The spousal meaning of the body in its masculinity and femininity, which manifested itself for the first time in the mystery of creation on the background of man's original innocence, is united in the image of Ephesians with the redemptive meaning, and in this way it is confirmed and in some sense 'created anew.'"⁷⁹ This understanding of the redemption of the body is one of the aspects of John Paul's vision of marriage and family that appeals to Mary Shivanandan. *The Theology of the Body* is less concerned with concupiscence than it is with the restoration of the spousal meaning of the body through redemption.⁸⁰

This presents a unique challenge to man, both male and female. Man today is not exempt from the quest of discovering his own existence. The fallen condition necessitate that quest even more. John Paul insists that man "must seek the meaning of his existence and the meaning of his humanity by reaching all the way to the mystery of creation through

⁷⁷ *TOB*, no. 66:3.

⁷⁸ *TOB*, no. 102:4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*. Cf. *Familiaris consortio*, 15.

⁸⁰ See Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love*, 138f.

the reality of redemption. There he finds also the essential answer to the question about the meaning of the human body, about the meaning of the masculinity and femininity of the human person.”⁸¹

As I have already noted above, John Paul wants to emphasize man’s freedom in relation to nature but without suggesting that nature is unimportant. On the contrary, man’s freedom means he is all the more responsible for his actions. For this very reason, John Paul identifies the challenge of Christ’s words. The Lord teaches that adultery is more subtle than bodily action, that in fact, one can commit adultery in the heart simply by a lustful look. Lustful desire objectifies the body of the other. The result of concupiscence, lust eliminates both the spousal meaning and the procreative meaning of the body, which for the pope are organically linked.⁸² John Paul draws the conclusion: “*Christ’s words are severe*. They demand that in the sphere in which relationships with persons of the other sex are formed, man has full and deep consciousness of his own acts, and above all of his interior acts, and that he is conscious of the inner impulses of his own ‘heart’ so that he can identify and evaluate them in a mature way.”⁸³ Man must be “the authentic master of his own innermost impulses” which contributes to the freedom for gift.⁸⁴ This whole section of *The Theology of the Body*, with its focus on interior impulses and interior and exterior action suggests the pope’s Thomistic training.

In order for man to live the challenge of the redemption of the body, to live in purity and freedom, John Paul insists that “he must *learn* with perseverance and consistency *what* the meaning of the body *is*, the meaning of femininity and masculinity. He must learn it... in

⁸¹ *TOB*, no. 102:8.

⁸² See *TOB*, no. 39:5.

⁸³ *TOB*, no. 48:3 (original emphasis).

⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

the sphere of the interior reactions of his own 'heart.'"⁸⁵ By mastering his interior instincts, man "rediscovers the spiritual beauty of the sign constituted by the human body in its masculinity and femininity."⁸⁶

The spiritual beauty of the body spoken of here by John Paul is fulfilled ultimately in the spiritualization of the body in the kingdom of God. The Lord tells the Sadducees that in the kingdom to come, man will be like angels (Lk 20:26). This does not mean according to the pope that the human body will be transformed to an ethereal constitution. This would render the resurrection pointless. Rather, it will consist of a "spiritualization of his somatic nature, that is, by another 'system of powers' within man. The resurrection signifies a new submission of the body to the spirit."⁸⁷ Unlike "historical" man, "eschatological" man will be free of the various oppositions at work in his faculties.⁸⁸

At the end of time, the redemption of Christ will culminate in "participation in the divine nature, participation in the inner life of God himself, penetration and permeation of what is essentially human by what is essentially divine.... This new spiritualization will be a *fruit of grace*, that is, *of God's self-communication in his very divinity*, not only to the soul, but *to the whole of man's psychosomatic subjectivity*."⁸⁹ This is why the Lord teaches that there is no marriage in the world to come (Lk 20:35). It seems, according to Wojtyła, that biblical eschatology leads to "*the discovery of the 'spousal' meaning of the body above all as the 'virginal' meaning of being male and female in the body*."⁹⁰ This is true because God will give himself completely

⁸⁵ TOB, no. 48:4 (original emphasis).

⁸⁶ TOB, no. 48:5 (original emphasis).

⁸⁷ TOB, no. 66:5.

⁸⁸ See TOB, no. 67:1.

⁸⁹ TOB, no. 67:3 (original emphasis).

⁹⁰ TOB, no. 67:4 (original emphasis).

to “eschatological” man, and man will make of himself a complete gift to God. In one of the most beautiful passages of the catecheses, Pope John Paul writes:

In this reciprocal gift of self by man, a gift that will become completely and definitively beatifying as the response worthy of a personal subject to God’s gift of himself, the “virginity” or rather the virginal state of the body will manifest itself completely as the eschatological fulfillment of the “spousal” meaning of the body, as the specific sign and authentic expression of personal subjectivity as a whole. In this way, then, the eschatological situation in which “they will take neither wife nor husband” has its solid foundation in the future state of the personal subject when, as a consequence of the vision of God “face to face,” *a love of such depth and power of concentration on God himself* will be born in the person that *completely absorbs the person’s whole psychosomatic subjectivity*.⁹¹

Though *The Theology of the Body* is preeminently concerned with the spousal meaning of the body as it is lived in the marital union, it is apparent now that Pope John Paul does not ignore vocations of continence (i.e., celibacy) and virginity. Indeed, for continence “for the kingdom of God” is a “sign that the body, whose end is not death, tends toward glorification.... *This charismatic sign of the ‘other word’ expresses the most authentic power and dynamics of the mystery of the ‘redemption of the body.’*”⁹² This is why, he says, those who embrace charismatic continence as a way of life should understand not only the nature of sexual instinct but, more importantly, they must have “*the awareness of the freedom of the gift, which is organically connected with the deep and mature consciousness of the spousal meaning of the body.*”⁹³ It is only in this awareness can voluntary continence “*find a full guarantee and motivation.*”⁹⁴

Precisely because the spousal meaning of the body entails freedom for a self-gift in love, it is not entirely surprising that the pope holds that vocations other than marriage are

⁹¹ TOB, no. 68:3 (original emphasis).

⁹² TOB, no. 75:1 (original emphasis).

⁹³ TOB, no. 80:5 (original emphasis).

⁹⁴ Ibid. (original emphasis).

capable of living out that spousal meaning in a non-conjugal way. The spousal meaning of the body can be lived in these various ways of life because Christ's redemptive love is a spousal love. His redemptive love embraces all these vocations, and each mirrors that love in its own way.⁹⁵ Even though virginity and celibacy are eschatological signs of the authentic and complete spousal meaning of the body, this does not diminish the fact, however, that this spousal meaning of the body is normally expressed in marriage in this life. Thus, when the pope turns to question of the language of the body, he focuses intently on marriage, consent, and procreation.⁹⁶

III. The Language of the Body in Marriage

A. *Consent, the Body, and Truth*

When John Paul reads Sacred Scripture, especially when he reads the prophets (for example, Mal 2:14; Isa 54:5-6, 10; Hos 1:2; and, Ezek 16 and 23), he is able to reaffirm his fundamental conviction that "the human body speaks a '*language*' of which it is not the

⁹⁵ See TOB, no. 102:8. See also *Familiaris consortio*, no. 16 on virginity and celibacy. While John Paul does not go to great lengths to treat every possible vocation in the Church (he does not mention widows, for example), Charles Curran's contention that *The Theology of the Body* has nothing to teach single (presumably non-consecrated, non-celibate) persons and widows seems excessive. See Curran, *Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 168f.

⁹⁶ William Mattison has offered a salient critique of popular presentations of *The Theology of the Body* which focus entirely on marriage and sexuality as the normative expression of the spousal meaning of the body. His concern is that such emphasis redirects the pope's thought away from Christian tradition, which has more heavily focused on eschatological virginity and the resurrection of the body. Marriage may be the normative way that men and women live out the spousal meaning of the body in this life, but it is not the definitive or only way for doing so. Mattison disagrees with the "ultimacy" of marriage some promoters of *The Theology of the Body* espouse but he argues that the catecheses lend themselves to this misinterpretation. See William Mattison, "'When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given to marriage': Marriage and Sexuality, Eschatology, and the Nuptial Meaning of the Body in Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body," in Lisa Sowle Cahill, et al., eds., *Sexuality and the U.S. Catholic Church: Crisis and Renewal* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2006), 32-51. I agree with his concerns that popular writers are over romanticizing marriage and sexuality. However, I would suggest that if there are elements in *The Theology of the Body* that contribute to this confusion, it is because the focus of *The Theology of the Body*, as I see it, is to articulate an experiential, biblically centered, defense of the notion of marriage and conjugal life found in *Humanae vitae*.

author. *Its author is man*, as male or female, as bridegroom or bride: man with his perennial vocation to the communion of persons. Yet, man is *in some sense unable to express* this singular language of his personal existence and vocation *without the body*.⁹⁷ Here, the pope introduces a new concept in his writing on meaning and the body.

Man, he says, must “re-read” the language of the body to communicate the spousal meaning:

He [man] thus rereads that spousal meaning of the body as integrally inscribed in the structure of the masculinity or femininity of the personal subject. A correct rereading “in the truth” is an indispensable condition for proclaiming this truth or instituting the visible sign of marriage as a sacrament. The spouses proclaim exactly this “language of the body,” reread in the truth, as the content and principle of their new life in Christ and in the Church.⁹⁸

Man remains the author of the meanings he communicates through the language of the body, but in the pope’s anthropology, he is the author “after having reread the ‘language of the body’ in truth.”⁹⁹ It will become clear below that for Pope John Paul II, the body communicates with a language that is inherent to nature and the structure of the human person. Normally, this language should communicate the spousal meaning of the body (which is the gift of self in love), but because of the effects of sin, this language is often corrupted by individuals and by spouses acting together.

⁹⁷ TOB, no. 104:7 (original emphasis).

⁹⁸ TOB, no. 105:2 (original emphasis). Following the line of John Paul’s thought, Walter J. Schu suggests that “re-reading” the body means reading the intrinsic meaning the body possesses in itself. Schu offers two helpful analogies to explain: “We are called to reread the language of the body in truth—the truth of the intrinsic meaning it possesses in itself and its acts. In a similar way Shakespeare made use of the English language already constituted. If our intentions correspond to the inner meaning of the language of the body, we are living in the truth. If, on the other hand, we attempt to confer on our actions a meaning that contradicts the significance they possess in themselves, we are falsifying the language of the body. We are telling a lie with our bodies. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas greeter Christ with a kiss of friendship. But he meant that kiss to betray his Master. Everyone recognizes immediately the terrible nature of violating in this way the language of the body” (Walter J. Schu, LC, *The Splendor of Love: John Paul II’s Vision for Marriage and Family* [New Hope, KY: New Hope Publications, 2003], 144).

⁹⁹ TOB, no. 107:4.

If this is true, it is not surprising that John Paul again says that the body does not act on its own behalf but on behalf of the person. It will speak “*in the name and with the authority of the person.*”¹⁰⁰ Through their bodies, the couple engages in “the conjugal dialogue, which is proper to their vocation and based on the language of the body, continually reread on the right occasion and at the proper time: and it is necessary that it is reread in the truth!”¹⁰¹ This dialogue of bodies includes more than the conjugal act. The pope writes, “*A complex of meanings corresponds to the language,* the couple—through their conduct and behavior, actions and gestures (‘gestures of tenderness,’ see *Gaudium et spes*, 49)—are called to become the authors of these meanings of the ‘language of the body,’ form which they then build and continually deepen love, faithfulness, conjugal integrity, and the union that remains indissoluble until death.”¹⁰² Later in his catecheses, John Paul will reference these gestures of tenderness in his defense of periodic continence within marriage.

Simply put, “*man* is the causal origin of actions that have through themselves (per se) clear-cut meanings. He is thus *the causal origin of actions and at the same time the author of their meanings.*”¹⁰³ The man and the woman appropriate the meanings of the language of the body (reread in the truth) in their communion with each other when they consciously ascribe those meanings to their behavior and action. According to Wojtyla, “*There is an organic link between rereading the integral meaning of the ‘language of the body’ in the truth and the consequent use of that language in conjugal life.*”¹⁰⁴ Thus, “if the human being—male and female—in marriage (and indirectly also in all spheres of mutual life together) *gives to his*

¹⁰⁰ *TOB*, no. 106:2 (original emphasis).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.* (original emphasis).

¹⁰³ *TOB*, no. 105:6.

¹⁰⁴ *TOB*, no. 106:3 (original emphasis).

behavior a meaning in conformity with the fundamental truth of the language of the body, then he too 'is in the truth.' In the opposite case, he commits lies and falsifies the language of the body.”¹⁰⁵

The fundamental truth that the language of the body is supposed to communicate for Wojtyla is contained in the words of consent exchanged by the couple.

The structure of the sacramental sign [of marriage] remains, in fact, in its essence the same as “in the beginning.” What determines it is *in some sense “the language of the body,”* inasmuch as the man and woman, who are to become one flesh by marriage, express in this sign the reciprocal gift of masculinity and femininity as the foundation of the conjugal union of persons. The sign of the sacrament of Marriage is constituted by the fact that the words spoken by the new spouses take up again the same “language of the body” as at the “beginning” and, at any rate, give it a concrete and unrepeatable expression.¹⁰⁶

He goes on to say that the language of the body is, therefore, “*not only the ‘substratum,’ but in some sense also the constitutive content of the communion of persons.*”¹⁰⁷ The man and the woman give themselves to each other precisely in their masculinity and their femininity. The couple is called to use the language of the body to express both the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning of love.¹⁰⁸

The words of consent “*confirm* the essential ‘*truth*’ of the language of the body and (at least indirectly, *implicitly*) they also *exclude* the essential ‘*untruth*,’ the falseness of the language of the body.”¹⁰⁹ The body speaks the truth of consent through “conjugal love, faithfulness, and integrity,” while “untruth or falsity is expressed through all that negates conjugal love,

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. (original emphasis).

¹⁰⁶ TOB, no. 103:4-5 (original emphasis). All of these ideas are included in the *Letter to Families*, nos. 7, 8, and 10. With these reflections, John Paul resituates the discussion of the *ratio et consumatum* of marriage within the context of language and self-gift. The question of what constitutes a marriage was heavily argued in the medieval Church. For a brief history of this discussion see, Theodore Mackin, S.J., *The Marital Sacrament* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 285-293.

¹⁰⁷ TOB, no. 103:5 (original emphasis).

¹⁰⁸ See TOB, no. 106:4 (original emphasis).

¹⁰⁹ TOB, no. 105:1 (original emphasis).

faithfulness, and integrity.”¹¹⁰ When John Paul here speaks of untruth in the language of the body, he first of all means the untruth that is adultery.¹¹¹ Below, it will become apparent that he believes contraception is also a lie, a falsification of the language of the body. Such falsification is the result of concupiscence: “*The one who rereads this ‘language’ and then expresses it not according to the needs proper to marriage as a covenant and sacrament, is naturally and morally the man of concupiscence.*”¹¹²

However, when a man and woman re-read the language of the body in the truth and use that language rightly, they are once again invoking the spousal meaning of the body as it was in the beginning and as it has been redeemed in Christ.¹¹³ In the penultimate audience before turning, finally, to the moral norm of *Humanae vitae*, Pope John Paul insightfully noted: “The ‘language of the body’ reread in the truth goes hand in hand *with the discovery of the inner inviolability of the person*. At the same time, precisely this discovery expresses the authentic depth of the reciprocal belonging of the spouses, the beginning and growing *consciousness of belonging to each other*, of being destined for each other: ‘My beloved is mine and I am his’ (Song 2:16).”¹¹⁴ This brings redemption of the body full circle back to the beginning. The spousal meaning of the body surpasses concupiscence by recognizing the inviolability of the other. Through their consent and the language of the body, the couple, Wojtyla will insist, is called to bear witness both to a spousal love and a procreative love.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ See, for example, TOB, no. 104:8: “*the body tells the truth* through faithfulness and conjugal love, and, when it commits ‘adultery’ it tells a lie, *it commits falsehood*” (original emphasis).

¹¹² TOB, no. 107:1 (original emphasis).

¹¹³ See TOB, no. 105:5.

¹¹⁴ TOB, no. 110:8 (original emphasis).

¹¹⁵ See, for example, TOB, no. 106:4.

B. *The Moral Norm of Humanae vitae*

Just two months shy of five years from when he began his catecheses on the theology of the body, Pope John Paul admits, “The reflections about human love in the divine plan carried out so far would remain in some way incomplete if we did not try to see their concrete application in the area of conjugal and familial morality.”¹¹⁶ The theology of the body is not only speculative. It is also practical. For his concrete application, the pope turns to *Humanae vitae*, especially to paragraphs 11 and 12 of that encyclical. Yet, and this should be clear, in writing the final part of these catecheses on *Humane Vitae*, the pope does not wish these to be considered a mere appendix: “If I draw particular attention precisely to these final catecheses, I do so not only because the topic discussed by them is more closely connected with our present age, but first of all because *it is from this topic that the questions spring* that run in some way through the whole of our reflections. It follows that this final part is not added to the whole, but is organically and homogenously united with it.”¹¹⁷ These were among the last words of John Paul’s five year catechetical project.

John Paul follows upon his earlier observation that the sacrament of the marriage is based on the language of the body “reread” in the truth, and the truth is the self-gift first expressed in the words of consent that are exchanged in the liturgy. Now, he goes on to say that this truth is constantly reaffirmed: “We are also dealing with a truth that is, so to speak, always affirmed anew. In fact, as man and woman live in marriage ‘until death,’ in some sense they continuously re-propose the sign they themselves gave—through the liturgy of the sacrament—on the day of their wedding.”¹¹⁸ The conjugal act is the moment “*so rich in*

¹¹⁶ *TOB*, no. 118:1.

¹¹⁷ *TOB*, no. 133:4 (original emphasis). See also *Familiaris consortio*, nos. 29 and 31.

¹¹⁸ *TOB*, no. 118:4.

meaning” that it is “particularly important that the ‘language of the body’ be reread in the truth. This reading become an indispensable condition for *acting in the truth* or for behaving *in conformity with the value and the moral norm*.”¹¹⁹ The moral norm he defends here is the norm that the conjugal act must remain open to procreation.

The pope notes that the moral norm, expressed in *Humanae vitae* 12, that the two meanings of the conjugal act (the procreative and the unitive) are inseparable is immediately defended by Paul VI with the following sentence: “By its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most closely uniting husband and wife, capacitates them for the generation of new lives, according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and woman” (*HV*, 12). Wojtyla is fascinated with Pope Paul VI’s twin notions of the “innermost structure” of the conjugal act (which he takes to be synonymous with the nature of the act), on the one hand, and the “laws inscribed in the very being of man and woman,” on the other.

He writes, “The encyclical leads one to look for the foundation of the norm determining the morality of the actions of man and woman in the conjugal act, in the nature of this act itself and more deeply still in the nature of the acting *subjects themselves*.”¹²⁰

Thus, John Paul is certain that the nature of the conjugal act must be understood by the couple.

The “*innermost structure*” (or *nature*) of the conjugal act constitutes *the necessary basis for an adequate reading and discovery of the meanings* that must be carried over into the conscience and the decisions of the acting persons. It also constitutes the necessary basis for grasping the adequate relationship of these meanings, namely, their inseparability. Since “the conjugal act”—at one and the same time—“deeply unites husband and wife” and together “makes them able to generate new lives,” and since the one as well as the other thing comes about “by its innermost structure,” it follows (with the necessity

¹¹⁹ Ibid. (original emphasis).

¹²⁰ *TOB*, no. 118:5 (original emphasis).

proper to reason, logical necessity) that the human person “should” read, *at one and the same time*, the “*two meanings* of the conjugal act” and also the “*inseparable connection* between the two meanings of the conjugal act.”¹²¹

Here, finally, we see John Paul’s concern for the nature of the conjugal act on full display. He argues that meaning is not arbitrary but is dependent on ontology. He even says that “what is at stake here is the *truth*, first *in the ontological dimension* (“innermost structure”) and then—as a consequence—in the *subjective and psychological dimensions* (“meaning”).”¹²² Meaning “is born in consciousness *with the rereading of the* (ontological) *truth of the object*. Through this rereading, the (ontological) truth, enters so to speak, into the cognitive, that is, subjective and psychological dimension.”¹²³

When Paul VI referred to the “reasonableness” of the moral norm (cf. HV 12), Pope John Paul II thought he was referring not only to the ontological dimension of the conjugal act but also to the psychological and subjective dimension. Nevertheless, the reasonableness of the subjective dimension is dependent on “*the right understanding* of the innermost structure of the conjugal act, that is, the adequate rereading the meanings that correspond to this structure and their inseparable connection in view of morally right behavior.... In this sense, we say that the norm is identical with rereading the ‘language of the body’ in the truth.”¹²⁴ The subjective dimension cannot properly be understood without reference to the ontological.

John Paul is clear that the conjugal act has its own moral qualification. Thus even if a couple is morally right in deciding not to procreate, “the *moral problem* of the way of acting in such a case remains, and this mode expresses itself in an act that—according to the Church’s

¹²¹ TOB, no. 118:6 (original emphasis) quoting *Humanae vitae*, no. 12.

¹²² Ibid. (original emphasis).

¹²³ TOB, no. 119:1 (original emphasis).

¹²⁴ TOB, no. 119:2 (original emphasis).

teaching transmitted in the encyclical—possesses *its own intrinsic moral qualification*, positive or negative. The first, positive, corresponds to the ‘natural’ regulation of fertility; the second, negative, corresponds to ‘artificial contraception.’”¹²⁵ Later, he says that natural regulation of fertility is in conformity with the natural law. But conformity with natural law is not legalistic but personal and virtuous for Wojtyła:

By “natural law” we understand here the “order of nature” in the field of procreation inasmuch as it is understood by right reason: this order is the expression of the Creator’s plan for the human person. And it is exactly this that the encyclical, together with the whole tradition of Christian teaching and practice, particularly underlines: the virtuous character of the attitude expressing itself in the “natural” regulation of fertility is determined, *not so much* by the faithfulness to an impersonal “*natural law*,” *but to the personal Creator*, the source and Lord of the order that is shown in this law.¹²⁶

The language of the body includes not only masculinity and femininity but also “the inner structures of the organism, of somatic and psychosomatic reactivity. All this should find its fitting place in the language with which the spouses dialogue as persons called to communion in the ‘union of the body.’”¹²⁷ Since the person is inseparable from his body, self-gift includes the true communion of the body. It is more than an intention spread across a relationship.

In *Familiaris consortio*, John Paul is clear that the body has its own “innate language.”¹²⁸ When the couple act at cross purposes from the body’s innate language they introduce an “objectively contradictory language” into their self-donation.¹²⁹ John Paul’s reference to an “innate language” recalls his commitment to the idea that man’s activity

¹²⁵ *TOB*, no. 122:3 (my emphasis).

¹²⁶ *TOB*, no. 124:6 (original emphasis).

¹²⁷ *TOB*, no. 125:1.

¹²⁸ John Paul, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 32.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

should be obedient to nature. According to John Crosby, this is a decisive rebuttal of dualism:

Their bodies have a nuptial [i.e., spousal] meaning, and their bodily union has the meaning of self-donation, *independently of any subjective act of conferring which they might perform*. This is why the bodily union of man and woman in the absence of spousal self-donation and of spousal belonging to one another (that is, the bodily union of fornication or adultery) has something untruthful, it “says” as it were too much, more than is really meant.... We find, then, that the nuptial meaning of the body does not exist merely as conferred by the spouses, it is rather pre-formed in the nature of man and woman, and is so strong a reality that it constitutes a norm for their subjective intentions; and it cannot be ignored without persons misusing each other.¹³⁰

This is exactly what John Paul makes explicit in *Familiaris consortio*. The couple that uses artificial contraception set themselves as “‘arbiters’ of the divine plane” and they “‘manipulate’ and degrade human sexuality—as well as themselves.”¹³¹ Whereas those who respect the language of the body, “are acting as ‘ministers’ of God’s plan and they ‘benefit from’ their sexuality according to the original dynamism of ‘total’ self-giving, without manipulation or alteration.”¹³²

This line of argument is reminiscent of *The Acting Person*. And just as in *The Acting Person*, *Love and Responsibility*, and *Humanae vitae*, self-mastery is still presented as necessary for the proper rereading of the language of the body.¹³³ John Paul repeats his earlier observation that self-mastery is not always the same as the domination of the forces of nature. In fact, he is concerned that the extension of means which dominate nature “threatens the human person for whom the method of ‘self-mastery’ is and remains specific.... The transposition of ‘artificial means’... *breaks* the constitutive dimension of the person, deprives man of the

¹³⁰ Crosby, “The Personalism of John Paul II,” 66 (original emphasis).

¹³¹ John Paul, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 32.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ See *TOB*, no. 123:5.

subjectivity proper to him, and turns him into *an object of manipulation*.”¹³⁴ The language of the body is “more than mere sexual reactivity.”¹³⁵ It is “an authentic language of persons”, [which] is subject to the demand for truth, that is, to objective moral norms.”¹³⁶

By now, it should be clear that the criterion of truth for conjugal life is the total self-gift. This is the truth that is expressed in consent, and it is the truth reaffirmed in the language of the body. “*According to this criterion of truth...*,” the pope writes, “the conjugal act ‘means’ not only love, but also potential fruitfulness, and thus it cannot be deprived of its full and adequate meaning by means of artificial interventions.”¹³⁷ It is not licit to separate these two meanings “because the one as well as the other belong to the innermost truth of the conjugal act. The one is realized together with the other and, in a certain way, the one through the other.”¹³⁸ John Paul is not clear here whether he is referring to the ontological dimension of the conjugal act or the psychological dimension. The strength of his tone would suggest the former: “When the conjugal act is *deprived of its inner truth* because it is deprived artificially of its procreative capacity, it also *ceases to be an act of love*.”¹³⁹ A real bodily union is brought about, but it “does not correspond to the inner truth and dignity of personal communion.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ *TOB*, no. 123:1 (original emphasis).

¹³⁵ *TOB*, no. 123:4.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *TOB*, no. 123:6 (original emphasis).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* (original emphasis).

¹⁴⁰ *TOB*, no. 123:7. John Paul provides a strong defense of the inseparability of the unitive and procreative meanings of the conjugal act. He never identifies the unitive meaning of the conjugal act with the spousal meaning of the body. In fact, though he says the procreative meaning and the spousal meaning are organically united, he routinely speaks of spousal meaning of the body expressed in the conjugal act as only “potentially procreative” (see, for example, *TOB*, no. 132:2). Protecting the dignity of the two inseparable meanings of the conjugal act protects the potential of the procreative expression of the spousal meaning (see *TOB*, no. 132:2). I believe he makes this distinction to separate the modes of the spousal meaning’s expression. The spousal meaning of the body is expressed in the conjugal act, yes, but it is also expressed in other gestures of affection which are not potentially procreative (see *TOB*, no. 129:6).

Since natural regulation of fertility requires self-mastery, it requires also continence. And continence is not simply a technique but a “definite and permanent moral attitude, *it is a virtue*, and thus the whole mode of behavior guided by it becomes virtuous.”¹⁴¹ For the pope, continence is the virtue that opposes concupiscence of the flesh. Continence is “the *ability to master, control, and orient the sexual drives* (concupiscence of the flesh) and their consequences in the psychosomatic subjectivity of human beings.”¹⁴² Elsewhere, continence is said to be “the spiritual effort aimed at expressing the ‘language of the body’ not only in the truth, but also in the authentic richness of the ‘manifestations of affection.’”¹⁴³ Here he seems to refer back to the gestures of tenderness.

With *Humanae vitae* (no. 20), Pope John Paul affirms that this effort is possible, that it requires that the human being viewed as person with his or her own subjectivity, with his or her own choices. Another person should not be viewed as simply a means to an end.¹⁴⁴ The personalistic norm, articulated in his earlier writings, is fully articulated in John Paul’s theology of the body.

Conclusion

The development of Karol Wojtyla’s thought on love, sex, and marriage begun with his published articles in the 1950s and reached its culmination in these *Theology of the Body* catecheses. Here, he brought the insights he had developed in his previous work, which were discussed in chapters three and four of this dissertation, to bear on an extended explanation

¹⁴¹ *TOB*, no. 124:4 (original emphasis). This was developed in more detail in *Love and Responsibility*, as I noted in the last chapter.

¹⁴² *TOB*, no. 128:1 (original emphasis).

¹⁴³ *TOB*, no. 129:1 (original emphasis).

¹⁴⁴ See *TOB*, no. 129:2.

and defense of Paul VI's 1968 encyclical *Humanae vitae*. In *Familiaris consortio*, John Paul invited theologians to develop an organic presentation of the teaching established in *Humanae vitae*.¹⁴⁵ He led by example with *The Theology of the Body*.

His presentation is based upon a scriptural exegesis, most notably of Genesis, the Gospels, and Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. In doing so, he provides a systematic explanation of creation as gift and of man called to find himself by giving himself to another in self-gift.¹⁴⁶ The body, all the while, is inseparably united to the person who is created in the image of God, and contains within itself a spousal attribute directing the person to the other. When the person "re-reads" the language built into his nature and his actions, he is able to ascribe meaning to those actions that are congruent with his nature. Such is the proper expression of spousal love as self-gift: the body speaks the offering of one person to another. When the body is prevented from communicating this meaning, as in the case of contraception, or when the person intends to communicate something different from the body, as in the case of adultery, then the person's actions are a lie.

I think John Paul's emphasis on subjective consciousness, of living the truth in love, provided a breath of fresh air in what otherwise had become a rather stale debate in the 20th century about the theological and philosophical categories of nature and person. Richard Spinello is right that Wojtyla's moral vision moves beyond a Thomistic anthropology in his

¹⁴⁵ See *Familiaris consortio*, 31.

¹⁴⁶ I disagree with Charles Curran, who, while he notes that *The Theology of the Body* has a generally positive understanding of marriage and sexuality, nonetheless, believes the catecheses do not provide a systematic treatment of love. This clearly not the case. Love, for Pope John Paul, is the gift of self. Curran wrote this criticism before the publication of Michael Waldstein's translation of the catechetical talks and the introduction of the headers found in the original manuscript. Curran's larger criticism is that *The Theology of the Body* in general is not a systematic treatment, since it was delivered piecemeal in the form of general audiences. As I mentioned in the general introduction of this study, Waldstein's research has shown this is not the case. Perhaps, Curran would be more favorable in light of this new development. See Charles E. Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 167, 170f.

emphasis on consciousness and self-determination along with his focus on the communitarian nature of the human person.¹⁴⁷ There is a cottage industry of popular commentaries, study guides, and explanations of this vision of marriage and love.¹⁴⁸ It has been argued that the pope's emphasis on the communion of persons effectively responded to a culture dominated by the "relationship marketplace" ... in which we instrumentalize others, rather than loving them."¹⁴⁹ I think this true.

There are some Catholic theologians, however, who have been critical of the pope's theology of sex, marriage, and the family, especially as it is articulated in *The Theology of the Body*. Some have argued, for example, that the idea of a self-gift manifest in each sexual act is simply too romantic. Interestingly, this criticism is articulated not only by the feminist theologian, Lisa Sowle Cahill, but it is also held by David Matzko McCarthy, each for different reasons. Cahill thinks that John Paul's theology is too romantic and does not take into consideration what she perceives to be the harsh social circumstances of women.¹⁵⁰ McCarthy, on the other hand, is concerned that the overly romantic personalist view of

¹⁴⁷ Spinello, *Genius of John Paul II*, 75ff. Mary Shivanandan lists a whole series of unique contributions made by John Paul to the understanding of the human person: the incommunicability of the person yet with a call to communion; the application of Trinitarian theology of *communio personarum* to anthropology; male and female complementarity; and, the relationship of gift and love, to name a few (see Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love*, 141-170). The constraints of this study have prevented me from addressing all of these aspects of John Paul's thought. It would be an interesting study to ascertain the true uniqueness of some of these components of pope's thought vis-à-vis the Christian tradition.

¹⁴⁸ The most popular of these is, of course, Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's: Man and Woman He Created Them*, rev. ed. (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2007).

¹⁴⁹ David Cloutier, "Heaven Is a Place on Earth? Analyzing the Popularity of Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body," in Lisa Sowle Cahill, John Garvey, and T. Frank Kennedy, S.J., eds., *Sexuality and the U.S. Catholic Church: Crisis and Renewal* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 19. Also arguing from a self-described feminist perspective, Charles Curran criticizes John Paul for overemphasizing women's maternal role while showing no concern for their role in the world and in the social sphere. Given the social condition of women throughout history, he thinks it is a danger to emphasize too much women's self-gift and service (see Curran, *Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 193ff.).

¹⁵⁰ See Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 201ff.

marriage espoused by John Paul lifts sexuality out of the normal routine of married life.¹⁵¹

Unlike Cahill, who is more interested with the role of women in society, McCarthy believes that John Paul's thought runs the danger of isolating the family from its larger social vocation.¹⁵² I tend to agree with McCarthy's critique here, but only if *The Theology of the Body* is read as a work that stands sufficiently on its own. I have argued in this chapter that the pope's task with the catecheses was much more narrow than it seems: to defend *Humanae vitae* from a biblical and experiential perspective.

Moreover, both Cahill and Charles Curran argue that John Paul's interpretation of scripture is too much indebted to the hierarchical teaching of the Church, and particularly to *Humanae vitae*.¹⁵³ They both contend that this has hindered his interpretation of the scripture on its own terms. Curran also complains that the pope does not appeal adequately to the experience of the lay faithful; he does not consult the wisdom of the *sensus fidelium*. A more popular, if at times more visceral, version of this criticism is often offered by Notre Dame law professor, Cathleen Kaveny.¹⁵⁴

Despite the criticisms it has received, *The Theology of the Body* has taken hold in the Catholic Church. Through the work of Christopher West and others, more and more of the lay faithful, especially engaged and married couples, are exposed to its principal tenets. This study, too, hopes to be a token and small contribution to the massive secondary material

¹⁵¹ David Matzko McCarthy, *Sex and Love in the Home*, rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 2004), 43.

¹⁵² See McCarthy, *Sex and Love*, 8, 118.

¹⁵³ See Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Catholic Sexual Ethics and the Dignity of the Person: A Double Message," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 148f.; Curran, *Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 177f.

¹⁵⁴ See Cathleen Kaveny, "What Women Want: 'Buffy,' the Pope, and the New Feminists," *Commonweal* 130.19 (November 7, 2003): 18-24; Cathleen Kaveny, "The 'New' Feminism? John Paul II and the 1912 Encyclopedia," *Commonweal* 135.6 (March 28, 2008): 8.

now available on Pope John Paul's wonderful catechetical lectures by bringing them into dialogue with the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas.

For the present purposes of this study, then, it is important to summarize John Paul's view of the spousal meaning of the body in order to identify which components and characteristics can be supported by Aquinas's mature thought. First, human existence is itself a gift from God. The gift of existence is constitutive of human nature and personhood. Secondly, precisely because they are created in the image of a God who is himself a communion of Divine Persons, John Paul argues that human existence is inherently directed to the other. Namely, the life of man is characterized by a drive to self-gift.

Third, since man is an embodied person, the human body participates in this spousal character of human existence. The spousal meaning of the body is the capacity to express the person's gift of self to another human person and, ultimately, to God. Since human persons are male or female, this spousal meaning is complementarily and equally expressed in both a masculine and feminine manner. This expression most often occurs in the relationship of marriage, in which there is complete conjugal self-giving, but the spousal meaning of the body is more fundamental than the marital relationship. The spousal meaning of the body is manifest even in (and perhaps especially in) celibate vocations as expressions of the virginal and redemptive aspects of that spousal meaning.

Fourth, because man is a free rational animal, he is not entirely subservient to nature but nonetheless must be obedient to it in order to properly express the meaning of his existence, which is the gift of self to another. This is to say that men and women are not arbitrary authors of the language of the body. However much they may be free to misuse the

body (and distort its accompanying communicative value), ultimately they are only truly fulfilled when they communicate love, life, and fidelity.

In the following chapters, it will be increasingly apparent exactly how the thought of St. Thomas supports the pope's notion of the spousal meaning of the body.

Chapter 6

The Anthropology of St. Thomas Aquinas

Introduction

St. Thomas Aquinas, writing in the thirteenth century, was concerned with different issues than Karol Wojtyla. For example, with the introduction of Aristotle to medieval Europe, Aquinas sought to integrate Aristotle's metaphysics into his own theological and philosophical framework. In this way, he went against the dominant Christian philosophical methodology of his day, which was dependent on Plato. Among other things, Aquinas is indebted to Aristotle for his understanding of the relationship between matter and form.

Aquinas's incorporation of Aristotle's hylomorphic view of the human being as a composite being of soul (form) and body (matter) has important consequences for his anthropology. Since the human being is a composite of soul and body, both are involved in man's call to fulfillment, to beatitude. Both are involved in human thought and action. Both shared in the original innocence of our first parents and both suffered the consequences of original sin. For Aquinas, both are redeemed but continue to suffer from the wounds of sin.

This chapter will offer a survey of St. Thomas's anthropology and how it relates to sexual difference and sexuality. In the first section, I will offer an exegesis of Aquinas's conception of man as a composite person. In the second section, this chapter will explore the importance of sexual difference and the relationship of sexuality to human flourishing. Finally, the third section will review Aquinas's understanding of original innocence and original sin.

In the previous three chapters, I explored Karol Wojtyla's anthropology and his moral theory surrounding his sexual ethics. This culminated in the last chapter's analysis of

The Theology of the Body catecheses. The purpose of this chapter is to identify the salient characteristics of St. Thomas's anthropology, which I will show is contingent upon a robust union between body and soul. Aquinas's hylomorphism is evident in every aspect of his description of man: from the interaction between body and soul, to sexual difference, to human flourishing and original sin. Just as in John Paul's catecheses, Aquinas holds that the body is neither unimportant nor a mere instrument of the human person. In some ways, the body is perhaps more important for Aquinas than Wojtyla inasmuch Aquinas will attempt to reconcile the impact of bodily sexual difference with his view of marriage more than Wojtyla does. This chapter will bring this study into the concerns of the next chapter, which treats Aquinas's view of appetite as the drive of love.

I. Man: A Composite Person

A. A Body and Soul Composite

Aquinas introduces his treatise on man, which begins with question 75 in the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, with the following note: "Having treated of the spiritual and of the corporeal creature, we now proceed to treat of man, who is composed of a spiritual and corporeal substance (*qui ex spirituali et corporali substantia componitur*)."¹ In the first several

¹ *ST*, I, prologue to q. 75. Unless otherwise noted all English translations of the *Summa theologiae* are from: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1948; repr. Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1981). Citations of the original Latin text are from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 3rd ed. (Torino: Edizioni San Paolo, 1999). Gilles Emery, O.P. notes that in recent decades "the notion of man as a composite of soul and body often raised a concern over the possibility of dualism" (see Gilles Emery, O.P., "The Unity of Man, Body and Soul, in St. Thomas Aquinas," in *Trinity, Church, and the Human Person: Thomistic Essays* [Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2007], 209). This is undoubtedly true. The mere mention of "two principles" comprising human nature (body and soul) strikes many as dualist. As a result, Emery notes, we are left with two options: either to embrace a Greek anthropology which separates soul from body or to embrace a biblical anthropology that sees man as "a bodily person existing in indissoluble unity" (ibid.). Joseph Ratzinger has offered an insightful critique of recent movements in theology which casts aside any understanding of an immortal soul in favor of an indissoluble unity in which man, body and soul, perishes at death. He even notes

questions of this treatise, he lays out his vision of man as a composite being, a substantial unity between body and soul. He understood himself to be taking a different philosophical approach to human nature than his predecessors and even his contemporaries.² This is clear from the interlocutors he employs in various articles throughout the treatise.

For example, in the corpus of question 75, “Whether the soul is a body?” Aquinas responds with the following:

To seek the nature of the soul, we must premise that the soul is defined as the first principle of life in those things which live: for we call living things *animate*, and those things which have no life, *inanimate*. Now life is shown principally by two actions, knowledge and movement. The philosophers of old [*antiqui philosophi*], not being able to rise above their imagination, supposed that the principle of these actions was something corporeal: for they asserted that only bodies were real things; and that was is not corporeal is nothing: hence they maintained that the soul is something corporeal.³

The *antiqui philosophi* to whom St. Thomas refers are the pre-Socratics, who each held some material body or another (wind, fire, air, and water) as the principle of life.⁴ Aquinas makes two moves in response.

that the new *Roman Missal* has largely suppressed the word “soul (*anima*)” from its prayers, even from the funeral rites (see Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 2nd ed., trans. Michael Waldstein [Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007], 105-161). This is interesting because Aquinas himself was concerned to defend a real unity of the body and soul in which neither could be understood without the other and both were part and parcel of the definition of man, both as a species and as an individual. Nevertheless, the connection is not indissoluble. The soul separates from the body at death and to returns it at general resurrection.

² For an excellent survey of conception of the body and soul in St. Thomas vis-à-vis his contemporaries, see Anton Pegis, *St. Thomas and the Problem of the Soul in the Thirteenth Century* (Toronto: St. Michael's College, 1934); Richard C. Dale, *The Problem of the Rational Soul in the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Edouard-Henri Wéber, O.P., *La person humaine au XIII^e siècle: L'avènement chez les Maîtres parisiens de l'acception moderne de l'homme* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1991).

³ *ST*, I, q. 75, a. 1, corpus (original emphasis)

⁴ Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa theologiae Ia 75-89* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 30-34. Pasnau's exegesis of Aquinas's treatise on human nature is generally well done from an analytical standpoint. However, following Aquinas's theory of delayed hominization, he concludes that a “vast majority of abortions, though they may be unfortunate and immoral, are not tantamount to murder” (ibid., 120). There are many Thomists who argue in favor of delayed hominization. See, for example, Joseph Donceel, “Abortion: Mediate v. Immediate Animation,” *Continuum* 5 (1967): 167-171, and, idem., “Immediate Animation and Delayed Hominization,” *Theological Studies* 31 (1970): 76-105; William Wallace, “Nature and Human Nature as the Norm of Medical Ethics,” in *Catholic Perspectives on*

First, he writes that “it is manifest that not every principle of vital action is a soul, for then the eye would be a soul, as it is a principle of vision and the same might be applied to the other instruments of the soul: but it is the *first* principle of life, which we call the soul.”⁵ Typically, when Aquinas uses the phrase “it is manifest,” he means just that: it does not need to be proved syllogistically. It is manifest by definition that not every vital action is a soul, for we do not call an eye or any other instrument of vital action a soul. The soul by definition is the first principle of life that gives rise to all these vital actions.

In the second move, Aquinas appeals to our experience of the world:

For it is clear that to be a principle of life, or to be a living thing, does not belong to a body as such; since, if that were the case, everybody would be a living thing, or a principle of life. Therefore a body is competent to be a living thing or even a principle of life, as *such* a body. Now that it is actually such a body, it owes to some principle which is called its act. Therefore the soul, which is the first principle of life, is not a body, but the act of a body.⁶

The Angelic Doctor notes that if a soul were a body, then all bodies would be alive. In effect, the fact that some bodies are living and other bodies are not means that there must be some principle to distinguish a living body from a non-living body aside from corporeality as such. This principle, Aquinas says, is act. A body is competent to be alive when it is a certain type of body which is brought to act, and the actuality of this body which gives it life is called the soul.

Medical Morals, eds. Edmund D. Pellegrino, John P. Langan, John C. Harvey (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), 23-52. Some Thomists have been successful in updating Aquinas’s scientific viewpoint. See Stephen J. Heaney, “Aquinas and the Presence of the Human Rational Soul in the Early Embryo,” *The Thomist* 56 (1992): 19-48 and Nicanor Austriaco, O.P., “Immediate Hominization from the Systems Perspectives,” *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 4 (2004): 719-738. For a brief introduction to the anthropology of the pre-Socratics, see Joseph Torchia, O.P., *Exploring Personhood: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Nature* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 17-38.

⁵ *ST*, I, q. 75, a. 1, corpus (original emphasis).

⁶ *Ibid.* (original emphasis).

Immediately in the first article of the first question in the treatise on man, Aquinas has concluded that the soul is not a thing. It is more a principle of act and life. But the soul is much more than a principle. For St. Thomas, the soul is also subsistent. At first glance, this is surprising. Since, as an objector points out, “That which subsists is said to be *this particular thing*. Now *this particular thing* is said not of the soul, but of that which is composed of soul and body.”⁷ If the soul is not a thing *per se*, how can it be subsistent?

Aquinas bases his answer in the human experience of knowledge: “It is clear that by means of the intellect man can have knowledge of all corporeal things.”⁸ He continues:

Whatever knows certain things cannot have any of them in its own nature; because that which is in it naturally would impede the knowledge of anything else. Thus we observe that a sick man’s tongue being vitiated by a feverish and bitter humor, is insensible to anything sweet, and everything seems bitter to it. Therefore, if the intellectual principle contained the nature of a body it would be unable to know all bodies. Now everybody has its own determinate nature. Therefore it is impossible for the intellectual principle to be a body. It is likewise impossible for it to understand by means of a bodily organ.⁹

Aquinas concludes, therefore, that the intellectual principle (the soul) has an operation (i.e., understanding) which is *per se* apart from the body. And “only that which subsists can have

⁷ *ST*, I, q. 75, a. 2, obj. 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, corpus. Aquinas, it should be noted, is writing well before the epistemological breakdown introduced by the methodical doubt of Rene Descartes in which human understanding was separated from reality. In the *Summa theologiae*, the Angelic Doctor is not concerned with the epistemological problem of whether our intellect adequately perceives reality or not. Indeed, he presumes it does. This is one of the many ways in which his intellectual milieu differs from Karol Wojtyła, whose work on Max Scheler was an attempt to reconnect knowledge with reality in an age of epistemological doubt. For a concise overview of St. Thomas’s relationship with modern theories of knowledge, see Paul T. Durbin, “St. Thomas and the History of Theories of Knowledge,” appendix 6, in *Summa theologiae*, vol. 12 (1a. 84-89) (New York: McGraw-Hill Books Company, 1968), 181-184; Paul T. Durbin, “Naïve Realism,” appendix 7, in *Summa theologiae*, vol. 12, 185-187; John F. Peifer, *The Concept in Thomism* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1952). For a historical survey of epistemological trends from Descartes, Immanuel Kant, and Karl Marx, see Benedict Ashley, O.P., *Theologies of the Body: Humanist and Christian* (Braintree, MA: The Pope John Center, 1985), 51-100. Charles Taylor has also provided an important and thorough history of secularism. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007). Another recent work has outlined the encounter of St. Thomas’s moral theory with the modern separation of practical reason and speculative reason represented in the thought of Immanuel Kant and John Locke. See Luis Cortes, *The Disfigured Face: Traditional Natural Law and Its Encounter with Modernity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

⁹ *Ibid.*

an operation *per se*. For nothing can operate but what is actual.... We must conclude, therefore, that the human soul, which is called the intellect or the mind, is something incorporeal and subsistent.”¹⁰ It is important to note that Aquinas also telegraphs his full anthropology in this question, namely that although the intellect understands apart from the body, the body is necessary for the action of the intellect because the body provides the object of the intellectual action, which is the phantasm.¹¹ It is because the souls of brute animals have no operations apart from the body, because a sensitive soul’s operation corresponds to some change in the body, that their souls are not subsistent.¹²

Even though the human soul is subsistent, St. Thomas is clear: the soul itself is not man. Man is more than his soul. Here, Aquinas begins to emphasize the importance he ascribes to matter (i.e., the body) in the definition of a species. “To the nature of the species belongs what the definition signifies; and in natural things the matter is part of the species; not, indeed, signate [i.e., designated or particular] matter, which is the principle of individuality; but the common matter. For as it belongs to the notion of this particular man to be composed of soul, flesh, and bones; so it belongs to the notion of man to be composed of soul, flesh, and bones.”¹³ The definition of man, whether as a species or as an individual, always includes the body—flesh and bones.

Aquinas acknowledges that there are operations in man which belong not only to the soul but also to the body. Sensation, for example, belongs to the soul and to the body.¹⁴ Plato had said that sensation was proper to the soul, and thus argued that the soul was using

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See *ST*, I, q. 75, a. 2, ad 3.

¹² See *ST*, I, q. 75, a. 3.

¹³ *ST*, I, q. 75, a. 4

¹⁴ See *ST*, I, q. 75, a. 4, corpus and q. 75, a. 3.

the body. Gilles Emery writes, “This position would imply that all the actions of a man are attributed properly to his soul alone. If I am my soul, then since I am the subject of my actions, my soul is the only proper subject of my actions. If this were true, our acts of sensation should be attributed only to our soul.”¹⁵ Aquinas argues otherwise. The acts of sensation are accomplished by soul and body. Man is both soul and body.¹⁶

That Aquinas holds for an incorporeal subsistent soul poses a problem in traditional Aristotelian metaphysics since the intellectual soul moves from potency to act when it moves from ignorance to understanding. For Aristotle, the principle of potency is matter (ultimately prime matter), which is brought into act by an agent who brings form to that matter (ultimately this process is grounded in the First Act or Prime Mover).

How then, if the soul is not a body, if it has no matter, can it move from potency to act? Aquinas replies:

The First Act is the universal principle of all acts; because It is infinite, virtually *precontaining all things*, as Dionysius says. Wherefore things participate of It not as part of themselves, but by diffusion of Its processions. Now as potentiality is receptive of act, it must be proportionate to act. But the acts received which proceed from the First Infinite Act, and are participations thereof, are diverse, so that there cannot be one potentiality which receives all acts, as there is one act, from which all participated acts are derived; for then the receptive potentiality would equal the active potentiality of the First Act. Now the receptive potentiality in the intellectual soul is other than the receptive potentiality of first [prime] matter, as appears from the diversity of things received by each. For primary matter receives individual forms; whereas the intelligence receives absolute forms. Hence the existence of such a potentiality in the intellectual souls does not prove that the soul is composed of matter and form.¹⁷

Aquinas circumvents a cosmic antithesis between primordial matter and the First Act by noting that there cannot be one potentiality but must be many potentialities. For if there

¹⁵ Emery, “The Unity of Man,” 218.

¹⁶ For a brief overview of Plato’s anthropology, see Torchia, *Exploring Personhood*, 39-69.

¹⁷ *ST*, I, q. 75, a. 5, ad 1 (original emphasis)

were only one potentiality to receive the infinite act of the First Act than that one potentiality would be brought to infinite act itself and by definition there cannot be two infinite acts. Rather, the processions of the Infinite Act bringing other potentialities to act are multiple and, one might say, polyvalent. Primary matter (and matter in general) receives individual forms. The intellect, however, receives absolute forms. Thus, there are different modes of moving from potentiality to actuality.

When Aquinas speaks about the union of the soul and body, he begins by insisting that the soul (the intellectual principle) is the form of the body, which follows upon his earlier statement that the soul is the first principle act of the body:

We must assert that the intellect which is the principle of intellectual operation is the form of the human body. For that whereby primarily anything acts is a form of the thing to which the act is to be attributed.... The reason is because nothing acts except so far as it is in act; where a thing acts by that whereby it is in act. Now it is clear that the first thing by which the body lives is the soul. And as life appears through various operations in different degrees in living things, that whereby we primarily perform each of these vital actions is the soul. For the soul is the primary principle of nourishment, sensation, and local movement; and likewise of our understanding. Therefore the principle by which we primarily understand, whether it be called the intellect or the intellectual soul, is the form of the body.¹⁸

Gilles Emery sees the point, “For St. Thomas, the principle of intellectual activity is the first principle of all other activities: biological, sensitive, motive, and so on.”¹⁹ In the next subsection, it will be clearer that Aquinas is not reducing all the activity of the human person to intellectual activity, far from it.

Presently, it is enough to insist that Aquinas is radically opposed to the idea (espoused by Plato and others) that the soul is not the form of the body but only uses the

¹⁸ *ST*, I, q. 76, a. 1, corpus.

¹⁹ Emery, “The Unity of Man,” 215.

body. For Aquinas, “the intellectual soul is united by its very being to the body as a form.”²⁰

In fact, he also insists that “although it [the soul] may exist in a separate state, yet since it ever retains its unibility [with the body], it cannot be called an individual substance... as neither can the hand nor any other part of man.”²¹ And so, Aquinas says, those who say the soul is united to the body in any way other than as its form must explain the experience each person has of understanding for him- or herself.²² Since the soul is the form of the body there are no intermediaries between the soul and the body. It is a direct union.²³ His insistence that the soul is *the* substantial form of the body is what put St. Thomas in contradiction with university and ecclesial authorities of his day, all of whom were committed Platonists.²⁴

Anticipating what he will eventually say about the intellectual power of understanding, Aquinas writes that it was necessary for the soul to be united to such a body:

Since the form is not for the matter, but rather the matter for the form, we must gather from the form the reason why the matter is such as it is; and not conversely. Now the intellectual soul... in the order of nature, holds the

²⁰ *ST*, I, q. 76, a. 6, ad 3.

²¹ *ST*, I, q. 29, a. 1, ad 5.

²² See *ST*, I, q. 76, a. 1, corpus: “But if anyone says that the intellectual soul is not the form of the body he must first explain how it is that this action of understanding is the action of this particular man; for each one is conscious that it is himself who understands.” In this article, Aquinas goes on to argue against both Averroes and Plato, who both had separated the principle of understanding from the body, each in a different way.

²³ See *ST*, I, q. 76, aa. 4-7. In each of these four articles, Aquinas defends his anthropology based on a substantial union between the soul and body against a different objection. In article 4, he argues against the idea that the body requires another form, other than the intellectual form, since this would suggest that the intellectual soul is not the first principle of life. In the fifth article, he argues that this is a proper union, that the body is not corrupt matter united to a pure spirit. In the sixth article, Aquinas argues that this union is not the result of accidental dispositions. Finally, in article seven, he concludes that the soul is not united to the body through other intermediary bodies.

²⁴ Aquinas argues that there could be no multiplicity of forms in man. As the body’s substantial form, the intellectual soul, subsumes the powers of the vegetative and sensitive souls (see *ST*, I, q. 75, a. 5; I, q. 76, a. 3). For a summary of the debate on the plurality of forms, see Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 126-130. The debate is related to the development of Aquinas’s position on delayed hominization (see note 4 above). For a history of the controversies surrounding Aquinas’s work especially following upon his death, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1:296-316; Emery, “The Unity of Man,” 216-217; Tugwell, “Aquinas: Introduction,” 224-243.

lowest place among intellectual substances; inasmuch as it is not naturally gifted with the knowledge of truth, as the angels are; but has to gather knowledge from individual things by way of the senses.... But nature never fails in necessary things: therefore the intellectual soul had to be endowed not only with the power of understanding, but also with the power of feeling. Now the action of the senses is not performed without a corporeal instrument. Therefore it behooved the intellectual soul to be united to a body fitted to be a convenient organ of sense.²⁵

While the body “needs” the soul for life, the soul “needs” the body because its nature requires the sense impressions only the body can provide.

That the body is vitally important for the life of the soul and the soul for the body is inherent in Aquinas’s stricthylomorphism. It is not surprising that he and John Paul both emphasize the importance of the body, especially since John Paul received an education in Thomistic metaphysics and anthropology early in his ecclesial career. St. Thomas, as I will show below, was very concerned to identify the role the body plays in the functions of the soul.

B. The Powers of a Soul United to a Body

Having stated that the soul is the form of the body, Aquinas’s explanation of the various powers of the soul reaffirms the importance of the body. At least in this life, while the body and soul are united in the human composite, the soul needs the body for all of its operations. In this life, the body is implicated in even the intellect’s highest operation of understanding since these operations are completed *through* the assistance of the body even if not in virtue of the body. Lawrence Dewan once wrote, “As beings at home in the world of

²⁵ *ST*, I, q. 76, a. 5, corpus.

material, corporeal things, we humans have a mind that finds its nourishment in the consideration of such corporeal things.”²⁶

Following Aristotle, St. Thomas says that there are several powers in the soul.²⁷ Each of these powers is directed to a particular act. For Aquinas and Aristotle, acts are distinguished according to their objects.²⁸ However, because he is committed to the composite view of human nature, the Angelic Doctor insists that not all the powers of human nature exist in the soul as their subject. This is to say, the soul is not the exclusive agent of all the powers of human nature:

It is clear from what we have said above... that some operations of the soul are performed without a corporeal organ, as understanding and will. Hence the powers of these operations are in the soul as their subject. But some operations of the soul are performed by means of corporeal organs; as sight by the eye, and hearing by the ear. And so it is with all the other operations of the nutritive and sensitive parts [of the human composite]. Therefore the powers which are the principles of these operations have their subject in the composite, and not in the soul alone.²⁹

It should be remembered, however, that earlier Aquinas insisted that the soul is the first act of the body. In that sense, all the powers of the human composite have the soul as their principle, even if not as their acting subject.³⁰ By insisting that the soul is not itself the subject of all the powers of the human composite, Aquinas disagrees even with Augustine who said that the soul can sense some things without the body.³¹

²⁶ Lawrence Dewan, “St. Thomas, Metaphysics, and Human Dignity,” in *Wisdom, Law, and Virtue: Essays in Thomistic Ethics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 63.

²⁷ See *ST*, I, q. 77, a. 2. Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima*, II, 3, 414a31.

²⁸ See *ST*, I, q. 77, a. 3. Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima*, II, 4., 415a18.

²⁹ *ST*, I, q. 77, a. 5, corpus.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, ads 1 and 2.

³¹ See St. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, Lib. XII, cap. 7, in Joseph Zycha, ed., *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1894), 28:389. See also, St. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, Lib. XII cap. 24, in *Corpus scriptorum*, 28:416. As is standard for St. Thomas, he does not outright “correct” St. Augustine but rather modifies how one should read his words. So, for example, in this passage Augustine is

Aquinas (again, following Aristotle) identifies four genera of powers “in the soul.”³² These are: the vegetative, the sensitive, the appetitive, the locomotive, and the intellectual.³³ The vegetative power “is a power the object of which is only the body that is united to that soul... [it] acts only on the body to which the soul is united.”³⁴ In the very next article, he goes on to say that the vegetative power of the soul has three parts: one in which the body comes into existence (the generative part), another in which the body grows to its full proportion (the augmentative part), and, finally, a third in which the body is sustained throughout life (the nutritive part).³⁵

Beyond the vegetative powers, “there is another genus in the powers of the soul, which genus regards a more universal object—namely, every sensible body and not only the body to which the soul is united.”³⁶ These are the sensitive powers of the soul. Beyond this genus, “there is yet another genus in the powers of the soul, which regards a still more universal object—namely, not only the sensible body, but all being in universal.”³⁷ These are the intellectual powers.

Both the sensitive and the intellectual powers are directed toward somebody extrinsic to the soul and the body to which the soul is united. And so, St. Thomas writes that these extrinsic bodies must be related to the soul in two ways. First, “inasmuch as this something extrinsic has a natural aptitude to be united to the soul, and to be by its likeness in the

following Plato. St. Thomas writes, among other things, “Now in many things relating to philosophy Augustine makes use of the opinions of Plato, not asserting them as true, but relating them” (*ST*, I, q. 77, a. 5, ad 3).

³² Aquinas’s inconsistent use of language should be noted. He says powers are in the soul and not in the human composite. But he also says that some powers need the body to function and hence later he will say that after the soul separates from the body, these powers are in the soul virtually but not actually (see *ST*, I, q. 77, a. 8, corpus).

³³ See *ST*, I, q. 78, a. 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, corpus.

³⁵ See *ST*, I, q. 78, a. 2.

³⁶ *ST*, I, q. 78, a. 1, corpus.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

soul.”³⁸ But secondly, inasmuch as the soul has an “inclination and tendency to something extrinsic” there are two more powers in the soul.³⁹ The first is the appetitive in which the soul “is referred to something extrinsic as to an end.”⁴⁰ The second is the locomotive in which the soul “is referred to something extrinsic as to the term of its operation or movement.”⁴¹

Aquinas, in fact, divides all living things into three classifications based upon how each living thing’s soul relates to extrinsic bodies. The vegetative souls (plants and the like) have no such relation; they are related only to their own bodies. Sensitive souls (brute animals) are related not only to their own souls (and so have the vegetative powers) but are related to other sensible bodies. Intellectual souls have these two powers but also can consider universal being.⁴²

Human beings share the sensitive power’s mode of apprehension with brute animals, and for Aquinas, the sensitive powers are the beginning of the action of the intellectual power: understanding. For this reason, it is important to analyze just exactly how St. Thomas understands the sensitive powers. The first thing to note is that for Aquinas, the sensitive powers are divided between the exterior senses and the interior senses, all of which involve the body (or some “corporeal organ” of the body in some way).

³⁸ Ibid. Here, Aquinas is recalling his earlier observation that the likeness or species of forms are in the soul, not the forms in their natural mode of existence, that is, as the forms exist in objects.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. I refer the reader to the first chapter of this dissertation (pages 21-28 above) in which I offered an analysis of St. Thomas’s understanding of appetite and the good. See also *ST*, I, q. 78, a. 1, ad 3 in which Aquinas distinguishes natural appetite and animal appetite. The natural appetite is “that inclination which each thing has, of its own nature for something; wherefore by its natural appetite each power desires something suitable to itself.” Animal appetite, on the other hand, “results from the form apprehended.” This is the difference between the natural appetite and the animal appetite. The natural appetite of the eye, for instance, is to see. The eye desires to see the visible object. But the animal appetite desires the visible object “not merely for the purpose of seeing it, but also for other purposes.”

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² See *ibid.*

The exterior senses that St. Thomas identifies are those we all learn in grammar school: seeing, hearing, smelling, touch, and taste.⁴³ These are all considered powers by Aquinas, who says that “sense is a passive power, and is naturally *altered* by the exterior sensible. Wherefore the exterior cause of such *alteration* is what is *per se* perceived by the sense, and according to the diversity of that exterior cause are the sensitive powers diversified.”⁴⁴ The diversity of powers corresponds to the modes in which exteriorly sensible causes affect bodies. These exteriorly sensible causes are any mixture of visibility, aurality, scent, tactility, and delectability. The sensitive powers are affected by the exterior sensible causes in five different ways, and therefore there are five different exterior senses.

Change and alteration, Aquinas says, is either spiritual or material. But the alteration required by the senses is spiritual:

Natural *alteration* takes place by the form of the *one who is altering* being received, according to its natural existence, into the thing *that is altered*, as heat is received in the thing heated. Whereas spiritual *alteration* takes place by the form of the *one who is altering* being received, according to a spiritual mode of existence, into the thing *that is altered*, as the form of color is received into the pupil which does not thereby become colored. Now, for the operation of the senses, a spiritual *alteration* is required, whereby an intention [*intentio*] of the sensible form is effected in the *sense* organ. Otherwise, if a natural *alteration* alone sufficed for the sense’s action, all natural bodies would feel when they undergo alteration.⁴⁵

⁴³ See *ST*, I, q. 78, a. 3.

⁴⁴ *ST*, I, q. 78, a. 3, corpus (translation altered by me at italics): “Est autem sensus quaedam potentia passiva, quae nata est immutari ab exteriori sensibili. Exterior ergo immutativum est quod per se a sensu percipitur, et secundum cuius diversitatem sensitivae potentiae distinguuntur.” In this study, I consistently alter the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province of the Latin words ‘*immutatio*’ and ‘*immutare*.’ *Immutare* is the infinitive ‘to change’ or ‘to alter.’ *Immutatio* is the noun ‘change’ or ‘alteration.’ However, the English Dominicans routinely use the words ‘immutation,’ ‘immutate,’ ‘immutated,’ and ‘immutor.’ These are archaic. The reader should take note that this word, while related to, is not the same as ‘*immutabilis*’ which means ‘unchangeable.’

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* (translation altered by me at italic, see previous note): “Est autem duplex immutatio: una naturalis, et alia spiritualis. Naturalis quidem, secundum quod forma immutantis recipitur in immutato secundum esse natural, sicut calor in calefacto. Spiritualis autem, secundum quod forma immutantis recipitur in immutato secundum esse spirituale; ut forma coloris in papilla, quae non fit per hoc colorata. Ad operationem autem sensus requiritur immutatio spiritualis, per quam intention formae sensibilis fiat in organo sufficeret ad sentiendum, omnia corpora naturalia sentirent dum alterantur.” St. Thomas goes on to explain that while all

Corporeal organs are needed to experience and perceive sensible bodies. The body is necessary to see, to smell, to hear, to taste, and to touch.

Four interior senses supplement the five exterior senses. Aquinas says there must be interior senses because “nature does not fail in necessary things” and “we must observe that for the life of a perfect animal, the animal should apprehend a thing not only at the actual time of sensation, but also when it is absent. Otherwise, since animal motion and action follow apprehension, an animal would not be moved to seek something absent.”⁴⁶ Again, St. Thomas’s argument is based on experience. In this same article, he writes that we observe animals seeking goods they do not presently possess. Therefore, he argues, there must be interior senses: the common sense (under which he includes the proper sense), imagination, the estimative power, and the memorative powers.

The common sense is that interior sense that is “the common root and principle of the exterior senses.”⁴⁷ Each exterior sense has a proper sense which “judges of the proper sensible by discerning it from other things which come under the same sense; for instance, by discerning white from black or green.”⁴⁸ But Aquinas goes on to say that the five proper senses are useless in comparing exterior sensible bodies since each proper sense only knows

sense operations involve some spiritual change in the sense organ, some senses involve natural alteration in the causing object itself, and still other senses involve a concomitant alteration in a particular sense organ. For example, in sight, there is no natural alteration in the object seen necessary for it be seen. But for an object to be heard, some natural alteration is necessary to produce sound. Aquinas says the same is true for smell. For tasting and touching, on the other hand, there is both a spiritual alteration and a natural alteration in the sense organs “for the hand that touches something hot becomes hot.”

⁴⁶ *ST*, I, q. 78, a. 4, corpus.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ad 1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, ad 2.

its own proper object. Thus, “neither sight nor taste can discern white from sweet.”⁴⁹ The task of interpreting the alterations across all the proper senses is left to the common sense.⁵⁰

The sensible forms are received in the exterior senses when an actual agent is directly impinging upon one or more of those five senses. We hear a thing when it is actually making noise. We cease to hear it when it no longer produces noise. Yet, in Aquinas’s anthropology, animals have an imagination which is for “the retention and preservation of these forms... as it were a storehouse of forms received through the senses.”⁵¹ Human beings and brute animals can recall the sounds of particular things which they have already heard, even if they do not hear it now. The same is true for the other four senses. Man’s imagination, however, goes beyond animals because he is able not only to recall sensible forms but to combine them. He can recall the form of gold and the form of a mountain to imagine a gold mountain though he has never seen one.⁵²

Brute animals have another interior power, not directly connected to the exterior senses, “for the apprehension of intentions which are not received through the senses.”⁵³ Sheep have a natural estimative instinct that the wolf means them harm. In human beings, however, intentions are not perceived through a purely natural instinct but “by means of coalition of ideas. Therefore the power which in other animals is called natural estimative, in man is called the *cogitative*, which by some sort of collation discovers these intentions. Wherefore it is also called the *particular reason*.”⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ In the *sed contra* of *ST*, I, q. 78, a. 4, Aquinas cites Avicenna as the authority for his list of interior senses.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² See *ibid.*

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid. (original emphasis).

Finally, animals and human beings have an interior memorative sense which stores the intentions received by the natural estimative (or the cogitative, in the case of man).

Aquinas says that we can notice that animals are able to routinely avoid that which they know to be harmful. According to St. Thomas, however, memory works differently in men and women than it does in animals. Animals only have, what he calls, a “*sudden* recollection of the past.”⁵⁵ Man also has as part of his memory the power of reminiscence in which syllogistically recalls the past “by the application of individual intentions.”⁵⁶

The human cogitative and memorative powers, Aquinas writes, “owe their excellence not to that which is proper to the sensitive part; but to a certain affinity and proximity to the universal reason, which, so to speak, overflows into them.”⁵⁷ This is the first hint of the importance of the relationship of the sensitive part of the human soul with the rational part. This relationship elevates the sensitive (i.e., what man shares with all the animals) in dignity. But as I have already said, the relationship is also important for the intellectual powers of the soul. Aquinas repeats that here but at the same time lays claim to the possibility of the intellect working beyond the corporeal sensitive: “Although the operation of the intellect *has its origin in the senses*: yet, in the thing apprehended through the senses, the intellect knows many things which the senses cannot perceive.”⁵⁸ This is most especially true in ratiocination, the process of syllogistic argument from premise to conclusion. Aquinas appeals to this process in explaining just exactly how natural reason can know of God’s existence even though our senses cannot perceive him.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Ibid. (my emphasis).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *ST* I, q. 78, a. 4, ad 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid., ad 4 (original emphasis).

⁵⁹ See *ST*, I, q. 12, a. 12; I, q. 1, a. 8.

When he begins to discuss the intellect of man specifically, Aquinas immediately states that the intellect is a passive power in man.⁶⁰ This is not surprising given what he has already said about the powers of the soul being moved from potency to act even though there is no matter within the soul. In the Thomistic metaphysics, only God is without potency. Only God is pure act, there is no potentiality in him whatsoever.⁶¹

The importance of the body for human knowledge in Aquinas's thinking cannot be underestimated. Indeed, it will soon be evident that the body has a lasting legacy on virtually all intellectual activity. The pursuit of knowledge is not the sole purview of some disembodied Cartesian soul inhabiting the material instrument of the body. On the contrary, below I will show that the body is so involved in human knowledge that Aquinas is forced to admit that the soul's disembodied state in the hereafter is, in a certain sense, unnatural until the soul reunites with the body at the general resurrection of the dead.

⁶⁰ See *ST*, I, q. 79, a. 2. The limits of this study prevent me from thoroughly explaining Aquinas's epistemology: how the intellect receives knowledge or how the parts of the intellect (practical reason and speculative reason) interact with one another. Peifer's classic exegesis remains valid, even though he is admittedly indebted to the commentarial tradition Thomist tradition (specifically John of St. Thomas and Thomas Cajetan), see Peifer, *The Concept of Thomism*. In my opinion, Daniel Westberg offers an accurate account the relationship of practical and speculative reason vis-à-vis their relationship to human action and the virtue of prudence. See Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*. Westberg's is not the only interpretation of reason claiming Thomistic influence. Both Jean Porter and Martin Rhonheimer claim Thomistic roots in their respective theories of the relationship of practical and speculative reason, even though they disagree with each other on certain points. See Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005); Martin Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason: A Thomistic View of Moral Autonomy*, trans. Gerald Malsbary (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000); Martin Rhonheimer, review of *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, by Jean Porter, *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19 (2006): 357-378; Jean Porter, "A Response to Martin Rhonheimer," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19 (2006): 379-395; Martin Rhonheimer, "Reply to Jean Porter," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19 (2006): 397-402. The recent debate on the nature of the moral object in Thomistic Action theory between Steven A. Long and William Murphy is in my view a debate about the relationship between the practical and speculative intellect in human action. See Steven A. Long, *Teleological Grammar*; William F. Murphy, Jr., "Developments in Thomistic Action Theory: Developments toward a Greater Consensus," *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 8 (2008): 505-528; Steven A. Long, "The False Theory undergirding Condoministic Exceptionalism: A Response to William F. Murphy, Jr. and Rev. Martin Rhonheimer," *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 8 (2008): 709-732.

⁶¹ See *ST*, I, q. 3, a. 1.

C. The Body and Knowledge

Aquinas follows Aristotle instead of Plato on the need for an active agent intellect. As St. Thomas reads him, “According to the opinion of Plato, there is no need for an active intellect in order to make things actually intelligible... For Plato supposed that the forms of natural things subsisted apart from matter, and consequently that they are intelligible: since a thing is actually intelligible from the very fact that it is immaterial.”⁶² But Aristotle, on the other hand, held that the forms of natural things do not exist apart from matter, and as forms in matter they are not intelligible. Therefore, “it follows that the natures or forms of the sensible things which we understand are not actually intelligible. Now nothing is reduced from potentiality to act except by something in act; as the senses are made actual by what is actually sensible. We must therefore assign on the part of the intellect some power to make things actually intelligible, by abstraction of the species from material conditions. And such is the necessity for an active intellect.”⁶³

The Angelic Doctor goes on to say that this agent intellect is in the soul.⁶⁴ He says, “we know this by experience, since we perceive that we abstract universal forms from their particular conditions, which is to make them actually intelligible.”⁶⁵ He does admit, however, that there must be a separate higher intellect which brings our own agent intellect from potentiality to act. And he says, “the separate intellect, according to the teaching of our faith, is God Himself, who is the soul’s Creator, and only beatitude.... Wherefore the human soul derives its intellectual light from Him.”⁶⁶

⁶² *ST*, I, q. 79, a. 3, corpus.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ See Aristotle, *De Anima*, III, 5, 430a10.

⁶⁵ *ST*, I, q. 79, a. 4, corpus.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Aquinas definitively rejects any sort of body-soul dualism in his account of knowledge. He is especially critical of Plato's theory that "man's intellect is filled with all intelligible species, but that, by being united to the body, it is hindered from the realization of its act."⁶⁷ This is unreasonable, St. Thomas says, because it seems impossible for a soul to forget all of its knowledge. Secondly, "if a sense be wanting, the knowledge of what is apprehended through that sense is wanting also: for instance, a man who is born blind can have no knowledge of colors."⁶⁸ The analogy is clear. Just as a blind man would not know the very concept of color, had the soul forgotten all knowledge of immaterial forms, no man (not even Plato) would even know the concept of knowledge to explain it to another.

The principle reason Aquinas cannot accept Plato's position is that he has already rejected Plato's anthropological position that the soul uses the body. For Aquinas, the soul is the form of the body and is naturally united to the body. Thus, "it is unreasonable that the natural operation of a thing be totally hindered by that which belongs to it naturally."⁶⁹

Aquinas is fully committed to body-soul unity in the acquisition of knowledge. He places the power of human knowledge midway between the sensitive power of animals and the intellect of angels. All three, he says, are cognitive powers.⁷⁰ The sensitive power is "the act of a corporeal organ. And therefore the object of every sensitive power is a form as existing in corporeal matter. And since such matter is the principle of individuality, therefore every power of the sensitive part can only have knowledge of the individual."⁷¹ The angelic intellect is a "cognitive power which is neither the act of a corporeal organ, nor in any way

⁶⁷ *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 3, corpus.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ See *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 1, corpus.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

connected with corporeal matter.... The object of [this] cognitive power is therefore a form existing apart from matter: for though angels know material things, yet they do not know them save in something immaterial, namely, either in themselves or in God.”⁷²

The human intellect holds the middle place, “for it is not the act of an organ; yet it is a power of the soul which is the form of the body.”⁷³ This has consequences for knowledge.

Aquinas continues:

It is proper to it [the intellect] to know a form existing individually in corporeal matter, but not as existing in this individual matter. But to know what is in individual matter, not as existing in such matter, is to abstract the form from individual matter which is represented by phantasms. Therefore we must needs say that our intellect understands material things by abstracting from phantasms; and through material things thus considered we acquire some knowledge of immaterial things, just as, on the contrary, angels know material things through the immaterial.⁷⁴

Aquinas suggests that he is following Aristotle in navigating between the two extremes of Democritus and of Plato. Democritus, like the other “ancient philosophers” (i.e., the pre-Socratics), did not distinguish between intellect and sense.⁷⁵ And so they thought that the impressions of the senses of exterior bodies was enough to suffice for intellectual knowledge. Democritus thought that these impressions were caused by a discharge of images from the exterior sensible cause. But Plato, as Aquinas has already shown, held that immaterial knowledge had nothing to do with sensible objects.

Aristotle, on the other hand, chose a middle way. St. Thomas writes:

For with Plato he agreed that intellect and sense are different. But he held that the sense has not its proper operation without the co-operation of the body; so that to feel is not an act of the soul alone, but of the *composite*....

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid..

⁷⁵ See *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 6.

Since, therefore, it is not unreasonable that the sensible objects which are outside the soul should produce some effect in the *composite*, Aristotle agreed with Democritus in this, that the operations of the sensitive part are caused by the impression of the sensible on the sense: not by a discharge, as Democritus said, but by some kind of operation.⁷⁶

But Aristotle and Aquinas agreed with Plato that the corporeal cannot make an impression on the incorporeal. The corporeal cannot bring the incorporeal to act. Therefore, Aristotle postulated the active intellect which “causes the phantasms received from the senses to be actually intelligible, by a process of abstraction.”⁷⁷ Following this logic, Aquinas concludes: “On the part of the phantasms, intellectual knowledge is caused by the senses. But since the phantasms cannot of themselves affect the passive intellect, and require to be made actually intelligible by the active intellect, it cannot be said that sensible knowledge is the total and perfect cause of intellectual knowledge, but rather that it is in a way the material cause.”⁷⁸

So important is the union of the intellectual soul with the body for Aquinas that he insists that the intellect can actually understand nothing in this life without making use of the sensitive powers of the soul, which depend on the body. Even to consider knowledge already acquired and to render judgments, the intellectual soul depends on the interior senses of the imagination and memory. This is because “the proper object of the human intellect, which is united to a body, is a quiddity or nature existing in corporeal matter; and through such natures of visible things it rises to a certain knowledge of things invisible.”⁷⁹ Aquinas again appeals to experience to explain this. He writes that when we attempt to understand something, we generate phantasms to serve us by way of examples in helping us to

⁷⁶ *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 6 (original emphasis).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 7, corpus.

understand. For the intellect to actually understand its proper object (a nature existing in corporeal matter), it must always turn to sense images (phantasms).⁸⁰

Certainly in this life the body and its dispositions are important for our pursuit of truth and for our contemplation. Aquinas writes that some people understand things better simply because their bodies have a better disposition.⁸¹ Perhaps they are more imaginative in the phantasms they create to lead them syllogistically from one conclusion to another. Or maybe they have a better memory. The reverse is also true, when the imagination is faulty (as in the case of mental disorder) or the memory is lacking (as in the case of amnesia or laziness), our understanding is hindered and perhaps even suspended.⁸²

The Angelic Doctor acknowledges that his insistence on a strong unity of body and soul in his anthropology creates a tension in holding, at the same time, that the soul continues to live after it is separated from the body, and that it can continue to operate even after death.⁸³ He writes, “if we admit that the nature of the soul requires it to understand by turning to the phantasms, it will seem, since death does not change its nature, that it can then naturally understand nothing; as the phantasms are wanting to which it may turn.”⁸⁴ His resolution is simple:

Nothing acts except so far as it is actual, the mode of action in every agent follows from its mode of existence. Now the soul has one mode of being when in the body, and another apart from it, its nature remaining always the same; but this does not mean that its union with the body is an accidental thing, for, on the contrary, such union belongs to its very nature, just as the nature of a light object is not changed, when it is in its proper place, which is natural to it, and outside its proper place, which is beside its nature. The soul, therefore, when united to the body, consistently with that mode of existence,

⁸⁰ See also *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 1; I, q. 85, a. 2.

⁸¹ See *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 7.

⁸² See *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 7; I, q. 84, a. 8.

⁸³ See *ST*, I, q. 89, a. 1, corpus.

⁸⁴ *ST*, I, q. 89, a. 1, corpus.

has a mode of understanding, by turning to corporeal phantasms, which are in corporeal organs; but when it is separated from the body, it has a mode of understanding, by turning to simply intelligible objects, as is proper to other separate substances.⁸⁵

This other mode of understanding by turning directly and simply to intelligible objects is, however, “not in accordance with its [the soul’s] nature, and likewise to understand without turning to the phantasms is not natural to it.”⁸⁶

The separated soul understands by means of “a participated species arising from the influence of the Divine light, shared by the soul as by other separate substances [i.e., the angels]; though in a lesser degree.”⁸⁷ It must be said that this participation in the Divine light is an act of grace, for Aquinas, not an act of nature. While it is not natural for the soul to understand in this way, this is not an unnatural mode of knowledge since “God is the author of the influx both of the light of grace and of the light of nature.”⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid. In this same article, Aquinas also explains that while it may be more noble to understand by turning directly to intelligible objects without the use of phantasms, the perfection of the universe required a gradation of being and intellectual power. The human soul holds the lowest place among intellectual substances.

⁸⁷ *ST*, I, q. 89, a. 1, ad 3.

⁸⁸ Ibid.. Aquinas goes on to say that the divine light will allow the separated soul to know singulars (*ST*, I, q. 89, a. 4) and to know intelligible species learned in this life without having to resort to phantasms (*ST*, I, q. 89, a. 5-6). However, he does say that in this state the soul will have knowledge only in a confused and general manner because the soul is not united to its body (see *ST*, I, q. 89, a. 2-3). Aquinas’s solution to the existence the separated soul is not completely satisfying to many of his readers, especially to strict Aristotelians. See, for example, Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 366-393. Eleanor Stump offers a more favorable reading, see Eleanor Stump, *Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 200-216. For a more detailed treatment on this question, see Anton C. Pegis, “The Separated Soul and Its Nature in St. Thomas,” in *St. Thomas Aquinas 1274-1974 Commemorative Studies*, ed. Armand Mauer, vol. 1 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1974): 131-58; Montague Brown, “Aquinas on the Resurrection of the Body,” *The Thomist* 56 (1992): 165-207.

D. Person in Aquinas

The Angelic Doctor does not use the word ‘person’ in his treatise on man. Aquinas writes of personhood exclusively in the treatise on the Trinity and the treatise on the incarnation of Christ.⁸⁹ However, what he says in these two treatises is instructive for his notion of the human person.

Commenting on Aquinas’s notion of personhood, Joseph Torchia writes, “Thomistic personhood... comprises the spiritual dimension of the rational soul, the corporeal dimension of the human body, and the metaphysical dimension of being or *esse*. By virtue of this multidimensionality, the person is the ontological center of a whole range of operations.”⁹⁰ A brief survey of St. Thomas’s understanding of person will show this to be true.

When Aquinas begins his discussion of the definition of the personhood, he notes that substances, by definition, are individualized.⁹¹ We speak of *this* substance. The Angelic Doctor gives the name ‘*hypostasis*’ or ‘first substance’ to individual substances. The desk upon which the student writes is, according to Aquinas, a *hypostasis* or first substance. It is individualized and distinguishable from other first substances, even every other desk with which it would share a certain commonality and nature. But there is something more particular than even first substances. Aquinas continues: “Further still, in a more special and perfect way, the particular and the individual are found in the rational substances which have dominion over their own actions; and which are not only made to act, like others; but which can act themselves; for actions belong to singulars. Therefore also the individuals of the

⁸⁹ See *ST*, I, qq. 27-43 for the treatise on the Holy Trinity and *ST*, III, q. 22 on the personhood of Jesus Christ.

⁹⁰ Torchia, “Exploring Personhood,” 143.

⁹¹ See *ST*, I, q. 29, a. 1.

rational nature have a special name even among other substances; and this name is *person*.”⁹²

A person, therefore, is an individual substance of a rational nature. This is Boethius’ definition of a person.⁹³

In this definition, Aquinas is using the word ‘substance’ in a secondary way—as a concrete thing (a first substance). Aquinas writes:

In another sense substance means a subject or *suppositum*, which subsists in the genus of substance. To this, taken in a general sense, can be applied a name expressive of an intention; and thus it is called the *suppositum*. It is also called by three names signifying a reality—that is, *a thing of nature, subsistence, and hypostasis*, according to a threefold consideration of the substance thus named. For, as it exists in itself and not in another, it is called *subsistence*; as we say that those things subsist which exist in themselves, and not in another. As it underlies some common nature, it is called *a thing of nature*; as, for instance, this particular man is a human natural thing. As it underlies the accidents, it is called *hypostasis*, or *substance*.⁹⁴

Just as these words—‘a thing of nature,’ ‘subsistence,’ and ‘hypostasis’—signify all subjects (particular substances, i.e., first substances) the name ‘person’ signifies that for all rational substances.⁹⁵

It is important to understand St. Thomas’s view of the relationship of first substances, that is, concrete substance (whether rational or irrational) with the concept of nature or essence (the term ‘substance’ in its primary sense). Essence, nature, or substance refers to the “quiddity of a thing, signified by its definition, and thus we say that the definition means the substance of a thing.”⁹⁶ In his small but influential work, *De ente et*

⁹² *ST*, I, q. 29, a. 1, corpus (original italics).

⁹³ Boethius, *Liber de Persona et duabus Naturis contra Eutychen et Nestorium ad Ioannem Diaconum Ecclesiae Romanae*, cap. 3, in *PL* 64, 1343.

⁹⁴ *ST*, I, q. 29, a. 2, corpus (original italics). In the pages below, we will see that Aquinas will slightly modify this definition when he speaks of the personhood of God and of Jesus Christ.

⁹⁵ See *ibid.* Aquinas acknowledges the Latin and Greek differences in the term ‘*hypostasis*.’ See also *ST*, I, q. 29, a. 2, ad 2.

⁹⁶ *ST*, I, q. 29, a. 2, corpus.

essentia, Aquinas highlights the importance of matter in the multiplication of individuals within a species or nature.⁹⁷ Regarding substances of matter and form, Aquinas writes, “Their act of existing is received and limited because they have it from another; what is more, their nature or quiddity is received in designated matter. So, they are limited both from above and from below. Moreover, because of the division of designated matter, individuals can now be multiplied in one species.”⁹⁸ Matter is the principal of individuation among substances composed of matter and form (rational or otherwise). Accidental qualities are inherent in the individuation of substances. Aquinas says that an accident is an essence which is apt to exist in a subject.⁹⁹ Whiteness does not exist in the abstract but exists in white things. Whiteness is an accidental quality.

St. Thomas goes on to distinguish accidents between those which are proper to matter and those that are proper to form. Accidents which characterize the matter distinguish individuals of one species from another, while accidents attributed to the form characterize the species as a whole. The former he calls the “individual’s accidents,” while the latter he calls “proper attributes [accidents].”¹⁰⁰ Proper accidents are found in every individual of a species or nature, while individual accidents are just that: they are the individualizing attributes of material difference. These are the accidents that exist in matter

⁹⁷ This small work on being and essence is usually dated to the 1250s, about fifteen years before Aquinas began writing the *Summa theologiae*. On this particular point, however, there is no evidence that he ever changed his thought on the nature of accidents and essence, as it is borrowed from Aristotle, to whom Aquinas was indebted for much of his life. See Torrell, “St. Thomas Aquinas,” 47-50.

⁹⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, ch. 5, trans. Armand Mauer, C.S.B., (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1949). Unless otherwise noted, all translations from this work are Mauer’s.

⁹⁹ See *ST*, III, q. 77, a. 1, ad 2.

¹⁰⁰ See Aquinas, *De ente*, ch. 6: “As everything is individuated by matter and placed in a genus or species by its form, accidents following upon matter are the individual’s accidents, and it is by these that individuals of the same species differ one from another. But accidents which are consequent upon form are proper attributes of the genus or species. Hence, they are found in everything sharing the nature of the genus or species. The capacity for laughter, for instance, comes from man’s form, since laughter occurs because of an act of knowledge on the part of man’s soul.”

which distinguishes primary matter from designated [i.e., signate or particular] matter.

Aquinas says that maleness and femaleness are individual accidents consequent upon matter.¹⁰¹ Whereas risibility or laughter is a proper accident of the human species because it is attributed to the form, the human soul—and risibility occurs as an act of knowledge.¹⁰² This important distinction between individual accidents and proper accidents cannot be forgotten in any discussion of Aquinas's view of the body, and, I argue, his view of sexual difference, which I will present below.

'*Hypostasis*' and 'person' refer to these individual substances (substances individualized by matter designated by individual accidents). In the visible world, according to the Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysical view, matter is the distinguishing principle of substance. Thus, in the created world, matter and form are part of the definition (or essence) of things: "In things composed of matter and form, the essence signifies not only the form, nor only the matter, but what is composed of matter and the common form, as the principles of the species."¹⁰³ But in the invisible world, in the angelic realm, angels are differentiated from each other not by matter but by difference of their powers.¹⁰⁴ They too fit the definition of an individual hypostasis of a rational nature, and so can rightly be called persons.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Ibid.: "Among those accidents deriving from matter we find a certain diversity. Some are consequent upon matter in accordance with the relation it has to a special form; for example, among animals, male and female, whose diversity comes from matter." Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, X, 9, 1058b21.

¹⁰² See note 100 above. I am grateful to Paul Gondreau for highlighting the importance of this passage for Thomistic sexual anthropology. See Paul Gondreau, "The 'Inseparable Connection' between Procreation and Unitive Love (*Humanae Vitae*, §12) and Thomistic Hylomorphic Anthropology," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 6 (2008): 738-739.

¹⁰³ *ST*, I, q. 29, a. 2, ad 3.

¹⁰⁴ See *ST*, I, q. 50, aa. 2,4

¹⁰⁵ See Aquinas, *De ente*, ch. 5 for more of Aquinas's thoughts on the principle of individuation both for God and for the angelic creatures.

The soul separated from its body after death, on the other hand, cannot be called a person. Aquinas writes, “The soul is part of the human species; and so, although it may exist in a separate state, yet since it ever retains its nature of unibility [with the body], it cannot be called an individual substance, which is the hypostasis or first substance, as neither can the hand nor any other part of man; thus neither the definition nor the name of person belongs to it.”¹⁰⁶ St. Thomas has been criticized by at least one personalist theologian, who himself claims a Thomistic background, for denying personhood to the separated soul. David Crosby contends that Aquinas is wrong to think that the person is a mere part.¹⁰⁷ I think Crosby misses the point. For Aquinas, the human person is not a part, but the composite of soul and body. The soul is a part of the composite; it is part of man’s personhood. Aquinas’s commitment to hylomorphic unity between soul and body is resolute.¹⁰⁸ In a Thomistic anthropology, the category of personhood is not in contradistinction to the category of nature. Rather, the person is the perfection and manifestation of nature. Strictly speaking, we do not know human nature; we know persons. We make abstractions about human nature as principles of action, but it is a human person who acts.

The Angelic Doctor emphasizes the importance of ascribing personhood to God. “*Person* signifies what is most perfect in all nature—that is, a subsistent individual of a rational nature. Hence, since everything that is perfect must be attributed to God, forasmuch as His essence contains every perfection, this name *person* is fittingly applied to God; not,

¹⁰⁶ *ST I*, q. 29, a. 1, ad 5.

¹⁰⁷ See David Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 18.

¹⁰⁸ See Emery, “The Unity of Man,” 230: “The existence of the separated soul must be conceived of in terms of a twofold relation: first, a relation to the earthly existence in which the soul was united to the body in the dignity of a person (the soul did not exist before its union with the body); and second, a relation to the resurrection, which is held by faith, since the general resurrection will restore to the dead the human completeness of the person. The separated soul subsists in this twofold ‘tension.’” See also Dewan, “St. Thomas, Metaphysics, and Human Dignity,” 60–62.

however, as it is applied to creatures, but in a more excellent way.”¹⁰⁹ Aquinas partially agrees with an objector who cites the position that God is not rational in the same sense as creatures are. God’s reason is not discursive. Yet, St. Thomas notes, God has an intelligent nature.¹¹⁰

More importantly, for our purposes, St. Thomas agrees with an objector that God is not individualized by matter. He writes, “God cannot be called an *individual* in the sense that His individuality comes from matter; but only in the sense which implies incommunicability.”¹¹¹ He writes approvingly of Richard of St. Victor’s addendum to Boethius’ definition: “*Person in God is the incommunicable existence of the divine nature.*”¹¹² God is a person not only because he is a supreme incommunicable individual, but also the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are persons within the Godhead. This is the case for Aquinas because there are real relations in God, which are coincident with the divine essence.¹¹³ These relations are really distinguished from each other.¹¹⁴ And it is clear that for Aquinas distinction is the *sine qua non* of personhood.

Unfortunately, Aquinas does not anywhere speak in more detail about the incommunicability of the person. In the above cited passage, Aquinas says that God is an individual (and thus a person) “only in the sense which implies incommunicability.” Here Aquinas suggests that individuality is not only a particularity but also incommunicability and then he cites Richard of St. Victor’s who defines ‘person’ as including the property of

¹⁰⁹ *ST*, I, q. 29, a. 3, corpus (original emphasis).

¹¹⁰ See *ST*, I, q. 29, a. 3, obj. 4 and ad 4.

¹¹¹ *ST*, I, q. 29, a. 3, ad 4.

¹¹² Ibid (original emphasis). Cf. Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate*, Lib. IV, cap. 22, in *PL*, 196, 945.

See also *ST* I, q. 29, a. 4, ad 3.

¹¹³ See *ST*, I, q. 28, a. 1; *ST*, I, q. 28, a. 2.

¹¹⁴ See *ST*, I, q. 28, a. 3.

incommunicability when ‘person’ is used in reference to God. This raises two questions that Aquinas does not answer explicitly.

The first question is whether incommunicability is a property of individuality or is it a property of personhood. By this I mean to ask, when St. Thomas is speaking about incommunicability and individuality in this reply to his objector, does he mean to suggest that all individual substances are incommunicable? Is it because God is incommunicable that he is therefore an individual even though he is not comprised of matter and form? Certainly, Aquinas would agree that when non-rational substances are seen, they are, in some sense, communicating their existence to those who see. It would seem then that St. Thomas is using the word ‘individual’ in a more strict sense: an individual rational substance. If this is the case, then what does it mean to be incommunicable?

And this is the second question, what does it mean for Aquinas to say that God is incommunicable? In a later question, St. Thomas explains what he means both in the divine appellation of the term ‘person’ and in the human ‘appellation’:

The names of genera and species, as *man* or *animal*, are given to signify the common natures themselves, but not the intentions of those common natures, signified by the terms *genus* or *species*. The vague individual thing, as *some man*, signifies the common nature with the determinate mode of existence of singular things—that is, something self-subsisting, as distinct from others. But the name of a designated singular thing signifies that which distinguishes the determinate thing; as the name *Socrates* signifies *this* flesh and *this* bone. But there is this difference—the term *some man* signifies the nature, or the individual on the part of its nature, with the mode of existing of singular things; while this name *person* is not given to signify the individual on the part of the nature, but the subsistent reality in that nature. Now this is common in idea to the divine persons, that each of them subsists distinctly from the others in the divine nature. Thus the name *person* is common in idea to the three persons.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ *ST*, I, q. 30, a. 4, corpus (original emphasis).

What is ‘incommunicable’ in persons, whether human or divine, is not a matter of verbal communication or the exchange of information in any way. What is incommunicable, for Aquinas, is one’s own distinctive being, one’s particular concrete instantiation of one’s nature. What is incommunicable (and, I might add, non-transferable) is one’s own subsistent reality. And this, in turn, means that one’s own operations and actions in nature are just that: one’s own.¹¹⁶

In the first section of this chapter, therefore, I have offered a thorough account of Aquinas’s hylomorphism, on the one hand, and his understanding of personhood, on the other. Unfortunately, Aquinas never fully articulated the incommunicability of the person. In this way, the thought of Karol Wojtyla (and later of Pope John Paul II) moves beyond the limitations established by Aquinas’s method and concern. Still, St. Thomas’s strong account of the human person as a body-soul composite situates itself within the rich metaphysical categories of matter and form, act and potency. However, precisely because Aquinas is so committed to material aspect of the body-soul composite that is the human person, it is necessary for him both to offer an account of the purpose of bodily sexual difference and the impact this difference makes on the flourishing of the human person.

¹¹⁶ In *ST*, III, q. 19, a. 1, ad 4, Aquinas writes, “Being and operation belong to the person by reason of the nature; yet in a different manner. For being belongs to the very constitution of the person, and in this respect it has the nature of a term; consequently, unity of person requires unity of the complete and personal being. But operation is an effect of the person by reason of a form or nature.”

II. Sexuality and Human Flourishing

A. Sexual Difference in the *Summa Theologiae*

For St. Thomas, bodily sexual difference is natural and serves a purpose. The primary purpose in his view is the generation of offspring.¹¹⁷ However, he does not believe that sexual difference is solely for the purposes of procreation. In a number of places, he distinguishes the manner in which human beings beget and raise their children from the manner in which brute animals do.¹¹⁸ The command to “be fertile and multiple” (Gen. 1:28), while given to both man and animals, is simply not fulfilled by man in the same way as it is by animals.¹¹⁹ Indeed, Aquinas remarks that “the human male and female are united, not only for generation, as with other animals, but also for the purpose of domestic life, in which each has his or her duty, and in which the man is the head of the woman.”¹²⁰ The nature of married domestic life, its relationship to the love of the couple, and the raising of their

¹¹⁷ See *ST*, I, q. 92, a. 1.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, *ST*, I, q. 92, a. 2; II-II, q. 154, a. 2; Supp., q. 41, a. 1 (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, Lib. III, cap. 122). On December 6, 1273, while celebrating Mass on the feast of St. Nicholas, St. Thomas had some sort of mystical experience after which he told his friend and associate, Reginald, these famous words: “I cannot do any more. Everything I have written seems to me as straw in comparison with what I have seen.” After that, the Angelic Doctor never wrote or dictated anything again. He died three months later on March 7, 1274 (see Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 289-295). Until the day of the vision, St. Thomas had been working on the *tertia pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, which includes treatises on the incarnation, the sacraments, the resurrection, and the last things. Because he did not finish, his students culled responses from his early commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* (begun in 1252) to complete the *Summa* (see Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 332-334). This became known as the *Supplementum* to the *Summa theologiae*. This supplement includes the questions on marriage. Though I will cite the *Supplementum* in this study because it is treated by most Thomists as a canonical extension of the *Summa*, I will corroborate St. Thomas’s arguments found in the *Supplementum* with arguments from his other *summa*, the *Summa contra gentiles* which was completed only a few years before he began working on the *Summa theologiae* (see Torrell, *ibid.*). To assist the reader, when the *Supplementum* is cited in this study, if a corresponding passage exists in the *Summa contra gentiles* (hereafter, *SCG*), it will be immediately offered parenthetically.

¹¹⁹ See *ST*, Supp., q. 42, a. 2, ad 4 (*SCG*, Lib. III, cap. 136).

¹²⁰ *ST* I, q. 92, a. 2. It is beyond purview of this study to engage in an exegesis of Aquinas’s use of the traditional Christian household code in which the husband was understood to be the head of the woman. Here he is following a long line of Christian thinkers who, until modern times, held for such a code following the early practice of early Christianity witnessed by St. Paul.

children will be more fully explored in the next chapter. Presently, I am concerned with human sexual difference as such.

Initially, St. Thomas must contend with Aristotle's biological understanding that "the female is, as it were, a mutilated [misbegotten] male."¹²¹ Aristotle believed that semen is the active force of regeneration operating on the matter of the menstrual fluid in the formation of offspring. Since semen comes from the male, he concluded that its goal was to form a male. A female, therefore, was a "misbegotten male"—the semen had failed in its operation to reproduce its own likeness. Aquinas agrees with this idea. He writes, "As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence; such as that of a south wind."¹²² There is no doubt that such a statement by the Angelic Doctor would not endear him to roughly half of the world's population. What will be clear below, however, is that Aquinas's faith in creation and in human dignity will force him to temper Aristotle's position.

Sexual difference is in the body for Aquinas. It is part of human nature because the body is part of human nature. I remind the reader of the point in the previous section, neither the body alone nor the soul alone constitute the human individual. The soul is subsistent, and endures even after the corruption of the body, yes, but it always retains its nature to be united to a particular body. Sexual difference is in the body, not in the soul.

¹²¹ Aristotle, "On the Generation of Animals," II, 3, 737a28, trans. A. Platt, in Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1:1144.

¹²² *ST I*, q. 92, a. 1, ad 1.

St. Thomas is very clear on this point. For him, the image of God in each human person resides in the soul, not in the body. The human body, like all other created realities, bears a trace of God's presence (inasmuch as it is created and sustained by God) but it is not in the image and likeness of God.¹²³ God himself does not have sexual parts.¹²⁴ The soul is the seat of the powers that make us like God: knowledge (reason) and choice (will). He understands Genesis 1:28 "not to imply that the image of God came through the distinction of sex, but that the image of God belongs to both sexes, since it is in the mind, wherein there is no sexual distinction."¹²⁵ Indeed, elsewhere, Aquinas asserts that "in matters pertaining to the soul woman does not differ from man as to the thing (for sometimes a woman is found to be better than many men as regards the soul)."¹²⁶

However, Aquinas moves beyond Aristotle. Granting that in individual cases a woman may indeed be "misbegotten," he writes that "as different grades belong to the perfection of the universe, so also diversity of sex belongs to the perfection of human nature."¹²⁷ The female sex along with the male sex belongs to the "*perfection* of human

¹²³ See *ST*, I, q. 93, a. 6.

¹²⁴ See *ST*, I, q. 3.

¹²⁵ *ST*, I, q. 93, a. 6, ad 2. Recall that when Aquinas uses the word 'mind,' he means the soul (see *ST*, I, q. 75, a. 2). When Aquinas comments on St. Augustine's position that man is in the image of God but woman is in the image of man, he agrees, but only in a secondary sense: "The image of God, in its principal signification, namely the intellectual nature, is found both in man and in woman.... But in a secondary sense the image of God is found in man, and not in woman: for man is the beginning and end of woman; as God is the beginning and end of every creature" (*ST*, I, q. 93, a. 4, ad 1).

¹²⁶ *ST*, Supp., q. 39, a. 1, corpus. Cf. *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*, Lib. IV, dist. xxv, q. 2, a. 2, qua. 1, ad. 4. In this passage, St. Thomas is defending the Church's teaching that women invalidly receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. While his reasoning is solid, a more contemporary look at the Church's teaching on the non-admissibility of women to the priesthood is offered by Sara Butler, *The Catholic Priesthood and Women: A Guide to the Teaching of the Church* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2006). It should also be noted that in the *Summa contra gentiles*, Aquinas says, "the female needs the male, not merely for the sake of generation, as in the case of other animals, but also for the sake of government, since the male is both more perfect in reasoning and stronger in his powers" (*Summa contra gentiles*, III, 123:3). Since this passage concerns the relationship between man and woman in the state of marriage, I will withhold exegesis until the next chapter.

¹²⁷ *ST*, I, q. 99, a. 2, corpus.

nature.”¹²⁸ Thus, he writes, “Woman is said to be a *misbegotten male*, as being a product outside the purpose of nature considered in the individual case: but not against the purpose of universal nature.”¹²⁹ Elsewhere, he writes that the woman “is in the intention of universal nature, which requires both sexes for the perfection of the human species.”¹³⁰ Prudence Allen notes the importance of this principle in Aquinas’s thought. She writes, “Thomas has moved towards sex complementarity. For the argument that the ‘variety of sex makes for the perfection of human nature’ implies that the differences between women and men are significant and that there is an overall value to this difference that surpasses the individual superiority of a single man in relation to a single woman.”¹³¹

Aquinas is able to move beyond Aristotle’s limits because of his belief in a Creator God. The very first time in the *Summa* that he responds to Aristotle’s position he concludes with these words: “The intention of universal nature depends on God, who is the universal author of nature. Therefore, in establishing nature, he produced not only the male but also female.”¹³² St. Thomas can agree with Aristotle that, yes, in individual situations and cases perhaps the generation of a woman is a flaw in the work of the active generating force. But this is only secondary. God has established a greater end for the universe, for the human

¹²⁸ Ibid. (translation altered by me at italics): “Sicut autem ad perfectionem universi pertinent diversi gradus rerum, ita etiam diversitas sexus est ad perfectionem humanae naturae.”

¹²⁹ *ST*, I, q. 99, a. 2, ad 1 (original emphasis).

¹³⁰ *ST*, Supp., q. 81, a. 3, ad 2 (*SCG*, Lib. IV, cap. 88).

¹³¹ Prudence Allen, R.S.M., *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 BC – AD 1250* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1985), 389. Allen has provided a seminal study of the notion of woman in the history of Western thought. Her treatment of St. Thomas Aquinas is balanced and thorough. See Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 385-407. A more introductory study is offered in Christopher C. Roberts, *Creation and Covenant: The Significance of Sexual Difference in the Moral Theology of Marriage* (New York: T& T Clark, 2007), 99-109. Michael Nolan has argued that both Aristotle and Aquinas have been generally mistranslated on this point. He insists that both men were speaking of the male and female “factors,” namely the gametes. The female is a defective vis-à-vis the male gamete, the sperm, inasmuch as it failed to reproduce its own likeness. See Michael Nolan, “The Aristotelian Background to Aquinas’s Denial that ‘Woman is a Defective Male,’” *Thomist* 64 (2000): 21-69.

¹³² *ST*, I, q. 92, a. 1, ad 1 (my translation): “Intentio autem naturae universalis dependet ex Deo, qui est universalis auctor naturae. Et ideo instituendo naturam, non solum marem, sed etiam feminam produxit.”

race. He has so arranged the universe, that what even appears to be a defect in a particular case is in fact not. Aquinas believes all things are subject to God's providence, even though God rarely acts immediately upon his creation.¹³³ He himself does not purposely cause natural defect.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, things are only considered natural defects or evils when considered in relation to some particular good (in this case the good of how the semen ought to function). These are not defects in relation to the ultimate end ordained by God's providence and to which all of nature tends.¹³⁵

It is apparent that Aquinas believes that the female sex is "natural" in this universal perspective from the fact that he held that women would have been begotten even before original sin, while man was still in the state of innocence.¹³⁶ In the state of innocence the body is more subject to the soul.¹³⁷ Therefore, St. Thomas says that the determination of sex of the offspring would not have been due to some defect or extrinsic cause but rather to the "mere will of the parent."¹³⁸ He presumes that in the state of innocence that there would have been a desire for these "misbegotten males" since it is God's will that there be male and females, and in the state of innocence man's reason was perfectly subject to God.¹³⁹ It is only persons living with a fallen human nature that view women as "misbegotten males."¹⁴⁰

¹³³ See *ST*, I, q. 103, a. 5; I, q. 103, a. 6.

¹³⁴ For the sake of the argument, I am accepting here the Aristotelian position that women are in fact "misbegotten." Although this is obviously a position based on a faulty understanding of reproduction.

¹³⁵ See *ST*, I, q. 103, a. 7.

¹³⁶ See *ST*, I, q. 99, a. 2.

¹³⁷ See *ST*, I, q. 95, a. 1.

¹³⁸ *ST*, I, q. 99, a. 2, ad 2.

¹³⁹ See *ST*, I, q. 95, a. 1.

¹⁴⁰ Aquinas's moves toward equality between men and women leaves something to be desired for many feminist theologians. Lisa Sowle Cahill provides a reasonable critique of Aquinas's anthropology in Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Between the Sexes: Foundations for a Christian Ethics of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 105-122. See also Kari Elisabeth Borresen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Woman in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1995). Prudence Allen offers a more favorable reading in Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 385-407, 410-413.

God's will is that the human species reproduce through the union of the two sexes. There would have been reproduction even in original innocence, not for the preservation of the species (since death had not yet entered in human history), but, Aquinas says, for the multiplication of the species, which is a good. Otherwise, original sin would have been necessary for access to this good.¹⁴¹ Even in original innocence, procreation would have been through sexual intercourse.¹⁴²

This does not mean, however, that sexual difference is meaningless for Aquinas, or that it is relegated only to procreation. It is part of our integrity. After the general resurrection, there will no longer be procreation since "the human race will already have the number of individuals preordained by God."¹⁴³ Nonetheless, there will be sexual difference in the resurrection.¹⁴⁴ The body will rise in its integrity and with all its members.¹⁴⁵

This means that sexual difference is inherent in nature itself because it is an accidental quality within signate matter. John Grabowski's caution against overstating that sexual difference is located in nature is well taken.¹⁴⁶ It should not be suggested that sexual difference in men and women is so profound so as to delineate two separate species or natures, each with its own inclinations (and, Grabowski warns, its own moral code). Surely, this is not Aquinas's intention as he indicates the soul (the seat of the image of God) is without sexual difference and that the proper accidents which flow from the soul determine

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² See *ST*, I, q. 99, a. 2.

¹⁴³ *ST*, Supp., q. 81, a. 4, corpus (*JCG*, Lib. IV, cap. 83).

¹⁴⁴ See *ST*, Supp., q. 81, a. 3 (*JCG*, Lib. IV, cap. 88).

¹⁴⁵ See *ST*, Supp., q. 80, a. 1 (*JCG*, Lib. IV, cap. 84).

¹⁴⁶ See Grabowski, *Sex and Virtue*, 109.

the species, whereas the accidents of matter (such as maleness and femaleness) determine only the individuals of the species.¹⁴⁷

When he first introduces the concept of sexual difference for procreation, Aquinas notes that “among animals there is a vital operation nobler than generation, to which their life is principally directed; therefore the male sex is not found in continual union with the female in perfect animals, but only at the time of coition.”¹⁴⁸ This is to distinguish animals from plants whose highest purpose is generation. He goes on to say that “man is yet further ordered to a still nobler vital action, and that is intellectual operation.”¹⁴⁹ The nobility of intellectual operation is central to Aquinas’s understanding of the relationship of sexuality to human happiness (beatitude), but yet this intellectual operation, as I have already shown, is in some way contingent upon the body. Sexuality and the passions it entails must be incorporated into an account of human flourishing.

¹⁴⁷ Grabowski’s solution is to draw a solid distinction between person and nature, locating maleness and femaleness in the human person analogous to the relationality which distinguishes the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity (see Grabowski, *Sex and Virtue*, 109-111). Recently, Paul Gondreau has criticized Grabowski’s approach as effectively reducing maleness and femaleness to one relation among many. He argues that the distinction between the Divine Persons can only analogously be compared to the relationship between men and women. See Paul Gondreau, “The ‘Inseparable Connection,’” 739n23. I am grateful to Paul Gondreau for allowing me to preview the manuscript of his forthcoming book, “Principles of a Realist (Thomist) Sexual Anthropology.” It provides more detail than the article cited. Gondreau’s salient criticism deserves a response which is beyond the constraints of this dissertation. Many of his points are valid, but I do not think John Grabowski intends in his work to make maleness and femaleness pure accidental properties equivalent to all other relationships. Quite the contrary, if anything, it seems to me that he defines these as the two essential relationships of the human person.

¹⁴⁸ *ST*, I, q. 92, a. 1.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

B. Sexuality and Human Flourishing

For all of his emphasis on sexual difference, St. Thomas Aquinas writes virtually nothing about the sex act itself, the conjugal act. He does say that generation of offspring is a “a great blessing” (*bonum consecretum*).¹⁵⁰ In *Summa contra gentiles*, he writes that carnal union produces a “sweet association” (*suavem societatem*) between the sexes.¹⁵¹ He resolutely disagrees with the Church fathers, St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. John Chrysostom, both of whom said that there would have been no sexual activity in original innocence.¹⁵² He goes as far as to say that sexual delight would have been greater in Eden: “Indeed would sensible delight have been greater in proportion to the greater purity of nature and the greater sensibility of the body.”¹⁵³

The above reflections on Aquinas’s anthropology reveals that he would place the delight and pleasure that comes from sexual intercourse in the sensitive appetite since it includes bodily affectation. I remind the reader of the brief exegesis I provided in the first chapter of this study on Aquinas’s understanding of appetite.¹⁵⁴ There, I noted that St. Thomas understands every creature to exist in a state of becoming.¹⁵⁵ Every created being tends toward its own perfection, toward the fulfillment of its nature.¹⁵⁶ The good is that which is perfective. Particular objects manifest particular goods which are perfective of other objects.¹⁵⁷ That this is true both of the sensitive souls of brute animals, who although

¹⁵⁰ See *ST*, I, q. 98, a. 1.

¹⁵¹ See *SCG*, Lib. III, cap. 123.6.

¹⁵² See St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio*, in Jacques Paul Migne, *Cursus Patrologiae*, Greek Edition (Paris: 1857-1866), 44, 189. Hereafter cited as *PG*. See also St. John Chrysostom, *Homilae in Genesim*, hom. 16, in *PG*, 53, 126..

¹⁵³ *ST*, I, q. 98, a. 2, ad 3.

¹⁵⁴ See pages 20-29 above.

¹⁵⁵ See *ST*, I-II, q. 18, a. 1.

¹⁵⁶ See *ST*, I, q. 19, a. 1.

¹⁵⁷ See *ST*, I, q. 16, a. 1.

irrational, are guided by their nature to their own perfection and also true of the intellectual soul, which is guided by reason, is vital for any discussion of sexuality in the *Summa theologiae* because for Aquinas the delight of sex is fundamentally a passion in the sensitive appetite.

For St. Thomas, the appetitive drives in man and in brute animals are principally directed *ad extra*, to things in themselves. In fact, he speaks of passion (the drive of the sensitive appetite) as “being drawn to the agent.”¹⁵⁸ Aquinas writes, “Now the soul is drawn to a thing by the appetitive power rather than by the apprehensive power: because the soul has, through its appetitive power, an order to things as they are in themselves: hence the Philosopher says that *good and evil*, i.e., the objects of the appetitive power, *are in things themselves*.”¹⁵⁹ It should be recalled how this differs from the apprehensive power as described earlier in this chapter, which is directed to the likeness or species of things as they exist in the one who perceives.

The will (the intellectual appetite) differs from the sensitive appetite in this respect. The will is not directed to things as they exist in themselves. Rather, the will is directed to the good of things in themselves as those things are apprehended by the intellect.¹⁶⁰ The sensitive soul, on the other hand, is affected by things in themselves. In sensitive apprehension, as I noted earlier, extrinsic objects cause a corporeal transmutation which allows the sensitive soul to apprehend the presence of the thing (and to remember the thing). The same is true for the sensitive appetite. The sensitive appetite is moved, or drawn

¹⁵⁸ *ST*, I-II, q. 22, a. 1, corpus.

¹⁵⁹ *ST*, I-II, q. 22, a. 2, corpus (original emphasis). Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, BK. VI, 4, 1027b25.

¹⁶⁰ See *ST*, I, q. 82, a. 3.

by an agent, by way of bodily transmutation.¹⁶¹ And this is why passion is not properly intellectual:

Passion is to be found where there is corporeal transmutation. This corporeal transmutation is found in the act of the sensitive appetite, and is not only spiritual, as in the sensitive apprehension, but also natural. Now there is no need for corporeal transmutation in the act of the intellectual appetite [i.e., the will]: because this appetite is not exercised by means of a corporeal organ. It is therefore evident that passion is more properly in the act of the sensitive appetite, than in that of the intellectual appetite.¹⁶²

But this does not mean that man, because he is an intellectual creature, is without passion.

Indeed, while passion may not be essentially in the human soul, it is a part of the soul accidentally because the soul is the form of the body, and, therefore, has sensitive functions (both apprehensive and appetitive). Passion is in the human composite, according to Aquinas.¹⁶³

However, because of man's higher status as an intellectual creature, he experiences his passions differently, or better to say, passions affect him differently. Men and women differ from animals in exactly how they respond to their passions. For Aquinas, all passions must be governed by reason. In irrational animals this does not happen by following intellectual reason but rather they "are led by a kind of estimative power, which is subject to a higher reason, i.e., the Divine reason."¹⁶⁴ Earlier in the *Summa theologiae*, St. Thomas explains, "in other animals the sensitive appetite is naturally moved by the estimative power;

¹⁶¹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 22, a. 1.

¹⁶² *ST*, I-II, q. 23, a. 1, corpus.

¹⁶³ See *ST*, I-II, q. 22, a. 1, corpus and ad 3.

¹⁶⁴ *ST*, I-II, q. 24, a. 4, ad 3.

for instance, the sheep, esteeming the wolf as an enemy, is afraid.”¹⁶⁵ But in man, the estimative power is replaced with practical reason.¹⁶⁶

Aquinas holds that passions in themselves are not moral. They are neither good nor evil when considered only as corporeal transmutations affected by extrinsic agents. The sensitive appetite, like sensitive apprehension, is, on its own terms, irrational.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the sensitive appetite is related to reason. Thus, St. Thomas writes, “If, however, they [the passions] be considered as subject to the command of reason and will, then moral good and evil are in them.”¹⁶⁸

The Angelic Doctor disagrees with the Stoics, who viewed all passions as evil.

Regarding the Stoic view of emotion, he writes the following:

The Stoics did not discern between sense and intellect; and consequently neither between the intellectual and sensitive appetite. Hence they did not discriminate the passions of the soul from the movements of the will, in so far as the passions of the soul are in the sensitive appetite, while the simple movements of the will are in the intellectual appetite: but every rational movement of the appetitive part they call will, while they call passion, a movement that exceeds the limits of reason.¹⁶⁹

The problem with the Stoics was not that they identified passion as evil because it exceeded the limits of reason. The problem was that they did not understand that the will moves apart from the sensitive and irrational appetite. Aquinas himself says that “the passions of the soul, in so far as they are contrary to the order of reason, incline us to sin: but in so far as they are

¹⁶⁵ *ST*, I, q. 81, a. 3, corpus.

¹⁶⁶ See *ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ See *ST*, I-II, q. 24, a. 1.

¹⁶⁸ *ST*, I-II, q. 24, a. 1, corpus.

¹⁶⁹ *ST*, I-II, q. 24, a. 2, corpus.

controlled by reason, they pertain to virtue.”¹⁷⁰ Men and women must govern their passions rationally.

Elsewhere, Aquinas writes that the lower appetite, while sufficient to move irrational animals immediately, is not sufficient to move man unless the higher appetite (the will guided by reason) concedes:

In other animals movement follows at once the concupiscible and irascible appetites: for instance, the sheep, fearing the wolf, flees at once, because it has not superior counteracting appetite. On the contrary, man is not moved at once, according to the irascible and concupiscible appetites: but he awaits the commands of the will, which is the superior appetite. For wherever there is order among a number of motive powers, the second only moves by virtue of the first: wherefore the lower appetite is not sufficient to cause movement, unless the higher appetite consents.¹⁷¹

This is why in the treatise on the passions, Aquinas will insist that “the passions, in so far as they are voluntary [i.e., consented to by the will], [may] be called morally good or evil.”¹⁷²

Daniel Westberg notes, “Though it is often convenient for people to excuse their eating habits or sexual behavior on the basis of the strength and irresistibility of sensation and the natural sequence of desire and action, Thomas will have none of this.”¹⁷³ Our passions must be directed to reason.

Here, again, we see the importance of reason in Aquinas’s work, especially in his moral theory. Reason is important in the determination of good and evil in human action because the human soul’s specific difference from other souls is that it is a rational soul, which is man’s natural form:

Now in human actions, good and evil are predicated in reference to reason; because as Dionysius says, *the good of man is to be in accordance with reason*, and

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., ad 3.

¹⁷¹ *ST*, I, q. 81, a. 3, corpus.

¹⁷² *ST*, I-II, q. 24, a. 1, corpus.

¹⁷³ Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 80.

evil is *to be against reason*. For that is good for a thing which suits it in regard to its form; and evil, that which is against the order of its form. It is therefore evident that the difference of good and evil considered in reference to the object [of action] is an essential difference in relation to reason; that is to say, according as the object is suitable or unsuitable to reason. Now certain actions are called human or moral, inasmuch as they proceed from reason.¹⁷⁴

Proper human actions are those actions of which man is the master through reason and free-will. This is to distinguish free actions from other general acts of man which do not involve freedom (for example, the beating of the heart).¹⁷⁵

It is God's own reason that governs the universe. To act in accord with his reason is to be good; Aquinas calls this the eternal law.¹⁷⁶ Animals participate in the divine reason inasmuch as their natural form and even their estimative power are created by divine reason to operate in a certain manner. Human beings, on the other hand, participate in divine reason through their own God-given power to reason. This is the basis of the natural law:

Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Wherefore it has a share of the of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end: and this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law.... The light of natural reason, whereby we discern what is good and what is evil, which is the function of the natural law, is nothing else than an imprint on us of the Divine light. It is therefore evident that the natural law is nothing else than the rational creature's participation of the eternal law.¹⁷⁷

By following the dictates of right reason (which Aquinas calls the natural law), we find the fulfillment of our nature, of our created being, as designed by divine reason. This is why St.

¹⁷⁴ *ST*, I-II, q. 18, a. 5, corpus (original italics).

¹⁷⁵ See *ST*, I-II, q. 1, a. 1.

¹⁷⁶ See *ST*, I-II, q. 91, a. 1.

¹⁷⁷ *ST*, I-II, q. 91, a. 2, corpus.

Thomas is clear that “it belongs to the perfection of moral or human good, that the passions themselves also should be controlled by reason.”¹⁷⁸

The sensitive appetite and its passions are only properly ordered when they are governed by reason.¹⁷⁹ In fact, inasmuch as the passions are subject to reason, they are subject to the natural law.¹⁸⁰ While it is true that passions have an “inborn aptitude” to obey reason, after original sin they do not always so obey.¹⁸¹ More about this will be discussed in the next chapter. For now, I will explore briefly Aquinas’s understanding of the unique Adam and Eve’s unique original state in order to contrast that with love, marriage, and concupiscence in our fallen state in the final two chapters of this study. That men and women live with the wounds of original sin cannot but affect their mastery of their passions and their relationship with each other.

III. Original Innocence and Original Sin

St. Thomas writes that original justice, the state in which Adam and Eve were created, “consisted in [man’s] reason being subject to God, the lower powers to reason, and the body to the soul.”¹⁸² He adds, “the first subjection was the cause of both the second and the third; since while reason was subject to God, the lower powers remained subject to reason.”¹⁸³ It is only when man is in right relationship with God that he is in right relationship with himself.

¹⁷⁸ *ST*, I-II, q. 24, a. 3, corpus.

¹⁷⁹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 17, a. 7.

¹⁸⁰ See *ST*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2, ad 2.

¹⁸¹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 50, a. 3, ad 1; I-II, q. 17, a. 7.

¹⁸² *ST*, I, q. 95, a. 1, corpus.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

It is important to note that this threefold submission is not a natural endowment. In fact, the Catholic tradition has long held Adam and Eve were endowed “with grace and other gifts surpassing what is due to human nature by itself.”¹⁸⁴ For Aquinas, original justice is a grace. He writes, “Now it is clear that such a subjection of the body to the soul and of the lower powers to reason, was not from nature; otherwise it would have remained after sin.... Hence it is clear that also the primitive subjection by virtue of which reason was subject to God, was not a merely natural gift, but a supernatural endowment of grace; for it is not possible that the effect should be of greater efficiency than the cause.”¹⁸⁵ For St. Thomas, the first man and woman were created in grace and this grace is the cause of original righteousness, the state of original justice.¹⁸⁶

The subjection of the lower powers to the higher powers are necessary for happiness in Aquinas’s anthropology. He explains why in the *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*, written contemporaneously with the *Summa theologiae*.¹⁸⁷ In the *De Malo*, St. Thomas provides a key insight:

Every rational creature without exception needs a particular divine help, namely, the help of sanctifying grace, in order to attain perfect happiness.... But in addition to this necessary help, human beings needed another supernatural help because of their composite nature. For human beings are composed of soul and body, and of an intellectual and sensory nature. And if the body and the senses be left to their nature, as it were, they burden and hinder the intellect from being able to freely attain the highest reaches of contemplation. And this help was original justice, by which the mind of human beings would be so subject to God that their powers and their very

¹⁸⁴ O’Brien, “Original Justice,” 144.

¹⁸⁵ *ST*, I, q. 95, a. 1. See also *ST*, I, q. 100, a. 1, corpus and ad 2; I-II, q. 81, a. 2.

¹⁸⁶ It should be noted that another grace of the original state was immortality. As St. Thomas understands it, death entered the world through sin not inasmuch as humanity was naturally immortal before sin, but rather human nature has always been mortal. But in the state of original justice, grace preserved the body from corruption (see *ST*, I, q. 97, a. 1).

¹⁸⁷ For the historical context of these two works, see Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1:142-159, 197-223, 327-329.

bodies would be completely subject to them, nor would their reason impede them from being able to tend toward God.... And original sin takes away this help of original justice.¹⁸⁸

The situation of original justice was wholly unique. Our first parents were uniquely blessed with unmerited grace, which perfected human nature on a natural level and eliminated deficiencies connatural to that nature (such as suffering and death).¹⁸⁹ The sensitive appetites pull the creature in various directions toward various goods. This can distract man from his higher pursuits unless the lower appetites are channeled by reason.

In the state of innocence, concupiscence, which is a desire for sensible pleasure, would have been moderated by reason. And this is why Aquinas can say that sexual delight would have been greater in Eden than it is now. Reason's role "is not to lessen sensual pleasure, but to prevent the force of concupiscence from cleaving to it immoderately. By *immoderately* I mean going beyond the bounds of reason, as a sober person does not take less pleasure in food taken in moderation than the glutton, but his concupiscence lingers less in such pleasures."¹⁹⁰ Indeed, the Angelic Doctor does not intend to remove passion from the moral life. He insists "just as it is better than man should both will good and do it in his external act; so also does it belong to the perfection of moral good, that man should be moved unto good, not only in respect of his will, but also in respect of his sensitive

¹⁸⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones disputate de malo*, q. 5, a. 1, corpus. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations from *De Malo* are from Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. Richard Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁸⁹ See *ST*, I, q. 97, aa. 1-3 for Aquinas's understanding of the various remedies of grace provided human nature in paradise. See also O'Brien, "Original Justice," 146: "Original justice does perfect human nature on a natural level. While a gift and exceeding the claims of human nature, original justice met its wants. Freedom from suffering and death was in keeping with the natural immortality of the soul. The tranquility in the lower appetites was in accord with the control the reason is meant to achieve; man was given that habitual conformity of passion to reason expected after the acquisition of moral virtues. The will itself received a perfection that matched its bent towards God the author of nature and the fulfillment of natural law. By a supernaturally bestowed gift, then, the defects connatural to human nature as composed of body and spirit were overcome; original justice perfected man in his natural and moral well-being."

¹⁹⁰ *ST*, I, q. 98, a. 2, ad 3 (original emphasis).

appetite.”¹⁹¹ The fact he that devotes his longest treatise (27 questions and 132 articles) to the passions, longer than even his treatise on beatitude, in the heart of the *prima secundae* indicates the seriousness with which he takes human emotion.¹⁹²

That our emotions so easily run rampant and are disobedient to reason, and that we so often either let them run amok or clamp them down with stoic severity, is likely the result of original sin. According to St. Thomas, original sin “is an inordinate disposition, arising from the destruction of the harmony which was essential to original justice.”¹⁹³ Rather than living in harmony of the nature-perfecting grace that was original justice, in the fallen state we live disintegrated lives: “As bodily sickness is partly a privation, in so far as it denotes the destruction of the equilibrium of health, and partly something positive, viz. the very humors that are inordinately disposed, so too original sin denotes the privation of original justice, and besides this, the inordinate disposition of the parts of the soul. Consequently, it is not a pure privation but a corrupt habit.”¹⁹⁴ Original sin cannot be a pure privation for Aquinas since privation is the term he uses for that which is due to nature but, for some reason, is absent.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ *ST*, I-II, q. 24, a. 3, corpus.

¹⁹² The work of the passions in the moral life is often undervalued by Thomists. Some have attempted to retrieve this important aspect of Aquinas’s work. For example, see G. Simon Harak, S.J., *Virtuous Passions: The Formation of Christian Character* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993); Servais Pinckaers, O.P., “Reappropriating Aquinas’s Account of the Passions,” trans. Craig Steven Titus, in *The Pinckaers Reader*, 273–287. Harak’s book represents an admirable attempt to recover a Thomistic understanding of passion in moral action and character development. Unfortunately, it is hindered by several incorrect citations of Aquinas and a selective interpretation of the passages he cites. Pinckaers’s essay purports only to be an initial offering. See also Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2009); Diana Fritz Cates, *Choosing to Feel: Virtue, Friendship, and Compassion for Friends* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999); Paul Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ’s Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2009); Robert Minder, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Summa theologiae, 1a2ae 22-48* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹⁹³ *ST*, I-II, q. 82, a. 1, corpus. See also I-II, q. 82, a. 1, ad 2.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, ad 1.

¹⁹⁵ See *ST*, I, q. 49, a. 1.

Original sin is not a pure privation because the grace of original justice was not naturally due to man. Since it was grace that gave harmony to human nature in original innocence, original sin is less a privation and more a simple continuation of human existence without the nature-perfecting endowments of grace—a privation that inevitably leads to disorder. Thomas O'Brien puts it this way, "Human nature with its powers as derived from Adam is now just itself, left to itself; this is how it is disordered."¹⁹⁶ Original sin is not a positive inclination to moral evil added to human nature following our first parents' sin. If original sin were, in fact, a positive inclination to evil, then God himself would be implicated in evil's cause as the one who inflicted this positive inclination in punishment for sin. Rather, original sin is the rupture of man's relationship with God and, therefore, the loss of his own integration.

This has important consequences for Aquinas's view of fallen human nature. For example, while St. Thomas holds that man can still know truth without grace (but not without the divine light at work in his reason as mentioned earlier in this chapter), and while he can still work some particular goods, he can no longer achieve the complete good proportionate to his human nature due to the disordering and disintegration of the soul's powers.¹⁹⁷ This disintegration is properly called the "wounding of nature." Regarding our corrupt state, St. Thomas notes that "all the powers of the soul are left, as it were, destitute of their proper order, whereby they are naturally directed to virtue; which destitution is called a wounding of nature."¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Thomas C. O'Brien, "Original Justice," 152. See also *ST*, I-II, q. 82, a. 1, ad 1; I-II, q. 82, a. 1, ad 3; I-II, q. 82, a. 2, ad 2; I-II, q. 82, a. 4, ad 1; I-II, q. 82, a. 4, ad 3.

¹⁹⁷ See *ST*, I-II, q. 109, a. 2; I-II, q. 109, a. 3.

¹⁹⁸ *ST*, I-II, q. 85, a. 5.

However, human nature retains some goodness even after original sin. Aquinas identifies three goods of human nature, even in the fallen state: “First, there the principles of which nature is constituted, and the properties that flow from them, such as the powers of the soul, and so forth. Secondly, since man has from nature an inclination to virtue, as stated above ([I-II], q. 60, a. 1; q. 63, a. 1), this inclination to virtue is a good of nature. Thirdly, the gift of original justice, conferred on the whole human nature in the person of the first man, may be called a good of nature.”¹⁹⁹ He eventually concludes that it is only the third good of nature, the gift of original justice, that is absolutely destroyed by original sin.

The first good, the principles of nature, is neither destroyed nor diminished. The principles of nature are determinative attributes of nature. To argue that they are destroyed would be to argue that nature itself is destroyed by sin, and we know this is not the case. We have retained our nature; we have retained the use of our faculties. The second good, however, the natural inclination to virtue is diminished if even it is not destroyed. Eventually, Aquinas will write that our wounded inclination to virtue requires healing grace (*gratia sanans*) for complete natural fulfillment. This inclination is diminished by original sin, Aquinas says, “because human acts produce an inclination to like acts, as stated above ([I-II], q. 50, a. 1). Now from the very fact that a thing becomes inclined to one of two contraries, its inclination to the other contrary must be diminished. Wherefore as sin is opposed to virtue, from the very fact that man sins, there results a diminution of that good of nature, which is the inclination to virtue.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ *ST*, I-II, q. 85, a. 1.

²⁰⁰ *ST*, I-II, q. 85, a. 1.

The inclination to virtue is the result of our faculties. Virtue is the perfection a power.²⁰¹ St. Thomas calls this inclination a “middle term” between the principles of rational nature and the perfection of those principles brought about by virtue.²⁰² He notes, “the good of nature, that is diminished by sin, is the natural inclination to virtue, which is befitting to man from the very fact that he is a rational being; for it is due to this that he performs actions in accord with reason, which is to act virtuously.”²⁰³ The human inclination to virtue is precisely the tendency in each of us to become fully human, the measure of which is determined by the very principles of our nature.²⁰⁴ It is worthy to ask the question as to exactly how this inclination is diminished by sin. If the inclination to virtue is the midpoint between the principles of our nature and their fulfillment, and if those principles are undiminished by sin, how then is the inclination diminished?

St. Thomas responds by suggesting that diminution can be considered in two ways: either in reference to the root (the principles of human nature, i.e., the powers of the soul) or in reference to their *telos*. But the diminution cannot stem from the root, because the principles are not diminished by sin. Aquinas notes that if the root is diminished, then the

²⁰¹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 55, a. 1.

²⁰² See *ST*, I-II, q. 85, a. 2.

²⁰³ *ST*, I-II, q. 85, a. 2.

²⁰⁴ See O'Brien, “Fallen Nature,” 156f.: “The principles of his [man’s] nature, as is true of any reality, make man to be what he is. By the same token they include a direction towards the full realization of this way of being. Because he is human, man by his very nature is bent towards being fully human. This direction is called an inclination—or tendency to act towards the full realization of himself and the perfection of which he does not possess simply by existing. But the principles of his nature are the true index to what fulfillment of himself should be. Again, man is what he is through the principles of his nature. These principles themselves then bespeak of an inclination, an order to human perfection. Since virtue ensures that actions are in conformity to this order of nature, the principles also of themselves mean an inclination to virtue. Nature in its essential principles and in its bent to virtue, then, is not two distinct realities. The distinction is simply between the principles as establishing man in existence and as providing the spring for operations by which he will achieve completion.”

human being is no longer rational but quasi-rational. If the root is completely destroyed, then fallen man is not rational whatsoever.²⁰⁵

The diminution of our inclination to virtue occurs in the second way, he writes, “in so far as an obstacle is placed against its attaining its term.”²⁰⁶ The diminution of the inclination to virtue can, moreover, be indefinite, “because obstacles can be placed indefinitely inasmuch as man can go on indefinitely adding sin to sin: and yet it cannot be destroyed entirely, because the root of this inclination always remains.”²⁰⁷ These obstacles are initially the result of the fact that our various powers are no longer directed by reason but are left to themselves.²⁰⁸ Only after repeated sins (actions against reason) do we develop vices, which are habitual dispositions tending to more vicious actions.²⁰⁹ When this conclusion is combined with Aquinas’s insight that original sin is the privation of the harmony of the grace of original justice leading to disintegration, two conclusions are apparent.

First, original sin does not direct human nature to failure or imperfection. Rather, failure remains a possibility precisely because the very obstacle to our perfection is the multiplicity of conflicting ends available in the principles of human nature—the lower appetites can have ends at variance with the higher appetite. Deviation from our true and proper end is a genuine possibility in the principles of human nature itself, given free-will. This is confirmed by the very definition of a sinful or vicious act as an act which does not conform to human reason, itself participating in the eternal law.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ See *ST*, I-II, q. 85, a. 2.

²⁰⁶ *ST*, I-II, q. 85, a. 2.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ See *ST*, I-II, q. 85, a. 3.

²⁰⁹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 54, a. 3.

²¹⁰ See *ST*, I, q. 63, a. 1 in which Aquinas speaks about sin as deviation from the rectitude of nature. See also *ST*, I-II, q. 71, a. 6 regarding human actions not in conformity with reason. In this reply to the fourth

For this study, it is important to understand that in a Thomistic anthropology sexual delight (now a function of the fallen sensitive appetite) can impinge upon our higher pursuits if not tempered with the virtue of chastity. The next chapter will discuss this in more detail. Any consideration of virtue and natural law must include a consideration of the wounds of human nature caused by original sin. Similarly, any consideration of the great goods of love, sexuality, and marriage must not forget the difficulty fallen men and women have in integrating their desires with reason.

Conclusion

St. Thomas Aquinas developed a unique and strong hylomorphic anthropology in which the body and soul are united in a composite human person. He insisted that this unity was immediate, that is, without the mediation of other souls or forms. In his view, the unity is so strong that one can legitimately insist that the soul needs the body just as much as the body needs the soul.

Moreover, St. Thomas provides us with a metaphysical understanding not only of substance in general but of individual substances. He calls individual substances ‘first substances.’ In the visible world, these first substances are concretized or individualized from other first substances through the composition of matter and form. Matter is specified and designated by accidental qualities, one member of species differs from another materially. Species, on the other hand, are distinguished from one another in virtue of accidental qualities adhering to the form. One man may be taller than another, but both are

objection of this same article, Aquinas notes that which is sinful, contrary to eternal law and natural law, is contrary to reason because it is inordinate. Finally, see *ST*, I-II, q. 85, a. 6 for a discussion on the natural corruptibility of man’s composite human nature which, in turn, engenders a multiplicity ends for the various principles at work in the composite.

capable of laughter, sorrow, and anger since these qualities stem from the substantial form: the human soul.

The Angelic Doctor located sexual difference among those individuating accidents adhering in matter. And though he followed Aristotle in assuming that women were “misbegotten males,” his faith in the providence of God allowed him to make the initial steps toward sexual complementarity by insisting that the difference of sexes was part of God’s providential plan. In Aquinas’s anthropology sexual differences are individuating material attributes and so there is no sexual difference in the soul itself. And because of this, men and women share in a common human nature without separation from one another.

Aquinas’s presentation is weak in some areas, however. While he says that personhood is the perfection of nature and the term applied to an individual (i.e., first substances) of a rational nature, he never discusses human personhood in the treatise on man. He leaves several questions unresolved in his treatment on personhood in God vis-à-vis personhood in men and women. For example, while he says that God is a person because he is incommunicable, he does not entirely explain what he means by incommunicability or how this might apply to human persons. Of course, incommunicability is a foundational point for Karol Wojtyła’s understanding of the human person.

It also remains to be seen what St. Thomas thinks of the relationship between men and women in that domestic life he says is so necessary for the upbringing of human children. If sexual difference is only a material accident, how does it affect the complementarity of sexes in living life beyond sexual procreation? This is a question that the next chapter will take up.

What is clear is that St. Thomas Aquinas had a strong ontological understanding of human nature and human personhood. He combined this ontological view with the revelation that there is a provident Creator, designing men and women for the purposes of the perfection of the universe. It is already beginning to be clear that Aquinas is not the naturalist theologian or philosopher as many of the manualists and twentieth century moral theologians presumed he was.

Additionally, he was not unaware of the impact original sin had on the human composite. Since men and women are no longer beneficiaries of the nature-perfecting grace that Adam and Eve had in paradise, their passions are more capable of leading reason astray. Because of this wounding of nature, men and women experience sexual delight in a different way than Adam and Eve would have before the fall. Indeed, before the fall, Aquinas argues, they would have experienced the goodness of sexual pleasure in a way far more excellent than men and women do today. Since men and women now live with a fallen human condition, there is all the more reason for them to direct to reason those passions and delights inherent in their composition as body and soul. In the next chapter, I hope to show exactly how Aquinas proposes that this reality relates to the movement of love in the *Summa theologiae*.

Chapter 7

The Movement of Love in the *Summa Theologiae*

Introduction

The focus of the last chapter on the anthropology of St. Thomas Aquinas provided the foundation for this chapter and the next on the notions of love and marriage in Aquinas's mature work, the *Summa theologiae*. My effort in this study is to show that St. Thomas's anthropology can support the notion of a spousal meaning of the body as articulated in *The Theology of the Body*. The attempt to locate a spousal meaning of the body in the *Summa theologiae* is in part an attempt to highlight Aquinas's anthropological and metaphysical foundations for his understanding of love and marriage.

The goal of this chapter is to show that St. Thomas situated love within the broad metaphysical framework of every being's attraction to good. This framework was highlighted both in the first chapter of this study and in the previous chapter. The importance which the Angelic Doctor ascribes to the *appetitus*, a being's inclination to the good, cannot be overstated. To put it simply, just as Pope John Paul II argued that the spousal meaning of the body directs the human person out of himself to complete fulfillment in the gift of self, so too St. Thomas Aquinas insists that all created beings are directed out of themselves in the pursuit of perfection. Men and women cannot find fulfillment and perfection in themselves. No created being can in Aquinas's view. I want to suggest that Aquinas's notion of love is a metaphysical one. And given man's fallen nature, this drive out of oneself is only properly ordered through the virtues, specifically the virtues of prudence, temperance, and charity.

For these purposes, the chapter has three sections. The first section on the metaphysical foundation of love will explore the notion that love is an attraction to the good, that there are different types of loves according to Aquinas, and the role that the nature plays in our attraction to the good. The second section focuses on the role of prudence and temperance in human love. Finally, the third section will highlight the love of God, or the friendship with God, which is the theological virtue of charity.

I. The Metaphysical Foundation of Love

A. Love: Attraction to the Good

The observations made in the first chapter of this dissertation (and which were briefly summarized in the previous chapter) regarding St. Thomas's thought on the good and our attraction to the good are foundational for understanding his theory of love. To repeat that briefly, for Aquinas, every agent acts for an end.¹ The end is that which is suitable to the agent's form: "Everything, insofar as it is in act, acts and tends towards that which is in accordance with its form."² In Aquinas's worldview, beings act in pursuit of the fullness of their form. He recognizes that created beings are imperfect: "Now a thing is said to be perfect if it lacks nothing according to the mode of its perfection. But since everything is what it is by its form (and since the form presupposes certain things, and from the form certain things necessarily follow), in order for a thing to be perfect and good it must have a form, together with all that precedes and follows upon that form."³ It belongs to the form of a bird to have two wings and to fly. If it lacks either of these (or any of the other

¹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 1, a. 2.

² *ST*, I, q. 5, a. 5.

³ *Ibid.*

characteristics of what it means to be a bird), it is good inasmuch as it exists but it is not perfect. This is why God is God: he has no imperfections.⁴

Each natural thing has an “aptitude toward its natural form, that when it has it not it tends towards it; and when it has it, it is at rest therein.”⁵ Aquinas writes that “all desire their own perfection,” and that which is desired by a being is desired because it is perfect vis-à-vis the agent in some respect or another.⁶ This is why natural beings are drawn outside of themselves. Their imperfections are remedied only by other beings and ultimately by the supreme Good who is God. While arguing that angels and men naturally love of God more than themselves, Aquinas notes that “in natural things, everything which, as such, naturally belongs to another, is principally and more strongly inclined to that other to which it belongs, than towards itself.”⁷ Created beings have a drive or tendency to the perfection of their form.

In the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas calls this tendency to perfection (to the good) “appetite (*appetitus*).”⁸ All things, even those without knowledge, have an appetite: “The aptitude to good in things without knowledge is called natural appetite. Whence also an intellectual nature has a like aptitude to the good as apprehended through its intelligible form.”⁹ But this is a not a hard distinction.

⁴ See *ST*, I, q. 4, aa. 1-2; I, q. 6, aa. 1-2. Cf. *ST*, I, q. 2, a. 3: “Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum of heat, is cause of all hot things. Therefore there must be also something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.”

⁵ *ST*, I, q. 19, a. 1.

⁶ See *ST*, I, q. 5, a. 1.

⁷ *ST*, I, q. 60, a. 5.

⁸ See *ST*, I, q. 19, a. 1.

⁹ *ST*, I, q. 19, a. 1 (my translation): “Et haec habitudo ad bonum, in rebus carentibus cognitione, vocatur appetitus naturalis. Unde et natura intellectualis ad bonum apprehensum per formam intelligibilem, simile habitudinem habet.”

For the Angelic Doctor, love is intrinsically bound to the appetite for the good, for the fullness and perfection of one's being. He begins his discussion of love in the *prima secundae* by grounding the notion of love squarely in this drive of a being to the good: "Love is something pertaining to the appetite since good is the object of both."¹⁰ He then distinguishes three differences in love according to the difference of appetites. In the most basic sense, love is "the principle of movement towards the end loved."¹¹ The word *love* can be applied even to the natural appetite since "the principle of this [natural] movement is the appetitive subject's connaturalness with the thing to which it tends."¹² From this perspective, even heavy objects can be said to love the resting place to which the attraction of gravity pulls them, just as much as the intellect naturally 'loves' the truth and the will naturally 'loves' the good.¹³

It is apparent that the terminology "natural appetite" and "natural love" refers not simply to the movements of irrational or inanimate matter. Even though Aquinas frequently describes the movement of appetite in terms of natural movements (such as fire rising or gravity pulling). Natural appetite means, first and foremost, the inclination each thing has to

¹⁰ *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 1. For other relevant exegeses on the inclination to the good and love, see Jordan Aumann, "Thomistic Evaluation of Love and Charity," *Angelicum* 55 (1978): 533-541; David M. Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts (Ia IIae, qq. 6-17)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 70-73; Thomas Gilby, appendix 1, in *Summa theologiae*, Vol. 16 (1a2ae 1-5) (New York: McGraw-Hill Books Company, 1969), 144-146; Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Summa Theologiae 1a2ae 22-48* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 126-132; Paul J. Wadell, *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992), 36-43.

¹¹ *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 1. Robert Pasnau's overly analytical reading of Aquinas reveals its limitations when he suggests that Aquinas's idea that love is a movement sounds rather mechanical (see Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa theologiae 1a* 75-89 [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 242). Following the lead of Josef Pieper, Robert Miner suggests that Aquinas's use of the word *amor* in a variety of ways reveals a fundamental dynamism between appetite and appetible object (see Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, 118, citing Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, and Love* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997], 146-147). It is my hope that the exegesis I offer here of Aquinas's notion of love in the *Summa theologiae*, will contribute to a response to Pasnau's remark.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ See *ibid.* Cf. *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 2.

“something like and suitable to the thing inclined.”¹⁴ The natural appetite inclines each thing to something suitable to its natural form, to that which is connatural to it.¹⁵ Aquinas says explicitly, “Natural love is not only in the powers of the vegetal soul, but in all the soul’s powers, and also in all the parts of the body, and universally in all things... since each thing has a connaturalness with that which is naturally suitable to it.”¹⁶ Romanus Cessario explains, “Natural appetite represents a particular organism’s bent toward any good that authentically perfects its being.... Because the human person enjoys vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual powers, each one of these ‘forms’ spawns its own kind of natural appetites; however, the one substantial form that constitutes the human soul ensures the unity of the human person in acting.”¹⁷

Elsewhere, he writes:

It is common to every nature to have some inclination; and this is its natural appetite or love. This inclination is found to exist differently in different natures; but in each according to its mode. Consequently, in the intellectual nature there is to be found a natural inclination coming from the will; in the sensitive nature, according to the sensitive appetite; but in a nature devoid of knowledge, only according to the tendency of the nature to something.¹⁸

Michael Sherwin notes, “Aquinas’ method here is significant. By introducing rational love in the context of natural love, he is presenting rational love’s relationship to cognition as part of a larger and more general dynamic. All appetitive principles of action presuppose knowledge. This is true even for non-rational creatures.”¹⁹

¹⁴ *ST*, I-II, q. 8, a. 1.

¹⁵ See *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 1.

¹⁶ *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 1, ad 3. See also *ST*, II-II, q. 141, a. 1, ad 1: “Nature inclines everything to whatever is becoming to it. Wherefore man naturally desires pleasures that are becoming to him. Since, however, man as such is a rational being, it follows that those pleasures are becoming to man which are in accordance with reason.”

¹⁷ Romanus Cessario, *The Virtues, or The Examined Life* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 179.

¹⁸ *ST*, I, q. 60, a. 1.

¹⁹ Michael S. Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 72.

In St. Thomas's anthropology, appetite follows cognition: since "in order for a thing to be done for an end, some knowledge of the end is necessary."²⁰ Love requires knowledge. This is important. It means that "human action presupposes a voluntary receptivity to reality. At its most basic level, love is a response to the goodness of reality, a response to the real as it is or as it could be."²¹

This may seem to be a problem for irrational beings, but St. Thomas says that natural inanimate bodies are not inclined to movement "except in so far as they are displaced from their natural conditions, and are out of their proper place; for when they are in the place that is proper and natural to them, then they are at rest."²² Inanimate objects are moved either from or to their places of rest by forces extrinsic to themselves.²³ These extrinsic forces are generally creatures of knowledge (animals, persons, or, in Aquinas's cosmology, even angels). However, it is God's own knowledge that governs creation and moves it to its end.²⁴ It is, ultimately, God, the author of nature, who knows the natural end of all creatures and it is he who has imparted the natural inclination to all beings: inanimate, non-rational, and rational.²⁵

Love differs according to the difference in the appetites, Aquinas says.²⁶ The natural appetite alone operates in those things which have no apprehension whatsoever. But, "there is another appetite arising from an apprehension in the subject of the appetite, but from

²⁰ *ST*, I-II, q. 6, a. 1; cf. I-II, q. 15, a. 3. See also *SCG*, bk. II, ch. 23.

²¹ Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 95.

²² *ST*, I, q. 18, a. 1, ad 2.

²³ See *ST*, I, q. 18, a. 1.

²⁴ See *ST*, I-II, q. 1, a. 2. In Aquinas's cosmology, with the exception of the miraculous, God always operates in creation through the medium of secondary causes. See *ST*, I, q. 103, a. 6. For an excellent exegesis on the interaction between God's omnipotent providence and secondary causes, including man's free will, one can hardly do better than M. John Farrelly, *Predestination, Grace, and Free Will* (London: Burns and Oates, 1964), 152-216.

²⁵ See *ST*, I, q. 6, a. 1, ad 2; I, q. 103, a. 1, ads. 1-3; I-II, q. 15, a. 2; I-II, q. 26, a. 1.

²⁶ See *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 1.

necessity and not from free will. Such is, in irrational animals, the *sensitive appetite*, which, however, in man, has a certain share of liberty, in so far as it obeys reason.—Again, there is another appetite following freely from an apprehension in the subject of the appetite. And this is the rational appetite or intellectual appetite, which is called the *will*.²⁷ It is important to stress, once again, that St. Thomas is not drawing a hard distinction between natural appetites, on the one hand, and sensitive and rational appetites, on the other. As the above has shown, every appetite (sensitive and rational) is also a natural appetite with its own inclination to its proper end, as is the case with every power of the soul and created thing. The rational appetite, the will, pursues its natural end through the intermediary ends the intellect judges conducive to achieving its natural end.²⁸

Since love is the principle of movement towards the end, appetite pursues an end in principle of the end's being connatural to the agent. On the other hand, “the aptitude of the sensitive appetite or of the will to some good, that is to say, its very complacency in good (*complacentia boni*), is called *sensitive love*, or *intellectual* or *rational love*.”²⁹ Michael Sherwin says this complacency in the good is a “a pleasant affective affinity.”³⁰ Aquinas delineates a threefold interaction between the appetite and the object loved (the appetible object).³¹

²⁷ Ibid. (Original emphasis).

²⁸ The task of morality, it has been said, might be summarized as keeping the rational appetite properly and voluntarily aligned with its natural end (see Lawrence Dewan, “St. Thomas, the Common Good, and the Love of Persons,” in *Wisdom, Law, and Virtue*, 274). While man's ultimate end has been vigorously debated, St. Thomas is clear that the end of all created beings is the end which the Creator intends (see *ST*, I, q. 6, a. 1, ad 2; I, q. 103, a. 1, ad 1, 3; cf. *ST*, I-II, q. 91, a. 1). Certainly, this is one of the purposes Aquinas sees for the natural law. The natural law is man's rational participation in the eternal law, the eternal designs of God, in order align the rational appetite to those designs (cf. *ST*, I-II, q. 91, a. 2; q. 94, aa.2-3). In the background of these observations is the relationship between nature and grace. This relationship is a centuries old dispute and it remains a contested issue to this day. I will address those concerns briefly in footnote 197 below.

²⁹ *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 1 (original emphasis).

³⁰ Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 70.

³¹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 2.

First, the appetible object gives the appetite “a certain adaptation to itself, which consists in complacency in that object; and from this follows movement towards the appetible object.... Accordingly, the first change wrought in the appetite by the appetible object is called *love*, and is nothing else than complacency (*complacentia*) in that object.”³² The appetible object introduces a pleasant affective affinity into the appetite. The soul’s apprehension (whether sensitive or rational) recognizes something pleasing in the object, something which perfects the agent in one respect or another, and this produces a complacency in the object.³³ “From this complacency results a movement towards that same object, and this movement is *desire*; and lastly, there is rest which is *joy*.”³⁴ There is a difference between sensitive love and rational or intellectual love, and this will be discussed further below, but here it is enough to note the relationship between the object loved and the appetite.³⁵ What separates the love of the will from all other loves is exactly free choice (*electionem*). Aquinas calls rational love, the love that is freely chosen, *dilectio*.³⁶

B. *Passion, Reason, and Will*

Since Aquinas understands love as the appetitive movement of created being out of itself in search of the perfection of its form, it remains to be seen how man’s free will and intellect affects this drive. This is to say, if as Aquinas holds man is a free rational animal, then he is also free to determine his loves, to determine in what he believes he will find his

³² *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 2 (original emphasis)

³³ See *ST*, I-II, q. 27, a. 1.

³⁴ *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 2 (original emphasis)

³⁵ This is marked difference from Aquinas’s early work. In his commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*, St. Thomas believed the form of the beloved actually moved into the appetite of the lover, and moved the appetite itself. Aquinas’s mature thought sees the complacency (in which the lover’s reason plays a role) as moving the appetite toward the beloved. For a history of the development of this theme in Aquinas’s work, see Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 64-81.

³⁶ See *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 3.

perfection and fulfillment: whether it be another human person, or God, or some created good. In order to understand just exactly how the human person loves (and so comes out of himself toward a good), it is necessary to explore Aquinas's view of human love as a unique interaction between passion and freedom.

Strictly speaking, for Aquinas, sensitive love is the love that is a passion. In the previous chapter, I noted that passions exist only in the sensitive appetite and this is because passions entail a corporeal transmutation. Only the sensitive appetite is affected by corporeal transmutation.³⁷ The sensitive appetite only knows individual objects, that a particular concrete being is blue or that it is soft or supple and smells nice. Reason, however, is able to abstract universal forms from particular conditions.³⁸

The will does not require a corporeal organ for actualization. Unlike animals, which are moved immediately by their passions, men and women are moved only when the superior intellectual appetite moves to the object following upon the apprehension of practical reason.³⁹ Love that is in the will is an intellectual love inasmuch as the intellectual appetite follows the reason of the subject himself.⁴⁰ Thomas writes, "in the intellectual appetite, love is a certain harmony of the appetite with that which is apprehended as suitable."⁴¹

³⁷ See pages 238ff. above. Cf. *ST*, I-II, q. 22, a. 1; *ST*, I-II, q. 22, a. 3. In a response to the objection that scripture speaks of love, joy, and anger in God and the angels, all of which are passions, Aquinas writes: "When love and joy and the like are ascribed to God or the angels, or to man in respect of his intellectual appetite, they signify simple acts of the will having like effects, but without passion" (*ST*, I-II, q. 22, a. 3, ad 3; cf. *ST*, I-II, q. 24, a. 3, ad 2).

³⁸ See *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 1; I, q. 79, a. 4. Cf. Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 239-247, 251ff.; Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, 19-41.

³⁹ See *ST*, I, q. 81, a. 3.

⁴⁰ See *ST*, I-II, q. 27, a. 2, ad 3.

⁴¹ *ST*, I-II, q. 29, a. 1.

The will loves that which is apprehended as good (the *bonum rationis*): “Just as the natural appetite tends to good existing in a thing; so the animal or voluntary appetite tends to a good which is apprehended. Consequently, in order that the will tend to anything, it is requisite *not that this be good in very truth, but that it be apprehended as good.*”⁴² The Angelic Doctor admits that “sometimes the will tends to something which is apprehended as good, and yet is not really good.”⁴³ Moreover, since in this life goods are complex, most beings are desirable and good in one respect but not in another. Chocolate may be desirable for its taste, but not for its effects on skin and weight. Thus, in reference to the goodness of an object, “there may a distinction according to the consideration of reason; so does it happen that one and the same thing is desired in way, and not desired in another.”⁴⁴ An object may be suitable in one respect, but unsuitable in another.

The reason and the will work in a tandem relationship in pursuit of their ends. The object of the will is the good, therefore St. Thomas says, the will moves all the powers of the soul to their proper acts:

Now good in general, which has the nature of an end, is the object of the will. Consequently, in this respect, the will moves the other powers of the soul to their acts, for we make use of the other powers when we will. For the end and perfection of every other power is included under the object of the will as some particular good: and always the art or power to which the universal end belongs, moves to their acts the arts or powers to which belong the particular ends included in the universal end.⁴⁵

The will commands the exercise of all the soul’s powers, including the intellect.⁴⁶

⁴² *ST*, I-II, q. 8, a. 1 (my emphasis). Cf. *ST*, I-II, q. 5, a. 8, ad 2; I-II, q. 6, a. 2, ad 1; I-II, q. 46, a. 5, ad 1; I, q. 19, a. 1; I, q. 82, a. 3.

⁴³ *ST*, I-II, q. 13, a. 5, ad 2.

⁴⁴ *ST*, I-II, q. 5, a. 8, ad 2. Cf. Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 96-97.

⁴⁵ *ST*, I-II, q. 9, a. 2.

⁴⁶ See also *ST*, I, q. 81, a. 4.

Nonetheless, the intellect plays its own role since, after all, the intellect presents the object of desire to the will which pursues the *bonum rationis* (the good as apprehended). The intellect thus determines or specifies the will's command: "The object moves, by determining the act, after the manner of a formal principle, whereby in natural things actions are specified, as heating by heat. Now the first formal principle is universal *being* and *truth*, which is the object of the intellect. And therefore by this kind of motion the intellect moves the will, as presenting its object to it."⁴⁷

Aquinas locates sin in the will. Since the will is the principle of action and the power commanding all others powers of the soul to exercise their respective acts, sin is in the will as its subject.⁴⁸ But because the will is determined by the apprehension of the intellect, the object of the will sinfully pursues also presupposes a deficiency in the in the intellect's apprehension. St. Thomas notes, "Since the object of the will is a good or an apparent good, it is never moved to an evil, unless that which is not good appear good in some respect to reason; so that the will would never tend to evil, unless there were ignorance or error in the reason."⁴⁹

Sometimes ignorance is truly antecedent to the will, as when a person is really ignorant of knowledge he is not bound to know. Acting from this antecedent ignorance is

⁴⁷ *ST*, I-II, q. 9, a. 2 (original emphasis). See *ST*, I-II, q. 9, a. 2, ad 3: "The will moves the intellect as to the exercise of its act; since even the true itself which is the perfection of the intellect, is included in the universal good, as a particular good. But as to the determination of the act, which the act derives from the object, the intellect moves the will; since the good itself is apprehended under a special aspect as contained in the universal true. It is therefore evident that the same is not mover and moved in the same respect." Cf. *ST*, I, q. 82, a. 4, corpus and ads. 1-2.

⁴⁸ See *ST*, I-II, q. 74, a. 1.

⁴⁹ *ST*, I-II, q. 77, a. 2. For detailed studies of the cause of evil as beyond the intention (*praeter intentionem*) of the will. See Stephen L. Brock, *Action and Conduct: Thomas Aquinas and the Theory of Action* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 216-242; Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas and the First Cause of Moral Evil," in *Wisdom, Law, and Virtue*, 186-196; Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 198-215.

not culpable.⁵⁰ Ignorance becomes the catalyst of sin only when it is chosen by will. In such a case, the will commands the intellect to remain in ignorance or in partial ignorance regarding the object of action.

The good of sexual pleasure, for example, may be pursued but the will commands the away from considering the undesirability of intercourse outside of marriage. This ignorance is consequent upon an act of the will. And this form of ignorance influences man's action in two ways:

First, because the act of the will is brought to bear on the ignorance: as when a man wishes not to know, that he may have an excuse for sin, or that he may not be withheld from sin... And this is called *affected ignorance*. Secondly, ignorance is said to be voluntary, when it regards that which one can and ought to know: for in this sense *not to act* and *not to will* are said to be voluntary.... And ignorance of this kind happens, either when one does not actually consider what one can and ought to consider; this is called *ignorance of evil choice*, and arises from some passion or habit.⁵¹

A man who simply chooses not to ask whether the merchandise he buys from the back of van in a city alley is stolen, even though he has a good sense that it is, is choosing to act from affected ignorance. Whereas the man who chooses not to consider the ramifications of extramarital sex in order to engage in the act with a woman he meets in the pub is acting from the ignorance of evil choice. This ignorance is caused either from passion (in this case a sensitive love that is actualized by sensuality, hormones, and perhaps alcohol, all corporeal transmutations) or perhaps even from a vice.⁵² In either case, the chosen ignorance is disordered just as much as the action.⁵³ This is why elsewhere Aquinas writes that the “right

⁵⁰ See *ST*, I-II, q. 6, a. 8.

⁵¹ *ST*, I-II, q. 6, a. 8 (original emphasis).

⁵² Vices are habitual dispositions to actions which are not befitting the agent's nature (see *ST*, I-II, q. 71, a. 1). But it should still be noted that a person who sins through habit, or in this habitually acts from chosen ignorance, does so with a certain malice in Aquinas's view (see *ST*, I-II, q. 78, a. 2).

⁵³ See *ST*, I-II, q. 74, a. 1, ad 2.

inclination of the will is required antecedently for happiness, just as the arrow must take a right course in order to strike the target.”⁵⁴ The will must be properly aligned to the true good.

In Aquinas’s epistemology, something is apprehended as good and thus desirable in the relationship between the thing itself and its inherent goodness, on the one hand, and the disposition of the agent on the other.⁵⁵ The sensitive appetite, which is to say the passions, affect the disposition of the agent. “According to a passion of the sensitive appetite man is changed to a certain disposition. Wherefore according as man is affected by a passion, something seems to him fitting, which does not seem so when he is not so affected: thus that seems good to a man when angered, which does not seem good when he is calm. And in this way, the sensitive appetite moves the will, on the part of the object.”⁵⁶

Later in the *prima secundae*, Aquinas explains exactly how passions can affect the perception of the object:

The judgment and apprehension of reason is impeded on account of a vehement and inordinate apprehension of the imagination and judgment of the estimate power, as appears in those who are out of their mind. Now it is evident that the apprehension of the imagination and the judgment of the estimative power follows the passion of the sensitive appetite, even as the verdict of taste follows the disposition of the tongue: for which reason we observe that those who are in some kind of passion, do not easily turn their imagination away from the object of their emotion, the result being that the judgment of reason often follows the passion of the sensitive appetite, and consequently the will’s movement follows it also, since it has a natural inclination always to follow the judgment of reason.⁵⁷

In the previous chapter, I noted that the whereas brute animals and human beings both have imaginations, only man is able to call upon his imagination at will. Fixation in the midst of

⁵⁴ *ST*, I-II, q. 4, a. 4, ad 2.

⁵⁵ See *ST*, I-II, q. 9, a. 2.

⁵⁶ *ST*, I-II, q. 9, a. 2. Cf. *ST*, I-II, q. 10, a. 3.

⁵⁷ *ST*, I-II, q. 77, a. 2. Cf. Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 105.

passion, whichever passion, is a common experience among men and women in which a particular good becomes the focus of our attention to the exclusion of other goods.

At other times, the sensitive appetite might be so intent on its object that the other powers of the soul are simply unable to be attentive to their own proper objects. The passions thus distract the other powers.⁵⁸ Aquinas says persons often act contrary to their habitual knowledge, what they know to be true and good, because “nothing prevents a thing which is known habitually from not being considered actually.”⁵⁹ Even though a man knows adultery is wrong, generally, he may fail to apply this knowledge in a particular instance for any number of reasons. Perhaps there is some bodily infirmity that inhibits him (perhaps because of his drunkenness he is unable to see that the woman with whom he sleeps is not his wife).

More often than not, passions inhibit reason either by distraction, or by inclining reason to something contrary to the true good, or by some corporeal transmutation “the result of which is that the reason is somehow fettered so as not to exercise its act freely; even as sleep or drunkenness, on account of some change wrought on the body, fetters the use of reason.... Sometimes, when the passions are very intense, man loses his reason altogether: for many have gone out of their minds through excess of love or anger.”⁶⁰ When emotions are intense, the heart beats quicker, adrenaline begins to flow in the body, and these biological changes (in Aquinas’s language, corporeal transmutations) affect the reason. What is known habitually (that adultery is wrong) is unattended to in the heat of the moment.

⁵⁸ See *ST*, I-II, q. 77, a. 1.

⁵⁹ *ST*, I-II, q. 77, a. 2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

While the imagination, at the command of reason, can present an object to the sensitive appetite, since the sensitive appetite depends on the body for its actualization, it retains something of an independence from reason. Although the intellectual appetite must consent in order for man to act, nonetheless the sensitive appetite does not depend on the reason for its object when the object is presented by the body and not by the reason.⁶¹ This is the difference between fantasy and reality. Even though the sensitive appetite is inclined to obey reason, the “condition or disposition of the body is not subject to the command of reason: and consequently in this respect, the movement of the sensitive appetite is hindered from being wholly subject to the command of reason.”⁶² Aquinas says reason governs the sensitive appetite “not by a *despotic supremacy*, which is that of a master over his slave; but by a *politic and royal supremacy*, whereby the free are governed, who are not wholly subject to command.”⁶³

Of course, in man’s original state the passions were entirely subject to reason.⁶⁴ The passions are not themselves inherently sinful. They become so only inasmuch as they incline us toward action that is contrary to reason.⁶⁵ In this life, rational love requires the right ordering of our passions so that which we love, the persons we love, are loved for who they are and not entirely for passionate purposes. Our rational love must be rightly ordered and it must include passion. It is the whole person who loves. Jordan Aumann once wrote that

⁶¹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 17, a. 7.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.* (original emphasis)

⁶⁴ See *ST*, I, q. 95, a. 2. Cf. *ST*, III, q. 15, a. 4.

⁶⁵ See *ST*, I-II, q. 24, a. 4.

“purely spiritual or volitional love without any resonance in the emotion of love is not a truly human love.”⁶⁶

C. Friendship and Concupiscence

St. Thomas says that rational love is properly divided into love of friendship (*amor amicitiae*) and love concupiscence (*amor concupiscentiae*).⁶⁷ Love is not divided against itself but rather the “the movement of love has a twofold tendency.”⁶⁸ The first, the love of friendship, is the movement “towards the good which a man wishes to someone, to himself or to another.”⁶⁹ The second, the love of concupiscence, are the goods he wishes for another.⁷⁰ That which is loved with *amor amicitiae* is loved primarily and simply for its own sake. That which is loved with *amor concupiscentiae* is loved only secondarily and relative to something else, namely, the person for which it is loved.⁷¹

St. Thomas will later cite the authority of Aristotle for his understanding of friendship: “According to the Philosopher, not every love has the character of friendship, but that love to which is together with benevolence, when, to wit, we love someone so as to wish good to him.”⁷² He goes further to say that benevolence is not enough for friendship: “Neither does well-wishing suffice for friendship, for a certain mutual love is requisite, since

⁶⁶ Aumann, “Thomistic Evaluation of Love and Charity,” 540. Servais Pinckaers has also noted the need to reappropriate a proper understanding of passion in moral theology. See Servais Pinckaers, “Reappropriating Aquinas’s Account of the Passions,” 273-287.

⁶⁷ See *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 4.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid. See *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a. 4, ad 1: “For a friend is, properly speaking, one to whom we wish good: while we are said to desire, what we wish for ourselves.”

⁷⁰ See *ibid.*

⁷¹ Ibid. See Aumann, “Thomistic Evaluation of Love and Charity,” 542-546; Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, 122-126; Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 74-77.

⁷² *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a. 1, citing Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 8, ch. 2,3.

friendship is between friend and friend: and this well-wishing is founded on some kind of communication.”⁷³ Friendship is a certain communication of goodness between friends.

Since friendship requires communication between friends, *amor amicitiae* cannot be directed to irrational creatures. St. Thomas writes, “Friendship cannot exist except towards rational creatures, who are capable of returning love, and communicating one with another in the various works of life, and who may fare well or ill, according to the changes of fortune and happiness.”⁷⁴ We are unable to share good things with an irrational creature, which “is not competent, properly speaking, to possess good, this being proper to the rational creature which, through its free-will, is the master of its disposal of the good it possesses.”⁷⁵ Moreover, friendship “is based on some fellowship of life; since *nothing is so proper to friendship as to live together*, as the Philosopher proves. Now irrational creatures can have no fellowship in human life which regulated by reason.”⁷⁶ We can love irrational creatures not as friends but rather as goods directed to friendship. We can love them with *amor concupiscentiae*.

Aquinas notes that the difference between the love of things (*amor concupiscentiae*) and the love of persons (*amor amicitiae*) is this: “When we love a thing, by desiring it, we apprehend it as belonging to our well-being. In like manner when a man loves another with the love of friendship, he wills good to him, just as he wills good to himself: wherefore he apprehends him as his other self, in so far, to wit, as he wills good to him as to himself.”⁷⁷ The Angelic Doctor makes the point that “the love which a man loves himself is the form

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ *ST*, I, q. 20, a. 2, ad 3.

⁷⁵ *ST*, II-II, q. 25, a. 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid. (original emphasis) citing Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 8, ch. 5.

⁷⁷ *ST*, I-II, q. 28, a. 1. Elsewhere, Aquinas qualifies this point. He notes, “We must hold that, properly speaking, a man is not a friend to himself, but something more than a friend, since friendship implies union.... Whereas a man is one with himself which is more than being united to another” (see *ST*, II-II, q. 25, a. 4)

and root of friendship.”⁷⁸ The manner in which man loves himself will determine the character of his friendships.

Man’s love for himself must be properly ordered. It is a fault to love oneself in a disordered way. “Those who love themselves are to be blamed, in so far as they love themselves as regards their sensitive nature, which they humor. This is not to love oneself truly according to one’s rational nature, so as to desire for oneself the good things which pertain to the perfection of reason.”⁷⁹ When self-love is dominated by the concupiscible appetite, not only do we love ourselves primarily as sensual beings, but friendship becomes more focused on pleasure and utility. “When friendship is based on usefulness or pleasure, a man does indeed wish his friend some good: and in this respect the character of friendship is preserved. But since he refers this good further to his own pleasure or use, the result is that friendship of the useful or pleasant, in so far as it is connected with love of concupiscence, loses the character of true friendship.”⁸⁰

Peter Kwasniewski summarizes Aquinas’s point nicely:

The crucial point... is that the *amor amicitiae* at the basis of a reciprocal friendship of virtue, by moving lover and beloved to cherish and help one another, is the means whereby each individual is enabled to exceed himself, going forth into the will and life of the other so that a common good comes into being at some level, where before only the good of the self stood at the horizon of desire.... On the contrary, when the individual does not go out of himself by placing part (or in the case of God, all) of his good in another, his appetite remains solely self-referential—not merely in the way that love is grounded in self-love, but in what that *amor concupiscentiae* does not terminate in any other good than one’s own substance.⁸¹

⁷⁸ *ST*, II-II, q. 25, a. 4.

⁷⁹ *ST*, II-II, q. 25, a. 4, ad 3.

⁸⁰ *ST*, I-II, q. 26, a 4, ad 3.

⁸¹ Peter A. Kwasniewski, “St. Thomas, Extasis, and Union with the Beloved,” *The Thomist* 61 (1997): 595.

Aquinas further clarifies this point when he speaks about ecstasy as an effect of love.

Ecstasy, he says, “means to be placed outside of oneself.”⁸² He says that, on the one hand, ecstasy can sometimes be in the apprehensive power: when a person is raised above his comprehension and sensation to apprehend a higher knowledge or when a person’s reason is overcome by violence or madness. But precisely because the appetite is also an outward movement, the appetite also experiences the ecstasy of love.

In the love of concupiscence the lover is carried out of himself but only in a certain sense, inasmuch “as not being satisfied with enjoying the good he has, he seeks to enjoy something out of himself. But since he seeks to have this extrinsic good for himself, he does not go out from himself simply, and this movement remains finally within him.”⁸³ The concupiscent person’s pursuits ultimately remain concerned only with himself. With the love of friendship, on the other hand, “a man’s affection goes out from itself simply; because he wishes and does good to his friend, by caring and providing for him, for his sake.”⁸⁴

That love is a movement follows upon Aquinas’s metaphysical principles and his anthropology, namely, on the relationship between the reason and the will, between truth and goodness. For Aquinas, the intellect creates a certain type of union between the knower and the known. The known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower.⁸⁵ But there is also a union of the appetite, a union of love, which moves the lover to the beloved.⁸⁶ And while the union of love can exist in different stages (whether the beloved is present or absent to the lover), what is clear is that for Aquinas the union of the lover with the beloved

⁸² *ST*, I-II, q. 28, a. 3.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ See *ST*, I, q. 16, a. 1.

⁸⁶ See *ST*, I-II, q. 28, a. 1.

is real rather than notional. The union of love is with the beloved herself, it is not just a union to the idea of the beloved.⁸⁷

Aquinas offers a distinction when the union of love is greater than the union of knowledge, that is, when it is better to love than to know.⁸⁸ It concerns the relative mode of comparison between the intellect and the will. “When... the thing in which there is good is nobler than the soul itself, in which is the idea understood; by comparison with such a thing, the will is higher than the intellect. But when the thing which is good is less noble than the soul, then even in comparison with that thing the intellect is higher than the will. Wherefore the love of God is better than the knowledge of God; but, on the contrary, the knowledge of corporeal things is better than the love thereof.”⁸⁹ Those things that are inferior to the soul are given simpler (and, hence, more noble) existence once they are known abstractly and simply by the intellect. Those things that are superior to the soul, however, cannot really be apprehended in the proper sense of them. They can be deduced through cause-effect reasoning but the intellect cannot attain an understanding of their essence that would not in some way be less noble than as they exist in themselves.⁹⁰

Because the will is free, it is possible for it to love something inferior to the soul—to love it as an end in itself, and not as a means to a greater good. In doing so, love would go against reason which, in the union caused by knowledge, would possess the form of that

⁸⁷ See *ST*, I-II, q. 32, a. 3.

⁸⁸ I am grateful to an insightful article written by Russell Hittinger on this topic. Hittinger fails to note the development of Aquinas’s notion of love from the time he wrote his commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* and the time he wrote the *Summa theologiae* (discussed by Michael Sherwin, see note 35 above). However, he does provide an accurate depiction of St. Thomas’s understanding of the relationship between knowledge and love. See Russell Hittinger, “When It is More Excellent to Love than to Know: The Other Side of Thomistic ‘Realism,’” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 57 (1983): 171-179.

⁸⁹ *ST*, I, q. 82, a. 3.

⁹⁰ Aquinas arrives at this same conclusion in his disputed questions on the truth, where he notes that “the intellect takes on the forms of things superior to the soul in a way inferior to that which they have in the things themselves.” See *DV*, q. 22, a. 11.

thing more simply, and thus more nobly, than the thing itself. Russell Hittinger notes, “The appetitive capacity to be affected by the ‘other’ allows for the possibility that the soul can become degraded by being overly fetched with, and too identified with, lower things.”⁹¹ On the other hand, when we love that which the intellect cannot fully grasp, our love is noble since our beloved is more noble than the idea of our beloved. This is why it is degrading and blameworthy for a person to love a tree, a stone, or merely carnal pleasure: these things are beneath our nobility as rational creatures.

Happiness, for Aquinas, is that which every man and woman desires as their perfection, their end.⁹² Although each person may differ in his opinion about what the ultimate end of life is, nonetheless every person naturally desires contentment and perfect fulfillment.⁹³ St. Thomas himself argues that some ends, commonly pursued by people, cannot be our last end. He picks wealth, honors, fame and glory, power, and pleasure as common examples of ends pursued that are ultimately unsatisfying.⁹⁴ Delight, he says, cannot be our ultimate end because “it results from the perfect good, the very essence of happiness.”⁹⁵ We delight in the good once it is possessed. Carnal pleasure will not bring us happiness because it is limited to the body and sense. I noted in the previous chapter, that the senses are limited to the apprehension of singulars in Aquinas’s anthropology. Singular goods participate in the ultimate and universal good.⁹⁶ No single carnal pleasure can fully

⁹¹ Hittinger, “When It Is More Excellent to Love,” 176. Cf. Kwasniewski, “St. Thomas, Extasis, and Union,” 589-594 for a more thorough analysis of the possibility of love as debasing or elevating.

⁹² See *ST*, I-II, q. 1, a. 1 and a. 2.

⁹³ See *ST*, I-II, q. 1, a. 7, corpus and ad 2.

⁹⁴ See *ST*, I-II, q. 2, aa. 1-6.

⁹⁵ *ST*, I-II, q. 2, a. 6. See *ST*, I-II, q. 3, a. 4.

⁹⁶ See *ST*, I-II, q. 1, a. 4, corpus and ad 1.

satisfy the human person, as Aquinas reaffirms here.⁹⁷ Although, he will say that the body is required for perfect and complete happiness since soul and body are ordered to one another.⁹⁸

In Aquinas's metaphysics, happiness must be an operation precisely because the good is that which perfects, and that which perfects is that which actualizes.⁹⁹ The last end of man must be an operation of man's most noble part, that which separates him from the animals, that which makes him what he is: a rational animal. Thus, happiness is a good of the rational soul.¹⁰⁰ It is the operation of the speculative intellect, that part of our reason that contemplates reality and universal being.¹⁰¹ Ultimately, in the Angelic Doctor's view, God is man's true last end. He is the supreme uncreated good in which all other created goods participate.¹⁰² He argues that man can attain an imperfect happiness in this life by his own powers, but can only achieve perfect happiness with God through a supernatural and divine gift.¹⁰³ Grace is that gift, and will be discussed below.

The goods we pursue, which we love, are subordinated to the highest good: God.¹⁰⁴ All other goods, all other loves, are true and right inasmuch as they direct us to the first

⁹⁷ See *ST*, I-II, q. 2, a. 6.

⁹⁸ See *ST*, I-II, q. 4, a. 6.

⁹⁹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 3, a. 2.

¹⁰⁰ See *ST*, I-II, q. 2, a. 7.

¹⁰¹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 3, a. 5. Aquinas also notes that the will plays a role in happiness, inasmuch as it desires the ultimate good and takes delight once happiness is attained. However, happiness is not in the operation of the will precisely because that which is desired is already present in the will, at least in intention. If happiness were an operation of the will, all men would be happy simply by desiring the good, and this is not the case (see *ST*, I-II, q. 3, a. 4).

¹⁰² See *ST*, I-II, q. 2, a. 8; q. 3, a. 1; q. 3, a. 8.

¹⁰³ See *ST*, I-II, q. 5, aa. 1, 3, 5. The relationship of nature to the supernatural, of happiness to the beatific vision of God, was furiously debated in the twentieth century. The debate began with the publication of Henri de Lubac's *Surnaturel* in 1946. See footnote 197 below for a more detailed discussion of the issues at play in this debate.

¹⁰⁴ Aquinas says "Those who sin turn from that in which their last end really consists: but they do not turn away from the intention of the last end, which intention they mistakenly seek in other things" (*ST*, I-II, q.

good, God, and to love of him. Love must be properly ordered. For Aquinas, “virtue is the order or ordering of love... because in us love is set in order by virtue.”¹⁰⁵ From the Angelic Doctor’s perspective, the sad truth about humanity is that the gift of freedom (of a rational appetite) and its accompanying drive to love coupled with man’s intellectual capacities means that he is radically capable of selling himself short. He is capable of investing himself entirely in goods that, when not properly ordered to the Supreme Good, are beneath his dignity. This is the perennial possibility of disintegration inherent in man’s constitution which Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II) identified. This is why love and the spousal meaning of the body require virtue and self-mastery.

II. Virtuous Love

A. *Love is Prudent*

The Angelic Doctor’s presentation of the virtues in the *Summa* can be analyzed a number of ways: the relationship between virtue and vice, the difference between acquired and infused virtue, or the necessity of the theological virtues for perfect happiness, to name just a few methods. In this chapter, I am concerned with virtue, inasmuch as virtue properly orders love. Given the relationship of love to the reason and to the concupiscible appetite, it seems fitting, therefore, to explore the two virtues ascribed to these two principles: prudence and temperance. The virtue of justice will be a principle concern in the next chapter on Aquinas’s view of marriage.

1, a. 7, ad 1). Later in the *Summa*, he suggests that when a child comes to the age of reason, he is responsible to use his discretion to direct himself to his due end: to God. See *ST*, I-II, q. 89, a. 6, corpus and ad 3.

¹⁰⁵ *ST*, I-II, q. 55, a. 1, ad 4.

To properly understand prudence and virtue, it is necessary to understand what exactly a virtue is for Aquinas. He defines virtue in two different ways. First, he says virtue is “a certain perfection of a power.”¹⁰⁶ However, he also borrows and agrees with a definition of virtue common at the time: “Virtue is a good quality of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us, without us.”¹⁰⁷ Some powers, such as biological powers are perfected in their activity (unless they are unhealthy) because they are naturally determined to a single object. However, some powers, such as the intellectual powers of man, are fundamentally indeterminate to concrete objects, even though they are determined to universal objects (the true and the good in the reason and the will, respectively). Intellectual powers can be determined to a wide variety of objects and to actions of varying goodness. Indeed, in the previous chapter, I noted that Aquinas’s view of original sin is that man’s intellectual powers are now disordered precisely because they are left to themselves and are, therefore, sometimes directed to conflicting goods, or even to false goods.

In Aquinas’s view, man’s powers are not destroyed by original sin but maintain an inclination to virtue, however, difficult it may be to achieve that virtue.¹⁰⁸ The inclination of our powers to their proper objects “is to be considered the middle term between two others: for it is based on the rational nature as on its root, and tends to the good of virtue, as to its term or end.”¹⁰⁹ The inclination to perfection is the middle term between our powers and virtue because “the good of nature... is the natural inclination to virtue, which is befitting to man from the very fact that he is a rational being; for it is due to this that he performs

¹⁰⁶ See *ST*, I-II, q. 55, a. 1.

¹⁰⁷ *ST*, I-II, q. 55, a. 5, obj. 1.

¹⁰⁸ See *ST*, I-II, q. 109, aa. 2 and 3; I-II, q. 60, a. 1; I-II, q. 63, a. 1; I-II, q. 85, a. 1.

¹⁰⁹ *ST*, I-II, q. 85, a. 2.

actions in accord with reason, which is to act virtuously.”¹¹⁰ This inclination in man is precisely his tendency to become fully human, the measure of which is determined by the principles of human nature.¹¹¹

Even without grace, Aquinas believes we can acquire virtue, although acquired virtue is fragile and precarious.¹¹² Simply put, the continued and repeated exercise of moral action produces a certain quality of the soul which he terms “*habitus* [habit]” or “a disposition whereby what which is disposed well or ill, and this, either in regard to itself or in regard to another.”¹¹³ A *habitus* can be acquired through a series of actions or it can be directly infused by God.¹¹⁴ A habit is an interior ordering of a power to action.¹¹⁵ Habits that order action in accordance with nature are virtues; habits that refer us to evil are vices.¹¹⁶ A *habitus* “is a principle of progress and resourcefulness through full commitment.”¹¹⁷ According to Romanus Cessario, “*Habitus* supposes a conception of the human person as open to

¹¹⁰ *ST*, I-II, q. 85, a. 2.

¹¹¹ See Thomas C. O’Brien, “Fallen Nature,” 156f.: “The principle of his [man’s] nature, as is true of any reality, make man to be what he is. By the same token they include a direction towards the full realization of this way of being. Because he is a human, man by his very nature is bent towards being fully human. This direction is called an inclination—or tendency to act towards the full realization of himself and the perfection of which he does not possess simply by existing. But the principles of his nature are the index to what the fulfillment of himself should be. Again, man is what he is through the principles of his nature. These principles themselves then bespeak of an inclination, an order to human perfection. Since virtue ensures that actions are in conformity to this order of nature, the principles also of themselves mean an inclination to virtue. Nature in its essential principles and in its bent to virtue, then, is not two distinct realities. The distinction is simply between the principles as establishing man in existence and as providing the spring for operations by which he will achieve completion.”

¹¹² See *ST*, I-II, q. 65, a. 2; q. 109, a. 2; q. 109, a. 3; q. 109, a. 8. See Cessario, *Introduction*, 196-200.

¹¹³ *ST*, I-II, q. 49, a. 1 citing Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. V, ch. 25.

¹¹⁴ See *ST*, I-II, q. 51, a. 2; I-II, q. 51, a. 4.

¹¹⁵ See *ST*, I-II, q. 54, a. 2.

¹¹⁶ See *ST*, I-II, q. 54, a. 3.

¹¹⁷ See Servais Pinckaers, *Sources of Christian Ethics* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 225. See also Pinckaers, *Sources*, 364: “Virtue is not a habitual way of acting, formed by the repetition of material acts and engendering in us a psychological mechanism. It is a personal capacity for action, the fruit of a series of fine actions, a power for progress and perfection.”

development and modification from both natural and divine causes.”¹¹⁸ Our actions have a true effect on our personality.

Technically speaking, virtues are those habits that dispose us to do good. In this sense, then, Aquinas allows that there are such things as intellectual virtues (science, wisdom, understanding, and art), but that these are only virtues relatively speaking and not absolutely. An artist or a scientist, after all, may not be a morally good person.¹¹⁹ Even the preeminent intellectual virtue of understanding, whereby the speculative intellect is perfected in its consideration of truth itself (the very object of the intellect) is not enough to guarantee moral rectitude: “For it happens sometimes that the aforesaid universal principle, known by means of understanding or science, is destroyed in a particular case by a passion: thus to one who is swayed by concupiscence, when he is overcome thereby, the object of his desire seems good, although it is opposed to the universal judgment of reason.”¹²⁰ In addition to the possibility of passion overruling judgment, Aquinas says that concrete actions, the means to the fixed end of human nature, are manifold and infinite.¹²¹ It is not enough to know truth itself, to know the good, we must be able to act and apply what we know to action.

The virtue of prudence is properly an intellectual virtue but it might be better understood as the virtue that bridges the intellectual virtues (and specifically the virtue of understanding) with right action.¹²² Prudence perfects the practical reason (which makes concrete rather than speculative judgments). Aquinas defines prudence as “right reason

¹¹⁸ See Romanus Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*, 2nd ed. (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 36.

¹¹⁹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 56, a. 3. Cf. *ST*, I-II, q. 58, a. 5.

¹²⁰ *ST*, I-II, q. 58, a. 5.

¹²¹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 47, a.3; I-II, q. 47, a. 15; I-II, q. 49, a. 7.

¹²² See *ST*, I-II, q. 57, a. 4, ad 1.

about things to be done.”¹²³ It is concerned primarily with the means to the ends apprehended by the speculative reason (both the ultimate end the person pursues and further ends to action immediately considered).¹²⁴ This is why prudence is the most necessary of the four cardinal virtues.¹²⁵ It establishes the mean and measure of justice, fortitude, and temperance.¹²⁶

By definition, prudence is the virtue whereby the multiplicity of means to any given end are discerned and chosen. But in Aquinas’s worldview, this does not mean that prudence is relativist or purely subjective. On the contrary, prudence is grounded in reality. He writes:

To prudence belongs not only the consideration of the reason, but also the application to action, which is the end of the practical reason. But no man can conveniently apply one thing to another, unless he knows both the thing to be applied, and the thing to which it has to be applied. Now actions are in singular matters: and so it is necessary for the prudent man to know both the universal principles of reason, and the singulars about which actions are concerned.¹²⁷

This is why understanding is needed for moral virtue.¹²⁸ We act based on our understanding of reality, on the one hand, and, on our experience on the other. Our experience is important in Aquinas’s view. Past experience helps us to know what to expect from reality amid the infinite possible results from our actions. “It is because the infinite number of singulars cannot be comprehended by human reason, that *our counsels are uncertain* (Wis. 9:14). Nevertheless experience reduces the infinity of singulars to a certain number which occur as a general rule, and the knowledge of these suffices for human prudence.”¹²⁹

¹²³ See *ST*, I-II, q. 56, a. 3.

¹²⁴ See *ST*, I-II, q. 14, a. 2; I-II, q. 58, a. 5; II-II, q. 47, a. 1; II-II, q. 47, a. 2; II-II, q. 47, a. 3.

¹²⁵ See *ST*, I-II, q. 57, a. 5; II-II, q. 47, a. 5, ad 3. Even the theological virtue of charity needs prudence, see Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 251f.

¹²⁶ See *ST*, I-II, q. 64, a. 3; II-II, q. 50, a. 1, ad 1; II-II, q. 51, a. 2.

¹²⁷ *ST*, II-II, q. 47, a. 3.

¹²⁸ See *ST*, I-II, q. 58, a. 5.

¹²⁹ *ST*, II-II, q. 47, a. 3, ad 2 (original emphasis). Several scholars over the last two decades have attempted to recover the role of prudence in reasoning about right human action and in natural law theory.

It is precisely in virtue's connection between the universal and the singular, epitomized in and catalyzed by the virtue of prudence, that frees Aquinas's virtue theory from mere abstraction. Servais Pinckaers once wrote,

Only a morality based on the virtues can truly assure a connection between the universality of principles and the particularity of human action.... Virtue cannot be reduced to a simple idea or proposition, however precise. It is a specific reality and is only revealed in the experience of action and life.... It is formed by the repetition of interior actions that insure excellence and progress in performance.... Thanks to the repeated experience of acting appropriately and well in a given area such as justice or temperance, we learn to relate the universal to the particular as we discern what is most fitting and profitable in the various circumstances that arise.¹³⁰

The focus on experience and the need for right experience is the reason, Pinckaers argues, that Aristotle insisted that the young should not study morality.¹³¹

Prudence "is caused by the exercise of acts, wherefore *its acquisition demands experience and time*."¹³² Therefore, Aquinas insists that in order to grow in prudence a person must not only grow in experience but he must also be docile to learning from others. He must take counsel from prudent men and women.¹³³ With his emphasis on prudence, St. Thomas is insisting that morality is more than abiding by rules. The moral systems of casuistry so prominent from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries represented an attempt to gain

These scholars have taken a decided position against the precept-oriented natural theory of philosophers like John Finnis and Germain Grisez. See, for example, Pamela Hall, *Narrative and Natural Law*; Daniel Mark Nelson, *The Priority of Prudence: Virtue and Natural Law in Thomas Aquinas and the Implications for Modern Ethics* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991); Waddell, *The Primacy of Love*; Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*. These works are generally welcomed by many moral theologians for drawing attention to a fuller view of Aquinas's virtue theory and its relationship to natural law. However, they are not without their limitations. For an excellent critique of these and other studies on Aquinas's virtue ethic, see Jean Porter, "Recent Studies in Aquinas's Virtue Ethic: A Review Essay," *The Journal of Religious Studies* 26 (1998): 191-215. See also Romanus Cessario, "Moral Realism and the Natural Law," in *Introduction to Moral Theology*, 52-99.

¹³⁰ Servais Pinckaers, "The Role of Virtue in Moral Theology," in *The Pinckaers Reader*, 298, 299.

¹³¹ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 1, ch. 4; Pinckaers, "The Role of Virtue in Moral Theology," 300-301.

¹³² *ST*, II-II, q. 47, a. 14, ad 3 (original emphasis) citing Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 2, ch. 2.

¹³³ See *ST*, II-II, q. 47, a. 15; II-II, q. 49, a. 3. Even those who are divinely infused prudence know, at the very least, that they must prudently take the counsel of others (see *ST*, II-II, q. 47, a. 14, ad 2).

too much certitude in matters that are often too specific. Josef Piper argues that casuistry's true purpose was to sharpen prudential judgment. Its peril came when it overstepped this boundary.¹³⁴ Certainly one of the difficulties with the freedom of indifference described by Servais Pinckaers is the reduced role not only of prudence but also the reduced emphasis on the authority of the community and one's elders in the formation of this virtue.

Early in his explicit treatment of prudence in the *secunda secundae*, Aquinas writes:

As stated above [I, q. 82, a. 4], the will moves all the faculties to their acts. Now the first act of the appetitive faculty is love, as stated above [I-II, q. 25, aa. 1,2]. Accordingly prudence is said to be love, not indeed essentially, but in so far as love moves to the act of prudence. Wherefore Augustine goes on to say that *prudence is love discerning aright that which helps from that which hinders us in tending to God*. Now love is said to discern because it moves the reason to discern.¹³⁵

This is an important observation. Prudence is not love “essentially” since love is in the will and prudence is a virtue of the practical intellect. However, inasmuch as the will commands the powers of the soul to exercise their act, the love in the will commands the act of prudence. According to one Thomist, here “we find in the very heart of the Thomistic intellect and will an *act* giving being to an *act*. The act of love in the appetite calls into being the act of knowledge in the intellect.”¹³⁶

It is not surprising then that Aquinas holds that “every sin is opposed to prudence.”¹³⁷ The direct cause of every sin according to Aquinas is an affective adherence to

¹³⁴ See Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 26-28. Cf. Cessario, *Moral Virtues*, 13-14.

¹³⁵ *ST*, II-II, q. 47, a. 1, ad 1 (original emphasis).

¹³⁶ Charles O’Neil, *Imprudence in Aquinas*, The Aquinas Lecture, 1955 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1955), 106 (original emphasis). See especially pages 103-107 on the relationship of love and prudence in Aquinas. See also, Charles O’Neil, “Is Prudence Love?” *The Monist* 58 (1974): 119-139.

¹³⁷ *ST*, II-II, q. 55, a. 2, ad 3. Every vice is also contrary to prudence (see *ST*, II-II, q. 119, a. 3, ad 3).

a mutable good, an adherence which is contrary to the nature and dignity of man.¹³⁸ Such adherence develops from an inordinate self-love.¹³⁹ Precisely because prudence is about means to the end loved, a defect concerning the end is the “worst of all.”¹⁴⁰ In fact, the primary vice that St. Thomas believes resembles the virtue of prudence is a “prudence of the flesh” in which a man “looks upon carnal goods as the last end of his life,” and so constructs an architecture of means to achieve those carnal goods.¹⁴¹ This is self-love gone awry.

This is why, while prudence is the measure of the other cardinal virtues, prudence itself needs the other virtues, even the virtue of temperance, perhaps especially the virtue of temperance. The many vices of imprudence arise from lust, “As the Philosopher states *pleasure above all corrupts the estimate of prudence*, and chiefly sexual pleasure which absorbs the mind, and draws it to sensible delight. Now the perfection of prudence and of every intellectual virtue consists in abstraction from sensible objects.”¹⁴² This is why Aquinas insists that the moral virtues are connected one to another through prudence.¹⁴³ Moral virtues protect the reason against inordinate passions that comprise judgment and inordinately affect love.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ See *ST*, I-II, q. 75, a. 1.

¹³⁹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 77, a. 4. Cf. *ST*, II-II, q. 153, a. 5, ad 3.

¹⁴⁰ See *ST*, II-II, q. 47, a. 1, ad 3: “The worth of prudence consists not in thought merely, but in its application to action, which is the end of the practical reason. Wherefore if any defect occur in this, it is most contrary to prudence, since, the end being of most import in everything, it follows that a defect which touches the end is the worst of all.”

¹⁴¹ See *ST*, II-II, q. 55, a. 1. Cf. *ST*, II-II, q. 55, a. 1, ad 2: “The flesh is on account of the soul, as matter is on account of the form, and the instrument on account of the principal agent. Hence the flesh is loved lawfully, if it be directed to the good of the soul as its end. If, however, a man place his last end in a good of the flesh, his love will be inordinate and unlawful, and it is thus that prudence of the flesh is directed to the love of the flesh.”

¹⁴² *ST*, II-II, q. 54, a. 6 (original emphasis). See also *ST*, II-II, q. 54, a. 6, ad 3: “Carnal vices destroy the judgment of reason so much the more as they lead us away from reason.” Cf. *ST*, II-II, q. 153, a. 5, ad 1.

¹⁴³ See *ST*, I-II, q. 65, a. 1.

¹⁴⁴ See *ST*, II-II, q. 123, a. 12; II-II, q. 136, a. 1.

B. Love is Temperate

In Aquinas's moral theory, the virtue of temperance moderates the soul's appetite for "sensible and bodily goods."¹⁴⁵ To repeat, men and women have a sensitive appetite, which they have in common with brute animals. This sensitive appetite has concupiscible attractions to sensible and bodily goods, on the one hand, and flees (irascibly) from sensible and bodily evils.¹⁴⁶ The sensitive appetite, the locus of the passions in the soul, is the locus of virtue inasmuch as it is ordered to reason, or ought to be so but for the fallen state of man, as I noted in the previous chapter.

Fortitude is the virtue that strengthens man's resolve in the face of evil, but temperance moderates our desires for sensible goods:

These movements of the sensitive appetite [rebel] against reason chiefly by lack of moderation. Because sensible and bodily goods, considered in their species, are not in opposition to reason, but are subject to it as instruments which reason employs in order to attain its proper end: and that they are opposed to reason is owing to the fact that the sensitive appetite fails to tend towards them in accord with the mode of reason. Hence it belongs properly to moral virtue to moderate those passions which denote a pursuit of the good.... Accordingly..., temperance, which denotes a kind of moderation, is chiefly concerned with those passions that tend towards sensible goods, viz. desire and pleasure, and consequently with the sorrows that arise from the absence of those pleasures.¹⁴⁷

The Angelic Doctor adopts Aristotle's definition of pleasure. Pleasure is "a movement by which the soul as a whole is consciously brought into its normal state of being."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ See *ST*, II-II, q. 141, a. 3. For an exegesis on Aquinas's understanding of the virtue of temperance, see Diana Fritz Cates, "The Virtue of Temperance (II IIae, qq. 141-170)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, 321-339; Cessario, *The Virtues*, 177-197; Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 143-206.

¹⁴⁶ See *ST*, I-II, q. 23, a. 1.

¹⁴⁷ *ST*, II-II, q. 141, a. 3.

¹⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Bk. 1, ch. 11 (1269b38-39). Translation from Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, vol. 2 (Princeton: The Princeton University Press, 1984), 2180. Cf. *ST*, I-II, q. 31, a. 1.

Aquinas argues that temperance must concern the greatest of pleasures, and, he says, these are the pleasures of touch. This is the case, he says, because “pleasure results from a natural operation, it is so much the greater according as it results from a more natural operation.”¹⁴⁹ In this category, he locates pleasures of food, drink, and sexual activity.¹⁵⁰ These are the most pleasurable natural operations in man because they are consistent with the preservation of the individual and of the species.¹⁵¹

In fact, pleasure is so much a part of human life and flourishing, that Aquinas considers it a vice absolutely “to reject pleasure to the extent of omitting things that are necessary for nature’s preservation.”¹⁵² Since man shares these same pleasures and operations with animals, it is necessary that he experience them with the excellence proper to the rational person he is.¹⁵³ Immoderate pleasure, precisely because it concerns things lower than the simple and abstract objects of contemplation, can easily distract us from reason, from divine law, and from contemplation.¹⁵⁴

The virtue of temperance moderates the passions according to the mean between excess and deficiency of pleasure.¹⁵⁵ This is why the virtue of the prudence is so necessary. The mean shifts from situation to situation. What is the mean, and, therefore, what is virtuous, in one situation may be excessive or deficient in another situation.¹⁵⁶ The role of

¹⁴⁹ *ST*, II-II, q. 141, a. 4.

¹⁵⁰ See *ST*, II-II, q. 141, aa. 4, 5.

¹⁵¹ See *ST*, II-II, q. 141, a. 5. Aquinas, however, also allows that temperance concerns unnecessary pleasures, provided those pleasures are not a hindrance to the body and to health (see *ST*, II-II, q. 141, a. 6, ad 2). This is due to his anthropology which sees the body as necessary for the operations of the soul, even knowledge requires sense impressions in some way (cf. *ST*, I, q. 78, a. 4; I, q. 80, aa. 6-8).

¹⁵² *ST*, II-II, q. 142, a. 1.

¹⁵³ See *ST*, II-II, q. 142, a. 4; Cf. *ST*, II-II, q. 141, aa. 2,3.

¹⁵⁴ See *ST*, II-II, q. 142, a. 4; II-II, q. 142, a. 2, ad 1; II-II, q. 141, a. 4.

¹⁵⁵ See *ST*, I-II, q. 59, a. 1. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. II, ch. 5.

¹⁵⁶ See *ST*, I-II, q. 64, a. 1, ad 2; I-II, q. 64, a. 2.

prudence is to discern the mean in every situation.¹⁵⁷ Temperance makes use of sensual pleasure “according to the demands of place and time, and in keeping with those among whom one dwells.”¹⁵⁸ Because prudence determines the mean of temperance, as one author puts it, it is the habit “that assists persons in choosing how to feel.”¹⁵⁹

Since temperance is concerned primarily with food, drink, and sex, Aquinas treats abstinence, sobriety, and chastity as subjective parts of temperance. The virtue of abstinence is the “retrenchment from food... as regulated by reason.”¹⁶⁰ Abstinence is also regulated by reason because the virtuous temperate person “in abstaining from food... should act with due regard for those among whom he lives, for his own person, and for the requirements of health.”¹⁶¹ A temperate man takes appropriate delight in food. For St. Thomas, fasting is a true act of abstinence because it serves “to bridle the lusts of the flesh... in order to that the mind may arise more freely to the contemplation of heavenly things.”¹⁶² Deficiency with regard to the pleasures of food is insensibility and is grievous when it moves a man to avoid nutrition that his body needs.¹⁶³ Gluttony stands on the excessive end of the desire for food. Gluttony is an inordinate desire for the pleasures of the palate.¹⁶⁴

Abstinence concerns both meat and drink Aquinas says, but sobriety concerns a “matter wherein the observance of the measure is most deserving of praise. Such a matter is

¹⁵⁷ See *ST*, I-II, q. 64, a. 3; II-II, q. 50, a. 1, ad 1; II-II, q. 51, a. 2.

¹⁵⁸ *ST*, II-II, q. 142, a. 6, ad 2.

¹⁵⁹ Diana Fritz Cates, “The Virtue of Temperance (IIa IIae, qq. 141-170),” in Stephen Pope, *The Ethics of Aquinas*, 325. Cf. *ST*, II-II, q. 47, a. 7, ad 2-3; I-II, q. 15, a. 3; I-II, q. 57, a. 5.

¹⁶⁰ *ST*, II-II, q. 146, a. 1. In a response to an objector, Aquinas agrees medicine regards the “quantity and quality” of food in regard to health. Nonetheless, abstinence moderates food in its “internal affections with regard to good reason” (see *ST*, II-II, q. 146, a. 1, ad 2).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *ST*, II-II, q. 147, a. 1. Aquinas holds that fasting is the guardian of chastity inasmuch as it bridles the lusts of the flesh (cf. *ST*, II-II, q. 147, a. 1).

¹⁶³ See *ST*, II-II, q. 147.1, ad 2; II-II, q. 142, a. 1.

¹⁶⁴ See *ST*, II-II, q. 148, a. 1, corpus and ad 2; II-II, q. 148, a. 2.

the drinking of intoxicants, because the measured use thereof is most profitable, while immoderate excess therein is most of harmful, since it hinders the use of reason even more than excessive eating.”¹⁶⁵ St. Thomas frequently cites scripture to support his claim that moderate use of wine is healthy.¹⁶⁶ Yet, he is not unaware of the dangers of intoxicating drink.¹⁶⁷

Sobriety is also a virtuous mean that shifts according to circumstances.¹⁶⁸ Aquinas follows Aristotle in holding that deficiency in matters of drink is very rare, and, therefore, it is unnamed. Yet, he acknowledges that deficiency is possible “if a man were knowingly to abstain from wine to the extent of molesting nature grievously.”¹⁶⁹ Drunkenness, the excessive use of alcohol, is the vice against sobriety because it causes the loss of reason.¹⁷⁰ Given that in Aquinas’s anthropology reason is that which distinguishes man from the rest of creation, it is not surprising that he says that drunkenness is worse than gluttony precisely because it hinders moral agency.¹⁷¹

Finally, and most importantly for the topic of this dissertation, Aquinas turns to chastity and its acts. The virtue of chastity concerns matters relating to “venereal pleasures” and sexual intercourse.¹⁷² Aquinas writes that “venereal pleasures are more impetuous, and are more oppressive on the reason than the pleasures of the palate: and therefore they are in greater need of chastisement and restraint, since if one consent to them this increases the

¹⁶⁵ *ST*, II-II, q. 149, a. 1.

¹⁶⁶ See Sirach 31:27-28; 1 Timothy 5:23. Cf. *ST*, II-II, q. 149, a. 1, *sed contra* and corpus; II-II, q. 149, a. 3.

¹⁶⁷ See *ST*, II-II, q. 149, a. 2; II-II, q. 150, a. 2.

¹⁶⁸ See *ST*, II-II, q. 149, a. 3; II-II, q. 150, a. 2, ad 3.

¹⁶⁹ *ST*, II-II, q. 150, a. 1, ad 2. Aquinas here assumes that a certain amount of wine is necessary for good health (cf. *ST*, II-II, q. 149, a. 1).

¹⁷⁰ *ST*, II-II, q. 150, a. 1.

¹⁷¹ See *ST*, II-II, q. 149, a. 2, ad 1; II-II, q. 150, a. 2.

¹⁷² See *ST*, II-II, q. 151, a. 1; II-II, q. 151, a. 4.

force of concupiscence and weakens the strength of the mind.”¹⁷³ Furthermore, “the movement of the organs of generation is not subject to the command of reason, as are the movements of the other external members.”¹⁷⁴ Because of original sin, Josef Pieper writes, “the human self is capable of throwing itself into disorder to the point of self-destruction.”¹⁷⁵ Within sexual intercourse, the pleasure is so great “that the free act of reason in considering spiritual things is incompatible with the aforesaid pleasure.”¹⁷⁶ Unrestrained venereal pleasures “work the greatest havoc in man’s mind.”¹⁷⁷ In fact, when a man finds himself overly distracted by carnal pleasures, he no longer seeks spiritual pleasures because they have become “distasteful to him.”¹⁷⁸ St. Thomas says that venereal temptations are so strong that “of all a Christian’s conflicts, the most difficult combats are those of chastity; wherein the fight is a daily one, but victory rare.”¹⁷⁹

The virtue of chastity disposes a person “to make moderate use of bodily members in accordance with the judgment of his reason and the choice of his will.”¹⁸⁰ Chastity orders venereal acts to be performed “in due manner and order.”¹⁸¹ What is interesting about Aquinas’s treatise on chastity is that, unlike his treatments of abstinence and sobriety, he omits any suggestion that the mean of this virtue shifts according to circumstances.¹⁸² St. Thomas argues, on the one hand, that venereal pleasure is not subject to the command of

¹⁷³ *ST*, II-II, q. 151, a. 3, ad 2.

¹⁷⁴ *ST*, II-II, q. 151, a. 4.

¹⁷⁵ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 148.

¹⁷⁶ *ST*, II-II, q. 153, a. 2, ad 2.

¹⁷⁷ *ST*, II-II, q. 153, a. 1, ad 1.

¹⁷⁸ *ST*, II-II, q. 153, a. 5.

¹⁷⁹ *ST*, II-II, q. 154, a. 3, ad 1.

¹⁸⁰ *ST*, II-II, q. 151, a. 1, ad 1. Given that Aquinas uses the phrase “venereal pleasures” throughout the treatise on chastity, it is certain that here, when he uses the term “bodily members,” he means the sexual organs.

¹⁸¹ *ST*, II-II, q. 153, a. 2.

¹⁸² I am grateful to Cates for pointing this out. See Cates, “The Virtue of Temperance,” 333.

reason, but on the other hand, he says that chastity disposes toward moderate use of bodily members according to the judgment of reason.

Aquinas clarifies his position in a question on lust as to whether a venereal activity can exist without sinfulness (he says it can). He writes,

As stated above [II-II, q. 152, a. 2, ad 2; I-II, q. 64, a. 2], the mean of virtue depends not on quantity but on conformity with right reason: and consequently the exceeding pleasure attaching to a venereal act directed according to reason, is not opposed to the mean of virtue. Moreover, virtue is not concerned with the amount of pleasure experienced by the external sense, as this depends on the disposition of the body; what matters is how much the interior appetite is affected by that pleasure. Nor does it follow that the act in question is contrary to virtue, from the fact that the free act of reason in considering spiritual things is incompatible with the aforesaid pleasure. For it is not contrary to virtue, if the act of reason be sometimes interrupted for something that is done in accordance with reason, else it would be against virtue for a person to set himself to sleep. That venereal concupiscence and pleasure are not subject to the command and moderation of reason, us due to the punishment of the first sin, inasmuch as the reason, for rebelling against God, deserved that its body should rebel against it.¹⁸³

This lengthy passage is important because it demonstrates how chastity differs from abstinence and sobriety precisely because of the overpowering nature of venereal pleasure. Unlike, the other pleasures of touch, St. Thomas is suggesting that venereal pleasure essentially impairs reason in the midst of the sexual act. In this way, it is not dissimilar to sleep.

Precisely because the reason is not able to moderate the experience of pleasure in the moment of sexual activity, the act of reason must be virtuous before it sets out to be interrupted by sex. This is why there is no talk of a shifting circumstances for sexual pleasure. The mean of reason in regard to sexual activity is not contingent on accidental circumstances because, as Aquinas sees it, there is nothing about the circumstances or

¹⁸³ *ST*, II-II, q. 153, a. 1, ad 2.

situation that can moderate the overpowering nature of venereal pleasure. Engaging in the sexual act, like engaging in sleep or in taking food, must be proportioned to the order of reason. The ordering of reason directs things to their end.¹⁸⁴ Since “it is no sin if one, by the dictate of reason, makes use of certain things in a fitting manner and order for the end to which they were adapted, provided this end be something truly good.... The preservation of the nature of the human species is very great good... so is the use of venereal acts directed to the preservation of the whole human race.”¹⁸⁵

Throughout the treatise on temperance, the mean for the sexual activity, the virtue of chastity, is to engage in venereal acts primarily for procreation. The vice of lust and all of its species comes from an intention to enjoy venereal pleasures alone without an intention for procreation: “The lustful man intends not human generation but venereal pleasures.”¹⁸⁶ As Aquinas sees it, venereal acts are properly used in accordance with reason, and reason dictates that they be used for their purpose, which is procreation. The vice of lust and its species is the use of the sexual organs contrary to reason, which is contrary to their purpose, for the sake of venereal pleasure alone.¹⁸⁷ Aquinas holds that the sexual act for procreation is legitimate only within the marital relationship in which the offspring will receive the best upbringing.¹⁸⁸

I will say more on Aquinas’s view of marriage in the next chapter. Presently, I am concerned only with the virtues of prudence and temperance in their relationship with love. In this light, it makes sense that the treatise on temperance is not much concerned with the

¹⁸⁴ See *ST*, II-II, q. 141, a. 6.

¹⁸⁵ *ST*, II-II, q. 153, a. 2.

¹⁸⁶ *ST*, II-II, q. 154, a. 11, ad 3.

¹⁸⁷ See *ST*, II-II, q. 153, aa. 3-4

¹⁸⁸ See *ST*, II-II, q. 154, a. 2.

proper relationship between man and woman, husband and wife. The virtue of temperance is concerned only with the person's passions and their moderation according to reason.

"Properly speaking, man is that which is according to reason. Wherefore from the very fact that a man holds [*tenet se*] to that which is in accord with reason, he is said to contain himself."¹⁸⁹ Although he may not use this term, self-possession is certainly a goal of Aquinas's virtue theory and this means being in control of one's concupiscible passions. Pieper writes, "Temperance is selfless self-preservation. Intemperance is self-destruction through the selfish degradation of the powers which aim at self-preservation."¹⁹⁰

The degradation of the sexuality is listed as parts of lust: simple fornication, adultery, incest, seduction, rape, sacrilege, and sins against nature.¹⁹¹ The sins of *luxuria* (simple fornication, adultery, incest, seduction, rape, sacrilege) as serious sins against chastity. But the sins against nature (bestiality, homosexual acts, masturbation, and unnatural manner of heterosexual intercourse) are more grievous violations of chastity in Aquinas's mind since not only are they violations of right reason but, additionally, they are "contrary to the natural order of the venereal act as becoming to the human race."¹⁹² Nevertheless, says Cessario, "Aquinas would maintain that, because of the harm rape causes to the bond of charity, the seriousness of rape—to cite one example—ordinarily surpasses that of solitary masturbation. For the Christian life, charity remains the principal good that chastity or any virtue embodies."¹⁹³ Charity, in Aquinas's system, is fundamentally a relationship with God, a union

¹⁸⁹ *ST*, II-II, q. 155, a. 1.

¹⁹⁰ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 148.

¹⁹¹ See *ST*, II-II, q. 154.

¹⁹² *ST*, II-II, q. 154, a. 11.

¹⁹³ Cessario, *The Virtues*, 193. See *ST*, II-II, q. 151, a. 2. It is often quoted objection against St. Thomas that he says masturbation is a more grave sin than rape because it is a sin against nature. Jean Porter and Lisa Sowle Cahill are two prominent moral theologians who have voiced this critique. See Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Between*

with God, and this is why chastity consists principally of charity. To commit sexual sins against nature is to sin against the order of the One who is our complete beloved, in whom our hearts find their complete rest.¹⁹⁴

It is a common mistake to view the virtue of temperance as a sort of repression of sexuality, as if St. Thomas seeks to govern all passion and feeling through the rubric of a cold and hard Aristotelian logic disguised as moderating reason.¹⁹⁵ Nothing could be further from the truth. For Aquinas, the virtue brings tranquility and joy to the soul, not conflicted battle of repression.¹⁹⁶ In fact, as Cates has pointed out, this is the difference between the continent person and the temperate person. The continent person experiences the vehement passions in the sensitive appetite, which he must continually struggle to moderate.¹⁹⁷

Whereas, vehement concupiscible passions do not even arise in the temperate person.¹⁹⁸ It is precisely because the passions are rightly ordered that they were not suppressed in the paradise of Adam and Eve. This is why Aquinas says that sexual pleasure was even greater

the Sexes, 106f.; Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law*, 222f. Porter provides a succinct summary of the criticism: “We tend to presuppose that there are important differences between those kinds of actions that harm other people, and sexual transgressions.... While we do consider certain kinds of sexual behavior to be wrong or shameful, we are too conscious of the complexity of sexual relationships, and their highly incommunicable personal dimensions, to be entirely comfortable with a highly stringent sexual morality” (Porter, *Natural and Divine Law*, 222). Interestingly, this was the first objection Aquinas considered to his position: “Now adultery, seduction and rape which are injurious to our neighbor are seemingly more contrary to the love of our neighbor, than unnatural sins, by which no other person is injured” (*ST*, II-II, q. 154, a. 12, obj. 1). To this, Aquinas responds: “The ordering of nature is from God himself: wherefore in sins contrary to nature, whereby the very order of nature is violated, an injury is done to God, the Author of nature. Hence Augustine says: *Those foul offenses that are against nature should be everywhere and at all times detested and punished.... For even that very intercourse which should be between God and us is violated, when that same nature, of which He is the Author, is polluted by the perversity of lust*” (*ST*, II-II, q. 154, a. 12, ad 1 [original emphasis]). In the next section of this chapter, it will be clear that the love of neighbor and love of God coincide with one another. For Aquinas, sins against nature do harm another person: God. See also Lawrence Dewan, “Jean Porter on Natural Law: Thomistic Notes,” in *Wisdom, Law, and Virtue*, 263-265.

¹⁹⁴ See *ST*, II-II, q. 151, a. 2; II-II, q. 154, a. 12, ad 1.

¹⁹⁵ Pasnau following Martha Nussbaum’s theory of emotion shares the critique that Aquinas has a relatively negative view of the passions. See Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 262-264. Cf. Martha Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁹⁶ See *ST*, II-II, q. 141, a. 2, ad 2.

¹⁹⁷ See Cates, “The Virtue of Temperance,” 323. See also Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*.

¹⁹⁸ See *ST*, II-II, q. 155, a. 1.

then than it is now.¹⁹⁹ The temperate person experiences delight in food, in drink, and in sexual activity in a way fitting to the dignity, beauty, and honor of the human person.²⁰⁰

III. Charity: The Friendship of God

A. Grace and Nature

No discussion of the topic of love in the *Summa theologiae* is complete without an exegesis of St. Thomas's conception of the theological virtue of charity. For St. Thomas, the theological virtue of charity is a certain friendship with God.²⁰¹ In order to understand this, however, it is first necessary to consider the relationship of nature and grace.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ See *ST*, I, q. 98, a. 2, ad 3.

²⁰⁰ See *ST*, II-II, q. 141, a. 2, ad 3.

²⁰¹ See *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a. 1.

²⁰² In 1946, Henri de Lubac published *Surnaturel: Etudes historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946). This was followed in 1965 by two works clarifying the issues raised in 1946. These were translated into English in the late 1960s. See Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (London: Chapman, 1967); Henri de Lubac, *Augustinianism and Modern Theology* (London: Chapman, 1969). De Lubac's work renewed an old controversy about the relationship between nature and grace in Christian theology and in the work of St. Thomas Aquinas in particular. Specifically, Aquinas argues that man has a natural desire to see God in several places (see *ST*, I, q. 12, a. 1; I-II, q. 3, a. 8; *Summa contra gentiles*, bk. III, chs. 50-51, among other places). The problem, as Denis Bradley has observed, is, "just what Aquinas's philosophical arguments about the *natural desire* for seeing God... allow us to conclude about the *natural possibility* of seeing God is not evident" (Denis Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good: Reason and Human Happiness in Aquinas's Moral Science* [Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997], 427). De Lubac himself argued that the natural desire to see God suggested that it is inconceivable to speak about a purely natural end, or happiness, in man as Aquinas does in *ST*, I-II, q. 4, a. 5; I-II, q. 62, a. 1; I-II, q. 63, a. 3; I-II, q. 65, a. 2. See De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 41-43. This claim led to a heated debate between the theologians of the *Nouvelle theologie* (which included De Lubac) and the strict Thomists following the tradition of Aquinas's commentators, at least as much because de Lubac's argument attempted to separate Aquinas from the commentatorial tradition. Several histories have been written on the debate. See, for example, Stephen Duffy, *The Graced Horizon: Nature and Grace in Modern Catholic Thought* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992); Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 134-148; Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theolog*, 72-115. For a sympathetic reading of de Lubac's work see Paul McPartlan, *Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology* (New York: T & T Clark, 1995), 45-60.

Romanus Cessario, who counts Cajetan among his Thomistic forebears, argues in several places that the culprit in the increasing unpopularity of scholasticism in the early twentieth century was the Jesuit Francisco Suarez, that it was he who attempted to resolve the paradox of natural desire and graced fulfillment by creating a category of pure nature without grace (see Cessario, *The Virtues*, 68-69). Cessario believes Suarez and other Jesuits of the Reformation period were "eclectic Thomists" who were willing to "import large portions of other philosophical and theological systems so that they are led to relativize the principles and conclusions that constitute the Thomism of Thomas Aquinas." For this reason, he does consider them Thomists, and,

In the previous chapter, it was clear that every act of the will is preceded by an act of the intellect because the will is a rational appetite. While the will tends to the good, it is the good apprehended by reason (the *bonum rationis*).²⁰³ For its part, the intellect has by nature an understanding (*intellectus*) of first principles (such as the principle of non-contradiction and that whole is greater than a part) that are simply understood without deductive argumentation.²⁰⁴ All movement in the human person is the result of the interaction between these two principles: intellect and will.

therefore, does not include them in his *Short History of Thomism* precisely because “they do not warrant full consideration in a history devoted to Thomism.” See Romanus Cessario, *Short History of Thomism*, 17, 18.

Cessario follows Cajetan’s interpretation, which is that Aquinas always presumes the reality of revelation in his theology. That, in fact, God has been operating in grace throughout history since the fall. As Cessario says, the mere fact that Aquinas holds, as he does, for the possibility of divinely infused moral virtues assumes “that God has acted in human history in such a way as to make beatific fellowship with himself possible for every member of the race” (Cessario, *The Moral Virtues*, 106). For a summary of Cajetan’s position and those of other medieval commentators of Aquinas, see Thomas Gilby, “The Vision of God,” Appendix 5 in *Summa theologiae*, vol. 16, (1ae2ae. 1-5) (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 153-155. Cessario comments, “De Lubac and those who followed him react strongly against any suggestion of layering the supernatural onto the natural. But *gratia perficit naturam* does not imply that human nature in itself forms a de-supernaturalized clone of the Christian saint. If we take Aquinas’s moral theology in context, to be fully moral means to be on the way to God, on the way to beatific fellowship with God” (Cessario, *The Virtues*, 75n30).

The reader will surmise in the course of this section of chapter 7 that this latter is also my position. I take Aquinas to mean what he says in the *Summa theologiae*. And in the course of this section it will be clear that he does mean to say that there can be imperfect natural happiness in this life without the gratuitous gift of grace infusing the theological and moral virtues. But Aquinas clearly does not mean that grace should be presumed. Similarly, he would abhor an abstract conception of man in a state of “pure nature,” who could act without any influence from the divine. This is metaphysically impossible in St. Thomas’s view. Finally, from what he himself says, it can be presumed that the Angelic Doctor would have disagreed with any attempt to presume upon God’s grace, or that we could earn God’s grace.

Perhaps as a result of the debate, many theologians have generally been suspicious of the scholastic distinction between grace and nature. The most famous example would be Karl Rahner. See Karl Rahner, “On the Relationship between Nature and Grace,” in *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1961, 1965), 1:297-318; Karl Rahner, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1985), 116-37. For a helpful summary of Rahner’s thought, see Stephen J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 261-341. For a contemporary robust defense of the nature-grace distinction based on Aquinas’s work, see Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 379-389. Her bibliography is very helpful. In this regard, see also Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 424-481; Steven Long, “Obediential Potency, Human Knowledge, and the Natural Desire for God,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 37 (1997): 45-63; Brian Thomas Mullady, *The Meaning of the Term “Moral” in St. Thomas Aquinas* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1986).

²⁰³ *ST*, I, q. 19, a. 1; I, q. 80, a. 2; I, q. 82, a. 1; I-II, q. 8, a. 1; I-II, q. 13, a. 5, ad 2.

²⁰⁴ See *ST*, I, q. 79, a. 8..

However, to avoid an infinite regress of interaction (the intellect specifying the will and the will exercising the intellect), Aquinas says there is an exterior mover who is above human nature that puts the process into act.²⁰⁵ In his treatise on grace, for example, he notes: “Man is master of his acts and of his willing or not willing, because of his deliberate reason, which can be bent on one side or another. And although he is master of his deliberating or not deliberating, yet this can only be by a previous deliberation; and since it cannot go on to infinity, we must come at length to this, that man’s free-will is moved by an extrinsic principle, which is above the human mind, to wit by God.”²⁰⁶ This is why St. Thomas can say that God’s agency in some remains present even to our fallen nature, even though without grace we can have no direct experience or knowledge of it.²⁰⁷

In the very first question of his treatise of grace, Aquinas writes that man knows whatever he knows through God’s own efficient causality bringing the intellect to act in the first place and giving it its form as an intellectual power.²⁰⁸ The form God bestows on human understanding (an intelligible light, the Angelic Doctor calls it) is sufficient “for knowing certain intelligible things, viz., those we can come to know through the senses.”²⁰⁹ For higher things, however, the human intellect needs “a stronger light, viz., the light of faith or prophecy which is called the *light of grace*.”²¹⁰ In the will, too, all that we desire, in all that we pursue, we are pursuing God, who is the Supreme Good, whether we are conscious

²⁰⁵ See *ST*, I, q. 2, a. 3; I, q. 82, a. 4, ad 3; I-II, q. 9, a. 4; I-II, q. 17, a. 5, ad 3.

²⁰⁶ *ST*, I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 1.

²⁰⁷ See *ST*, I, q. 8, a. 3. Cf. *ST*, I, q. 8, a. 3, ad 3: “No other perfection, except grace, added to substance, renders God present in anything as the object known and loved; therefore only grace constitutes a special mode of God’s existence in things.”

²⁰⁸ See *ST*, I-II, q. 109, a. 1.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* (original emphasis)

of this fact or not. God is the end (*telos*) of all mankind, the Supreme Good is that which is all satisfying for which every individual longs.²¹¹

The difficulty is that because of God's infinite greatness and the vast expanse between him and mankind, man is unable to know, without divine assistance, anything more about God other than that he exists and that he is the first cause.²¹² And a particular man can come to this knowledge through the natural light of his reason only after a long life of philosophical reasoning and, even then, not without some error in his thinking about the First Cause.²¹³

If the vision of God is the *telos* of man, and if the vision of God surpasses all human powers, can man achieve his happiness?²¹⁴ St. Thomas says that any happiness that man can achieve in this life on his own power is necessarily imperfect.²¹⁵ But Aquinas argues that because the Beatific Vision of God is our *telos*, our nature has a natural receptivity to the grace of God, which alone can bring about true and perfect happiness: "Now man is in potentiality of the blessed, which consists in the vision of God; and is ordained to it as an to an end; since the rational creature is capable of that blessed knowledge, inasmuch as he is made in the image of God."²¹⁶ In the same article, in a reply to an objection, he makes it even more clear: "The beatific vision and knowledge are to some extent above [*supra*] the nature of the rational soul, inasmuch as it cannot reach it of its own strength; but in another way it is in accordance with [*secundum*] its nature, inasmuch as it is capable of it [*capax eius*] by nature, having been made in the likeness of God.... But the uncreated knowledge is in every

²¹¹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 1, a. 4; I-II, q. 1, a. 6; I-II, q. 3, a. 8.; I-II, q. 34, a. 3.

²¹² See *ST*, I, q. 13, a. 12.

²¹³ See *ST*, I, q. 1, a. 1; II-II, q. 2, a. 4.

²¹⁴ See *ST*, I, q. 12, a. 4; I-II, q. 3, a. 8.

²¹⁵ See *ST*, I-II, q. 5, a. 7.

²¹⁶ *ST*, III, q. 9, a. 2.

way above [*supra*] the nature of the human soul.”²¹⁷ Elsewhere in the *Summa*, he clarifies that, yes, “the reason and will are naturally directed to God, inasmuch as He is the beginning and end of nature, but in proportion to nature. But the reason and will, according to their nature, are not sufficiently directed to Him in so far as he is the object of supernatural happiness.”²¹⁸

So it seems, in Aquinas’s view, that “God ordained human nature to attain the end of eternal life, not by its own strength, but by the help of grace.”²¹⁹ Nevertheless, we are not permitted to conclude that God is bound to offer grace to every human person. His will cannot be forced by our actions or preparations. Grace is an entirely gratuitous gift from God.²²⁰ In this life, we can only know with certainty that we have received grace if we receive a special revelation from God confirming the fact. Otherwise, we must live with mere conjecture that we are receiving the grace of God through certain known facts—among other things, if we delight in God, despise worldly things, and are not conscious of having committed a mortal sin.²²¹

In Aquinas’s theological anthropology, grace exists in the soul as a sort of quality:

It is not fitting that God should provide less for those he loves, that they may acquire supernatural good, than for creatures whom he loves that they may acquire natural good. Now he so provides for natural creatures, that not

²¹⁷ *ST*, III, q. 9, a. 2, ad 3. This is a theme repeated throughout the *Summa theologiae*. See *ST*, I, q. 62, a. 6, ad 1: “As grace comes of God’s will alone, so likewise does the nature of the angel: and God’s will ordained nature for grace, so did it ordain the various degrees of nature to the various degrees of grace;” I, q. 95, a. 1, s.c.: “Man and angel are both ordained to grace;” I-II, q. 113, a. 10: “In certain miraculous works it is found that the form introduced is beyond the natural power of such matter, as in the resurrection of the dead, life is above the natural power of such a body. And thus the justification of the ungodly is not miraculous, because the soul is naturally capable of grace; since from its having been made to the likeness of God, it is fit to receive God by grace.” Cf. *Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo*, q. 2, a. 11: “As the sun pours light into air, so God pours grace into the soul. And grace is indeed superior to the nature of the soul, and yet there is in the nature of the soul and any rational creature an aptitude to receive grace, and the grace received strengthens the soul to perform requisite acts.” English translation of the *De Malo* taken from: Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. Richard Regan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 135.

²¹⁸ *ST*, I-II, q. 62, a. 1, ad 3.

²¹⁹ *ST*, I-II, q. 114, a. 2, ad 1.

²²⁰ See *ST*, I, q. 19, a. 3; I-II, q. 112, aa. 1-3.

²²¹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 112, a. 5.

merely does he move them to their natural acts, but he bestows upon them certain forms and powers, which are the principles of acts, in order that they may of themselves be inclined to these movements, and thus the movements whereby they are moved to by God become natural and easy to creatures.... Much more therefore does he infuse into such as he moves towards the acquisition of supernatural good, certain forms or supernatural qualities, whereby they may be moved by him sweetly and promptly to acquire eternal goods; and thus the gift of grace is a quality.²²²

St. Thomas wants to be clear. Grace does not effect a substantial change in the soul. It is a substantial quality. If grace were its own substantial form, it would inherently alter the substance of nature. This would constitute the most extreme discontinuity between the human nature of the pagan and the believer.²²³ Nor does grace move the soul by efficient causality. God does not force the a man or woman to accept grace. Rather, grace acts on the human person formally.²²⁴ This is a recurrent theme when Aquinas speaks about charity and the other theological and infused virtues.

Grace, which heals and elevates human nature, is more than a disposition added to the powers of the soul to reach out for the divine. Rather, grace is in the very essence of the soul itself: “For as man in his intellectual power participates in the divine knowledge through the virtue of faith, and in his power the will participates in the divine love through the virtue of charity, so also in the nature of the soul does he participate in the divine nature, after the manner of a likeness, through a certain regeneration or re-creation.”²²⁵ Grace creates a new relationship between the rational creature and his Lord and God.²²⁶ The relationship is most properly defined as “friendship with God,” and this is the nature of the theological virtue of charity.

²²² *ST*, I-II, q. 110, a. 2.

²²³ See *ST*, I-II, q. 110, a. 2, ad 2.

²²⁴ See *ST*, I-II, q. 110, a. 2, ad 1.

²²⁵ See *ST*, I-II, q. 110, a. 4.

²²⁶ As examples, see *ST*, I, q. 38, a. 1; I, q. 43, a. 3; III, q. 23, a. 3.

B. *Charity: The Love Ordering All Loves*

The relationship with God, brought about grace, corresponds to the pursuit of man's supernatural happiness "which man can obtain by the power of God, by a kind of participation of the Godhead, about which it is written [2 Peter 1:4] that in Christ we are made *partakers of the Divine nature*."²²⁷ Aquinas concludes, "Hence it is necessary for man to receive from God some additional principles, whereby he may be directed to supernatural happiness.... Such like principles are called *theological virtues*; first, because their object is God...; secondly, because they are infused in us by God alone; thirdly, because these virtues are not made to known to us, save by Divine revelation, contained in Holy Writ."²²⁸

The three theological virtues—faith, hope, and love—are principles added to the reason and the will. In St. Thomas's theological system, they respect human nature: "First, as regards the intellect, man receives certain supernatural principles, which are held by means of a Divine light: these are the articles of faith.—Secondly, the will directed to this end, both as to the movement of intention, which tends to that end as something attainable—and this pertains to hope—and as to a certain spiritual union, whereby the will is, so to speak, transformed into that end—and this belongs to charity."²²⁹ Since Aquinas insists that grace works with nature, he also insists that although the three theological virtues are infused in the human soul together, their acts are distinct. And in the order of generation, the act of

²²⁷ *ST*, I-II, q. 62, a. 1 (original emphasis).

²²⁸ *Ibid.* For excellent exegeses on the theological virtue of charity and the infused moral virtues, see Cessario, *Moral Virtues*, 94-125; Cessario, *The Virtues*, 61-95; Eberhard Schockenhoff, "The Theological Virtue of Charity (IIa IIae, qq. 23-46)," Grant Kaplan and Frederick G. Lawrence, trans., in *Ethics of Aquinas*, 244-258. See also Paul Waddell, *The Primacy of Love*. Waddell's book is a dynamic and engaging read of Aquinas's ethics. However, it is marred by Waddell's consistent and repeated description of love as a passion, and charity as passionate love. While this is true in a certain sense (love does exist in the concupiscible passions), this language diminishes the role of the intellectual appetite (the seat of rational love and charity) in Aquinas's virtue theory.

²²⁹ *ST*, I-II, q. 62, a. 3. Aquinas appeals to 1 Cor. 13:13 in I-II, q. 62, a. 4, s.c. for the list of the three theological virtues.

faith precedes that of hope, which, in turn, precedes the act of charity. This is the case because “the movement of the appetite cannot tend to anything, either by hoping or loving, unless that thing be apprehended by the sense or by the intellect.”²³⁰ For this reason, the virtues of faith and hope can exist when charity is lost (by mortal sin), although they will be lifeless, but, charity can never exist in this life without faith and hope.²³¹

The theological virtue of faith is not only an intellectual exercise. The assent given to the articles of faith is not the intellectual assent of science. Rather, it is an intellectual assent commanded by the will: “The act of believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth at the command of the will moved by the grace of God.”²³² It is the lack of absolute clarity that separates opinion and belief from scientific reasoning. Unlike angelic substances, who know truths simply and intuitively, the human person must come to know truth through process of reasoning: moving from one thing understood to another understood to another thing understood. Movement cannot regress *ad infinitum* but is always grounded on the self-evident first principles of understanding, which are then verified and further illuminated.²³³ Science is “derived from self-evident and therefore seen principles.”²³⁴ When, however, the scientific reasoning process falters precisely because of lack of clarity, the will is necessarily engaged: “It is proper to the believer to think with assent: so that the act of believing is distinguished from all other acts of the intellect, which are about the true or the false.”²³⁵

²³⁰ *ST*, I-II, q. 62, a. 4.

²³¹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 65, a. 4; I-II, q. 65, a. 5.

²³² *ST*, II-II, q. 2, a. 9.

²³³ See *ST*, I, q. 79, a. 8.

²³⁴ *ST*, II-II, q. 1, a. 5.

²³⁵ *ST*, II-II, q. 2, a. 1.

He goes on to write: “The intellect of the believer is determined to one object, not by reason, but by the will, wherefore assent is taken here for an act of the intellect as determined to one object by the will.”²³⁶ Thus the act of belief elicited by the theological virtue of faith is meritorious because it is an “act of the intellect assenting to the Divine truth *at the command of the will moved by the grace of God*, so that it is subject to the free-will *in relation to God*.”²³⁷ Therefore, it seems the grace bestowed upon the believer is not only the light of faith but a grace that moves and shapes a corresponding inclination of the will.

Rather, this inclination is a sort of “inward instinct” given by grace: “The believer has sufficient motive for believing, for he is moved by the authority of Divine teaching confirmed by miracles, and, what is more, by the inward instinct of the Divine invitation [*interiori instinctu Dei invitantis*].”²³⁸ In another place, he writes rather plainly: “Some act of the will is required before faith, but not an act of the will quickened by charity. This latter act presupposed faith, because the will cannot tend to God with perfect love, unless the intellect possess right faith about him.”²³⁹ In fact, what distinguishes living faith from lifeless faith is precisely whether faith lives quickened by charity.

The object of faith, the First Truth, “is directed to the object of the will, i.e., the good, as to its end: and this good which is the end of faith, viz., the Divine Good, is the proper object of charity. Therefore, charity is called the form of faith in so far as the act of faith is perfected and formed by charity.” Indeed, “the distinction of living from lifeless faith is in respect of something pertaining to the will, i.e. charity, and not in respect of something

²³⁶ *ST*, II-II, q. 2, a. 1, ad 3.

²³⁷ *ST*, II-II, q. 2, a. 9 (my emphasis).

²³⁸ *ST*, II-II, q. 2, a. 9, ad 3.

²³⁹ *ST*, II-II, q. 4, a. 7, ad 5.

pertaining to the intellect.”²⁴⁰ This is why Aquinas insists that that with respect to their acts, faith necessarily precedes hope and charity, but, with regard to perfection, charity precedes both faith and hope.²⁴¹ The will only tends to a good as apprehended.

In a grand movement of grace, God not only introduces the light of faith but gives the human person the ability, through an interior instinct, to assent to the articles of faith. This assent is then quickened and formed by the virtue of charity. The infusion of faith with charity confronts man with the true grandeur of Aquinas’s vision. Namely, “faith works by love.”²⁴² Combine this with his conception of charity as friendship with God and we have even greater testimony of God’s plan. Not only does the revealing God raise our minds to share in his own self-understanding through the light of the faith, but he also gives us fellowship with him, in his divine nature.

St. Thomas explicitly disagrees with Peter Lombard, who he understood to teach that the theological virtue of charity was caused by the Holy Spirit dwelling in the mind and causing the movement of love without any intermediary habit. If that were the case, Aquinas argues, then the movement of charity would not be a movement of the person’s will. It would not be voluntary but a forced movement from an extrinsic power.²⁴³ The same is true, he continues, if the Holy Spirit were moving the will as an instrument. According to the Angelic Doctor,

No act is perfectly produced by an active power, unless it be connatural to that power by reason of some form whereby it is inclined to the end appointed to it by Hum; and in this He *ordereth all things sweetly* [Wisdom 8:1].

²⁴⁰ *ST*, II-II, q. 4, a. 4. In a response to an objection, Aquinas makes the point that “when living faith becomes lifeless, faith is not changed, but its subject, the soul, which at one time has faith without charity, and at another time, with charity” (*ST*, II-II, q. 4, a.4, ad 4).

²⁴¹ See *ST*, II-II, q. 62, a. 5. Cf. *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a.8.

²⁴² *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a. 6, ad 2.

²⁴³ See *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a. 2.

But it is evident that the act of charity surpasses the nature of the power of the will, so that, therefore, unless some form be superadded to the natural power, inclining it to the act of love, this same act would be less perfect than the natural acts and the acts of the other powers; nor would it be easy and pleasurable to perform. And this is evidently untrue, since no virtue has such a strong inclination to its act as charity has, nor does any virtue perform its act with so great pleasure. Therefore it is most necessary that, for us to perform the act of charity, there should be in us some habitual form superadded to the natural power, inclining that power to the act of charity, and causing it to act with ease and pleasure.²⁴⁴

This form superadded to the power of the will is part and parcel of the grace that becomes a certain quality of the soul.

As I mentioned earlier, in Aquinas's view, charity differs from hope in this respect. Hope tends to God as something attainable. Whereas charity effects both a spiritual union with God, who is our supreme end, and transformation in him.²⁴⁵ This is only possible by an elevation of the man's natural powers through some superadded form. It is not difficult to see why Aquinas says that charity is the most excellent of all virtues since it "attains God Himself that it may rest in Him, but not that something may accrue to us from Him."²⁴⁶ The infusion of grace as superadded forms means that Aquinas's view of grace is not extrinsicist.²⁴⁷

This is also why St. Thomas says that without charity there can be no true and perfect virtue, only imperfect virtue is possible without grace. Virtue is ordered to the good, and the good is primarily an end. In Aquinas's worldview, an end is two-fold: last end and proximate end, the latter ideally being ordered to the former. The proximate end, in his system, is not wholly subsumed into the ultimate end. The proximate end retains its own

²⁴⁴ Ibid. (original emphasis)

²⁴⁵ See *ST*, I-II, q. 62, a. 3.

²⁴⁶ *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a. 6.

²⁴⁷ See Cessario, *Introduction*, 200.

character. Hence, he writes, “If... we take virtue as being ordered to some particular end, then we may speak of virtue being where there is no charity, in so far as it is directed to some particular good.... If... this particular good be a true good, for instance the welfare of the state, or the like, it will indeed be a true virtue, imperfect, however unless it be referred to the final and perfect good.”²⁴⁸

Since the good is an end, this translates to both an ultimate universal good (which is God) and also particular goods. Aquinas concludes:

The ultimate and principal good of man is the enjoyment of God, according Psalm 72:28: *It is good for me to adhere to God*, and to this good man is ordered by charity. Man’s secondary and, as it were, particular good may be twofold: one is truly good, because, considered in itself, it can be directed to the principal good, which is the last end; while the other is good apparently and not truly, because it leads us away from the final good. Accordingly it is evident that simply true virtue is that which is directed to man’s principal good; thus also the Philosopher says that *virtue is the disposition of a perfect thing to that which is best*: and in this way no true virtue is possible without charity.²⁴⁹

He goes on to say that an imperfect virtue is possible inasmuch as it may be directed to a proximate good (a particular end) provided the particular good be a true good and not a false good. “It is charity which directs the acts of all other virtues to the last end, and which,

²⁴⁸ *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a. 7. It should be noted here that even though Aquinas cites Augustine in this article, he disagrees with Augustine on this point. Augustine held that no virtue was possible whatsoever without the theological virtue of charity. Augustine believed only in a strict dichotomy between sinful self-love and charity, thus any act that was not motivated by charity was necessarily motivated by sinful self-love (see Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theology*, 37-71). Aquinas disagrees in this article by pointing to the possibility that true proximate ends (which tend to the universal end) can be pursued in a stable manner for the good of the individual and of the community. For further discussion, see Schockenhoff, “The Theological Virtue of Charity,” 250-251. For a contemporary attempt to articulate the Augustinian position as Thomas’s own position, see Thomas M. Osborne, “The Augustinianism of Thomas Aquinas’s Moral Theory,” *The Thomist* 67 (2003): 279-305. For a more traditional explanation of Aquinas’s view of virtue without charity, see Brian Shanley, “Aquinas on Pagan Virtue,” *The Thomist* 63 (1999): 553-77.

²⁴⁹ *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a. 7 citing Aristotle, *Physics*, Bk. 7, ch. 17 (original emphasis)

consequently, also gives the form to all other acts of virtue: and it is precisely in this sense that charity is called the form of the virtues.”²⁵⁰

In Aquinas’s virtue theory, those virtues acquired through habituation are imperfect because they are not explicitly directed to Divine reason.²⁵¹ When prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude are acquired by habituation, they are concerned primarily with right reason of human affairs directing those affairs to the good of the individual and the good of the community.²⁵² This is why St. Thomas says that there are infused virtues, which accompany the theological virtues: “The theological virtues direct us sufficiently to our supernatural end, inchoatively: i.e., to God Himself immediately. But the soul needs further to be perfected by infused virtues in regard to other things, yet in relation to God.”²⁵³ With grace, we must learn to love God in all of our actions.

The primary difference between infused and acquired virtues is this: “those infused moral virtues, whereby men behave well in respect of their being *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God* [Ephesians 2:19], differ from the acquired virtues, whereby man behaves well in respect of human affairs.”²⁵⁴ Thus, in one place, St. Thomas writes:

Thus prudence, by contemplating the things of God, counts as nothing all things of the world, and directs all the thoughts of the soul to God alone—temperance, so far as nature allows, neglects the needs of the body; fortitude prevents the soul from being afraid of neglecting the body and rising to heavenly things; and justice consists in the soul giving a whole hearted consent to follow the way thus proposed.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁰ *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a. 8. Charity is the mother of all virtues (see *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a. 8, ad 3).

²⁵¹ See *ST*, I-II, q. 63, a. 2. Cf. *ST*, I-II, q. 65, a. 2.

²⁵² See *ST*, I-II, q. 63, a. 4; I-II, q. 61, a. 5, corpus and ad 4.

²⁵³ *ST*, I-II, q. 63, a. 3, ad 2.

²⁵⁴ *ST*, I-II, q. 63, a. 4 (original emphasis)

²⁵⁵ *ST*, I-II, q. 61, a. 5.

In response to an objection, he says, “Both acquired and infused temperance moderate desires for pleasures of touch, but for different reasons.”²⁵⁶

The infused virtues go hand and hand with the theological virtue of charity: they cannot exist in the human soul without charity and charity cannot exist without them.²⁵⁷

When charity is lost because of mortal sin, which is to say when a single action undertaken with sufficient reflection and full consent is a grave violation against God’s love, the infused virtues are lost. (Although, because of they are acquired by habituation, acquired virtues require repeated behavior to reverse.²⁵⁸) Charity, the love of God at work in the human person, is the love that orders men and women, and all the activities of their life, to the ultimate end: God himself.

St. Thomas spends twelve articles addressing the loves that are commanded or ordered by charity other than the love of God.²⁵⁹ These are not different loves. The theological virtue of charity is one virtue interiorly but one that is differentiated in different acts.²⁶⁰ We are to love our neighbor but not the guilt of their sin; to love angels but not

²⁵⁶ *ST*, I-II, q. 64, a. 4, ad 2. One of the criticisms that Cessario levels against the casuistry is “how little emphasis the casuists, who built their complicated systems upon the assumption that the whole moral life involved observance of divinely ordained precepts, gave to the role played even by the virtue of faith itself in vitalizing the moral life” (Cessario, *Moral Virtues*, 49). The Christian must see his moral life on the horizon of the truths of the faith: the incarnation, the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity, the hope of resurrection, and the value suffering, for example. An instance of this failure in casuistry is the oft cited moral case of truthfulness in the face an occupying force (“Ought I to reveal my Jewish friends hiding in the attic to the Nazi soldier standing at my door?”). Cessario argues that while the question provokes debated resolutions on either side, “the weighing of an action’s consequences alone cannot resolve this moral dilemma.... An authentic Christian response to the example cited must take into account the fortitude of Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit called counsel, and the New Testament beatitude: ‘Blessed are they who are persecuted....’ In brief, moral argumentation limited only to rationalistic modes of ethical decision making fails to provide a satisfactory theological resolution for such ‘crunch’ questions in Christian ethics” (Cessario, *Moral Virtues*, 50-51).

²⁵⁷ See *ST*, I-II, q. 65, a. 2; I-II, q. 65, a. 3.

²⁵⁸ See *ST*, I-II, q. 63, a. 2, ad 2. For a more detailed study of the infused virtues see, Cessario, *Moral Virtues*, 102-125; Michael Sherwin, “Infused Virtue and the Effects of Acquired Vice: A Test Case for the Thomistic Theory of Infused Cardinal Virtues,” *The Thomist* 73 (2009): 29-52.

²⁵⁹ See *ST*, II-II, q. 25.

²⁶⁰ See *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a. 5, corpus and ad 2.

demons. Love ourselves but not irrational creatures. In the end, St. Thomas concludes that there are four objects that ought to be loved with the theological virtue of charity. Primarily, there is God, the principle of object of the virtue. We should love God above all else.²⁶¹

Secondly, are those things which partake in the happiness of God: angels and men. Man loves himself because charity is the love of God and all that partakes of God, which includes us.²⁶² A man loves his neighbor for the same reason, namely that all men and women are made in the image of God and partake in God to some degree.²⁶³ But a man is not to sacrifice his spiritual beatitude, his love of God, for his neighbor, even if to keep his neighbor free from sin.²⁶⁴

Although, a person does not love every other with equal intensity out of charity, for man loves his neighbor inasmuch as he or she is proximate to God himself (who is the principle object of charity). Those neighbors closer to God rightly receive more intense love from man than those who are not.²⁶⁵ There is also an order of charity in regard to natural relationships. Man should love his parents with a greater dignity but his children with greater priority, because of the differing sorts of relationships to his kin.²⁶⁶ He should love his wife with greater passion but his parents with greater respect.²⁶⁷

Finally, man loves his body because it participates in a kind of overflow of happiness from man's participation in God. Man loves his body because it was created by God, but he

²⁶¹ See *ST*, II-II, q. 25, a. 12; II-II, q. 26, aa. 1-3.

²⁶² *ST*, II-II, q. 25, a. 4. Aquinas says that sinners and the wicked are not blamed because they love themselves, but because they love themselves wrongly. They are too much in love with the carnal aspect of their human nature. See *ST*, II-II, q. 25, a. 4, ad 3; II-II, q. 25, a. 7.

²⁶³ See *ST*, II-II, q. 25, a. 1; II-II, q. 44, a. 2.

²⁶⁴ *ST*, II-II, q. 26, a. 4.

²⁶⁵ See *ST*, II-II, q. 26, a. 6.

²⁶⁶ See *ST*, II-II, q. 26, aa. 8-9.

²⁶⁷ See *ST*, II-II, q. 26, aa. 10-11.

does not love the effects wrought in it by original sin.²⁶⁸ But the love of the body is beneath the love of persons, even when ordered by the theological virtue of charity because the body participates in happiness secondarily as a sort of overflow from the soul, which participates in happiness primarily. This follows from Aquinas's own anthropology discussed in the previous chapter, in which the body is ordered to the goods of the soul and receives from the soul its form. Thus, our love for our body must fall behind our love for God and our love for our neighbor even the point of suffering bodily harm for the good of our neighbor or for ourselves for the sake of spiritual matters.²⁶⁹

Conclusion

St. Thomas Aquinas's understanding of love as a movement toward the good combines with his understanding of the good as perfecting of limited and imperfect creatures to give a decisive metaphysical bent to his theology of love. Like other created beings, men and women are hardwired to go out of themselves in order to seek the perfection that other beings can provide (and, ultimately, that only God can give). Ideally, reason governs our appetites and we make prudent choices of which goods to pursue and in what manner: a man loves his wife in a certain manner that is different than the manner in which he loves other persons.

For men and women to proceed through life in a way that maintains their own human dignity as rational creatures created in the image of God, they must learn to love rightly. Their loves must be properly ordered according to the dignity of their human nature.

²⁶⁸ See *ST*, II-II, q. 25, a. 5; II-II, q. 25, a. 5.

²⁶⁹ See *ST*, II-II, q. 26, a. 4, ad 2; II-II, q. 26, a. 5, corpus and ad 2.

This is made all the more difficult by the possibility of the passions pursuing their own ends apart from reason, especially since original sin has wounded the natural harmony between body and soul, reason and emotion.

Virtue orders love. Prudence orders love by establishing the *ratio* behind behavior, affection, and the manifestation of love so that a person loves appropriately in every situation he finds himself. Temperance combines with prudence to order the passions which ought to accompany love so that they do not overtake that which is most human: man's reason. When man loves rationally and appropriately, he loves passionately and most humanly.

However, on their own, prudence and temperance order love only within the confines of human achievement: within the family and within society. But man is made for more. He is made for eternal life with his Creator, who fulfills this destiny only by gratuitous gift. The gift of grace brings not only knowledge by faith in our ultimate end and hope in attaining it, but it also brings charity which unites the will to God in love creating a friendship in every sense of the word: communion and mutual benevolence. This new friendship with God puts man on a new horizon, in which every aspect of his life is oriented explicitly to this final end. Charity creates its own order of love between man and God, man and his family, man and his neighbors, and, finally, man and his body.

Thus with charity, we receive the infused virtues. New supernatural principles are superadded upon our natural principles of the intellect, will, and sensitive appetite in order to orient all of our actions and thoughts to the Lord. He is the supreme Good that rightly orders all other activity and perfects all deficiency.

It is my hope that now the traces of Thomistic support for Pope John Paul II's notion of the spousal meaning of the body are coming into view. As I suggested in earlier chapters of this study, the pope never abandoned wholesale the Thomistic education he received. Even though his *Theology of the Body* is explicitly a biblical anthropology, St. Thomas's metaphysics, anthropology, and philosophy were informed by revelation. It should not be surprising that what John Paul isolated as scriptural theme—that man's existence is only truly fulfilled with the sincere gift of himself to another—can be located in Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* even though the Angelic Doctor is not here commenting on scripture (although he was a scriptural commentator as I noted in the first chapter).²⁷⁰

Yet, the catalyst for *The Theology of the Body* was Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae vitae*, and John Paul argued that the spousal meaning of the body is typified most commonly in this life in the marriage of man and woman. Therefore, to complete my analysis of Aquinas's contribution to the spousal meaning of the body, it is necessary in the next chapter to analyze Aquinas's understanding of marriage and the conjugal act.

²⁷⁰ Another study might explore the prevalence of love as movement and love as ecstasy in Aquinas's scriptural commentaries. This study has limited itself to the *Summa theologiae* as its primary source.

Chapter 8

Marriage and the Conjugal Act according to St. Thomas Aquinas

Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I have attempted to highlight two themes in Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* that I am arguing connect to John Paul's notion of the spousal meaning of the body. First, in chapter six, I provided a broad survey of the impact St. Thomas's view that the human person is a composite of body and soul has on the other relevant aspects of his understanding of human life. Then, in the last chapter, I focused on his notion of love as a movement out of the person to another and the ways in which this movement is properly ordered by virtue. Both of these have connections to the spousal meaning of the body (the relation of body and soul, and the outward movement of love), which will be made more clear in the general conclusion to follow.

As I noted in chapter five, the spousal meaning of the body, although not exclusively manifest in marriage, is, nonetheless, normally expressed in marriage. In *The Theology of the Body*, John Paul was able to articulate not only a defense of the moral norms of *Humanae vitae*, but he was able to provide a complete view of the human person and marital sexuality that respects human freedom without sacrificing man's indebtedness to nature and the Creator. This chapter has a two-fold purpose. First, I will offer an exegesis of Aquinas's understanding of marriage. In his mature work, St. Thomas argued that marriage is the greatest of friendships. Here I will show that Angelic Doctor does articulate a notion of self-offering and self-gift of spouses in marriage, which builds the foundation for the domestic society of the family.

Given the importance of hylomorphic unity of the human person, it is important that my treatment of Aquinas's view of marriage explore the his treatment of sexual difference within that martial relationship. Part of my task is to show that while Aquinas was a product of his cultural milieu, he was not an advocate of the absolute subjection of women to men. Indeed, if he does hold, as I argue he does, that marriage is a sort of mutual self-offering, then he must allow for the equal dignity between spouses. In short, marriage is true friendship that moves beyond sexual relations to establish the domestic society. Second, I want to explore how this complete self-offering in friendship of one spouse to another is rendered in Aquinas's view of the conjugal act. I want to show that Aquinas's conception of marriage and the conjugal act support the position offered by John Paul in *The Theology of the Body* which focuses on the inseparability of the unitive and procreative as an expression of the spousal meaning of the body.

Admittedly, any scholar of the *Summa theologiae* interested in St. Thomas's thought on marriage is able to glean from it very little information about Aquinas's mature thought on the marital relationship between husband and wife. The Angelic Doctor treats the life and nature of Christ along with the sacraments in the *tertia pars* of the *Summa*. It is likely that he began writing this final portion of his magnum opus during the last year of his life, while he was regent in Naples.¹ Unfortunately for the disciples of Aquinas, on December 6, 1273, while celebrating Mass, Aquinas had a sort of mystical experience, which his companion Reginald could only describe as an "astonishing transformation (*fuit mira mutatione commotus*)."² After which, he said simply that he could write no more. Aquinas had been

¹ See Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1:261-262.

² Ibid., 289.

working on the treatise on penance in the *Summa theologiae*. He died three months later on March 7, 1274.³

Later, his disciples completed the questions of the *tertia pars* by adding a *supplementum*. These questions were lifted verbatim from parallel passages of Aquinas's earliest work, his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.⁴ Aquinas's treatment of marriage in the *supplementum*, therefore, is not entirely indicative of his mature thought. For an accurate understanding of Aquinas's mature thought, the scholar is relegated to other works from the later years of the Angelic Doctor's life, contemporaneous with the *Summa theologiae*. Principal among these works is the *Summa contra gentiles*, which was completed by 1267 at the latest.⁵

In this chapter, I will presume that unless St. Thomas explicitly modified his position on marriage in a later work, then his positions represented in the *supplementum* of the *Summa theologiae* are his settled convictions. Even though he never wrote an extended treatise on marriage, he devoted several chapters to marriage in the *Summa contra gentiles*. He also mentions matrimony briefly in other mature works, including the *secunda pars* and *tertia pars* of the *Summa theologiae*. There is no other way for a scholar of Aquinas to proceed than to assume that had the Angelic Doctor changed his thinking on certain aspects of marriage, he would have at least hinted at it in the *Summa contra gentiles* or in his other works, even before he had the opportunity correct the record fully in a completed *Summa theologiae*.

Indeed, Aquinas's understanding of marriage and his arguments in favor of monogamy and the indissolubility of the marital bond did develop and mature in his later years. This development is evident in the differences between the treatise on marriage in the

³ Ibid., 293.

⁴ See Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Aquinas's Summa: Background, Structure, and Reception* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 62.

⁵ See Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 101-102.

supplementum and how this treatment is modified in the *Summa contra gentiles*. Namely, Aquinas comes to understand marriage as the greatest of friendships between human beings. This conclusion then strengthens his arguments in favor of monogamy and marital indissolubility. And it further supports the notion of marriage as a privileged expression of the love of friendship, which brings the lover and the beloved into a union.

I. Marriage as the Greatest Friendship

A. The Nature and Role of Women according to St. Thomas

Numerous studies have detailed the development of thinking—theological, canonical, and cultural—on marriage during the Middle Ages. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries especially, the Church became the standard bearer for understanding marriage as a union between two equally consenting persons.⁶ There are inherent difficulties in attempting to reconstruct the social position of women in any historical era. Historian Glenn Olsen notes that “assessing a ‘status’ typically involves evaluating a large number of not necessarily commensurate and always changing factors simultaneously. The status of an individual, let alone of some large category as ‘women,’ depends on a host of factors. These range from age and class through economic circumstances to the possession of various forms of personal freedom. Even if specified in the medieval sources, these have inevitably to be ranked by some scale of values, either our own or a composite coming from the period

⁶ See, for example, Antii Arjava, ed., *Consent and Coercion to Sex and Marriage in Ancient and Medieval Societies* (Washington: 1993), esp. part 3; Evan Grubbs, *Law*, 183-93; James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 188-189; James Brundage, “The Paradox of Sexual Equality in the Early Middle Ages,” in Ralph W. Mathisen and Hagith S. Sivan, eds. *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1996), 256-64; Charles J. Reid, Jr., *Power Over the Body, Equality in the Family: Rights and Domestic Relations in Medieval Canon Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 37-44; Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, trans. N.D. Smith (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 287-303.

under study.”⁷ Yet it would be purposefully neglectful to ignore that St. Thomas had a certain view of women that is no longer held by most scholars.

Previously, in chapter six, I explored Aquinas’s anthropology. In that chapter, I highlighted the importance of the relationship between the body and soul in the human person. In Aquinas’s anthropology, the soul cannot understand anything in this life without making use of the sensitive powers of the soul, which themselves make use of the corporeal organs of the body. Even to consider knowledge already acquired, the soul must make use of the sense powers of imagination and memory. This is why Aquinas says that some people understand better than others: their bodies are better disposed.⁸

In chapter six, I also explored briefly Aquinas’s understanding of sexual difference. He held that sexual difference serves the purpose of propagating the species. Aquinas’s belief in a provident Creator and in human dignity led him to temper Aristotle’s position that females are misbegotten males by noting that while it may be true that a woman is a misbegotten male in a particular case (inasmuch as the male gamete fails to reproduce itself), her production was always intended by God Almighty. In fact, he argues that sexual reproduction would have occurred in paradise before the fall. Aquinas, I noted then, holds that men and women are equal in their substantial form (the intellectual soul) and so men and women are equal manifestations of the *imago Dei*. Likewise, they are both called to the same supernatural end.

⁷ Glenn W. Olsen, “Marriage in Barbarian Kingdom and Christian Court: Fifth through Eleventh Centuries,” in Glenn W. Olsen, ed., *Christian Marriage: A Historical Study* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2001), 150. Historian Georges Duby repeatedly acknowledges these sorts of difficulties in his work on the history of marriage in the Middle Ages. See Georges Duby, *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, trans. Jane Dunnett (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁸ See *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 7; q. 84, a. 7, q. 84, a. 8.

Until this point, I have discussed very little of how St. Thomas understood the relationship between men and women in the *Summa theologiae*. Even though, as I noted in chapter six, he holds that men and women are not different in their souls (the seat of the *imago Dei*), since the human person is a body-soul composite, the differences of the sexes must be considered in their relationship to one another. Aquinas's consideration of the relationship between man and woman centers on the purpose of this specific difference between the two. In her study on Aquinas's philosophy of woman, Kristin Popik writes, "Sexual differentiation is ordained to generation.... Thus it is to the activity of generation, to the roles which males and females play in generation that Aquinas looks in order to determine the nature of masculinity and femininity and how they are related to each other."⁹

Following Aristotelian biology, Aquinas believed that the male provides the active agent in procreation that works on the female's passive material to form the child.¹⁰ Since in Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics it is a greater good to be in act than to be passive (indeed, as I have noted in previous chapters, goodness is itself synonymous with actuality), masculinity is superior to femininity. Femininity is inferior precisely because of this passivity in relation to the masculine and also because the female comes into existence through a defect in a particular case (even though she remains in the intention of God): the male gamete fails to reproduce its likeness with a male child.¹¹ Throughout the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas presumes that the male sex is nobler than the female sex. He says fathers should be

⁹ Kristin Popik, "The Philosophy of Woman of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part One: The Nature of Woman," *Faith and Reason* 4.4 (Winter, 1978): 26. See also Kristin Popik, "The Philosophy of Woman of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part Two: The Role of Woman," *Faith and Reason* 5.1 (Spring, 1979): 12- 42. Popik's study is a thorough exegesis of all of Aquinas's writings on the nature of woman. The following pages of my own study are indebted to Popik's work. See also Allen, *Concept of Woman*, 1:385-412.

¹⁰ See *ST*, I, q. 92, a. 1; q. 98, a. 2; q. 118, aa. 1-2; III, q. 31, a. 5. Cf. Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, bk. II, no. 3.

¹¹ See *ST*, I, q. 92, a. 1, ad 1; Cf. Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, bk. II, no. 3.

loved more than mothers because they are the active principles of our generation.¹² When speaking of Christ's incarnation, he takes it for granted that the male sex is superior.¹³ And this is true across the animals species. This is why, St. Thomas says, that only males were used in the holocaust sacrifices of the Old Testament.¹⁴

Since the differences are bodily and not spiritual, the passivity of the body translates to a general physical weakness according to Aquinas. This bodily weakness affects the soul of the human composite. Thus, Aquinas (following Aristotle) asserts that women are generally weaker and less persevering than men.¹⁵ Weakness of body yields a weakness of soul. This is why women have a greater need for the virtue of sobriety: "In women there is not sufficient strength of mind to resist concupiscence."¹⁶ They are at greater risk for allowing their appetites to run rampant since their bodies (and thus their minds) are weaker.¹⁷ Because of this, Aquinas repeats that man is superior in reason to woman, at least in this life.¹⁸ Indeed, "in matters pertaining to the soul woman does not differ from man as to the thing (for sometimes a woman is found to be better than many men as regards the soul)."¹⁹

¹² See *ST*, II-II, q. 26, a. 10.

¹³ See *ST*, III, q. 31, a. 4, obj. 1 and ad 1.

¹⁴ See *ST*, I-II, q. 102, a. 3, ad 9.

¹⁵ See *ST*, II-II, q. 138, a. 1, ad 1. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. VII, no. 7.

¹⁶ *ST*, II-II, q. 149, a. 4.

¹⁷ See *ST*, II-II, q. 156, corpus and ad 1.

¹⁸ See *ST*, II-II, q. 70, a. 3; q. 177, a. 2; q. 182, a. 4.

¹⁹ *ST*, Supp., q. 39, a. 1, corpus. Cf. *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*, Lib. IV, dist. xxv, q. 2, a. 2, qua. 1, ad. 4. I think Christopher Roberts draws an appropriate conclusion here: "Without the soul we would be animals, without the body we would be like angels. To be faithful to our vocation as the sort of creatures we are, we must not aspire to be disembodied souls or act as if we were, for that is the provenance of angels, a different order of creation. Thus, on Aquinas's premises, it follows that sexual difference is part of our natural existence without which we cannot be human, but sexual difference is also not sufficient to make us human and it does not in itself enable or bring us to our supernatural, beatific destinies. Our ultimate destiny is, according to Aquinas, something first and foremost enjoyed by the contemplative soul, which is where the *imago Dei* exists. Beatitude or eschatological fulfillment is a gift of grace bestowed on the soul by God" (Roberts, *Creation and Covenant*, 102-103).

Even though the Angelic Doctor speaks of the inferiority of women to men in general terms, there are instances where he suggests that in individual cases a woman may be strong. In fact, any individual woman may be stronger and more reasonable than any individual man. In the very same response to an objection when he speaks of the weakness of women, he mentions another possibility. He writes, “Accordingly, since woman, as regards the body, has a weak temperament, the result is that for the most part, whatever she holds to, she holds to it weakly; although in rare case the opposite occurs, according to Proverbs 31:10, *Who shall find a valiant woman?* And since small and weak things *are accounted as though they are not*, the Philosopher speaks of women as though they had not the firm judgment of reason, although the contrary happens in some women.”²⁰ In the *tertia pars*, he explicitly identifies Mary Magdalene as an example of a uniquely strong woman.²¹ In other areas of his mature work, he identifies the Blessed Mother and the Samaritan woman as examples of uniquely strong women.²²

Kristin Popik notes:

There are a number of ways of explaining these exceptions, a number of ways by which individual women might excel beyond the others and attain exceptional heights in reasoning and in moral virtue. The most basic solution to this problem lies in remembering that the argument for the inferiority of women’s souls as a consequence of their bodily inferiority is in fact the argument for individual differences among human beings in general.... Other bodily conditions also affect the souls.²³

In various parts of the *Summa*, Aquinas makes various comments about the disposition of the body in the activity of the soul. For example, he writes that one person may understand

²⁰ *ST*, II-II, q. 156, a. 1, ad 1 (original emphasis).

²¹ See *ST*, III, q. 55, a. 1, ad 1.

²² On this aspect of Aquinas’s work, see Popik, “The Philosophy of Woman of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part One,” 46-51.

²³ Popik, “The Philosophy of Woman of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part One,” 28.

something better than another because of the body's disposition or because of its health, or lack thereof.²⁴ He says that some men may be less persevering because of the "softness" (effeminacy) of their bodies.²⁵ Some women may grow in the virtue of sobriety and find themselves stronger than some men.²⁶ Grace is also a great equalizer: available to all who accept it.²⁷ In another work contemporaneous with the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas even suggests women surrounded by theoretical and speculative discussion grow in understanding, strength, and virtue more than other women and even other men outside of these circles.²⁸ Popik concludes that these passages from Aquinas indicate that the "inferiority [of women] is not so great as to be impossible of being overcome with a bit of practice, by cultural factors, and by education."²⁹

Aquinas's conclusions about the relationship between men and women will naturally have an impact on his understanding of the marital relationship. Throughout his career, St. Thomas viewed marriage as a freely chosen common society in which men and women played differing roles. This society, however, is one between equals which is characterized by friendship.

²⁴ See *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 7.

²⁵ See *ST*, II-II, q. 138, a. 1.

²⁶ See *ST*, II-II, q. 149, a. 4.

²⁷ See, for example, *ST*, III, q. 72, a. 8, corpus and ad 3.

²⁸ See Thomas Aquinas, *In Evangelium S. Ioannis Commentarium*, ch. IV, lec. 10, vs. 10, no. 598. An English translation of this passage is available. See Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, Part I, tran. James A. Weisheipl, O.P., and Fabian R. Larcher, O.P. (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1980), 246. I am grateful Popik for calling attention to this passage. Cf. Popik, "The Philosophy of Woman of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part One," 46-47.

²⁹ Popik, "The Philosophy of Woman of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part One," 47.

B. Marriage in the Supplement of the Summa Theologiae

The material of the *supplement* to the *Summa theologiae*, culled from Aquinas's commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, was written at the dawn of his academic life. In the *supplement*, St. Thomas Aquinas begins his treatment of marriage by arguing that it is natural. It is not natural because it is absolutely necessary (as the upward motion of fire is necessary). Matrimony is a matter of free-will, and nothing happens with absolute necessary in matters of the will.³⁰ Rather, marriage is natural, Aquinas says, in the same way as virtue is natural. This is to say, nature inclines man to marriage, even though he must freely choose it. Nature inclines man to marriage because it is a naturally reasonable institution. For Aquinas, marriage is naturally reasonable for two reasons—the principal and secondary ends of matrimony.³¹

The “principal end” of marriage is “the good of offspring. For nature intends not only the begetting of offspring, but also [their] education and development until [they] reach the perfect state of man as man, and that is the state of virtue.”³² And this, he asserts, requires a stable tie between the man and a “definite” woman.³³ The secondary end is “the mutual services which married persons render one another in household matters.”³⁴ Natural

³⁰ See *ST*, Sup., q. 41, a. 1 (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 26, q. 1, a. 1). For excellent summaries of Aquinas's understanding of marriage, see Angela McKay, “Aquinas on the End of Marriage,” in Richard J. Fehring and Theresa Notare, eds., *Human Fertility: Where Faith and Science Meet* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008), 53-70; Roberts, *Creation and Covenant*, 99-109. I am especially grateful for McKay's study, which concerns the development of Aquinas's thought on marriage.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.* That procreation includes the education and nutrition of children is not a position unique to St. Thomas. See Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, lib. IX, cap. 7.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.* In the section below, it will be shown that St. Thomas's thought on the relationship between the primary and secondary ends of marriage changes slightly in the *Summa contra gentiles*. For an excellent study of Aquinas's thought on the two ends of marriage, see Guy de Broglie, S.J., “La conception thomiste des deux finalités du mariage,” *Doctor Communis* 30 (1974): 3-41.

reason, therefore, directs man to this “society of man and woman which consists in matrimony.”³⁵ Marriage is a bond between the man and the woman.³⁶

That marriage is primarily directed to the begetting of children is important for Aquinas’s understanding of marriage in other ways. For example, it is because the marital bond leads to children that Aquinas says that marriage existed before original sin. In fact, Aquinas held that because of procreation, marriage was an office of nature before it was a sacrament.³⁷ The sacrament of matrimony adds a sacred quality to the natural institution of marriage inasmuch as the sacrament affords both the grace of indivisibility between the partners and the nature of a sign of Christ’s love for the Church.³⁸ To be clear, Aquinas insists that the sacramental quality of marriage is its most excellent feature (since grace surpasses nature), but the intention for offspring is the most essential defining characteristic of this union.³⁹

It is important to note that for St. Thomas, procreation includes not only the biological generation of children, but also their education and upbringing until the child reaches “the perfect state of man as man, and that is the state of virtue.”⁴⁰ Education

³⁵ Ibid. In the very next article, Aquinas argues that matrimony is not commanded since the contemplation of God is the highest activity a person can undertake. True and undivided contemplation cannot tolerate the distraction with worldly affairs that marriage requires. Since every society is best served by each person accomplishing his task for the common good, as long as there are married couples who serve the common good by procreation and education of offspring, some persons may renounce marriage for the common good: the contemplation of God (see *ST*, Sup., q. 41, a. 2). Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 26, q. 1, a. 2. See also Pinckaers, *Sources*, 433ff. and 442-47; Reid, *Power Over the Body*, 78. This is one of the few instances in which St. Thomas disagrees with St. Augustine. Augustine held that the necessity of procreation differed according to the eras of salvation history. After the resurrection of Christ, he believed, celibacy was always preferable to marriage and there was no longer a strict need for procreation. See, for example, Augustine, *De sancta virginitate*, §9. Cf. Paul Ramsey, “Human Sexuality in the History of Redemption,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16 (1988): 56-88.

³⁶ See *ST*, Sup., q. 48, a. 1.

³⁷ See *ST*, Sup., q. 42, a. 2. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 2.

³⁸ See *ST*, Sup., q. 49, a. 2, corpus and ads. 4 and 7. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 2.

³⁹ See *ST*, Sup., q. 49, a. 3. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 3.

⁴⁰ *ST*, Sup., q. 41, a. 1. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 26, q. 1, a. 1.

requires time and a community of persons. This is why this all important inclusion of education with procreation means also that even early on in Aquinas's thought, the secondary end of mutual cooperation is directed to and included in the primary end. The education of the children is that "to which as its end is directed the entire communion of works that exists between man and wife as united in marriage, since parents *lay up* for their *children* (2 Cor. 12:14); so that the offspring like a principal end includes another, as it were, secondary end."⁴¹

In the *supplement*, Aquinas shows how these two ends prohibit certain forms of unions, specifically polygamy and concubinage. Polygamy does not hinder the primary end if a man has several wives since, Aquinas believes, "one man is sufficient to get children of several wives, *and* to rear the children born of them."⁴² Yet, having many wives hinders the secondary ends inasmuch as it creates discord in the conjugal society and, therefore, jeopardizes the mutual beneficence of the partners.⁴³ However, the Angelic Doctor insists that it is violation of the principal end of marriage for a woman to have several husbands precisely because the paternity of the children will be questionable and human beings are concerned mostly with the good of their own offspring not somebody else's.⁴⁴ Having a concubine, and indeed engaging in sexual intercourse outside of marriage, likewise jeopardizes the primary end of marriage since the education of offspring requires the stable union of man and woman.⁴⁵

⁴¹ *ST*, Sup., q. 49, a. 2, ad 1 (original emphasis). Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 2.

⁴² *ST*, Sup., q. 65, a. 1 (my emphasis). Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1.

⁴³ See *ibid.*

⁴⁴ See *ST*, Sup., q. 65, a. 1, ad 8. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1.

⁴⁵ See *ST*, Sup., q. 65, a. 3; q. 65, a. 5. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 33, q. 1, a. 3, qua. 1 and 3.

Additionally, St. Thomas argues that the union between man and woman must naturally be enduring because educating children in virtue requires the parents' care "for a long time."⁴⁶ In fact, Aquinas suggests that this education continues throughout a person's lifetime:

By the intention of nature marriage is directed to the rearing of the offspring, not merely for a time, but throughout its whole life. Hence it is of natural law that parents should lay up for their children, and that children should be their parents' heirs (2 Cor. 12:14). Therefore, since the offspring is the common good of husband and wife, the dictate of the natural law requires the latter to live together forever inseparably: and so the indissolubility of marriage is of natural law.⁴⁷

Yet, in the very next article, he will insist that inseparability in marriage is a secondary precept of natural law (or the secondary intention of nature) not a primary one (primary intention). Aquinas' delineation between primary and secondary precepts of natural law (that is, intentions of nature) and how these precepts may be dispensed is instructive:

A dispensation from a precept of the law of nature is sometimes found in the lower causes, and in this way a dispensation may bear upon the secondary precepts of the natural law, but not on the first precepts because these are always existent as it were, as stated above [cf. *ST*, Sup., q. 65, a. 1] in reference to the plurality of wives [which goes against the secondary end of marriage but not the primary end].... But sometimes this reason is found in the higher causes, and then a dispensation may be given by God even from the first precepts of the natural law, for the sake of signifying or showing some Divine mystery, as instanced in the dispensation vouchsafed to Abraham in the slaying of his innocent son. Such dispensations, however, are not granted to all generally, but to certain individual persons, as also happens in regard to miracles.⁴⁸

This, in turn, allows Aquinas to explain how it is possible that spouses might separate, and, indeed, have separated in the past.

⁴⁶ *ST*, Sup., q. 41, a. 1, ad 2. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 26, q. 1, a. 1.

⁴⁷ *ST*, Sup., q. 67, a. 1. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 1.

⁴⁸ *ST*, Sup., q. 67, a. 2. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, qua. 1.

He begins by noting that if indissolubility is a primary precept of nature then only a divine cause could dispense a couple from marriage.⁴⁹ But, he says, indissolubility is a secondary precept because it “is not directed to the good of the offspring, which is the principal end of marriage, except in so far as parents have to provide for their children for their whole life, by due preparation of those things that are necessary in life. Now this preparation does not pertain to the first intention of nature, in respect of which all things are common.”⁵⁰ Therefore, he says, dispensations from indissolubility can be granted from lower causes such as the Mosaic or ecclesial law.

Aquinas admits that in the fallen state, divorce is permitted (and here, he follows Jesus Christ’s only explicit teaching on marriage). This, however, does not negate the fact that inseparability is naturally part of matrimony, even if only secondarily.⁵¹ While indissolubility is a second intention of nature it “belongs to its [marriage’s] first intention as a sacrament of the Church. Hence, from the moment it was made a sacrament of the Church, as long as it remains such it cannot be a matter of dispensation, except perhaps by the second kind of dispensation [a divine dispensation].”⁵² It is the grace of Christ in the sacrament that restores indissolubility. While these passages may give the impression that Aquinas was less than convinced of the indissolubility of marriage, it is important to recall his purpose here: to explain the historical instances of dispensation from this natural norm.

The early Aquinas saw marriage as “a particular kind of companionship pertaining to that common action [of offspring and mutual services].”⁵³ It is a society, after all, for

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ See *ST*, Sup., q. 67, a. 1, ads. 1 and 2. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 1.

⁵² *ST*, Sup., q. 67, a. 2, ad 3. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, qua. 1.

⁵³ *ST*, Sup., q. 43, a. 3, ad 3. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2.

Aquinas.⁵⁴ Every society needs a head, and Aquinas repeatedly says the husband is the head of the family in the management of the household.⁵⁵ There is a division of labor in the household management just as there is a division of roles in the marital act. The two are equal in this act, says Aquinas, even if he still holds that the man is more noble in his part than the woman, because, as he sees it, it is more noble to be active than passive. He writes, “Although the father ranks above the mother, the mother has more to do with the offspring than the father has.... Wherefore the mother has a closer relation to the nature of marriage than the father has.”⁵⁶ Elsewhere, he writes that slavery is an impediment to marriage precisely because marriage involves an equal debt of both parties to the other.⁵⁷ He writes that the husband is subject to his wife in the generative act, and that she has a claim on his body for this purpose.⁵⁸

Even though the man may be the head of the family, the Angelic Doctor cautions that the “head in its own capacity is bound to the members.”⁵⁹ In the parts of the *Summa theologiae*, which are more mature than the parts of the *Summa*’s supplement, it will become clearer that Aquinas sees man’s governance over the family as a political governance rather than a despotic one. The man must treat his wife with respect, especially in the marital act, neither demeaning her nor treating her as an object of lust to satisfy his wanton pleasure.⁶⁰ In

⁵⁴ See *ST*, Sup., q. 41, a. 1. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 26, a. 1, a. 1.

⁵⁵ See *ST*, Sup., q. 44, a. 2, ad 1; q. 52, a. 3, ad 3; q. 67, a. 6, ad 1. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 1, qua. 2; d. 36, a. 3; d. 33, q. 2, a. 3, qua. 1.

⁵⁶ *ST*, Sup., q. 44, a. 2, ad 1. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 1, qua. 2.

⁵⁷ See *ST*, Sup., q. 52, a. 1, ad 1. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 36, a. 1.

⁵⁸ See *ST*, Sup., q. 52, a. 3; q. 64, a. 1. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 36, a. 3.

⁵⁹ *ST*, Sup., q. 64, a. 5, ad 4. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 33, q. 1, a. 3, qua. 3.

⁶⁰ See *ST*, Sup., q. 49, a. 6, corpus and ad 1. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 31, q. 2, a. 3.

fact, he says that one of the graces contained in the sacrament of matrimony is the grace for the man to relate to his wife in the martial act in a becoming manner.⁶¹

Aquinas did modify some elements of his understanding of marriage later in his life. Angela McKay astutely notes that his early defense of monogamy and indissolubility “is an attempt to derive these requirements strictly from the two activities that men and women share.... One who reads the text from the *Commentary on the Sentences* in isolation might well think that Aquinas believed that marriage could be justified *only* by procreation and the other necessities of life.”⁶² McKay notes that the Aristotelian notion of imperfect friendship, friendship of utility, revolves around shared activity and is very fragile. Once the activity is no longer shared, the mutual benefits no longer received, the friendship dissipates.⁶³ She asks, “If divorce... is unlawful only because of the time that the upbringing of children requires, then why should it not be licit for those spouses who are infertile or whose children have died to divorce?”⁶⁴ In the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas never discusses the character of the relationship between the man and the woman, the nature of their companionship. In the *Summa contra gentiles*, however, he fills this lacuna in his thought.

C. Marriage in the Summa Contra Gentiles

Aquinas’s presentation of marriage in the *Summa contra gentiles* has many of the same elements of his earlier teaching presented in the *supplementum* of the *Summa theologiae* but it differs in two important respects. First, as McKay has already noted, Aquinas is more

⁶¹ See *ST*, Sup., q. 42, a. 3. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 3

⁶² McKay, “Aquinas on the End of Marriage,” 63, 64. (Original emphasis).

⁶³ See *ibid.*, 56-58. Cf. Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*, Bk. IX, no. 12; Bk. VIII, no. 3; Bk. VIII, no. 6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

concerned with the character of the relationship in arguing the reasons why marriage should be indissoluble and monogamous. In the *Summa contra gentiles*, he moves “beyond the ‘ends’ of marriage he offered in the *Sentences*... to introduce more ‘personalistic’ considerations.”⁶⁵ Specifically, in this *Summa*, St. Thomas presents marriage as the greatest of friendships and explores the ramifications for such a statement. Secondly, the Angelic Doctor more closely unites the generation of offspring with their upbringing.

In the *Summa contra gentiles*, Aquinas presents marriage as friendship. In his treatment, he offers allusions to and sometimes direct reference of Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*. For example, in one place, he writes: “The greater that friendship is, the more solid and long-lasting will it be. Now, there seems to be the greatest friendship [*maxima amicitia*] between husband and wife, for they are united not only in the act of fleshly union, which produces a certain gentle association [*suavem societatem*] even among beasts, but also in the partnership of the whole range of domestic activity.”⁶⁶ Aquinas’s understanding of friendship (largely dependent on Aristotle) is found in the *secunda pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, which I discussed in the previous chapter. Presently, it is sufficient to note that Aristotle believed that greater or more complete friendships were more durable, and that friendships based solely on utility or pleasure dissolve once the friend is no longer useful or pleasant.⁶⁷

Aristotle argued that all friendship, whether the imperfect friendships of utility and pleasure or the complete friendship of virtue between good people, involves a shared activity

⁶⁵ Ibid. (original emphasis).

⁶⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, bk. III, cap. 123, no. 6. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of this work are from: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, Book 3, *Providence, Part II*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975). Hereafter, the *Summa contra gentiles* will be cited as *SCG*.

⁶⁷ See, for example, *Nichomachean Ethics*, bk. VIII, no. 3 for Aristotle’s treatment on the different types of friendships.

between the friends. He writes, “Whatever someone [regards as] his being, or the end for which he chooses to be alive, that is the activity he wishes to pursue in his friend’s company.”⁶⁸ The shared activity of rearing children forms the basis for the natural friendship between man and woman in Aristotle’s thinking:

The friendship of man and woman also seems to be natural. For human beings form couples more naturally than they form cities, to the extent that the household is prior to the city, and more necessary, and childbearing is shared more widely among the animals. For the other animals, the community goes only as far as childbearing. Human beings, however, share a household not only for childbearing, but also for the benefits in their life. For the difference between them implies that their functions are divided, with different ones for the man and the woman; hence each supplies the other’s needs by contributing a special function to the common good. For this reason their friendship seems to include both utility and pleasure.⁶⁹

So it seems that Aristotle held that all marriages consist at least in the friendship of utility or pleasure, which he has said, is easily dissolved. He is careful to include the possibility that husband and wife may have a complete or perfect friendship (the virtuous friendship) “if they are decent.”⁷⁰ Complete friendship requires the friends to be good and virtuous.⁷¹

It seems that in the *Summa contra gentiles*, Aquinas not only borrows Aristotle’s sense of friendship to describe the relationship of husband and wife, but he also insists that the friendship goes beyond mere utility and pleasure to complete and virtuous friendship. Thus, he notes that friendship is characterized by equality and specifically cites Aristotle.⁷² One of Aquinas’s mature arguments against polygamy is precisely Aristotle’s point that true and

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. IX, no. 12. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations are from Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999).

⁶⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. VIII, no. 12.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ See *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. VIII, no. 3.

⁷² See SCG, bk. III, cap. 124, no. 4. Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. VIII, no. 5: “Friendship is said to be equality. And this is true above all in the friendship of good people.”

complete friendship is not possible with many people.⁷³ It is precisely because the friendship is complete and virtuous that marriage should be indissoluble.⁷⁴ Moreover, the indissolubility is important so that their love for one another will be more faithful.⁷⁵

The Angelic Doctor expands the notion of equality in friendship to supplement his previous arguments on the nature of marriage. For instance, he writes that it would be against natural equity if a marriage were to be dissolved since “the female needs the male, not merely for the sake of generation, as in the case of other animals, but also for the sake of government, since the male is both more perfect in reasoning and stronger in his powers.”⁷⁶ Similarly, it would be contrary to equity if the wife were to be dismissed after she lost her beauty and fecundity.⁷⁷ It is against equality since a woman, at least in Aquinas’s day, could not dismiss her husband from the marriage.⁷⁸ Finally, Aquinas continues his argument that one woman having many husbands is contrary to nature since a man must have certitude of his offspring.⁷⁹ But even though certainty of paternity is possible when one man has many wives, the friendship would not be free and equal between all parties. In fact, he says, in this case, the wives would be “somewhat servile.”⁸⁰ In the *Summa contra gentiles*, Angela McKay notes, “what Aquinas’ remarks seem to demonstrate is an increasing awareness that marriage

⁷³ Cf. SCG, bk. III, cap. 124, no. 5. Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. VIII, no. 6.

⁷⁴ See SCG, bk. III, cap. 123, no. 6.

⁷⁵ See SCG, bk. III, cap. 123, no. 8. Aquinas uses friendship to buttress his arguments against marriage within consanguine family lines by insisting that friendship should be expanded throughout the world and this is accomplished by persons marrying (and thus developing friendships with) persons from outside their family of origin (see SCG, bk. III, cap. 125, no. 6).

⁷⁶ SCG, bk. III, cap. 123, no. 3. Aquinas’s latent prejudice in favor of men comes to the fore in this passage.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ See SCG, bk. III, cap. 123, no. 4.

⁷⁹ See SCG, bk. III, cap. 124, nos. 1-2.

⁸⁰ See SCG, bk. III, cap. 124, nos. 4-5. Cf. McKay, “Aquinas on the End of Marriage,” 67-68.

consists not merely in sharing activities, but also about sharing those activities in a highly specific context, namely in the context of complete friendship.”⁸¹

The second thing Aquinas does in the *Summa contra gentiles* is to connect more firmly the generation of offspring with their upbringing, which further strengthens his arguments for the indissolubility of marriage. He begins his expanded argument with the following:

It is good for each person to attain his end, whereas it is bad for him to swerve away from his proper end. Now, this should be considered applicable to the parts, just as it is to the whole being; for instance, each and every part of man, and every one of his acts, should attain the proper end.... Now... what is sought in the case of semen... [is] to emit it for the purpose of generation, to which purpose the sexual act is directed. But man’s generative process would be frustrated unless it were followed by proper nutrition, because the offspring would not survive if proper nutrition were withheld. Therefore, the emission of semen ought to be so ordered that it will result in both the production of offspring and in the upbringing of this offspring.⁸²

Notice how Aquinas explicitly ties upbringing to the teleology of the semen itself by insisting that this teleology would be “frustrated” if the emission of semen allows for generation without upbringing. The generation of offspring includes production of, nutrition for, and upbringing of offspring. He writes that seminal emission without being ordered to nutrition and upbringing would be contrary to the good of man.⁸³

In St. Thomas’s view, generation is the only natural act directed toward the common good: the good of the species, the good of the state, and the good of the Church.⁸⁴ Hence, Aquinas says that “disorders connected with the act of generation are not only opposed to natural instinct, but are also transgressions of divine and human laws. Hence, a greater sin results from a disorder in this area than in regard to the use of food or other things of that

⁸¹ McKay, “Aquinas on the End of Marriage,” 69.

⁸² SCG, bk. III, cap. 122, no. 4.

⁸³ See SCG, bk. III, cap. 122, no. 6.

⁸⁴ See SCG, bk. III, cap. 123, no. 7; SCG, bk. IV, cap. 78, no. 2.

kind.”⁸⁵ This is also why says that fornication is a very serious sin: it is contrary to the natural good. He even asserts that “after the sin of homicide whereby a human nature already in existence is destroyed, this type of sin appears to take next place, for by it the generation of human nature is precluded.”⁸⁶

Given the importance of upbringing, Aquinas repeats many of the same arguments he made in the *supplementum* about the necessity for an indissoluble relationship in which the father remains with the mother to assist in this task. He writes that women cannot raise children alone since they cannot provide for themselves and are not strong enough to issue the corrections necessary in the children’s education in the virtue of prudence.⁸⁷

Elements from both the commentary on Lombard’s *Sentences* and the *Summa contra gentiles* appear in the completed parts of the *Summa theologiae*. Although, Aquinas only mentions marriage briefly in these portions of the *Summa theologiae*, what he does write is instructive for his settled view of marriage.

D. Marriage in the Summa Theologiae

In the most detailed article on marriage in the *secunda pars*, Aquinas repeats many of his earlier positions about marriage. Its primary purpose is the generation and education of children, and this life-long task requires the man and the woman to live in a mutual bond. Marriage is between a definite man and a definite woman and is directed to the common

⁸⁵ SCG, bk. III, cap. 123, no. 7

⁸⁶ SCG, bk. III, cap. 122, no. 9.

⁸⁷ SCG, bk. III, cap. 122, nos. 7-8. No doubt in the Middle Ages this was at least partially true, since women had very little access to the public square. Moreover, the certitude of his offspring would be impossible if the separation of men and women were routinely acceptable. Cf. SCG, bk. III, cap. 123, no. 5.

good of the human race.⁸⁸ In the *tertia pars*, he now includes an additional notion to the form of marriage—the union of souls. He writes: “Now the form of matrimony consists in a certain inseparable union of souls, by which husband and wife are pledged by a bond of mutual affection that cannot be sundered. And the end of matrimony is the begetting and upbringing of children: the first of which is attained by conjugal intercourse; the second by the other duties of husband and wife, by which they help one another in rearing their children.”⁸⁹

Even though Aquinas acknowledges that some women are more intelligent, stronger, and more virtuous than some men, when he speaks of the structural role of society and the family, he assumes what he believes is the generally the case: that masculinity is superior to femininity. Following Aristotle’s notion that man is a social being, Aquinas writes that all human beings are inclined to live in common. The difficulty with common life is that individuals are also inclined to their own good. Thus, the Angelic Doctor writes, “a social life cannot exist among a number of people unless under the presidency of one to look after the common good; for many, as such, seek many things, whereas one attends only to one. Wherefore the Philosopher says, in the beginning of the *Politics*, that wherever many things are directed to one, we shall always find one at the head directing them.”⁹⁰ He goes on to say that any person who is given knowledge and virtue receives these gifts “to the benefit of others.”⁹¹

⁸⁸ See *ST*, II-II, q. 154, a. 2.

⁸⁹ *ST*, III, q. 29, a. 2.

⁹⁰ *ST*, I, q. 96, a. 4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

In the *secunda pars*, Aquinas reasserts his position that the family is itself a society in which there are varying roles.⁹² Since he believes that men are stronger and more virtuous than women, it is natural for man to be the one who governs the family and directs it to the common good.⁹³ The relative inequality of male and female bodies would have existed in the state of innocence.⁹⁴ And this natural subjection of wife to husband would have existed then as well.⁹⁵ This subjection became more rigorous after sin inasmuch as now, Aquinas says, she “has to obey her husband’s will even against her own.”⁹⁶

It is true that in various places throughout the *Summa theologiae*, St. Thomas compares woman to man as a lower reason to higher reason, with the lower requiring the direction of the higher.⁹⁷ Yet, Aquinas is also clear that the rule of husband over wife is not despotic governance but economic or civil one. Despotic rule is characterized by a servile subjection in which the ruler governs others for his own benefit. Economic or civil rule (i.e., political rule) is a government for the good of all.⁹⁸ The woman is not the slave of the man.⁹⁹

When our subject speaks of the differences between the role of slaves and the role of women in the home, it can seem as if he is equating the two. After noting that the members of the household are concerned with “every-day actions directed to the necessities of life,” he states:

Now the preservation of man’s life may be considered from two points of view. First, from the point of view of the individual, i.e., in so far as man preserves his individuality: and for the purpose of the preservation of life,

⁹² See, *ST*, I-II, q. 105, a. 4.

⁹³ See *ST*, I, q. 92, a. 1, ad 2.

⁹⁴ See *ST*, I, q. 96, a. 3.

⁹⁵ See *ST*, I, q. 96, a. 4.

⁹⁶ *ST*, II-II, q. 164, a. 2, ad 1.

⁹⁷ See *ST*, I, q. 79, a. 9; I-II, q. 74, a. 7; II-II, q. 182, a. 4.

⁹⁸ See *ST*, I, q. 92, a. 1, ad 2. Cf. *ST*, I, q. 96, a. 4.

⁹⁹ See *ST*, I, q. 92, a. 3.

considered from this standpoint, man has at his service external goods, by means of which he provides himself with food and clothing and other such necessities of life: in the handling of which he has need of servants. Secondly, man's life is preserved from the point of view of the species, by means of generation, for which purpose man needs a wife, that she may bear him children.¹⁰⁰

Yet, the distinction between the two follows precisely the difference between despotic and political rule. Despotic rule seeks only the good of the ruler, while political rule seeks the good of all. Kristin Popik observes that Aquinas “is distinguishing, not equating, the positions of slave and woman. The slave fulfills needs which pertain to the individual good of the man, and the woman is needed for generation, which is not ordered to his good but to the good of the species.... The woman does not merely supply the man with some personal needs of his as a slave does; he needs her in order to generate offspring, which is for her good as much as for his.”¹⁰¹ Moreover, unlike a slave, which is commonly considered property, a wife is not a man's possession in Aquinas's thought. Committing adultery with a married woman is not equivalent to theft.¹⁰²

In the *Summa theologiae*, St. Thomas understands that there is a certain equality in marriage between the husband and wife. For example, in the treatise on justice, when Aquinas distinguishes between relationships of persons in justice (which places under the term “right” or “just”), he sets marriage apart as a unique. The relationship between two men, both subject to the state, is characterized by justice, simply speaking. But when a person “belongs” to another there is a different form of justice. Thus, child belongs to his father, and the father, therefore, has paternal rights over his son. A master has dominative rights over his slaves. In these two relationships, there is no strict justice between the two

¹⁰⁰ *ST*, I-II, q. 105, a. 4.

¹⁰¹ Popik, “The Philosophy of Woman of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part Two,” 20.

¹⁰² See *ST*, II-II, q. 66, a. 3; q. 118, a. 2.

since one party is not considered civilly equal to the other: the son is not equal to his father, the slave is not equal to his master. But, regarding a man's relationship to his wife, Aquinas writes:

A wife, though she is something belonging to the husband, since she stands related to him as to her own body, as the Apostle declare (Eph. 5:28), is nevertheless more distinct from her husband, than a son from his father, or as slave from his master: for she is received into a kind of social life, that of matrimony, wherefore according to the Philosopher (*Ethics* 5:6) there is more scope for justice between husband and wife than between father and son, or master and slave, because, as husband and wife have an immediate relation to the community of the household, as stated in *Politics* I.2.5, it follows that between them there is *domestic justice* rather than civic.¹⁰³

Thus, there is a sort of equal domestic justice between husband and wife that differs from the subservient relationship of children and slaves to the head of the household. It is not a strict civic justice since women, in Aquinas worldview, have no role in the public square.¹⁰⁴

This is why when he considers the sin of adultery, even though he considers it as a vice of lust in the treatise on temperance, St. Thomas's explanation of adultery gives the distinct impression that it is also a sin against justice. He writes that it is a "twofold offense against chastity and the good of human procreation."¹⁰⁵ By uniting with a woman not joined to him, a husband harms the upbringing of his own children. By uniting with another's women, he harms the upbringing of another's children. And, Aquinas says, the same is true for adulterous woman just as much as adulterous men. Adultery breaks the good faith between the spouses.¹⁰⁶

Within the marriage, man and woman have different but equally necessary roles. The woman is concerned with the begetting of children and the "community of works pertaining

¹⁰³ *ST*, II-II, q. 57, a. 4 (original emphasis)

¹⁰⁴ See Popik, "The Philosophy of Woman of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part Two," 20-21, 32.

¹⁰⁵ *ST*, II-II, q. 154, a. 8.

¹⁰⁶ See *ST*, II-II, q. 154, a. 8, ad 2.

to family life.”¹⁰⁷ While she is “subject to her husband in matters relating to the family life, so it belongs to the husband to provide the necessities of that life.”¹⁰⁸ The man is to have a certain “solicitude” for his wife and his children.¹⁰⁹ In a work contemporaneous with the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas’s *Commentary on Aristotle’s Politics*, the Angelic Doctor notes that the woman is directly responsible for the management of the interior of the family. For example, she is “concerned with the preservation of the household wealth which the man acquires.”¹¹⁰ In his *Commentary on the Ethics*, he says that the wife is concerned with domestic operations.¹¹¹ Popik’s conclusion is forceful: “The fact that the woman is subject to her husband in household affairs does not mean that she is without authority in the home.... Aquinas likens the husband’s and wife’s rule of the family to aristocratic rule, in which each of them has responsibility over matters pertaining to them both. Although she is ultimately subject to her husband’s direction, the wife is the manager of all the internal affairs of the household.”¹¹²

Aquinas allows a great deal of freedom for wives within the family. Even though he continues the convention of publicly prohibiting women from teaching (which he inherits from St. Paul among other places), he allows (and even insists) that they teach within their home.¹¹³ Her subjection to her husband is only in matters relating to the household. She is a free person with regard to her own affairs. For example, she can freely assent to the faith

¹⁰⁷ *ST*, II-II, q. 164, a. 2.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ See *ST*, II-II, q. 186, a. 4.

¹¹⁰ Popik, “The Philosophy of Woman of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part Two,” 25 citing Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Politics*, bk. III, ch. 2, no. 376.

¹¹¹ See *ibid.*, 25 citing Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nichomachean Ethics*, bk. VIII, lec. 12, no. 1721.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹³ See *ST*, III, q. 55, a. 1, ad 3; q. 67, a. 4, ad 1. It should not go unstated that Aquinas is not innovative in his regard for a woman’s role in the home. This view is presented throughout the Old Testament. See Francis Martin, “Marriage in the Old Testament and Intertestamental Periods,” in Olsen, ed., *Christian Marriage*, 1-49.

without her husband's permission since this does not concern the management of the home.¹¹⁴ Yet, she is not allowed to take a religious vow or to take any oaths, since these can interfere with her management of the household.¹¹⁵ The same is true of her administration of monies within the home. Aquinas says that she is free to give alms from the household monies if she has the "express or presumed consent of her husband."¹¹⁶ With the exception of her dowry (which is given for the management of the family), she is free to give from her own monies and property without her husband's consent, although St. Thomas says she "should be moderate, lest through giving too much she impoverish her husband."¹¹⁷ This suggests that Aquinas understands that the property and monies which the spouses earn are shared by the household.

From our present vantage point, the facts that Aquinas accepted (yet tempered) Aristotle's conception of woman as a "defective male," severely limited woman's public role, and made her subject to a man in matters of the household can be appear quite negative. Yet, in spite of his cultural milieu, he made held for equality between the spouses. While the equality of roles may be disputed by contemporary standards, St. Thomas did hold that both spouses must be equal in their self-offering in marriage. No human person could be forced to marry or to renounce marriage.¹¹⁸ Aquinas held that wives were able not only to manage the affairs of the household and their husband's money (with only his presumed consent),

¹¹⁴ See *ST*, II-II, q. 10, a. 12, ad 1.

¹¹⁵ See *ST*, II-II, q. 88, a. 8, corpus and ad 3; q. 89, a. 9, ad 3. On the biblical warrants for Aquinas's teaching, see Cahill, *Between the Sexes*, 114-118.

¹¹⁶ *ST*, II-II, q. 32, a. 8, ad 2.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ See *ST*, II-II, q. 104, a. 5.

they could keep their own wealth and money, managing it as they see fit (provided it does not interfere with the life of the home).¹¹⁹

Very importantly, as Kristin Popik observes, Aquinas never says explicitly that women as a group of persons are subject to men.¹²⁰ In fact, he takes for granted that widows are under the authority of no man.¹²¹ Elsewhere, Aquinas makes no distinction between boys and girls and their freedom (after they reach the age of reason) in professing religious vows, without their father's consent on the matter.¹²² Unlike slaves, who are not free in their person, men and women can dispose of themselves any way they like without their father's approval.¹²³ In Aquinas's view, a girl was under the protection of her father lest she fall into a wanton and promiscuous lifestyle, which would bring shame on her family.¹²⁴ This is the distinguishing characteristic of seduction: it is the robbing of a woman's virginity, which, in Aquinas's milieu, rendered her incapable of marriage.¹²⁵ Yet, it is precisely this defining of women only in relation to the men of their lives that puts many contemporary moral theologians ill at ease.¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ See *ST*, II-II, q. 32, a. 8.

¹²⁰ See Popik, "The Philosophy of Woman of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part Two," 35-36.

¹²¹ See, for example, *ST*, II-II, q. 65, a. 4, obj. 2 and ad 2.

¹²² See *ST*, II-II, q. 88, a. 9; q. 189, a. 9.

¹²³ *ST*, II-II, q. 88, a. 8. Although it is true that Aquinas uses a girls' subjection to her father as analogous example to explain a person's relationship to his superior (*ST*, II-II, q. 88, a. 8, ad 3). In this example, he writes, "no vow of a religious stands without the consent of his superior, as neither does the vow of a girl while in her father's house without his consent...." Clearly, Aquinas means here to insist that a girl under her father's rule cannot vow anything without her father's consent. But yet in the very next article, once she reaches the age of reason, Aquinas is clear: the girl, just as much as her brother, can give herself over to religion.

¹²⁴ See *ST*, II-II, q. 154, a. 6, corpus.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ See, for example, Kari Elizabeth Borresen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Woman in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1981), 253. Yet, one must be careful to judge Aquinas from the standards of the twenty-first century especially given the social conditions and no public role for women in the thirteenth century.

In her magisterial study on women in philosophy and theology, *The Concept of Woman*, Prudence Allen identifies several theories of sexual identity at work in the history of western philosophy and theology. She identifies Aristotle as the founder of a view she calls sexual polarity, the idea that men and women are not only significantly different from one another but that women are inferior to men. His theory was based entirely on his biology and embryology—the idea of woman’s material inferiority. She writes, “Aristotle chose to isolate what he believed was woman’s contribution to generation and then, upon that idea, to develop an account of the differences between the sexes in a wide range of other aspects of human life. This pattern of isolating a single factor in women’s biological nature is common in sex-polarity arguments.”¹²⁷

Regarding Aquinas’s own conception of sexual identity, Allen is much more favorable without denying his limitations. She notes that “while Thomas was misled by Aristotle in the adoption of his rationale for philosophical differences between women and men, he was correctly led by Aristotle towards the goal of presenting a philosophy of the person as an integrated, unified existent.”¹²⁸ Moreover, she writes, “Thomas partially opened the door to a philosophy of sex complementarity on the highest of level of existence [namely, in heaven and in resurrected glory].”¹²⁹ She expresses her hope that this opening could one day lead to a Thomistic theology of sexual complementarity without the Aristotelian conclusions based on a faulty biology.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 126.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 411. Of course, Aristotle himself did not have a concept of personhood. Human beings are individuated by their matter and form, potency and act. See Joseph Torchia, “Aristotle: The Human Composite,” in *Exploring Personhood*, 71-95.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ See *ibid.*, 412.

Kristin Popik similarly notes that the Aquinas theory of “the inferiority of woman is solidly based on the Aristotelian biological theory of femininity as passivity, as defective in comparison with masculine activity and perfection. Without this foundation, the only ground of woman’s inferiority for St. Thomas is her physical weakness and a few scriptural passages, which are clearly used only as supportive arguments in his writings.”¹³¹ She admires the fact that in spite of the milieu, the Aristotelian formation, and scriptural precedent, that Aquinas was able to argue as he does for any sort of equality between the two sexes.¹³² Jean Porter also recognizes Aquinas’s qualified assertion of the equality of the sexes: both created in the image of God.¹³³ Lisa Sowle Cahill also praises Aquinas for identifying marriage as a certain friendship between the spouses, which incorporates the sexual act.¹³⁴

In the preceding, I have argued that St. Thomas’s view of marriage is nuanced enough to include not only sexual differentiation (which he must concede given his strict hyломorphism), but also elements of equality, self-offering, and the union of souls. In particular, the idea that the union of souls is the form of marriage has particular importance when discussing the spousal meaning of the body, which as I noted in chapter five, is communicated in the sacrament of marriage through marital consent and the conjugal act. Marriage has both a formal and a material element even in Aquinas’s thought. The material element is the conjugal act rightly ordered.

¹³¹ Popik, “The Philosophy of Woman, Part Two,” 37.

¹³² See *ibid.*, 36-39.

¹³³ Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 211.

¹³⁴ See Cahill, *Between the Sexes*, 118-119: “If the thought of Thomas about men and women, marriage, and sex does not always escape the strictures of a medieval outlook, I think we can hardly regard his failure as greater or more culpable than the idealization of individual freedom and glorification of sex, equally unbiblical, that often accompany the modern view of what is natural and fulfilling for humans.... His most valuable and original contribution to a Christian theology and ethics of sexuality is his insight that marital commitment is a profound form of friendship, intensified by physical expression.”

II. The Conjugal Act according to St. Thomas Aquinas

A. The Conjugal Act in the Summa Theologiae

I believe that Aquinas's view of the conjugal act is not all that different from Pope John Paul's, even though the pope articulated a certain linguistic "meaning" to the act in a way that Aquinas would not have. Yet, the Angelic Doctor did understand the importance of the conjugal act not just for procreation but also for marital relationship itself. The conjugal act signifies not only the goods of marriage but also the very union of the spouses' souls. In chapter seven, I studied Aquinas's view of temperance and chastity. In this chapter, I am more concerned with his understanding of sex within marriage. First, I want to review some of the basic observations about chastity in the last chapter. There, I noted that in St. Thomas's moral theory, the virtue of temperance moderates the concupiscible pleasures of touch, those greatest of sensual pleasures for the human person.¹³⁵ Temperance and the other virtues associated with it (sobriety, abstinence, and chastity) moderate these pleasures according to the mean between excess and deficiency.¹³⁶ Chastity is important in Aquinas's view since the pleasures associated with sexual intercourse are so great "that the free act of reason in considering spiritual things is incompatible with the aforesaid pleasure."¹³⁷

The virtue of chastity disposes a person to make use of the sexual act in accordance to reason and in a due manner.¹³⁸ Reason directs all things to their end. And the end of the generative organs are just that: generation.¹³⁹ It precisely because of this that Aquinas insists that engaging in the sexual act is not sinful but can be truly good, even meritorious, if it is

¹³⁵ See *ST*, II-II, q. 151, a. 4.

¹³⁶ See *ST*, I-II, q. 59, a. 1.

¹³⁷ *ST*, II-II, q. 153, a. 2, ad 2.

¹³⁸ See *ST*, II-II, q. 151, a. 1, ad 1; q. 153, a. 2.

¹³⁹ See *ST*, II-II, q. 141, a. 6; q. 154, a. 11, ad 3.

engaged in according to reason (that is, directed to the procreation and upbringing of offspring).¹⁴⁰ In Aquinas's view, the pleasures associated with sexual intercourse are not evil. They overcome reason not because they were created to do so but because of the punishment due to original sin: "That venereal concupiscence and pleasure are not subject to the command and moderation of reason, is due to the punishment of the first sin, inasmuch as the reason, for rebelling against God, deserved that its body should rebel against it."¹⁴¹ The lustful person is one who habitually prefers these pleasures over and against the intention to procreate.¹⁴²

The carnal union is very important in Aquinas's conception of marriage, since it is this union that separates a person's love of his spouse from the love he has for his parents.¹⁴³ Still, precisely because sexual intercourse in our fallen condition entails such vehement pleasure that overpower reason, it is possible that even an act of intercourse within marriage may be at least venially sinful.¹⁴⁴ Although, the marital act can be meritorious as well if engaged in for the right reasons.¹⁴⁵

Even though reason distinguishes the human person from other animals, Aquinas is not against its temporary impairment for a greater good, such as sleep or procreation.¹⁴⁶ As St. Thomas sees it, there must be some goods associated with marriage, which, he says,

¹⁴⁰ See *ST*, II-II, q. 154, a. 1, ad 2; q. 154, a. 2.

¹⁴¹ *ST*, II-II, q. 153, a. 1, ad 2.

¹⁴² See *ST*, II-II, q. 153, aa. 3-4; q. 154, a. 11, ad 3.

¹⁴³ See *ST*, II-II, q. 26, a. 11.

¹⁴⁴ See *ST*, II-II, q. 41, a. 4. Here St. Thomas supports the view established by St. Augustine that marital sex is at least venially sinful if pursued merely for the sake of satisfying concupiscence. Similarly, if a spouse requests the satisfaction of the marriage debt beyond reasonable measure, it is venially sinful. See Augustine, *De bono coniugali*, cap. 6-9.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ See, for example, *ST*, II-II, q. 153, a. 1, ad 2. As I noted in the last chapter, this is exactly why Aquinas condemns drunkenness, which he defines as the immoderate use of alcohol and its intoxicating effects beyond what is necessary for health (*ST*, II-II, q. 149, a. 1; q. 149, a. 3; q. 150, a. 1).

“excuse” or “rightly order” the marital act and its accompanying pleasure as well as the necessity of sharing one’s possessions with another for a lifetime.¹⁴⁷ Following St. Augustine’s lead, although he does not acknowledge him here, the Angelic Doctor identifies three goods: offspring, fidelity, and the sacrament.¹⁴⁸ These goods are not extrinsic factors that make the marital act good and so rightly order marriage from the outside. They are, in fact, goods intrinsic and essential to the nature of marriage.¹⁴⁹ These three goods are the reasons why the marital act is not always sinful in Aquinas’s view.¹⁵⁰ This is why the marital act itself does not corrupt virtue: the temporary overwhelming of a reason does not instill a vicious habit if the act is engaged in rightly and in rational order (which is to say within marriage and primarily for the purposes of procreation).¹⁵¹

Yet, although marriage provides the faculty or authority for sexual intercourse, the marital act is not itself essential for the marital union.¹⁵² For St. Thomas, the consent, the union between two persons is the most important element in establishing the marriage, but this consent includes a consent to carnal union. He writes,

¹⁴⁷ See *ST*, Sup., q. 49, a. 1. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 1.

¹⁴⁸ See *ST*, Sup., q. 49, a. 2. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 2. For a summary on Augustine’s view of marriage, see Mackin, *The Marital Sacrament*, 190-231; Glenn W. Olsen, “Progeny, Faithfulness, Sacred Bond: Marriage in the Age of Augustine,” in *Christian Marriage*, 101-145; Roberts, *Creation and Covenant*, 39-78.

¹⁴⁹ See *ST*, Sup., q. 49, a. 1, ad 2. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 1.

¹⁵⁰ See *ST*, Sup., q. 41, a. 3; q. 49, a. 4. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 3.; d. 31, q. 2, a. 1.

¹⁵¹ See *ST*, Sup., q. 41, a. 3, ad 6; q. 49, a. 4, ads. 1, 3. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 3.; d. 31, q. 2, a. 1.

¹⁵² See *ST*, Sup., q. 42, a. 4: “Integrity is twofold. One regards the primal perfection consisting in the very essence of a thing; the other regards the secondary perfection consisting in operation. Since then carnal intercourse is an operation or use of marriage which gives the faculty for that intercourse, it follows that carnal intercourse belongs to the latter, and not to the former integrity of marriage.” Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 4. In the early middle ages, theologians and canonists were debating the relationship between consent and consummation. By the time of Aquinas’s writing the opinion was relatively settled that consent was key with consummation ratifying that consent. See Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 229-242; Schillebeeckx, *Marriage*, 287-302. From a theological perspective, both sides wanted to protect the virginity of the Blessed Mother, on the one hand, and the reality of the marriage between her and St. Joseph. This is why Aquinas offers that wonderful phrase in the *tertia pars* mentioned above when discussing that unique marriage: “The form of matrimony consists in a certain inseparable union of souls, by which husband and wife are pledged by a bond of mutual affection that cannot be sundered” (*ST*, III, q. 29, a. 2).

The consent that makes a marriage is a consent to marriage, because the proper effect of the will is the thing willed. Wherefore, according as carnal intercourse stands in relation to marriage, so far is the consent that causes marriage a consent to carnal intercourse.... Marriage is not essentially the carnal union itself, but a certain joining together of husband and wife ordained to carnal intercourse, and a further consequent union between husband and wife, in so far as they each receive power over the other in reference to carnal intercourse, which joining together is called the nuptial bond.¹⁵³

The consent orders the couple to intercourse and orders intercourse rightly within the union that bears the goodness of offspring, fidelity, and the sacrament. And in his own language, Aquinas says that carnal intercourse actually signifies each of these three goods of marriage. Clearly, intercourse signifies offspring since this is its biological end. Yet, it is also signifies the fidelity of consent. In fact, he writes, “nothing is more expressly significant of consent than carnal intercourse.”¹⁵⁴ Finally, carnal intercourse signifies the indissolubility of the union brought about by the sacramental grace, which is itself a sign of Christ’s union with his church.¹⁵⁵

B. The Marriage Debt, Union and Procreation

In a passage cited above, Aquinas wrote that the consent of marriage includes a power over each other’s body. Each spouse gives to the other authority over his or her body in the marital act, directing it to procreation (the natural end of the procreative organs). Like other medieval theologians, Aquinas understands this mutual right and responsibility as the

¹⁵³ *ST*, Sup., q. 48, a. 1. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 28, a. 4.

¹⁵⁴ *ST*, Sup., q. 46, a. 2. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 28, a. 2.

¹⁵⁵ See *ST*, Sup., q. 42, a. 4, ad 2; Cf. *ST*, Sup., q. 42, a. 1, ads. 4, 5. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 4; d. 26, q. 2, a. 1.

“marriage debt” each owes to the other.¹⁵⁶ The marriage debt is another aspect of fidelity that is proper to the relationship: “Just as the marriage promise means that neither party is to have intercourse with a third party, so does it require that they should mutually pay the marriage debt. The latter is indeed the chief of the two since it follows from the power which each receives over the other. Consequently both these things pertain to faith [i.e., fidelity].”¹⁵⁷

The husband and the wife are equal in responsibility to “pay the debt,” which is to offer their bodies to the other.¹⁵⁸ However, because Aquinas recognizes differences between the husband and wife, and because he understands man to be the stronger principle of the relationship, he indicates that there are differences in how the husband and wife communicate their desire for the other. Thus, for example, the man must not be modest in asking for his wife to “pay the debt.” He must explicitly ask. The wife need not respond when he only hints of his wishes.¹⁵⁹ Yet because Aquinas believes women to be more modest, he expects the husband to be much more intuitive and to respond to his wife even if she makes only subtle indications of her desires.¹⁶⁰

The equality of authority of the spouses over each other’s bodies in marriage is so pronounced in Aquinas’s conception that he prohibits a slave from marrying a master: the slave is not free in offering her body to her husband.¹⁶¹ Elsewhere, St. Thomas writes that

¹⁵⁶ I am grateful to Paul Gondreau for suggesting the importance of the marital debt in a personalist reading of St. Thomas’s moral theory. See Paul Gondreau, “The ‘Inseparable Connection,’” 758-760.

¹⁵⁷ *ST*, Sup., q. 49, a. 2, ad 3. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 2.

¹⁵⁸ See *ST*, Sup., q. 64, a. 1; q. 64, a. 5. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 32, a. 1; d. 32, a. 5, qua. 1. For a more detailed review of the concept of the marriage debt in the medieval period, see John T. Noonan, *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists*, Enlarged Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 285ff.; 357-358; and Brundage, *Law, Sex and Society*, 359-360.

¹⁵⁹ See *ST*, Sup., q. 64, a. 5, ad 2. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 32, a. 5, qua. 1.

¹⁶⁰ See *ST*, Sup., q. 64, a. 2. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 32, a. 2, qua. 1.

¹⁶¹ See *ST*, Sup., q. 52, a. 1. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 36, a. 1.

the inability to engage in the act of coitus (which is quite different than sterility or infertility) can render a marriage invalid precisely because one of the spouses cannot offer his or her body to the other.¹⁶² To the objection that the martial act is not essential to marriage, Aquinas responds: “Although the act of carnal copulation is not essential to marriage, ability to fulfill the act is essential, because marriage gives each of the married parties power over the other’s body in relation to marital intercourse.”¹⁶³ It is important to note, though, that a spouse may reject the other’s requests for the martial act for legitimate reasons of health.¹⁶⁴ What is clear, however, is that even though the conjugal act is teleologically ordered *per se* to the procreation and the education of children, St. Thomas did not believe that if a particular conjugal act happened not to produce a child that the act was therefore sinful. In fact, his writing on the martial debt suggests a secondary, if not equal, use of the conjugal act: the expression of honesty and fidelity in the marriage.

In the *supplementum*, the Angelic doctor writes the following: “The end which nature intends in sexual union is the begetting and rearing of the offspring; and that this good might be sought after, it attached pleasure to the union.... Accordingly to make use of sexual intercourse on account of its inherent pleasure, without reference to the end for which nature intended it, is to act against nature, as also is it if intercourse be not such as may fittingly be directed to that end.”¹⁶⁵ Later in his mature *Summa contra gentiles*, Aquinas notes:

¹⁶² See *ST*, Sup., q. 58, a. 1. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 34, a. 2.

¹⁶³ *ST*, Sup., q. 58, a. 1, ad 2. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 34, a. 2.

¹⁶⁴ See *ST*, Sup., q. 64, a. 1, ads. 2, 3. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 32, a. 1. In these passages, Aquinas speaks only of the husband rejecting his wife because of his health or other legitimate reason prevents him from engaging in the conjugal act. However, there is nothing presented here nor elsewhere that would suggest his use of the husband’s rejection is nothing more than an example. Aquinas nowhere denies this same freedom to women.

¹⁶⁵ *ST*, Sup., q. 64, a. 3. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 32, a. 3.

It is evident that... every emission of semen, in such a way that generation cannot follow, is contrary to the good of man. And if this be done deliberately, it must be a sin. Now, I am speaking of a way from which, *in itself* [*secundum se*], generation could not result: such would be any emission of semen apart from the natural union of male and female. For which reason, sins of this type are called *contrary to nature* [*contra naturam*]. But, if by accident [*per accidens*] generation cannot result from the emission of semen, then this is not a reason for it being against nature, or a sin; as for instance, if the woman happens to be sterile.¹⁶⁶

Here, Aquinas distinguishes those venereal acts which are *contra naturam* from those conjugal acts which are in themselves procreative but which are in particular instance *per accidens* non-procreative for a circumstantial reason (i.e., the sterility of the woman).

John Noonan has suggested that this later development represents a change in Aquinas's position.¹⁶⁷ However, even in the *supplementum*, Aquinas suggests that it is not sinful to engage in intercourse even if procreation is not the result. Acknowledging Aquinas's view that the pleasure concomitant with the marital act is not in itself sinful, but its vehemence is the result of original sin, it is interesting to note what he says about the marital goods and how they "excuse" this pleasure in the marital act:

Just as the marriage goods, in so far as they consist in a habit, make a marriage honest and holy, so too, in so far as they are in the actual intention, they make the marriage act honest, as regards those two marriage goods which relate to the marriage act. Hence when married persons come together for the purpose of begetting children, or of paying the debt to one another (which pertains to *faith*), they are wholly excused from sin.... Consequently there are only two ways in which married persons can come together without any sin at all, namely in order to have offspring, and in order to pay the debt; otherwise it is always at least a venial sin.¹⁶⁸

Here, Aquinas makes clear that there are two ways in which a couple avoids venial sin in engaging in the marital act: the intention of to beget children and the intention to pay the

¹⁶⁶ *Summa contra gentiles*, bk. III, ch. 122. (Original emphasis.)

¹⁶⁷ Noonan, 242.

¹⁶⁸ *ST*, Sup., q. 49, a. 5 (original emphasis). Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 32, q. 2, a. 2.

debt. The larger issue at work here, of course, is the concept that any act of sexual intercourse between husband and wife might be a venial sin. Yet, I believe there are other passages in the *supplementum* that help clarify Aquinas's reasoning here. They concern the relation of the marriage debt to the sin of lust.

St. Thomas insists that the marriage act may become vicious if the motivation is lust. The gravity of the sin of lust, whether it be venial or mortal, is measured by the presence of the marriage goods in the intention of the spouse. And in these passages, Aquinas universally references the husband in his examples as the one prone to lust.¹⁶⁹ Thus, he writes, "If the motive be lust, yet not excluding the marriage blessings, namely that he [the husband] would by no means be willing to go to another woman, it is a venial sin; while if he exclude the marriage blessings, so as to be disposed to act in like manner with any woman, it is a mortal sin."¹⁷⁰ A man who sins mortally with lust is willing to satisfy his sexual needs with any woman, it just so happens that he has a wife ready at hand.

Later, Aquinas clarifies his position in regards to the sinfulness of lust. The lustful man seeks the pleasure itself without any intention to satisfy the marital debt or to generate offspring. The difference is the attention he pays to the fidelity he owes his wife:

If pleasure [in the marital act] be sought in such a way as to exclude the honesty of marriage, so that, to wit, it is not as a wife but as a woman that a man treats his wife, and that he is ready to use her in the same way if she were not his wife, it is a mortal sin; wherefore such a man is said to be too ardent a lover of his wife, because his ardor carries him away from the goods of marriage. If, however, he seeks pleasure within the bonds of marriage, so that it would not be sought in another than his wife, it is a venial sin.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ I note that even though in Aquinas's view it is women who are more in need of sobriety, it is men who are consistently identified in his treatises on lust.

¹⁷⁰ *ST*, Sup., q. 41, a. 4. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 26, q. 1, a. 4

¹⁷¹ *ST*, Sup., q. 49, a. 6. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 31, q. 2, a. 3

This explains why St. Thomas also asserts that “if a man intends by the marriage act to prevent fornication in his wife, it is no sin, because this is a kind of payment of the debt that comes under the good of *faith*. But if he intends to avoid fornication in himself, then there is a certain superfluity, and accordingly there is a venial sin.”¹⁷² Aquinas wants to keep the motives of the husband (and, by extension, the wife) free from lust in order to prevent the spouses from using one another merely for the satisfaction of sexual desire. In fact, St. Thomas departs from the theological norm of his day by insisting that even if a man seeks pleasure primarily, provided he seeks it within the bounds of marriage—procreation and fidelity—it is only a venial sin, not a mortal one.¹⁷³

The marital debt gives each spouse power over the other’s body. Aquinas never used the notion of self-gift in his treatment on marriage. The theology of gift is a contemporary development in moral theology.¹⁷⁴ However, I suggest that his understanding of the marital debt in the *supplementum*, which he never corrects or modifies in his mature work, is comparable to the idea that the spouses give their bodies over to the other in the marriage consent.

While Aquinas uses terms such as ‘authority’ and ‘power,’ he clarifies his meaning. The spouses must be equally free in the consent to marriage and so equal in giving their

¹⁷² *ST*, Sup., q. 49, a. 5, ad 2.

¹⁷³ See *ST*, Sup., q. 49, a. 6. See Ronald Lawler, Joseph Boyle, and William E. May, *Catholic Sexual Ethics: A Summary, Explanation, and Defense*, 2nd ed. (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1998), 61-63. For a history of the pursuit of marital sex for the sake avoiding the sin of fornication in satisfying sexual desire, see Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 282-284; Noonan, *Contraception*, 343-345.

¹⁷⁴ Brian Johnstone has offered a brief history of the development of the theology of the gift. See Brian V. Johnstone, “The Ethics of the Gift According to Aquinas, Derrida, and Marion,” *Australian EJournal of Theology* 3 (2004), http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_3/Johnstone.htm (accessed November 4, 2009). In this very helpful article, Johnstone offers an historical narrative of the development of the subject-object distinction along with an argument that the modern conception of ontology little connection with classical metaphysics. Furthermore, he offers an exegesis of Aquinas’s understanding of gift by looking at the treatises on the Holy Spirit and grace in the *Summa theologiae*.

bodies over to the other. They must be capable of equally rendering the marriage debt. Furthermore, the fact that the husband cannot make use of his wife's body for lustful purposes suggests something different than these terms convey to modern ears. While both the husband and the wife can explicitly request "payment" of this debt, they cannot do so for lustful purposes. Finally, the natural structure of the act itself, when respected, further prevents lust from overwhelming them. For the nature of the act in itself tends to procreation even if *per accidens* a particulate marital act does not beget any children. Only if such a *per accidens* non-procreative conjugal act is used for "its inherent pleasure, without reference to the end for which nature intended it" then it is a sinful act because it reveals the primary motive of lust and not fidelity or the payment of the marriage debt.¹⁷⁵

I agree with Paul Gondreau's interpretation that St. Thomas's sexual theory must be interpreted in light of his hylomorphic anthropology. Procreation is the primary end of marriage in Aquinas's view because the generation and education of offspring is what separates the relationship of husband and wife from every other personal relationship.¹⁷⁶ Gondreau isolates the connection with hylomorphism: "Just as human nature cannot be defined in abstraction from the bodily (i.e., animal) dimension, so neither can we abstract the bodily, procreative dimension from the nuptial, symbolic meaning of our sexuality."¹⁷⁷ The love of marriage is specified by the expression of love through the marital act.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ See *ST*, Sup., q. 64, a. 3. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 32, a. 3.

¹⁷⁶ See *ST*, Sup., q. 49, a. 3. Cf. *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 31, q. 1, a. 3. See Gondreau, "Inseparable Connection," 760. Gondreau shows here that Raymond of Peñafort, Aquinas's elder in the Dominican Order, had already made this observation. Cf. Raymond of Peñafort, *Summa on Marriage*, title II, no. 3. An English translation of this text is available: Raymond of Peñafort, *Summa on Marriage*, trans. Pierre Payer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2005), 20.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Regarding the marriage of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, Aquinas argues that their marriage was perfect in both the form (the essential union of souls) and partly to the exercise of marriage (the

Paul Gondreau has drawn an interesting conclusion from Aquinas's notion that the form of matrimony consists in the union of souls. While it may be anachronistic to say that St. Thomas had a concept of the "unitive" aspect of the conjugal act and of marriage, Gondreau argues, I think correctly, that the unitive dimension of marriage is this union of souls of which Aquinas speaks. The union of souls, the unitive, is not an afterthought in Aquinas's view. Precisely because the unitive represents the inseparable union of souls, it "expresses human sexuality's participation in the rational, in what is highest and noblest in us. The personalist [i.e., unitive] dimension raises our procreative animality, as it were, to the properly human."¹⁷⁹ Gondreau further concludes that since, in Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics, the form is the principle of unity between matter and form (just as the soul is the principle of unity between body and soul), then this explains why married couples seek, first, union with one another before they seek children together.

Throughout his writings on marriage, Aquinas, like Augustine, routinely insists that the procreation of offspring includes not only their biological generation but also their education and upbringing. St. Thomas routinely insists that human children are not like animal young. They require a unique form of care and education. On this account, Aquinas elaborates numerous qualities of married life: monogamy, fidelity, parental solicitude for children, and indissolubility. The domestic society that mother and father create is the society in which their children will be raised. Gondreau draws the conclusion: "We do not just 'produce babies' like animals.... Rather, we first enter into a communion of personal

procreation and upbringing of children). Although they never consummated their marriage, nevertheless their marriage was exercised in the upbringing of the Child Jesus. See *ST*, III, q. 29, a. 2.

¹⁷⁹ Gondreau, "Inseparable Connection," 761. Cf. *ST*, III, q. 29, a. 2.

spousal love, from which the begetting of human children flows, followed by the welcoming of these children into this same communion of love, into a family.”¹⁸⁰

One of the last moral textbooks written before the close of the Second Vatican Council made this same point:

Sometimes the primary ends are referred to by modern writers as the biological and social ends, while the secondary ends are called personalist. However, in contrasting personalist values with biological and social values one should not make the mistake of imagining that procreation and rearing of children are not personalist values, too, or that the so-called personalist values do not contribute to the biological and social ends. Procreation is not just a continuation of the race or the nation. It is inherently a continuation and fulfillment of the persons of husband and wife also. Parenthood may well be, and in fact frequently is, the highest of the personalist values in a given marriage which is *de facto* fruitful.¹⁸¹

The conclusions of this section serves to directly rebut those contemporary moral theologians who insist that St. Thomas’s sexual theory is overly dependent on a the physical structures of nature—too concerned with the teleological structure of the sexual act.¹⁸² A Thomistic anthropology is unable to separate the physical from the spiritual. Respecting the naturally procreative structure of the sexual act guarantees and protects its unitive and personalist dimension from motivations less than worthy of human dignity. Respecting the unitive and personalist dimension guarantees that procreation is more than simply biological.

This is precisely why Aquinas’s anthropology lends itself to the notion of a spousal meaning of the body. Since the human person is a body-soul composite, the body is not

¹⁸⁰ Gondreau, “Inseparable Connection,” 762.

¹⁸¹ John C. Ford and Gerald Kelly, *Contemporary Moral Theology*, Vol. 2, *Marriage Questions* (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1963), 49.

¹⁸² See, for example, Charles E. Curran, *Contemporary Problems in Moral Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: Fides, 1970), 106; Charles E. Curran, *A New Look at Christian Morality* (Josef Fuchs, *Moral Demands and Personal Obligations* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1993), 31ff.; Richard M. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundation of Catholic Morality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 223-28. For a terse response to these theologians, see William E. May, *An Introduction to Moral Theology*, 2nd ed. (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 2003), 80-84.

simply the soul's biological or physiological tool. As I showed in chapter six of this study, the body and soul mutually implicate each other in action and in thought. I also noted in that chapter that the body and soul (the human person himself), like all created being, must come out of himself in order to find complete perfection in another (and, ultimately, in the Other: God). Only God is complete perfection in himself. Nowhere in man's natural existence is this more apparent than in the sexual act itself, which requires a person of the opposite sex for teleological perfection. Without these admittedly basic insights along with Aquinas's notions of love and virtue, which I presented in the previous chapter, and his understanding of marriage as a union of souls and highest friendship, St. Thomas's sexual ethic could be construed as a physicalist. As it stands, however, Aquinas's view of marriage, much of which depends on St. Augustine's teaching, offers a robust Aristotelian hylomorphic framework in which we can understand what it means to say that the body speaks a language.

Because men and women are created composite beings with bodies and souls, *both* elements reach out to another for perfection—both the body and the soul are searching for perfection, and thus, the human person as a whole is searching for perfection. The movement of love is a movement not only of the soul but also of the body, since the soul and body are mutually implicative. And this reaching out to the other (with both body and soul), the hallmark of John Paul's spousal meaning of the body, manifest in marriage means that in spite of apparent inequalities of sexual roles, Aquinas's argument required him (and us) to insist upon not only the equality of the spouses in the self-offering of marriage (an offering which included the rendering of the marital debt). His thought also required him to conclude that the conjugal act was a visible or material manifestation of this union.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is certainly true that St. Thomas's perspective on women is not acceptable in the twenty-first century. Yet, in spite of his cultural milieu and his respect for Aristotelian biology, the Angelic Doctor made extraordinary steps in his theory of marriage and the conjugal act. He agreed that men were the head of the household, for which he had not only cultural custom but biblical warrant on his side, but he, nonetheless, insisted that there was a certain equality between husband and wife. He even established that there is a certain domestic justice between the two. Moreover, he insisted that a wife's freedom must be respected, provided it does not interfere with the life of the household.

There was a definite development in St. Thomas's thinking on the nature of marriage. Early in his life, he was not sure how to characterize the nature of the relationship between husband and wife. As a result, he seemingly settled for the lowest caliber of friendship in Aristotle's view: a friendship of utility based on a shared activity, which was the procreation and education of children. Later in his life, however, he began to see marriage as the supreme form of friendship between human beings. Building on Aristotle's own understanding of perfect friendship, Aquinas was able to make a more appealing argument for the indissolubility of monogamous marriage in the *Summa contra gentiles*.

Finally, I have shown that St. Thomas's view of the conjugal act need not be interpreted in a strictly physicalist way, as some have argued in the past. In fact, it is not too difficult to see his understanding of the marital debt through the same lens of the gift of self that Karol Wojtyla and others have written about. Equally important is the ramifications Aquinas's hylomorphic anthropology has for his understanding of the conjugal act. The material and the immaterial cannot be separated in this life, nor can the procreative and the

unitive aspects of the conjugal act. The body is implicated in the love between man and woman. This is a central tenet of John Paul's *Theology of the Body*. The body communicates the person, and it communicates love.

General Conclusion

I. Summary and Synthesis

My goal in this dissertation has been to show that St. Thomas Aquinas's anthropology, with its rich metaphysical foundation, can support the notion of a spousal meaning of the body as articulated by Pope John Paul II in *The Theology of the Body* catecheses. My hope is that by articulating Aquinas's anthropology and his understanding marriage alongside that of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II, it will be easier to see how the thought of these two thinkers can enrich each other. On the one hand, *The Theology of the Body* offers a biblical and experiential anthropology, which can supplement Aquinas's thought. On the other hand, in my exegesis of the early thought of Wojtyla, I showed that he began his academic career with a firm loyalty to the theological method of Aquinas. Even though he turned increasingly to phenomenology in the 1970s, he never rejected the value of natural theology and metaphysical theory. On the contrary, as I noted in chapter three, he consistently affirmed the need for metaphysics to distinguish moral good from evil.

A. Context

In the first three chapters of this study, I established the context for my interpretation of John Paul's *Theology of the Body* (and for the sexual ethics he presented in his pre-pontifical writings). In my view, John Paul's *Theology of the Body* and the concept of the spousal meaning of the body developed from the debates surrounding birth control and from Wojtyla's perception that theology had lost its concern for the rich interior life of the human person. I believe the problems in theology that Wojtyla rightly identified began with

the gradual dissolution of the theological synthesis formulated by St. Thomas Aquinas and this came to a head in the debates surrounding birth control. That why I began this study with a narrative of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas proceeding through the Middle Ages into modernity right up to the twentieth century and the debate on birth control.

The Angelic Doctor believed that moral theory was primarily concerned with happiness (*beatitudo*). He thought that the penitential books of the first generation of Dominicans had isolated moral matters from the larger questions of faith and human existence. In beginning his moral theory with questions on happiness or beatitude, Aquinas incorporates Aristotle's basic distinction between act and potency. Like the *Stagerite*, St. Thomas argued that there is an interior principle, a drive, in being itself that seeks perfect actuality.

This is the very definition of goodness in an Aristotelian-Thomistic worldview: the perfection of act. Although existence is its own perfection, every created being lacks complete perfection in all respects. The goods that created beings (rational and irrational) seek are those goods that will bring their remaining potencies to act. In the seventh chapter, I noted that this is Aquinas's most basic understanding of love. Love is the appetite for perfection. Rocks "naturally love" to be in a settled position. Human beings also "naturally love" to be perfected by another. And human love incorporates not only the love of man's animal nature (i.e., his body's drive for perfection) but human love includes reason and free-will; it includes choice. Ultimately, only the supreme good, God himself, is completely satisfying and fully actualizing (and, therefore, most worthy of our love).

Yet, my narrative continued, within a generation or so after Aquinas's death, nominalist philosophy, which denied the possibility that human reason can speak of

universal truth, had the effect of beginning the philosophical separation of the human mind from reality thus foreshadowing the eventual decline into modern rational skepticism. This nominalist philosophy was combined with voluntarism, which argued that the rightness and wrongness of human action was judged according to the will of the lawgiver—God or the state. Morality, then, was entirely dependent on the manifestation of and our obedience to the divine will, not to divine reason as Aquinas and the other early scholastics understood it.

This, in turn, led to an increasing reliance on revelation and nature as manifestations of God's will. The post-reformation manualists saw in the processes of nature the evidence of a Creator's design, a product of his will, and, therefore, insisted that these processes ought to be respected as a manifestation of divine law. In time, the prominent methodology of moral theory began to focus on the exterior components of human action by atomizing acts and evaluating each particular aspect of each particular act. Moralists' greatest concern was that human action aligned with nature. Nowhere was this emphasis more evident than in the area of sexual ethics. This methodology was a retreat from the moral theology of Aquinas, who had emphasized human action as a means to the development of a person's character in virtue rather than as a vacillation between freedom and obedience.

The excessive focus on the processes of nature in the evaluation of human action was the locus of the twentieth century debate on birth control. As I noted in chapter two, at just the same time that science began to be successful in designing hormonal birth control pills, so too there were movements in the Church advocating a greater understanding of marriage as a vocation to holiness (rather than a mere natural institution for the sake of procreation).

Increasingly, moral theologians, dissatisfied with the then typical emphasis on nature as the most important defining moral criterion, turned to the category of personhood in their discourse: it is a person, after all, not a nature, that engages in human action. The moral theologians who tended toward personalism were not united in their stance on contraception. Some, such as Dietrich von Hildebrand and Herbert Doms, opposed it. Others, like Louis Janssens, supported it.

The question was not only how much authority a person has over nature but exactly how nature should be understood. While Hildebrand and Doms both understood marriage as essentially about the self-gift of one person to another, they insisted that nature must be respected for that gift to have an authentic meaning. Janssens, and others like him, were more concerned to identify the human person's control over nature.

This was the debate that the commission formed by Pope John XXIII in 1963 and continued by Pope Paul VI attempted to resolve. Put simply, a majority of the members of the commission had argued with the development of science and a more contemporary understanding of marriage as a gift of self, that contraception, if used with the right intention, should not present a difficulty for Church teaching. A minority of members of the same commission provided an apologetic for the Church's ban on contraception, arguing that this unbroken tradition represents more than a mere biologicistic ethic. In a stunning move, Paul VI agreed with the minority members and issued *Humanae vitae* in 1968 in which he declared contraception intrinsically evil and enjoined the faithful to avoid it. In the encyclical, he distinguished contraception from the legitimate practice of periodic continence and, perhaps more importantly, he insisted that the procreative and unitive aspects of the

conjugal act could not be separated from one another without doing violence to the act itself.

Reactions to the encyclical typically fell down the line of how much authority to nature any particular moral theologian was willing to concede. Those who held nature must be normative in some way lauded Paul VI's delicate incorporation of personalist values on love and marriage with his affirmation of respect for nature. Those personalists who were convinced of the human person's greater importance vis-à-vis nature criticized the encyclical as physicalist. According to the latter, the document focused too heavily on the natural structures of the conjugal act. The debate after 1968 can be characterized, among other things, as continuing the debate that had come before the encyclical. It centered on the relationship between person and nature. Karol Wojtyla would make a great contribution to the discussion.

B. Karol Wojtyla – Pope John Paul II

From the beginning of his ecclesial career, Wojtyla was dissatisfied with the separation of theology and philosophy from the internal experience of the human person. He thought that speculative theology had become too abstract and too distant from the mystical theology of spiritual authors and the lived experience of the faithful. This is why in his first doctoral dissertation he argued that the mystical understanding of faith articulated by St. John of the Cross was not opposed to dogmatic faith. This is to say, he argued that dogmatic and intellectual propositions about God must be united to the experience of God in prayer.

Later, in his habilitation theses, he focused on the phenomenologist Max Scheler, who had attempted to connect the abstract rationalist philosophy of Immanuel Kant to reality through the human experience of emotion and value. Wojtyla ultimately concluded that, on his own, Scheler's understanding of ethical rightness could not be used to defend Christian moral norms since he did not understand that human action actually affects the acting subject himself or that moral value is objectively grounded in reality. Still, he insisted that Scheler's phenomenology of experience, if properly combined with a philosophical ontology, could be useful to Christian moralists.

In his early years of teaching, before he published *Love and Responsibility* in 1960, Wojtyla's continued to work to re-connect theory and theology with human experience and consciousness. In his Lublin Lectures, he evinces a thorough knowledge of both Aquinas's metaphysics and his moral theology. He was especially focused on the distinction between act and potency. In this period, he begins to articulate his view that human ethical experience springs from the interior dynamism of moving from potency to act.

Love and Reasonability is his initial foray into the issues of marriage and sex. It is also Wojtyla's first publication in which he articulates his own thought, rather than simply commenting on another's conclusions. This is the first time he does not write as beholden to Aquinas or any other thinker, even though his treatment of love of goodwill and love of pleasure is very similar to Aristotle's and St. Thomas's thought. In this book, he explicitly attempts to bring ontology and experience together in the realm of sexual ethics. The elements of Wojtyla's thought that would eventually characterize the spousal meaning of the body begin to come into view here.

Wojtyla wanted to reconcile what he calls the personalist norm with the natural necessities of the sexual urge. Borrowing language from Kant, Wojtyla's personalistic norm asserts that the human person is fundamentally incommunicable and, therefore, cannot be used as a means to an end. Yet, the sexual urge pushes a person outside himself to another precisely because the natural ends of sexual urge requires another person for its fulfillment. Therefore, Wojtyla argued that the order of nature and the order of personhood meet in the sexual act. That the human person is naturally directed out of himself is most especially manifest in the conjugal act.

One person cannot be used by another merely for the satisfaction of the sexual urge. Rather, Wojtyla argues in *Love and Responsibility*, the conjugal act is an occasion for the spouses to make a complete gift of themselves to each other.¹ The body is the means for the communication of this gift. It is the means for self-communication. Wojtyla's view is that the human person is revealed through his body and through his action. The body is not simply a raw datum to be manipulated at will but is a constituent component of a person's identity. The emphasis he places on the importance of the body's revelation of the person in his articles defending *Humanae vitae* along with *Love and Responsibility*, *The Acting Person*, and *The Theology of the Body* has led me to place a similar emphasis on this notion in my own exegesis of the pope's thought.²

¹ Wojtyla had first articulated this idea of personal self-gift and its relation to personal incommunicability in his 1953 article, "The Religious Experience of Purity." See Karol Wojtyla, "La experiencia religiosa de la pureza," 69-81.

² Although I limited my study to *The Theology of the Body* and the Wojtyla's writings leading to its publication, it is worth mentioning how this notion informed Pope John Paul's consideration of natural law promulgated in the 1993 encyclical *Veritatis splendor*.

In that encyclical, the pope wrote: "A freedom which claims to be absolute ends up treating the human body as a raw datum, devoid of any meaning and moral values until freedom has shaped it in accordance with its design. Consequently, human nature and the body appear as *presuppositions or preambles*, materially *necessary*, for freedom to make its choice, yet extrinsic to the person, the subject and the human act....

In language recalling both Aristotle and Aquinas, Wojtyla writes that love begins when two people agree to pursue a common good. And love requires responsibility. It must grow from a love of attraction to a mature love of friendship. Marital love moves beyond simple friendship since the husband and wife give themselves completely to each other in the relationship of marriage. In Wojtyla's view, marriage is an institution structured in order to protect the profound gift they have offered each other by creating a lasting public union. Within marriage, Wojtyla writes, the self-gift of persons is uniquely expressed in the conjugal act.

The interior life of the person begins with the body Wojtyla says routinely in *Love and Responsibility* and his later book *The Acting Person*. The order of nature directs the body to procreation. In the former book, he says that the order of nature is the order of existence and procreation. Both here and in his articles defending *Humanae Vitae*, he argues that procreative responsibility and the love between spouses are ontologically aligned. He says that the power of the sexual urge can pass over into lust and the use of another person.

This moral theory does not correspond to the truth about man and his freedom. It contradicts the *Church's teachings on the unity of the human person*, whose rational soul is *per se et essentialiter* the form of his body. The spiritual and immortal soul is the principle of unity of the human being, whereby it exists as a whole – *corpora et anima unus* – as a person.... *The person, including the body, is completely entrusted to himself, and it is in the unity of body and soul that the person is the subject of his own moral acts.* The person, by the light of reason and the support of virtue, discovers in the body the anticipatory signs, the expression and the promise of the gift of self, in conformity with the wise plan of the Creator" (no. 48, original emphasis).

The pope continues, "*A doctrine which dissociates the moral act from the bodily dimensions of its exercise is contrary to the teaching of Scripture and Tradition.* Such a doctrine revives, in new forms, certain ancient errors which have always been opposed by the Church, inasmuch as they reduce the human person to a 'spiritual' and purely formal freedom. This reduction misunderstands the moral meaning of the body and of kinds of behavior involving it (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19).... In fact, *body and soul are inseparable*: in the person, in the willing agent and in the deliberate act *they stand or fall together*" (no. 49, original emphasis).

Finally, the John Paul concludes, "Only in reference to the human person in his 'unified totality,' that is, as a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit,' can the specifically human meaning of the body be grasped. Indeed, natural inclinations take on moral relevance only insofar as they refer to the human person and his authentic fulfillment, a fulfillment which for that matter can take place always and only in human nature. By rejecting all manipulations of corporeity which alter its human meaning, the Church serves man and shows him the path of true love, the only path on which he can find the true God" (no. 50).

Respecting the procreative potential of the sexual act protects the couple from using one another merely for pleasure. A central tenet of Wojtyla's view is that the objective purposes of marriage (among which is procreation) create in principle the possibility for love and exclude treating a person as a means. This is why he says that marital love must not only be sensual but must mature through the virtue of chastity, in which neither person is used as a means to an end. A chaste person respects the gift his spouse has made of herself, and he seeks to treat that gift responsibly in order to protect her dignity as a person.

Yet, in order for a person to be chaste, in order for a person to make a genuine gift of himself to another, he must be self-possessed and have integrity. For Wojtyla, this means that a person must be able to govern his own interior dynamisms, both his spiritual desires and his bodily urges. A man cannot give what he does not possess. A person without self-possession cannot give himself to another. This is one of the principle reasons why Wojtyla defends the ban on birth control. Contraception depersonalizes the conjugal act by introducing a scientific technique that eliminates procreative responsibility, thus endangering self-possession and engendering a tendency to use the other person as means for pleasure. Procreation need not be intended in every conjugal act, but the couple should have a consciousness that this act might lead to conception. And, Wojtyla said, this should be accepted with generosity. In his mind, this difficult truth about the connection between procreation and the personalist aspects of conjugal intercourse can be only truly understood by those who are in fact self-possessed and integrated. In his early defenses of *Humanae vitae*, he claimed that the conjugal act must communicate the meaning of self-gift and this is only possible when the act is obedient to nature.

I have interpreted *The Theology of the Body* in the light of this background. It seems to me that the basic elements of the spousal meaning of the body were generally worked out before Wojtyla wrote the manuscript which eventually became the catecheses he delivered. Specifically, he had already come to identify with the primacy of existence as a gift which manifests itself in the human person with a drive outward to others (and ultimately to God). He had already reacted against a facile understanding of the body-soul union, which he recognized in the birth control debates of the twentieth century. Wojtyla was opposed to any construal of the body and human nature as completely malleable by the person. In fact, he did not hold for such a strict separation between person and nature. Finally, he understood that self-mastery is necessary to maintain personal freedom in the face of natural dynamisms in the body that can lead one person to use another instead of making himself a gift to the other.

As I pointed out in chapter four, beginning in the 1970s, Wojtyla was increasingly convinced that traditional teleological metaphysics, while losing none of its value, was no longer effective in articulating these truths. Therefore, it is not surprising that in *The Theology of the Body* catecheses he asserts that, while his talks rely on a metaphysical foundation, he is more concerned to explore the subjective aspects of human experience. In these catechesis, which I surveyed in chapter five, John Paul combines a biblical and theological anthropology, based largely on the narratives found in the opening chapter of Genesis, with his phenomenological interest in human experience along with his conviction on the unity of the human composite.

The pope comments that Genesis reveals that men and women are in search of their own existence, the meaning of their being. Adam's differences from the animals were

immediately apparent to him, especially his bodily differences from them. This awareness brought Adam to the knowledge of his solitude in the world. Knowledge of self, in the pope's view, is concomitant with knowledge of the world. John Paul wants his audience to realize that the primal gift of being which every man and woman has received, while manifesting an original solitude with subhuman animals, is also a drive to communion—communion with others and communion with God. The leitmotif throughout *The Theology of the Body*, that the body expresses the person, is implicated in this tendency directed to the other. The complementarity of man and woman satisfies this tendency in a *communio personarum* that leads, or ought to lead, both persons to communion with God.

In the pope's view, the body has an attribute, a spousal meaning, that is inherent and ontological. Although he never explains precisely how the spousal meaning of the body is ontological, he does insist that this spousal meaning is grounded in the reality that all being is fundamentally a gift. Therefore, the human person is marked by the fact that his existence is a gift. And, in the pope's view, this means that in some way the human person is only truly himself when he abandons himself as a gift to another. In *The Theology of the Body*, the pope argues that men and women experience this spousal attribute of the body in a masculine or feminine way. Yet, he does also say that human identity as a somatically constituted is more important than sexual difference.

While the pope nowhere presents a succinct definition of the spousal meaning of the body, in chapter five, I highlighted several passages that offer an insight into what he means by the term. First, the spousal meaning of the body means that the body is able to express the love of one person for another, and is, therefore, necessary for the expression of the self-gift one person makes to another. This self-gift is the perfection and purpose of human

existence. Second, the spousal meaning of the body involves a recognition that the other person cannot be used as a means to an end since each person is created by God for his own sake. Finally, the spousal meaning of the body requires a freedom from sin in order to offer a gift of oneself to another.³ This final aspect is akin to John Paul's earlier insistence on self-possession and self-governance. In *The Theology of the Body*, self-possession is achieved not only by self-mastery but by the grace offered to mankind through the redemption of Jesus Christ.

Put simply, in the pope's worldview, the body is a sort of primordial sacrament. It makes the invisible person visible to the world. Man is created not to be dominated by his body but to express himself through his body. The pope writes that with original sin the body no longer expresses the person simply and easily. Concupiscence makes the body a locus of conflict for the person's interior life, and this is a threat to self-possession and integrity. After the fall, men and women no longer have an immediate experience of the spousal meaning of the body.

The introduction of concupiscence into the life of men and women means that sexual activity now easily becomes a means of domination: domination of the body and domination of another person. The spousal meaning of the body is not lost after sin, since it is inherent in the constitution of man's being and existence, but yet it must be re-constituted with great effort in the pope's view. The redemption of Christ figures into this reconstitution since in taking on a human body; Christ redeems not only the soul but also the body. As the pope saw it, the spousal meaning of the body after Christ's death and resurrection

³ I am grateful to William Mattison's succinct explanation of the spousal meaning of the body, which helped me formulate the summary of this paragraph. See William Mattison, "When they rise from the dead," 36.

incorporates a further redemptive meaning which now includes the interior reactions of the heart. The spousal meaning of the body is, in fact, perfected by the eschatological “virginal” meaning of the body as the person comes into complete union with God.

Nonetheless, in this life, marriage remains the pope’s primary analogue for explaining the spousal meaning of the body. He challenges couples to “re-read” the spousal meaning of body in their marriage. This to say, he asks them to learn the clear-cut meanings of human action, including the sexual act, and to communicate these meanings effectively to one another. The truth that is communicated in the conjugal act is the very same truth expressed in marital consent: a self-offering of one whole person (including the person’s fertility) to another. Precisely because the spousal meaning of the body communicates complete self-gift, the conjugal act is procreative and unitive.

In the final audience of *The Theology of the Body*, John Paul turns his attention explicitly to *Humane vitae*, which he said guided the catecheses all along. Here, he reaffirms the inseparability of the unitive and procreative end or meanings of the conjugal act. The inseparability is not based on psychological reflection for the holy father but on ontology—which, he says, always precedes subjective experience. He insists that the subjective dimension of the conjugal act cannot be understood apart from the ontological aspect. The ontological aspect is that the body expresses the gift of self, and a gift which naturally tends to new life. Couples who do not subjectively make this spousal meaning their own, who voluntarily separate the procreative from the unitive, render the conjugal act unsuitable to the dignity and being of the human person.

C. St. Thomas Aquinas

In the latter half of this dissertation, I wanted to identify themes in the *Summa theologiae* that seem indicate support for the spousal meaning of the body, even though St. Thomas Aquinas was writing in a very different historical milieu than Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II. The key principles in Aquinas's thought that I think support Wojtyla's spousal meaning are as follows.

First, Aquinas has a strong sense of created being's appetite for perfection. In his metaphysics, perfection is synonymous with actuality and the good. All created being seeks to be fully actualized, and this actualization requires an agent other than the being. This is true whether the agent in question is the Supreme Good (who is God), or other created agents who can actualize in particular respects other beings who are in potency in those same respects. This is true especially of the human person, who as a composite of body and soul, is actualized (and thus perfect) in some respects and imperfect in others. His imperfections are only actualized through virtuous activity or the agency of others. Every person finds fulfillment outside of himself, for example, in study, in work, and in relationships. In Aristotelian-Thomistic language: every agent acts for an end, for a good. For St. Thomas, love, in its most primal sense, is this movement of the appetite to the good.

The second relevant characteristic in Aquinas's thought is his stricthylomorphism. He is so adamant on the unity between body and soul that it he argues that even the intellect's speculative activity bears the legacy of the body's sense images (that is, phantasms) in its discursive reasoning. As I noted in chapters three and four, much of what Wojtyla's argument on the relationship of the body and the person seems borrowed from Aquinas, even if re-articulated. The body needs the soul to live, but yet the soul is a certain type of

form that cannot function without a body. The proper definition of man must, therefore, include the body as well as the soul. In Aquinas's view, the personhood of human beings is distinct from the personhood of God and angels in exactly this way: men and women are embodied.

Third, human love is distinguished from natural love or passionate love inasmuch as human beings are rational composite creatures. Human love requires that man's passions (his animal and material component) be subordinate to reason—an inherently difficult task after original sin when the harmony between man's interior life and his body was lost. By definition, love is the movement toward perfection. Men and women must find some perfection in each other. But for this love to be a truly human love, it must be characterized by its rational nature. Human love requires that man's passions (his animal and material component) be subordinate to reason—an inherently difficult task after original sin when the harmony between man's interior life and his body was lost.

When a person's love is motivated by concupiscence, Aquinas taught, he degrades his own dignity by loving the sensual dimension of his nature more than his rational dimension. He degrades the one he loves by directing the good of that person to the satisfaction of his own pleasure. Enflamed passion can not only distract reason but can, in fact, temporarily suspend reason's function. This is why Aquinas was generally suspicious of the sexual act. The vehemence of sexual pleasure temporarily suspends rational thought. Thus, he argued, sex must be properly moderated by reason *before* engaging in the sexual act itself.

The person who is habitually guided by reason in his actions is a virtuous person. The virtuous person loves rightly. Because he is prudent, the virtuous man understands

himself and reality. As a man of virtue, he never acts in extreme ways but always conforms his actions to reason. Because he is temperate, he delights in pleasure in an appropriate way and at appropriate times. If he is a man of faith and charity, then his friendship with God will further order all his other loves to the One who is the supreme Good.

Fourth, even though St. Thomas's strict hylomorphism and his indebtedness to Aristotelian biology forced him to assert the physical superiority of men to women, his settled position on marriage that it was a conjugal relationship of the highest friendship. In spite of their sexual differences, however, even though the husband is the head of the family, there is a certain equality between husband and wife—a domestic justice that exists between the two. The Angelic Doctor seems to go out of his way to show that women are not without physical, intellectual, and spiritual means to transcend any biological inferiority. This equality between the two is why Aquinas says monogamy and indissolubility are necessary aspects of marriage. St. Thomas believed that living marriage in any other way than as a monogamous indissoluble relationship would effectively reduce wives to a position of inequality and servility to their husbands.

Additionally, in St. Thomas's view, the husband and the wife give to each other a certain authority over their bodies in the exchange of marital consent. This marital debt each owes to the other means that each can request the conjugal act from the other (although Aquinas says that there are differences between them in how the request is made). In fact, St. Thomas provides several parameters for the asking and the payment of this debt to prevent the spouses from lusting after each other (although he only mentions the possibility of the husband lusting after his wife).

Following St. Augustine, St. Thomas identified the three goods of marriage: procreation (and education) of offspring, fidelity, and the sacrament of matrimony. Unlike Augustine however, Aquinas believed that these goods properly order not only marriage to reason but they also order the conjugal act to reason. When the conjugal act is ordered to these three goods, the pleasure experienced by the act is good, even if that pleasure overpowers reason in the midst of intercourse.⁴ In St. Thomas's view, when the conjugal act is ordered to the procreation and education of offspring for the greater glory of God, it is positively meritorious. Or if the marital debt is rendered as an act of justice to the spouse who requests it, it is virtuous.

Finally, the formal element of marriage, Aquinas once wrote, is the union of souls. I have argued that because man is a body-soul composite, this formal element (the soul) must be united to the material element (the body). Borrowing an insight from Paul Gondreau, I argued in chapter eight, that just as the body and soul cannot be separated in this life neither can the formal and material elements of marriage. The formal element of marriage, the union of souls, cannot be separated from the material element of marriage, which is the body and its procreative potential.

There are limitations to Aquinas's sexual ethic which I highlighted in my exegesis. The two most often cited examples of these limitations are his treatment of women as misbegotten males and his insistence that sexual sins *contra naturam* (such as masturbation and

⁴ St. Augustine, on the other hand, did not see any good that could come from the pleasures of sex. In his opinion, the distraction of sexual pleasure was necessary only for the procreation of children within marriage. He believed that procreation was no longer necessary after the Paschal Mystery of Christ, and so he taught that only those who could not be continent should get married. Still, if a married couple advances spiritually to continence after marriage, all the better for that couple. See Augustine, *De bono et coniugali*, cap. 6, 10-11, 24.

homosexuality) are graver than the sin of rape.⁵ The former may be attributed to a historically conditioned mentality and an insufficient understanding of biology. Regarding the latter, however, I agree with John Grabowski that Aquinas's deficiency "is not necessarily the result of physicalist thinking... but may well be the result of a failure to fully appreciate the import of the personal values at stake within sexual intimacy."⁶

Yet, the emphasis Aquinas places on the marital debt as an expression of conjugal fidelity along with his appreciation of sexual pleasure and his admission that not every conjugal act is procreative suggests that he was struggling to develop a richer understanding of conjugal intercourse than the one he had inherited. It is in these areas that I see the principles necessary to develop a Thomistic spousal meaning of the body. In my view, his limitations in developing a personalist reading of sexual intimacy to complement his sexual ethic and his understanding of marriage are strictly the result of his historical and cultural milieu. I believe that Karol Wojtyła, in a decidedly different historical setting, resolves many of the deficiencies in Aquinas's presentation.

II. Conclusion and Critique

In this study, I have argued that elements of John Paul's spousal meaning of the body can be found in the mature thought of St. Thomas Aquinas found in the *Summa theologiae*. To accomplish this, I have read *The Theology of the Body* as a step in the twentieth century debate on marriage and contraception. A principal element of that debate, I have

⁵ Although, as I noted in chapter seven, sins *contra naturam* are also sins against God, the Creator of Nature. Furthermore, Aquinas makes this distinction in the treatise on lust. These sins' gravity are weighed only in reference to the vice of lust, not that of injustice. From the perspective of justice, rape is much more grave than masturbation.

⁶ Grabowski, *Sex and Virtue*, 81.

suggested, is the relationship between the category of personhood and the category of human nature. I have also shown that early in his academic career, Wojtyla recognized the deficiency of purely academic or speculative theology in reaching the faithful. In some ways, his entire life was devoted to the task of connecting the speculative and the practical, the dogmatic and the experiential, the objective and the subjective. *The Theology of the Body* was by no means the pinnacle of his life's work since he would serve as pope for another twenty-one years after the last catechesis. Nonetheless, it represents a remarkable project of defending, and perhaps rearticulating, Church's sexual ethic.

This background helps to explain why the pope never explicitly explains the ontological foundation which he presumes in *The Theology of the Body*. When he studied for the priesthood, Wojtyla had the benefit of a basic scholastic education, common at the time, in which he learned Thomistic metaphysics (although he later admitted how difficult the subject was for him). His early academic work indicates a thorough assimilation of Thomistic categories. Yet, by the time he penned the manuscript for the book that eventually became the catechetical audiences of *The Theology of the Body*, he was convinced that a more experiential and phenomenological approach would be more effective in articulating the norms of sexual morality.

Nevertheless, he did not abandon his own background. But there is a real possibility that at least some, if not many, readers of these catecheses do not have the benefit of the same scholastic education in metaphysics which John Paul received and which he presumed in his work. Without an ontological foundation supporting the anthropology John Paul presents, it is easy to miss the fact that he is not simply speaking metaphorically or lyrically. He is not romanticizing the body or marriage.

St. Thomas's hylemorphic theory gives philosophical credence to what in *The Theology of the Body* is primarily a biblical anthropology. That the spousal meaning of the body entails an intrinsic urge to the other and the freedom to love the other rightly is compatible with Aquinas's worldview is evident from the following points. First, like Wojtyla, Aquinas holds for a strict unity between body and soul. The human person is not constituted by either principle alone but by both. Second, Aquinas agrees that all created being is inherently driven out of itself in search of complete perfection. Third, this movement, called love, must be properly ordered, and this ordering is the chief characteristic of virtue. Without virtue, in St. Thomas's moral theory, man dissipates into a creature pursuing disparate ends with no guidance from reason.

Fourth, marriage, as the highest form of friendship entails a free exchange of consent, which includes the voluntary offering of one's body to the other. Finally, because of the hylemorphic unity of the human person, the conjugal act involves not only a biological aspect (procreation) but also a personalist aspect (paying the marital debt, fidelity, and education of offspring). The fact that Aquinas, like Augustine, routinely includes the education of offspring with procreation as the primary end of marriage and advocates a teleological importance for sexual pleasure (reasonably enjoyed) suggests that he himself was not entirely convinced that biological necessity (procreation) was the only use for the conjugal act. Indeed, paying the marital debt as an expression of fidelity is another good use of the act in Aquinas's view.

However, it is my considered opinion that there are weaknesses in both Aquinas's presentation and in *The Theology of the Body*. Aquinas did not offer a view of the experience of human consciousness or a full explanation of human personhood (even though he did offer

a modified version of Boethius' definition of the person). Consciousness and human personhood did not become issues of concern until the modern period. Similarly, St. Thomas did not provide a detailed view of the conjugal act as an expression of the fidelity and unity between spouses. But the fact that he asserted that either an intention to procreate or to pay the marital debt was sufficient to avoid sin in marital sex suggests that he would be open to the idea.

Karol Wojtyla's anthropology, especially what he presented in *The Theology of the Body* catecheses, can serve to correct these deficiencies in Aquinas's thought. His focus on human consciousness and the human person as subject has brought greater clarity to theological discourse, especially surrounding sexual ethics. Moreover, in a post-Cartesian modernity, his insistence on the importance of the body offers a holistic view of men and women and their relationship with one another. Yet, as he says throughout his corpus, the objectivity of the body is itself necessary but insufficient to understand the uniqueness or originality of every human person. The biblical anthropology he offers moves beyond but without rejecting the anthropology of Aquinas.⁷

⁷ The focus of this dissertation has been the pre-pontifical published work of Karol Wojtyla leading up to *The Theology of the Body*. In this period of his life, Wojtyla was less concerned about the differing roles of men and women in the family, in the Church, and in the world. However, the anthropology of *The Theology of the Body*, which sees the human person's uniqueness going deeper than his somatic constitution, is present in his apostolic letter on the dignity of women (*Mulieris dignitatem*). In that letter he expands his argument that men and women are called to a *communio personarum* by explicitly connecting their communion and relationship with each other with the communion of the Divine Persons in the Holy Trinity. See, for example, John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris dignitatem* (August 15, 1988), nos. 7-10. Here, John Paul further elaborates his anthropology by incorporating the Trinitarian dynamism of truth and love within the communion of the Divine Persons. He is able then to highlight the vocations unique to men and women (who make their own self-gift to each other and to God) without a dependence on the physical differences between them.

John Grabowski has indicated his preference for John Paul's anthropology "from above" rather than the standard scholastic anthropology "from below," which begins with the physical differences between the sexes as its starting point. He has identified the weaknesses of an anthropology from below, especially with its attempt "to derive ontological qualities of the sexes from the complementary roles of the sexes in intercourse" (John S. Grabowski, "Mutual Submission," 501n30). His concern is that by starting from below, this anthropology can result in a "meta-physicalism" and resembles flawed Aristotelian biology more than

Given the importance the body has for both thinkers, the role of sexual difference can and should be further developed in their thought. Aquinas, on the one hand, follows through with the logical conclusions of his hylomorphism but he was limited by the scientific conclusions he inherited from Aristotle. In *The Theology of the Body*, on the other hand, the pope asserts that the spousal meaning of the body is differently experienced by men and women but yet he also insists that the fact that they are somatically constituted is more important than that they are male and female. *The Theology of the Body* could have been strengthened had the pope further explored exactly how the spousal meaning of the body differs for men and women.

While it can be argued that Aquinas was prejudicial or mistaken in the roles he assigned mothers and fathers in the family, it is certainly true that he was interested in articulating the structures a family needs for its survival and the propagation and education of children. Since John Paul does not spend time explaining the differences between men and women adequately in *The Theology of the Body*, he does not spend time addressing the

contemporary science (ibid.). I agree with these concerns, as I mentioned in both chapter six and chapter eight of this dissertation.

However, an anthropology “from above” also has limitations. Chief among these limitations is the fact that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God but yet are embodied persons (unlike the Divine Persons or angelic persons). Without reference to the sexual aspect of the communion of husband and wife, there is little to differentiate the self-gift they make to each other from the gift of mother to child, or priest to Church. I am convinced John Paul intended to speak analogously about the similarities of the Divine *communio personarum* and the human *communio personarum*. He says as much: “*The image and likeness of God in man, created as man and woman (in the analogy that can be presumed between Creator and creature)*” (*Mulieris dignitatem*, no. 7 [original emphasis]). Later, he writes: “For biblical Revelation says that, while man’s ‘likeness’ to God is true, the ‘non-likeness’ which separates the whole of creation from the Creator is *still more essentially true*” (ibid., no. 8 [original emphasis]). The insistence upon analogy does not lessen the importance of John Paul’s conclusions. It confirms that faith moves beyond reason. John Paul insists on this point when he speaks about the relationship of men and women as the *communio personarum* (See ibid., no. 7). By calling the reader’s attention to theological analogy, I want simply to highlight the differences between human persons and Divine Persons.

I would argue for an anthropology that is both from below and from above. Somatic sexual difference is, after all, from God just as much as the call the *communio personarum*. An anthropology from above raises the dignity of the human body and sexual difference by clarifying their true purpose in the light of faith. Without an element from below, an anthropology from above runs the risk of reducing the body’s participation in that *communio personarum* which characterizes humanity, and especially, marriage. Yet without the witness of faith, an anthropology from below can easily fall into sexual prejudice and gender stereotyping.

structure of the family. Although he discusses procreation and parenthood as manifestations of the spousal meaning of the body, he never discusses children, their role in the family, and the parents' obligations to them.⁸ Reading *The Theology of the Body* in line with the tradition that came before it, especially on this point, can bring clarity to the pope's articulation of the spousal meaning of the body as the gift of self, manifest in marriage especially in the conjugal act, but not exclusively so.

III. Further Questions

The size and scope of this study necessitated that I treat some topics as briefly as possible to make my argument. Of course, exegesis of any point in St. Thomas Aquinas's thought can in itself be massive study. In this dissertation, I attempted to be thorough in my citations but I limited by exegesis to those points that were most necessary for the argument I was making without ignoring those passages of the *Summa theologiae* that are frequently disputed. A more thorough study, for example, might explore more deeply the role of the body in Aquinas's epistemology. A question this study might answer is exactly how Aquinas understands the imagination: dependent as it is on the body but nonetheless used by the intellect in speculative thought.

Additionally, there are some questions that the research of this study raises which are worthy of further pursuit. First, when Aquinas defines marriage as *maxima amicitiae* he borrows passages from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. I reported in chapter eight that Aristotle held that while marriage is naturally a friendship of utility centered on the common

⁸ In his later pontifical writings, however, the family and children will be more prominent in his writings. See, for example, John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, nos. 18-19; John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, nos. 13-14.

activity of child rearing, it could mature to a perfect friendship of goodwill if the persons are decent and virtuous. But what about the marriages of all those couples who are not yet virtuous and who in today's society may have no impetus or encouragement to grow in virtue? Since Aquinas says that marriage is *maxima amicitiae*, does he presume that all married couples are virtuous? Or is he presuming that, by grace, all Christian couples are virtuous and so experience marriage as highest friendship?

Another fascinating topic of study would be the role that the incarnation of Christ plays for the growth of virtue in the human person. Certainly, the incarnation and paschal mystery of Christ is the catalyst for the grace of infused virtue, but John Paul connects a redemptive meaning of the body to the spousal meaning of the body. Would Aquinas agree? What do the passions of Christ's humanity teach us about our passions?

Finally, further study in the pope's sexual anthropology and its relationship to the metaphysics of Aquinas is warranted. In his early academic career, Wojtyla was more focused on emphasizing St. Thomas's thought as he looked for a way to connect faith and doctrine to lived experience. I have argued that in the 1970s he made a much more intentional shift to phenomenology because he did not think that teleology was effective in articulating Christian moral norms. Is his phenomenology simply a matter of "window-dressing" traditional teleological arguments or was he truly attempting to offer a new philosophical *ratio* for Christian morality?

It is arguable that at least initially he was not sure of his own project. I noted in the third chapter of this dissertation that during the 1970 colloquium at the University of Cracow on *The Acting Person*, Wojtyla flatly stated that he was not trying to combine Thomism with phenomenology. Indeed, he thought such a combination was impossible.

Yet, in the introduction to the 1979 English edition of *The Acting Person*, a translation which I also noted has been criticized for rendering explicitly Thomistic terms and concepts in incomprehensible ways, he writes that this is exactly what he was trying to do: combine phenomenology with Thomism. Whether that project can be successful remains to be seen.

What is true is that *The Theology of the Body* is extraordinarily popular especially in the catechetical and parochial settings. Yet, it is my belief that these catecheses must be interpreted according to their own genesis, which was a manuscript furthering the conversation on questions of marriage and contraception. In this light, they should be read in continuity rather than in isolation from Wojtyla's earlier work. I believe this hermeneutic would take readers and commentators back to the anthropology and metaphysics offered by St. Thomas Aquinas in which Wojtyla was trained.

It has been over thirty years since Pope John Paul II began delivering in his Wednesday audiences the material that became known as *The Theology of the Body*. With the passage of time, perhaps the salient insights the pope articulated in that work will increasingly be the subject of academic dialogue and scrutiny, especially through the lens of the theological tradition preceding Wojtyla. In that way, the pope's work will be strengthened and refined for generations yet to come. My hope is that study will contribute to that important work.

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