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Navigating Between Naturalism and Idealism in the Spirit of *Veritatis Splendor*[1]

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"What good is the poet in barren times?" (Friedrich Hölderlin)[2]

In an encyclical whose purpose is "to reflect on the whole of the church's moral teaching, with the precise goal of recalling certain fundamental truths of Catholic doctrine which, in the present circumstances, risk being distorted or denied,"[3] one would expect—in keeping with tradition—that emphasis would be upon the "good [that] is to be done and pursued and [the] evil [that is] to be avoid."[4] What is particularly surprising in the approach of Pope John Paul II, then, is his focus upon truth and beauty, as the very name of the encyclical implies: *Veritatis Splendor*.[5]

"Why is the 'splendour of truth' so important?" John Paul II asks within the context of his 1994 Letter to Families.

> First of all, by way of contrast: the development of contemporary civilization is linked to a scientific and technological progress which is often achieved in a one-sided way, and thus appears purely positivistic. Postivisim, as we know, results in agnosticism in theory and utilitarianism in practice and in ethics. In our own day, history is in a way repeating itself. Utilitarianism is a civilization of production and of use, a civilization of "things" and not of "persons", a civilization in which persons are use in the same way as things are used. In the context of a civilization of use, woman can become an object for man, children a hindrance to parents, the family an institution obstructing the freedom of its members.[6]

Or, as the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar prophetically describes this utilitarian world, it is "a world without women, without children, without reverence for the form of love in poverty and humility, a world in which everything is viewed solely in terms of power or profit-margin, in which everything that is disinterested and gratuitous and useless is despised, persecuted, and wiped out, and even art is forced to wear the mask and the features of technique."[7]

What Balthasar herein recognizes as the consequence of the separation of nature and grace (or of divine and human causality), at least within the confines of much of contemporary thought, might also be formulated in terms of the typically modern conflict

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[1] Also published in *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 11, No. 4 (2013): 1249–86.
[2] "… wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit" (From "Brot und Wein")
[3] John Paul II, Encyclical letter on "the Splendor of Truth," *Veritatis Splendor* (August 6, 1993), no. 4.
[4] St. Thomas Aquinas, ST I-II, q. 94, a. 2.
[5] See *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 51, where John Paul II teaches that "to perfect himself in his specific order," the human person must not only "do good and avoid evil," but he must also "seek truth, practice good and contemplate beauty."
[6] John Paul II, Gratissimam Sane (2 February, 1994), no. 13.
[7] Hans Urs von Balthasar, Love Alone is Credible, translated by David C. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 142.

between human freedom and natural necessity.[8] Such is also the origin of the modern idea of selfhood, resulting, as Louis Dupré observes, "either in a naturalist or in an idealist conception of the person."[9]

> Both sides […] found it hard to preserve genuine otherness. A self-reduced to a meaning-giving function—a mere subject—loses its personal identity and, as a result, is no longer able to recognize the identity of the other. […] Likewise, if the self is merely a substance [in a Cartesian sense] albeit it a distinct one, it becomes absorbed within an objective totality that admits no real otherness.[10]

Hence, as Kenneth Schmitz summaries, otherness is understood either "in terms of conflict (dialectics) or equivocity (deconstruction)."[11] In the second sense, "The lonely man of today meets in the 'thou' only himself; he is," Balthasar observes, "more narcissistic than ever before in the history of mankind."[12]

A way beyond this impasse—that of "the sharp subject-object division characteristic of modern philosophical anthropology"—is, Dupré suggests, recourse to the ideas of beauty and harmony: ideas which "do not allow themselves to be explained in either of those terms, even though aesthetic theories kept hesitating between the two, leaning at first more to the objective and later to the subjective side."[13] As for Blessed John Paul II, he follows the example of Christ in his dialogue with the rich young man (cf. Mt 19:16) by making "an appeal to the absolute good which attracts us and beckons us" as the "echo of a call from God, who is the origin and goal of man's life."[14] As such, it is also an appeal to human freedom, insofar as it is understood—in the classic (pre-modern) sense—as "rooted in the soul's spontaneous inclinations to the true and the good,"[15] whence also his appeal to beauty: the shining forth (splendour) of the truth so that it might be savoured by the senses of sight and sound.[16]

In the profound words of Hans Urs von Balthasar,

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[8] This modern tension between nature and freedom is fittingly portrayed by Michael Allen Gillespie in terms of the conflict between Thomas Hobbes and René Descartes, whom Gillespie presents as "prototypical modern thinkers" (The Theological Origins of Modernity [Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2008], 262).

[9] Louis Dupré, The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture (New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 2004), 76-77.

[10] Ibid., 76. See also idem, The Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 118-19. "The conceptual apparatus of modern thought, including much theology," Dupré argues elsewhere, "has come to rest on the assumption that the subject-object opposition must be recognized as an ultimate" (idem, Metaphysics and Culture, The Aquinas Lecture, 1994 [Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994], 57).

[11] Kenneth Schmitz, "Created Receptivity and the Philosophy of the Concrete," The Thomist 61, no. 3 (1997), 339-71, here 361.

[12] Hans Urs von Balthasar, The God Question and Modern Man, with foreword by John Macquarrie, translated by Hilda Graef (New York: Seabury Press, 1967), 106.

[13] Louis Dupré, The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture, 76.

[14] *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 7.

[15] Servais Pinckaers, The Sources of Christian Ethics, translated by Mary Thomas Noble from the third edition (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 333. "For St. Thomas," Pinckaers explains, "the natural inclinations to goodness, happiness, being and truth were the very source of freedom. They formed the will and intellect, whose union produced free will." (ibid., 245).

[16] See, for example, ST I, q. 5, a. 4, ad. 1.

"The form as it appears to us is beautiful only because the delight that it arouses in us is founded upon the fact that, in it, the truth and goodness of the depths of reality itself are manifested and bestowed. […] The appearance of the form, as revelation of the depths, is an indissoluble union of two things. It is the real presence of the depths, of the whole of reality, and it is a real pointing beyond itself to these depths. […] We "behold" the form; but, if we really behold it, it is not as a detached form, rather in its unit with the depths that make their appearance in it. We see form as the splendour, as the glory of Being. We are "enraptured" by our contemplation of these depths and are "transported" to them."[17]

What is thus proposed for our appropriation by *Veritatis Splendor* is a profoundly realist (or creational) perspective: one which affirms the goodness—and thus also the beauty—of things in themselves, and not simply from the perspective of the human subject, as goes the expression: beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. This, of course, is also a metaphysical perspective—one that literally goes surpasses the physical dimension—but one which nonetheless implies that truth might be perceived—even touched and heard—by the knowing subject, whence also John Paul II's recourse at times to phenomenology, but a phenomenology based upon what he calls in one of his previous encyclicals a "contemplative outlook." This, more specifically, is an outlook that arises from faith in the God of life, who has created every individual as a "wonder" (cf. Ps 139:14). It is the outlook of those who see life in its deeper meaning, who grasp its utter gratuitousness, its beauty and its invitation to freedom and responsibility. It is the outlook of those who do not presume to take possession of reality but instead accept it as a gift, discovering in all things the reflection of the Creator and seeing in every person his living image (cf. Gen 1:27; Ps 8:5).[18]

In short, we are invited—within the specific context of his more recent encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor*—to uphold the "essential bond between Truth, the Good and Freedom,"[19] and to correct the current tendency of "detaching human freedom from its essential and constitutive relationship to truth"[20]—by recognizing and affirming a world that is simply given at the outset. Ours, John Paul II suggests, is a world which is bestowed as both a fact (*datum*) and a gift (*donum*): a world which, precisely as created, includes us and our freedom, but which is not simply or necessarily subject to us and our freedom; a world which is composed of relations and relationships that are given, but given in such a way as to be wilfully appropriated and fostered by human action: a world which beckons us "to see" and to affirm. After all, to contemplate, as the German philosopher Josef Pieper fittingly describes it, "means first of all to see—and not to think!"[21]

From this perspective, the claim to truth supposes what Aquinas call the "conformity" (*conformitas*) or "equation" (*adequatio*)[22]—or what the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von

[17] Hans Urs von Balthasar, The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, I: Seeing the Form, translated by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis and edited by Joseph Fessio and John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982, 1989), 118, 119. See also ibid., 19-20; and Louis Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 18.
[18] John Paul II, Encyclical on the Gospel of Life, Evangelium Vitae (March 25, 1995), no. 83.
[19] Cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 84.
[20] Ibid., no. 4.
[21] Josef Pieper, Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation, translated by Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 73.
[22] "True expresses the correspondence of being to the knowing power, for all knowing is produced by an assimilation of the knower to the thing known, so that assimilation is said to be the cause of knowledge. […] The first reference of being to the intellect, therefore, consists in its agreement with the intellect. This agreement is called 'the conformity of thing and intellect.' In this conformity is fulfilled the formal constituent of the true." (De Veritate I, 1: "Convenientiam vero entis ad intellectum exprimit hoc nomen verum. Omnis autem cognitio perficitur per assimilationem cognoscentis ad rem cognitam, ita quod assimilation dicta est causa cognitionis

Balthasar calls "attunement" (*Einstimmung*)[23]—of our subjective consciousness (perception or conviction) to objective reality, of our mental and emotional states to the world that God has created, so as to act accordingly: to "assimilate" the truth, as John Paul II, puts it.[24] Or, to put it in other words, truth and goodness imply the meeting of gifts: God's goodness calling forth from human hearts the response of receptive willingness to acknowledge the world and ourselves as a gift that is not of our making, so as in turn to discern God's project for the world and our lives and to act accordingly. As Balthasar reasons, "a person who contemplates a great work of art has to have a gift – whether inborn or acquired through training – to be able to perceive and assess its beauty, to distinguish it from mediocre art or kitsch."[25]

Similarly, or analogically, the human person is given to participate in God's governance of the world precisely by means of his or her spiritual nature – consisting of intellect and will – wherein also consists his or her likeness to God and whereby he or she is capable of discerning God's purpose for the world and for him- or herself in the world. Far from denying either the human person's place within (rather than beyond or above) this world or his bodily being, which is constitutive of our nature as such (i.e. as human), this perspective thus requires that we be incarnated in the body and in the world. At the same time, it is a perspective which calls upon the natural aspirations of the human heart to rise, in ecstasy, above the limits of its own self towards that which is nonetheless proper to itself: the realization of the self within a communion of persons. As such, it is also an appeal to love: not as a projection of its self or its own desires upon the beloved, but as a profound affirmation of the beloved's own goodness and beauty, radiating forth from his or her interior depths.

In this article, I propose to apply these insights to the specific problematic of modern feminism, which arose, I will argue in part one, out of women's rightful opposition to what I refer to as "the man-made woman": a combination—in keeping with Dupré's categories referred to above—of a naturalist, a dialectical, and an idealist conception (more in the Platonic than the Enlightenment sense) of woman. Such, is also, I will argue in this first part, the origin of the feminist refusal of the body, as "man" sees and manipulates it, but also as woman herself (that is to say, the feminist) sees it: namely as a means to oppression. In part two, I will present the modern conflict, so exemplary in the history of feminism, between nature and freedom and the consequential attempt of our contemporaries to re-make the human body. In part three, with the help of the distinction between what Karol Wojtyla calls the natural and the biological orders, I will present the positive challenge to adopt his "contemplative outlook" – upon the world and upon our body-selves. This, more specifically, I will argue in part four, is a regard which we might take as an invitation to "get out of our heads," or to transcend the influence of modernity, much of which attempts to transcend the God-given world of creation within, ironically enough, the immanence of the finite human mind.[26] In part five, I will argue that the consideration of the God-given value, or meaning, of

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[…] Prima ergo comparatio entis ad intellectum est ut ens intellectui correspndeat: quae quidem correspondentia, adaequatio rei et intellectus dicitur; et in hoc formaliter ratio veri perficitur.") Marietti edition. English translation by Robert Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952). See also ST I, q. 16, a. 1; and Yves Floucat, La vérité selon saint Thomas d'Aquin. Le réalisme de la connaissance (Paris: Téqui, 2009).

[23] See, for example, The Glory of the Lord I, 241ff.

[24] See *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 52.

[25] Hans Urs von Balthasar, Love Alone is Credible, 75.

[26] This is not to deny that the human soul is, as Aristotle taught, in some sense all things, nor that the human person is, according to the formulation of St. Augustine of Hippo (cf. De Trinitate, XIV, 8): "capax Dei," capable of [the infinite] God, because capable of grace (cf. ST I-II, q. 113, a. 10 / De Veritate 22, 2, ad. 5). Nor still would we object to the teaching of Aquinas, according to which "it must be absolutely granted that the blessed see the essence of God" (ST I, q. 12, a. 1: "simpliciter concedendum est quod beati Dei essentiam

womanhood sets us before a mystery of the self destined to communion. Herein, more specifically, we might discover both the destiny and the vocation to love and communion, as are inscribed within our bodies, but also within our souls: by, that is to say, our natural intrinsic orientation to truth and goodness, which we might analogically compare to the beautiful. From this perspective of the world as created by an all-loving and all-powerful God, human sexuality, I will reiterate, has a profoundly metaphysical value: one that literally transcends (meta) the physical. It is, in fact, the specifically spiritual nature of human persons – not withstanding the real fecundity of our bodies – which enables us to be co-creators with our God: artists by way of our attunement to the Creator's mind and purpose. Something of this mystery of attunement might be explained, as we will see in part six, by the manner in which a human lover invites his beloved to "live up" to the image that he guards of her in his heart. Similarly, or analogically, we will argue, in concluding, that the Christian is invited by the loving regard of God, in his incarnate Son, to become who she or he is: the image and likeness of God.

I. Feminist Opposition to the Man-Made Woman and the Subsequent Refusal of the Body as Given

In order to better appreciate this creational perspective – which, as I mentioned will be treated more thoroughly in the third and concluding parts of this conference – we might first take a quick survey of feminist thought which often stands not only in contrast, but even in direct opposition to this perspective. This, I suggest we might do by turning to an ancient Greek legend, describing the delightful wonder of a young child who patiently observes a sculptor chiselling at a marble block. Eventually there emerges—after many months of persistent hard labour—a beautiful white horse. Upon perceiving the horse for the first time, the delighted child cries out to the sculptor with respectful awe: "How did you know that there was a horse in that stone?"

We smile at the simplicity of the child who thinks that the artist's work consists of setting free, as it were, the trapped horse. Yet many early feminists rightfully conceived of their work in precisely these terms: that of allowing woman (exemplified by the horse) to give expression to the fullness of her natural attributes which had been imprisoned, as it were, by social constraints prohibiting her from actualizing her God-given freedom in such a way as to realize herself and her destiny; whence the liberating work of freeing the horse from the heavy block of marble. For these early feminists, the block of marble might thus be interpreted as social expectations that not only weighed her down, but also subjected her to man's vision of herself: a vision which all too often, as not only the well-known French feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir,[27] but also Sr. Prudence Allen,[28] Thomas Laqueur,[29] and Sylviane

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videant"). However, it is also important to admit that: "The faculty of seeing God […] does not belong to the created intellect naturally, but is given to it by the light of glory, which establishes the intellect in a kind of deiformity." (ibid., a. 6:"Facultas autem videndi Deum non competit intellectui creato secundum suam naturam, sed per lumen gloriae, quod intellectum in quadam deiformitate constituit").

[27] See Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, translated and edited by H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1989. (Le deuxième sexe I: Les faits et les mythes; II: L'expérience vécue (Paris: Gallimard, 1949, 1976). Beauvoir's position will be exposed below.

[28] See Prudence Allen, RSM, The Concept of Woman, I: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 BC-AD 1250 (Grand Rapids, MI /Cambridge, UK: Eerdmanns, 1997); idem, The Concept of Woman II: The Early Humanist Reform, 1250-1500 (Grand Rapids, MI / Cambridge, UK: Eerdmanns, 2002); and Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Ethical Equality in a New Feminism," in Women in Christ: Towards a New Feminism, edited by Michele M. Schumacher (Grand Rapids, MI / Cambridge, UK: Eerdmanns, 2004), 285-296.

[29] "I return again and again in this book to a problematic, unstable female body that is either a version of or wholly different from a generally unproblematic, stable male body. As feminist scholars have made abundantly

Agacinski[30] and many others have very aptly argued, was merely a projection of man's own identity as normative upon her or, at best, a projection of his own interests upon her; whence the emphasis upon her roles as his mistress or as the mother of his descendants and not as a person in her own right.[31]

To be sure, the notion of woman was historically viewed as a co-relative term, which is not to admit that it merely corresponds to our ever-changing mental states and not to anything in the real world. Rather, by this designation I mean to point to the fact that we understand the meaning of the word woman (like the reality that it signifies) in terms of its (her) relation to another term (corresponding to another reality or being), namely man. Man, in contrast, is both a generic term for all that is human (so as to include the concept of woman) and a gendered term (specifying the male sex). "The masculine is a 'gender' which is defined less by its relation to the feminine [in much of the history of philosophy] than by the capacity to rise above sexual duality," Sylviane Agacinski explains. "The masculine, like genus, is not in a relation of lateral opposition, if you will, to the feminine […] but in the position of a foundation: he is to the feminine that which the pure is to the impure, the primary to the second, the good to the evil, the original to the derived."[32]

This, in other words, is a profoundly androcentric account of sexual differentiation: "It is always the woman who differs from the man in the classic anthropological discourse, whether philosophical or theological," Agacinski continues, "whereas the feminine is subordinate to the masculine. The woman differs from the man; never the inverse, as if the masculine point of view was neutral, that of the universal human genus (genre), whereas the feminine would be 'gender' ('genre') different from genus (genre), always a little degenerate, derived, exotic, failing, particular, minor."[33]

This distinction between the very broad concept of man and the necessarily restraint meaning of woman is perhaps the point at which much of the difficulty in gender theory – or better said, the "ideology"[34] of gender – begins. For unlike the concept of man, which is

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clear, it is always woman's sexuality that is being constituted; woman is the empty category. Woman alone seems to have 'gender' since the category itself is defined as that aspect of social relations based on difference between sexes in which the standard has always been man." (Thomas Laqueur, The Making of Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud [Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press,1990], 22).

[30] See Sylviane Agacinski, Métaphysique des sexes. Masculin / Féminin aux sources du christianisme (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2005). Agaskinski's position will be exposed below.

[31] Sylviane Agacinski contrast's Beauvoir's theory according to which a woman's fecundity "constitutes a natural inferiority and a handicap" with that of Françoise Hériter, who recognizes in the traditional hierarchy of the sexes the effect of men's attempt to control reproduction. One might in fact, Agacinski reasons, imagine that "a man's uncertainty about his own paternity, as well as his incapacity to fully master the process of conception, constitute a handicap for him, inciting him to appropriate one or more women so as to be assured of descendants." (Ibid., 83). Agacinski holds to the second of these hypotheses as more probable.

[32] Ibid., 8. See also Michele M. Schumacher, "The 'Nature' of Nature in Feminism: From Dualism to Unity" in idem (ed.), Women in Christ: Towards a New Feminism (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI, 2004), 17-51.

[33] Ibid., 9.

[34] It is not without good reason, as shall become increasingly apparent, that Élizabeth Montfort prefers to speak of the "ideology of gender" than "the theory of gender." In using the term "theory," its proponents would have us believe that it is an already validated scientific hypothesis, when in fact it is only "an opinion at best an opinion, an ideology at worst." (Élizabeth Montfort, Le genre démasqué. Homme ou femme ? Le choix impossible [Valence: Éditions Peuple Libre, 2011], 15). Marguerite Peeters, on the other hand, argues that gender is "not an ideology in the proper sense of the term," since the word "evokes systems of thought linked to Western modernity," and gender is, she insists, "a postmodern phenomenon." (Marguerite A. Peeters, "Gender: An Anthropological Deconstruction and a Challenge for Faith" in Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Woman and

linguistically and philosophically associated with all that is human, that of women is one which can never be hidden in the general. Woman is always specified by her sex; whence the problematic encounter that much of modernity sought to avoid: the confrontation between the general and the specific (or the particular and the universal), a confrontation which inevitably challenges the modern idea of the human being as self-creating, and which, as John Paul II explains in *Veritatis Splendor*, obscures "the perception of the universality of the moral law on the part of reason."[35] Here, in other words, we are confronted with the idea that there is something necessary about being a woman: something that is determined at the outset and not accorded to her in virtue of her own freedom.

At the same time, the specificity of the concept of woman sets man before another being who is not simply a projection of himself or of his idea of the world; whence man's presentation of woman as "Other." As Simone de Beauvoir, would have it in her now classic argument: "She [woman] is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other."[36]

Certainly, feminists had good reason to argue against this reductionist vision of woman – a vision making of her the exception to the masculine rule and not a person in her own right – but they did not always respond in such a way as to protect women's best interests: her interests qua woman. In view of obtaining a place in a man's world, they all too often simply played by his rules, as Elisabeth Badinter[37] approvingly remarks and Gertrude von le Fort, disapprovingly.[38] They adapted man's vision of the world and of the human – which, of course, was that of the normative male – obscuring any traits that might distinguish her from man, with her life-bearing potentiality at the top of the list. Seeking, more specifically, to divert man's objectifying regard – one which would render woman nothing more than the object of man's interest (what Jean-Paul Sartre calls an "in-itself," an "en soi," as differing from a "for-itself," a "pour soi" / corresponding roughly to the difference between an object and a subject),[39] early feminist philosophers and theoreticians simply conformed to the masculine norm of personhood, freedom, and sex,[40] whence the appropriate title of a recent book in French, L'Homme est l'avenir de la femme ("Man is the future of woman").[41]

Man: The Humanum in its Entirety. International Congress on the 20th anniversary of John Paul II's Apostolic Letter, Mulieris Dignitatem, 1988-2008 [Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010], 289-99, here 289, 290).

[35] John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 51

[36] Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, xxii.

[37] See her Dead End Feminism, translated by Julia Borossa (Cambridge / Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2006). [Fausse route (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2003)].

[38] "She [the early feminist] tried to share man's intellectual world and sank to the level merely of his methods. In the social world she sought for space to develop her deepest potentialities and allowed herself instead to be inserted as a link in his apparatus. In a doubly fatal way she succumbed as woman to the very one-sidedness, to the mistakes and the dangers upon which the man of the period had sickened. The error lay not so much in the objectives of the feminist movement and in the situations it created as in the character of the epoch, which, in its spiritual life, no longer knew its obligations or the direction of its final goal." (Gertrud von le Fort, The Eternal Woman, 60).

[39] Sylviane Agacinski explains the distinction between an "en soi" and a "pour soi" as the difference "between the being who is only that which it is, like a simple object, and a consciousness which can choose itself freely, an authentic subject" (Politique des sexes [Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998, 2001], 85).

[40] "The great battle for the right to contraception and abortion was waged as much in order to reclaim power over procreation as it was for obtaining new sexual freedoms. 'A mother, if I choose to be' also meant 'enjoy sex

"Man's design," as Simone de Beauvoir saw it, for example, "is not to repeat himself in time [to reproduce descendants]: it is to take control of the instant and mold the future. It is male activity that in creating values has made of existence itself a value [whence the distinction between living in a properly human, i.e. rational, manner and simply living]; this activity has prevailed over the confused forces of life; it has subdued Nature and Woman." This subjection has occurred, Beauvoir reasons, by way of a sort of identification of women with nature. "Men," she argues, "have presumed to create a feminine domain – the kingdom of life, of immanence – only in order to lock up women therein."[42]

Such, more specifically, is what Beauvoir calls the paternalistic "myth" defining woman "as sentiment, inwardness, immanence."[43] "If, [in fact, Beauvoir reasons,] well before puberty and sometimes even from early infancy, she [the little girl] seems to us to be already sexually determined, this is not because mysterious instincts directly doom her to passivity, coquetry, maternity; it is because the influence of others upon the child is a factor almost from the start, and thus she is indoctrinated with her vocation from her earliest years."[44]

With these words from The Second Sex, published in 1949, Beauvoir might well have inaugurated the important distinction, which later feminists theoreticians will name sex and gender: the distinction, in other words, between that which is naturally or biologically determined in sexual differentiation and that which is socially, or culturally, determined; or to put it in terms of behavioural psychology, between nature and nurture. Hence the famous Beauvoirian phrase: "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman."[45] Curiously, however, she does not drive a wedge between the two as do later theoreticians, as we shall see, by arguing that there is no connection between the female body and the manner in which it is culturally presented.[46] Instead, she drives a wedge between woman's spirit and her body, so as, in fact, to actually fuel the argument in favour of biological determinism.

To be sure, Beauvoir must be applauded for her refusal to admit, as did later feminists, a division between man and woman which would polarize them into two species, as it were.[47] "To pose Woman," Beauvoir objects, "is to pose the absolute Other, without reciprocity, denying against all experience that she is a subject, a fellow human being."[48] In this context the famous French feminist appears to endorse what Pope John Paul II will present nearly 40

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without any limits'. And so the first wave of feminism not only largely contributed to the liberation of women, but also to the trivialization of sexuality." (Elisabeth Badinter, Dead End Feminism, 65-66).

[41] Natacha Polony, L'Homme est l'avenir de la femme, Autopsie du féminisme contemporain (Paris, C Lattès, 2008).

[42] Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, 65.

[43] Ibid., 255.

[44] Ibid., 268.

[45] Ibid., 267. Similarly: "Biology is not enough to give an answer to the question that is before us: why is woman the Other?" (ibid., 37).

[46] Judith Butler, for example, reasons: "For Beauvoir, gender is 'constructed,' but implied in her formulation is an agent, a cogito, who somehow takes on or appropriates that gender and could, in principle, take on some other gender." There is nothing in Beauvoir's account, Butler continues, "that guarantees that the 'one' who becomes a woman is necessarily female." (Gender Trouble, 8).

[47] This is especially true of the European continental approach that stressed differences between the sexes, unlike the Anglo-Saxon approach which highlighted likenesses. See Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," Signs 14 (1988): 119-57; and Beatriz Vollmer Coles, "New Feminism: A Sex-Gender Reunion" in Women in Christ: Toward a New Feminism, edited by Michele M. Schumacher (Cambridge & Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 52-66.

[48] The Second Sex, 253.

years later as "another 'I' in a common humanity."[49] Beauvoir nonetheless – and in this she obviously differs from the approach of John Paul II – goes so far in her argument for the equality of the sexes that she simply alleviates the differences between them, with the result that they can no longer be viewed as a "unity of the two," a "uni-duality," or a communion of persons preserving the "specific diversity and personal originality" of both sexes.[50]

At first view of her work, it might appear as if Beauvoir is taking up the important feminist argument against biological determinism: the reduction of woman to what lies within the realm of her body and its working, as is expressed in the "anatomy is destiny" philosophy. Such, more specifically, is the notion that a woman's identity is inscribed in her body, as in stone (or marble, to return to the image above): an idea which is at odds with the metaphysical meaning of human sexuality, as I will expose it below. Beauvoir, however, does not so much present women as "condemned to passivity by society, according to an arbitrary decree of men," as (instead) "maintained in an inertia to which nature had initially destined them." Hence, French philosopher Sylviane Agacinski reasons, she might just as well have admitted to biological determinism from the outset and written instead: "one does not become, but remains, a woman."[51] Or to put it otherwise: precisely in order to avoid the idea of a properly feminine nature which men (or so Beauvoir believes) had in their creation of culture, aligned with the animal (or sub-rational) realm at odds with the normative male (or rational) nature,[52] Beauvoir simply refuses to grant any metaphysical content to sexual differences.[53] In so doing, she creates a dualism within woman herself: a dualism between her body and her soul, or between nature, understood in the most base sense of the term – namely that which is sub-rational and fully determined – and reason, which is considered as constituting the essence of

[49] John Paul II, Mulieris Dignitatem, Apostolic Letter, "On the Dignity and Vocation of Women" on the occasion of the Marian Year (August 15, 1988), no. 6.

[50] See John Paul II, "Letter to Women" on the occasion of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (June 29, 1995), in Origins 25: 9 (July 27, 1995), nos. 7-8; and idem, Mulieris Dignitatem, nos. 7, 10. Similar is what Hans Urs von Balthasar calls, with reference to Albert Frank-Duquene, "a dual-unity." See Hans Urs von Balthasar, Theo-Drama (Theological Dramatic Theory) II: The Dramatis Personae: Man in God, translated by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 365-66; with reference to Albert Frank-Duquesne, Création et procréation (Paris: Ed. de Minuit, 1951), 42-46.

[51] Sylviane Agacinski, Politique des sexes (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998, 2001), 93. The celebrated Beauvorian phrase, "One is not born, but becomes a woman" "concerns historical, aquired alienation: the woman is here an artificial product. She is fabricated by history, enclosed within a convential role, obliged to bend to the status of an object and to passivity imposed upon her by society. But, behind this fabriacated women there is a second, natural woman, who is already alienated. This is a being who is biologically trapped: a victim primarily of her membership to the species, which destines her to fecundity and procreation and consquently to passivity. Women are not then simply condemned to passivity by society, according to an arbitrary decree of men: they are rather maintained in an inertia to which nature had initially destined them. In other words, the fabricated and alienated woman is the woman who remains in her natural alienation. Simone de Beauvoir could thus have said, in imagining this biological destiny that she rejects: one does not become, but remains a woman" (ibid.).

[52] "Man's design is not to repeat himself in time: it is to take control of the instant and mold the future. It is male activity that in creating values has made of existence itself a value; this activity has prevailed over the confused forces of life; it has subdued Nature and Woman." (The Second Sex, 65).

[53] Beauvoir is thus paradigmatic of a problematic that I have observed in much feminist thought: "[T]he body-spirit dualism that they [feminists] so often attribute to 'androcentric' logic is transformed – as feminists have not only observed but also advanced – into a male-female dualism which, in turn, has given birth to a sort of androgynous hybrid that is both ideological and reactionary. Denied or otherwise refused are thus the essential differences within human nature itself – namely sexual differences affecting the whole body-spirit whole of the human person – in virtue of which this nature might be understood as relational per se." (Michele M. Schumacher, "Feminism, Nature and Humanae Vitae: What's Love Got to Do with It?," Nova et Vetera (English Edition) 6, no. 4 (2008): 879-900, here 884-85). On the feminist denial of metaphysical differences of the sexes, see Beatriz Vollmer de Marcellus, The Ontological Differentiation of Human Gender: A Critique of the Philosophical Literature between 1965 and 1995 (Philadelphia, Xlibris, 2004); and idem (published under her married name of Coles), "New Feminism: A Sex-Gender Reunion."

the human. Admitting that it is woman's "misfortune" to be "biologically destined"[54] to transmit life and thus "more enslaved to the species"[55] than is man, Beauvoir thus counsels her to flee the body and its constraints: to rise above the so-called "animal" act of giving life and to participate instead in the properly masculine act of risking life, beginning (presumably) with her battle against men.[56]

One could hardly provide a better example of what Pope John Paul II presents as "the tension between freedom and a nature conceived of in a reductive way," a tension which is finally "resolved," he explains, "by a division within man himself"[57] or, in this case, woman herself, and ultimately within the communion of man and woman, the fundamental cell of the family and thus also of society.

II. The Nature-Freedom Conflict of Modernity and the Re-Making of the Human Body

Here, in the reasoning of Beauvoir, like that of so many other feminists following in her wake,[58] we are confronted, more specifically, with the presumed conflict, marking the history of modernity, between human freedom, which has become supreme, and the idea of a God-given nature which is ironically understood as lying entirely within the physical (sub-rational) realm. As such – as material and thus as immanent – nature is also, or consequently, subject to man's manipulative efforts. At times within this history, John Paul II instructs us in *Veritatis Splendor*, "it seemed that 'nature' subjected man totally to its own dynamics and even its own unbreakable laws." Even today, he continues, certain ethicists are "tempted to take as the standard for their discipline and even for its operative norms the results of a statistical study of concrete human behaviour patterns and the opinions about morality encountered in the majority of people." Others, more "sensitive to the dignity of freedom" conceive of it as opposed to or "in conflict with material and biological nature, over which it must progressively assert itself." Hence, the origin of two contrasting, even opposed, understandings of nature:

For some, "nature" becomes reduced to raw material for human activity and for its power: thus nature needs to be profoundly transformed, and indeed overcome by freedom, inasmuch as it represents a limitation and denial of freedom. For others, it is in the untrammeled advancement of man's power, or of his freedom, that economic, cultural, social and even moral values are established: nature would thus come to mean everything found in man and the world apart from freedom. In such an understanding, nature would include in the

[54] The Second Sex, 64. « Son malheur, c'est d'avoir été biologiquement vouée à répéter la Vie » (Le Deuxième Sexe I, 114).
[55] "And likewise it is quite true that woman—like man—is a being rooted in nature; she is more enslaved to the species than is the male, her animality is more manifest; but in her as in him the given traits are taken on though the fact of existence, she belongs also to the human realm. To assimilate her to Nature is simply to act from prejudice" (The Second Sex, 255; Le Deuxième Sexe I, 398: "Il est de même tout à fait vrai que la femme est – comme l'homme – un être enraciné dans la nature ; elle est plus que le mâle asservie à l'espèce, son animalité est la plus manifeste ; mais en elle comme en lui le donné est assumé par l'existence, elle appartient aussi au règne humain. L'assimiler à la Nature c'est un simple parti pris" (Le Deuxième Sexe I 398).
[56] See ibid., 64. Le Deuxième Sexe I, 114-15.
[57] *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 48.
[58] A recent example might be found in Elisabeth Badinter's book, The Conflict: How Modern Motherhood Undermines the Status of Women, translated by Adriana Hunter (New York: Metropolitan Books / Henry Holt and Co., 2011) (Le Conflit, la femme et la mère [Paris: Flammarion, 2010]). See Michele M. Schumacher, "Women's Self-Interest or Sacrificial Motherhood: Personal Desires, Natural Inclinations and the Meaning of Love," The Thomist 77 (2013).

first place the human body, its make-up and its processes: against this physical datum would be opposed whatever is "constructed", in other words "culture", seen as the product and result of freedom. Human nature, understood in this way, could be reduced to and treated as a readily available biological or social material. This ultimately means making freedom self-defining and a phenomenon creative of itself and its values. Indeed, when all is said and done man would not even have a nature; he would be his own personal life-project. Man would be nothing more than his own freedom![59]

As a case in point, we need only think of the contemporary ideology of gender. Whereas gender was once regarded as a cultural expression of biological sex, recent theoreticians argue that it is culture (and thus gender) that determines bodily sex and not, the inverse (sex that determines gender). "[T]here is no recourse to a body that has not always already been interpreted by cultural meanings;" reasons humanities professor Judith Butler. "[H]ence, sex could not qualify as a prediscursive anatomical facticity. Indeed, sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender all along."[60] As for gender, this term must not be understood as being related to culture "as sex is to nature," Butler argues. Rather, gender should be understood, she continues, as "the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive,' prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts."[61] Sex, in other words, is thought to have no intrinsic meaning or content that is not first given to it by culture.

Butler's claim is supported, at least implicitly, by history professor Thomas Laqueur, who seeks to "offer [historial] material [or accounts] for [demonstrating] how powerful prior notions of difference or sameness determine what one sees and reports about the body," and thus for "deciding what counts and what does not count as evidence."[62] Laqueur thus makes "every effort," as he puts it, "to show that no historically given set of facts about 'sex' entailed how sexual difference was in fact understood and represented […], and I use this evidence," he continues, "to make the more general claim that no set of facts ever entails any particular account of difference."[63] As for biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling, she argues that "labelling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender – not science – can define our sex. Furthermore, our beliefs about gender affect what kinds of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place."[64] In other words, scientists "create truths about sexuality," which are subsequently incorporated and confirmed by our bodies.[65] Indeed, Fausto-Sterling's own analysis of the "construction of sexuality" and her preference for "theories of sexuality that allow for flexibility and the development of new behaviour patterns" can hardly be divorced from her own "deep" commitment "to the ideas of the modern movements of gay and women's liberation"[66] and from her personal experience of living, as she puts it, "part of her life as an unabashed het*eros*exual, part as an unabashed lesbian, and part in transition."[67]

Denied from the outset is what she calls – borrowing from Donna Haraway –"the God trick": "producing," that is to say, "knowledge from above, from a place that denies the

[59] Jean Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 46.
[60] Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York / London: Routledge, 1990), 8.
[61] Ibid., 7.
[62] The Making of Sex, 21.
[63] Ibid., 19.
[64] Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 3.
[65] Ibid., 5.
[66] Ibid., 8.
[67] Ibid., ix.

individual scholar's location in a real and troubled world."[68] Such, more specifically, she suggests, is a world in which it is not always so easy to determine – biologically-speaking – whether a child is male or female.

If a child is born with two X chromosomes, oviducts, ovaries, and a uterus on the inside, but a penis and scrotum on the outside, for instance, is the child a boy or a girl? Most doctors declare the child a girl, despite the penis, because of her potential to give birth, and intervene using surgery and hormones to carry out the decision. Choosing which criteria to use in determining sex, and choosing to make the determination at all, are social decisions for which scientists can offer no absolute guidelines.[69]

It is thus not surprising that Judith Butler should ask the question: What is 'sex' anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal, and how is a feminist critic to assess the scientific discourses which purport to establish such 'facts' for us?"[70]

One could hardly find a better question for introducing the important distinction, which will also serve my transition between this brief exposition of feminist teaching on what constitutes womanhood as such and a classic metaphysical (and thus also realist) understanding of the same. This, more specifically, is the distinction made by Karol Wojtyla between the biological order and "the order of nature."

III. The Biological Order and the Order of Nature: An Important Distinction

Unlike most feminist and gender theoreticians today – who simply equate nature and biology or a naturalist philosophy (passing as physicalism) and natural law – Wojtyla presents biology as "a product of the human intellect which abstracts its elements from a larger reality, [and which] has man for its immediate author. The claim to autonomy in one's ethical views," he further maintains, "is a short jump from this." In other words, when man is seen as the creator of the world order, relativism is the most logical ethical theory: how can one defend the idea of universal truths and even the idea of intrinsic human dignity, when man creates man? "It is otherwise," Wojtyla continues, "with the order of nature, which means the totality of the cosmic relationships that arise among really existing entities."[71]

As we have seen in the foregoing exposition, it is this totality of relationships, which are not only realized by human freedom but also and most especially given to human freedom, that is denied by much feminist literature, beginning with the fundamental and constitutive relation between the human body and spirit, which precisely as unified, is, John Paul II teaches, the subject of moral acts.[72] "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," John Paul II teaches in *Veritatis Splendor*. It thus follows, according to Church teaching, that natural inclinations have "moral relevance only insofar as they refer to the human person and his

[68] Ibid., 6.
[69] Ibid., 5. Such is also the conclusion of Élisabeth Badinter, XY: On Masculine Identity, translated by Lydia Davis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 40. (XY. De l'identité masculine [Paris: Odile Jacob, 1992], 69).
[70] Judith Butler, Gender Trouble, 6-7.
[71] Love and Responsibility, translated by J.T. Willetts (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 56-57; emphasis mine.
[72] "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." (*Veritatis Splendor*, 48; emphasis his).

authentic fulfilment, a fulfilment," John Paul II adds, which "can take place always and only in human nature."[73]

In fact, natural law refers, he further teaches, to "the 'nature of the human person', which is the person himself in the unity of soul and body, in the unity of [both] his spiritual and biological inclinations and of all the other specific characteristics necessary for the pursuit of his end. 'The natural moral law expresses and lays down the purposes" of human life, which is to say, that we are created with divine intent and not chaotically set into a chaotic world so as to find our own chaotic way. At the same time, natural law is considered moral precisely because it also lays down the "rights and duties" of the human person, which John Paul II presents as "based" upon his or her "bodily and spiritual nature." "Therefore this law cannot be thought of as simply a set of norms on the biological level [so as to be reduced to that which we share with sub-rational creation]; rather it must be defined as the rational order whereby man [that is to say, man and woman] is called by the Creator to direct and regulate his [or her] life and actions and in particular to make use of his [or her] own body'."[74] And, because human nature always includes human freedom, natural law not only cannot be interpreted as physicalism or naturalism, such that moral laws are reduced to "biological laws,"[75] but it also will allow for no division between freedom and nature. "Indeed, these two realities are harmoniously bound together," John Paul II insists, "and each is intimately linked to the other."[76]

This, in turn, means that we cannot assent to the proposition according to which the human person, precisely "as a rational being not only can but actually must freely determine the meaning of his [or her] behaviour,"[77] and thus surmount or transcend his or her bodily limitations. Just as the human person cannot be reduced to his or her bodily structure and its functioning, so also he or she "cannot," John Paul II teaches, "be reduced to a freedom which is self-designing." Human freedom quite simply "entails," as he puts it "a particular spiritual and bodily structure."[78]

Such a metaphysical perspective of human nature – one which, it bears repeating, literally transcends (meta) the physical – does not only have implications upon the manner in which we perceive natural law and human freedom. It also affects the way we view human sexuality. As the Catechism puts it so well, sexuality "affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his [or her] body and soul" and thus also, more specifically, of "affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others."[79] It follows that this primal unity of the body and the soul, constituting the human person as such, has profound implications upon the other cosmic relations to which Wojtyla refers with his distinction between the biological and natural orders, beginning with the relation of the family, that "first and fundamental school of social

[73] Ibid., no. 50, with reference to idem, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (November 22,1981), no. 11.

[74] Ibid., no. 50, with reference to Vatican Council II, Gaudium et Spes, 51; and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Vitae* (February 22, 1987), Introduction, 3: AAS 80 (1988), 74. Emphasis mine.

[75] See *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 47.
[76] Ibid., no. 50.
[77] Ibid., no. 47.
[78] Ibid., no. 48.
[79] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2332. Similarly, in the teaching of Pope John Paul II: "sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person-body, emotions and soul-and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love" (*Familiaris consortio*, no. 37).

living,"[80] and still more fundamentally, the relation between man and woman, who are "called from the beginning […] not only to exist 'side by side' or 'together,'" but also, John Paul II teaches, "to exist mutually 'one for the other.'"[81]

When God-Yahweh says, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen 2:18), he affirms that, "alone," the man does not completely realize this essence. He realizes it only by existing "with someone" – and, put even more deeply and completely, by existing "for someone." (…) Communion of persons means living in a reciprocal "for," in a relationship of reciprocal gift.[82]

From this perspective – that of creation – human sexuality is not simply arbitrary; nor is it merely "skin deep." Rather, it is orientated – precisely as an essential aspect of human nature – to the vocation implied within the very gift of human nature, as rational. This, in turn, does not meant that human sexuality is simply subject to human freedom; for it is not human freedom that has brought it into existence, nor human freedom that gives it meaning. Rather, both freedom and sexuality are subject together, in a body-spirit unity, to the divinely-ordained meaning of human existence: a meaning which Christ has revealed as love. It is freedom's role to discover this meaning and to constantly discern its own intentions according to this standard (the meaning of love), so as also to direct the whole person (body and soul) toward what is worthy of love. It is the body's role, in turn, to serve reason in its discernment of the Creator's intentions; for it is in virtue of the body that we enter into relation with all of material reality – we need only think of the role of the senses, which require direct contact with that which is thereby perceived – and it is also in virtue of the body that we enter into relationships with other body-persons. "The person, by the light of reason and the support of virtue, [thus] discovers in the body," John Paul II teaches, "the anticipatory signs, the expression and the promise of the gift of self, in conformity with the wise plan of the Creator."[83]

To assent to this proposition – that the body expresses the Creator's intentions for us – one must have a certain confidence in reality: confidence – or better said, faith – that things really do bespeak the intentions of a wholly benevolent and supremely intelligent Creator who orders all things to their good in accord with the natures that He has bestowed upon them at the moment of creation. This in no way denies – rather it reinforces – the teaching of classic natural law theory according to which God orders human creatures "in the most excellent manner,"[84] namely by giving us the capacity to govern ourselves: not in an anarchical sense – as creatures who deem themselves no longer subject to divine rule and order – but as capable, in virtue of our intelligent nature, of discerning God's will and of acting accordingly, that is to say, virtuously.

In the unavoidable confrontation with sexual differentiation, which marks the history of humankind from its inception, the human person is thus presented with a mystery that is

[80] John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 37.
[81] John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, no. 7.
[82] General audience of January 2, 1980; no. 2; in idem, Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body, translated by Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 182. Similarly: "In the [original] 'unity of the two,' man and woman are called from the beginning not only to exist 'side by side' or 'together,' but they are also called to exist mutually 'one for the other.'" (*Mulieris dignitatem*, no. 7; emphasis his).
[83] *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 48.
[84] See St. Thomas Aquinas, ST I-II, q. 91, a. 2.

simultaneously given, in virtue of creation, and appropriated, in virtue of human freedom.[85] This, in other words, is a mystery which is given in both the creative and gratuitous senses of the word: a fact robed in gratuity. As such, it transcends the expertise of both the biological and the social sciences, evoking a reality that is not of our making, but that is nonetheless knowable and desirable to us. This, more specifically, is – as has been my purpose to argue – a reality which does not merely exist in our consciousness, but which, on the contrary, is offered to our consciousness in view of our willing appropriation and collaboration. As such, it is at once a gift and a call.

To be human means to be called to interpersonal communion. […] The whole of human history unfolds within the context of this call. In this history, on the basis of the principle of mutually being "for" the other, in interpersonal "communion," there develops in humanity itself, in accordance with God's will, the integration of what is "masculine" and what is "feminine."[86]

Or to put it otherwise (again, in the words of Blessed John Paul II): "Human life is by its nature 'co-educational,' and its dignity as well as its balance depend at every moment of history and in every place of geographic longitude and latitude on 'who' she shall be for him and he for her."[87]

IV. An Objective Regard upon Woman: An Invitation to Get Out of Our Heads

While this particular question or call is necessarily personal, it also has a social dimension; for precisely in the vis-à-vis, which sexual differentiation represents, modern men and women are offered a perspective that forces them to get out of their heads, as it were, and to confront an objective reality which is not of their making. An object cannot protect itself from someone's false understanding of its being, nor from his or her manipulative tactics or misuse of its God-ordained purpose in the world. A person, however – and obviously I have woman in mind – can well object to man's idea of herself and of her destiny, as Beauvoir rightly insisted, and thus also to his manipulative regard upon her. Here, then, in the encounter or confrontation of persons, there is also an encounter or confrontation with real objectivity: of a world which is not necessarily subject to man's ideas and purposes, a world which invites an objective regard, or a perspective of truth in the classic understanding of the term, namely an adequation – or what Hans Urs von Balthasar calls "attunement" – between perception and reality, between subject and object, between knower and known.

From this perspective – that of a given (even gratuitously-given) reality – the challenge of addressing sexual difference is not simply that of rethinking the way we approach scientific knowledge; for the fundamental question is more philosophical than experimental. This, to be precise, entails an epistemological question: one concerning how we view knowledge and knowing, and how we distinguish the two (the reality known from the process of knowing). When, in other words, we are confronted with the question of what is entailed in being a woman, as distinct from being a man – the question motivating John Paul II's important apostolic letter, *Mulieris dignitatem*[88]– we are simultaneously confronted

[85] See Michele M. Schumacher, "John Paul II's Theology of the Body on Trial: Responding to the Accusation of the Biological Reduction of Women," Nova et Vetera (English Edition)10: 2 (Spring 2012), 463-84.
[86] Idem, Mulieris dignitatem, no. 7.
[87] General audience of October 8, 1980; Man and Woman He Created Them, 301.
[88] This, more specifically, is the question of "the reason for and the consequences of the Creator's decision that the human being should always and only exist as a woman or a man," a question that is raised in view of

within our present cultural situation with a more fundamental, or preliminary, question: that of what constitutes knowledge in the first place. This, more specifically, is the question of whether knowing entails a manipulation of reality – a sort of bending of the known according to my field of interest, such that the object (or person, as the case may be) must succumb to my preconceived notion of the real (whence Beauvoir's theory of Woman as 'Other') – or whether, instead, knowing entails a conformity of my knowing powers to an objective reality: to the object known. In the latter case, it is I who, in fact or at least as a matter of speaking, must bend to the object, allowing it to speak to me, as it were, to inform me, to impress itself upon me, or to otherwise enrich me with its intrinsic goodness and beauty.

Entailed in the question of womanhood – the problem of discerning its content or meaning – is thus the question of our philosophical perspective: the question of whether I hold to a modern perspective, according to which the meaning of womanhood is determined, or at least measured by, my inner, subjective, convictions; to a nihilistic position, according to which the notion of woman signifies absolutely nothing at all; to an existentialist perspective of the Sartrian kind (which is also that of Beauvoir), according to which woman is defined either by her own freedom or by that of man who constantly seeks to determine her for his own purposes or desires; to a constructionist standpoint, which considers her as an ever-evolving social construct with no intrinsic meaning; to a post-modern stance, according to which the meaning of "woman" is determined by opposition: not in the co-relative sense of the term, but in the violent struggle between the oppressed (in this case, woman) and the oppressor (man); or, finally, to a realist perspective, according to which the content that we assign to the word "woman," exists in reality and not merely in our heads: a position which is maintained, at least indirectly, by those who argue that human sexuality is socially constructed).

To admit to this realist position – as I hope by now to have made clear – is hardly to reduce woman to a purely material being. Nor is it to take from her the freedom of self-determination (as distinct from self-designing or self-creating) or to remove her from the romantic world of mystery and the creative world of art. Nor, still, is it to separate her from the loving and providential regard of her Creator. Rather, it means grounding, and thus safeguarding, her freedom in her God-given human nature, such that she is free with a freedom destined for what is good and true and noble: a freedom which is realized in self-gift, because the person is realized in communion. "Freedom," Karol Wojyla explains, "exists for love," which in turn means the "limit[ing] of one's freedom on behalf of another." It follows, Woytla reasons, that the human being "longs for love more than for freedom – freedom is the means and love the end."[89]

Far from the very restrained, or negative sense of freedom which has marked much of modernity, in general, and feminism, in particular – freedom from oppression, for example, or freedom from constraint – we are thus invited to consider it as having a positive value in

"understand[ing] the greatness of the dignity and vocation of women" so as, in turn, to address "their [women's] active presence in the Church and in society" (Mulieris dignitatem, no. 1).

[89] Karol Wojtyla, Love and Responsibility, 135, 136. Similarly: "Perfection demands that maturity is self-giving to which human freedom is called" (John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, no 17). "Love, as a sincere gift of self, is what gives the life and freedom of the person their truest meaning" (John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, no. 96).

virtue of its God-given purpose: freedom for the other, freedom to give of oneself, and freedom to receive the other as a gift.[90]

V. The Beauty of Truth and the Attunement to the Real

By introducing the important distinction between the biological order and the natural order, Wojtyla – who, as we have seen, draws upon this important distinction in his papal teaching – does not therefore suggest that we might ascribe to some sort of Platonic idea of womanhood: to, that is to say, an eternal ideal qualifying woman from above, to return to Haraway's objection to the so-called "God trick." Rather, a natural law perspective supposes that the human being is intrinsically ordered by his or her Creator from within: not by way of a simple submission to the body, its needs and desires, but in the particularly human way of freely choosing one's life's goal in conformity with reason and faith and of acting accordingly. It follows that the divine Artist does not simply "draw forms, as it were, from the interior of matter, of wood, of stone, of marble"—to return to the image of the horse in the stone—so as to act "on the matter—let us say, even against it," as does the human artist, as he is fittingly depicted by Pierre-Marie Emonet:

> Michelangelo has defined sculpture: the forza di levare—the "power to lift" the superfluous stone from around the form, the figure within. And Michelangelo trimmed with chisels and hammers, sending shots of matter to all sides. There is nothing of this in the divine acting. […] "When God awakens a new reality, first, he does not act on things, or against things—as we are obliged to do. God works in them."[91]

The divine Artist, in other words, is One whose "creative power" might be found "in the depths of things,"[92] for the "divine influx passes […] through natural agents," who are thus "elevated to the order of instrumental causes of the divine causality."[93]

As for human agents, precisely as free, we are given by the Creator the power to direct our lives and to govern the world that He entrusts to us in view of a certain world-order – that of the various cosmic relations implied by God's creative act, including most especially the relation between man and woman – all of which ought to be subject to the fundamental good of God, whom revelation teaches us, is the final end of the human person. Or to put it still more directly, we are thus set before the specific task of rationally discerning God's purpose for our lives, so as to act accordingly. Such, I would suggest again, is not far from what Balthasar describes as attunement.

This musical image – precisely as artistic – invites us to return to the image of the horse in the marble block from still another perspective: that of a classic understanding of art. Here we have, Francesca Murphy rightly suggests, a vision "for a post-modern society, in which the idea of a common rationality is threadbare,"[94] but in which the basic human desire

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[90] See, for example, Pope John Paul II, Mulieris dignitatem, no. 7. It is "the vanity" of Beauvoir's philosophy, "like a great part of modern thought," Sylviane Agacinski maintains, "to believe in the autonomy of the subject and to recognize therein the privileged form of freedom." (Sylviane Agacinski, Politique des sexes, 96).

[91] Pierre-Marie Emonet, The Dearest Freshness Deep Down Things: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Being, translated by Robert R. Barr (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1999), 55. Reference here is made to Stanislas Fumet, Le néant contesté (Paris: Fayard, 1972), 123.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., 57.

[94] Francesca A. Murphy, "Inclusion and Exclusion in the Ethos of von Balthasar's Theo-Drama," New Blackfriars 79, no. 923 (January 1998), 56-64, here 60.

for love and beauty is not entirely lost; for the human being remains human and as such profoundly orientated by nature to what is good and true and thus also beautiful. The Christian – whom Balthasar presents as the "guardian of that metaphysical wonderment which is the point of origin for philosophy"[95] – nonetheless has a very important role to play in awakening this natural human desire within the men and women of our time. After all, the very world, which for our contemporaries is characterized by the "elimination of the sacred and the loss of the 'power of the heart' (Siewerth) to sense the 'majesty of being' (Hans André) in the immediacy of God"—a world which has "no Godward tendency (since it was become mere matter, an accumulation of facts and its synthesis is man in his state of wretchedness)" is, Balthasar rightly notes, a world which nonetheless remains sacred for the Christian as inhabited—even impregnated—by "something of eternity."[96] It follows, as Balthasar rightly perceives, that only the Christian is joining children in posing the essential question of being upon which metaphysical inquiry is based: the question, born of wonderment, as typified by the delighted child discovering the horse in the marble block.[97] This, more specifically, is the question: "Why is there anything rather than nothing at all?"

The failure to pose this question is, John Paul II suggests, typical of an impoverished society motivated by the desire "to possess things rather than to relate them to the truth." This, more specifically, he suggests, is a society "lacking that disinterested, unselfish and aesthetic attitude that is born of wonder in the presence of being and of the beauty which enables one to see in visible things the message of the invisible God who created them."[98] Such, he suggests in *Veritatis Splendor*, is a society for whom beauty, but also goodness, has been isolated from truth.

To be sure, it is unthinkable for the modern or contemporary mind to refer to beauty as "true" or even "good," for we are much too inclined to admit—as I implied in my introduction—that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Balthasar does not hesitate, however, to address the idea of "aesthetic measure."[99] As for St. Thomas, he too insists upon the objective dimension of beauty: "Something is not beautiful because we love it; rather, it is

[95] Hans Urs von Balthasar, The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, V: The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age, translated by Oliver Davies, Andrew Louth, Brian McNeil, John Saward and Rowan Williams and edited by Brian McNeil and John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 646. See also idem, Theo-Logic. Theological Logical Theory I: Truth of the World, translated by Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 106-107.

[96] Idem, "Revelation and the Beautiful," in idem, Explorations in Theology, I: The Word Made Flesh, translated by A. V. Littledale and Alexander Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 95-126, here 109. Similarly: "In a world without beauty—even if people cannot dispense with the word and constantly have it on the tip of their tongues in order to abuse it—in a world which is perhaps not wholly without beauty, but which can no longer see it or reckon with it: in such a world the good also loses its attractiveness, the self-evidence of why it must be carried out." (idem, The Glory of the Lord I, 19).

[97] Philosopher and classicist, Allan Bloom rightfully noted in 1987, when he published his best-seller, that only children were raising the essential questions of being, but they had sadly been left "in a day-care center called the humanities, in which the discussions have no echo in the adult world" (Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind [New York / London / Sydney: Simon & Schuster / Touchstone, 1987], 372).

[98] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on the Hundredth Anniversary of '*Rerum Novarum*,' *Centesimus Annus* (May 1, 1991), no. 37. Hence, the sigh of Emonet: "Why must we always regard things in connection with ourselves? Or, an arrogance still worse: Why must we believe that we created these beings simply because we look at them?" (The Dearest Freshness Deep Down Things, 86).

[99] See The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, I: Seeing the Form, translated by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis and edited by Joseph Fessio and John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982, 1989), 34 ff. [Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik. Band I. Schau der Gestalt (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1961, 19672)].

loved by us because it is beautiful and good."[100] Not surprisingly, then, the angelic doctor lists three conditions of beauty: "integrity or perfection, since those things which are impaired are by the very fact ugly; due proportion or harmony; and lastly, brightness, or clarity, whence things are called beautiful which have a bright colour."[101] Ultimately this means, as Balthasar sees it, that "The light of the transcendentals, unity, truth, goodness and beauty, a light at one with the light of philosophy, can only shine if it is undivided. A transcendence of beauty alone is not viable."[102] On the other hand, and more positively, "the beautiful is implied in the order of truth and goodness."[103] In fact, Aquinas maintains that "beauty and goodness in a thing are identical fundamentally," with this difference: "beauty relates to the cognitive faculty," whereas "goodness properly relates to the appetite (goodness being what all things desire)."[104]

By classing the beautiful among the transcendentals, we mean that it has, as the name implies, an intrinsically transcendent dimension, in virtue of which it draws (or literally "trans-ports") its beholder out of the immanence of this world. The manifestation of the beautiful, like that of Being in its other transcendental properties (those of truth, goodness and unity), "invites the creaturely spirit," Balthasar explains, "to move away from and beyond itself and [to] entrust and surrender itself to that mystery"[105]: that of beauty, in the case at hand. In this sense, at least, the encounter between a great work of art and its beholder is necessarily ecstatic: it causes one to stand (stasis) out (ex) of one's own self. Art might thus rightly be personified, for here the object (a work of art) acts as a subject: it exercises a sort of bewitching, or enchanting influence upon the one who beholds it: like a charm, whence the word charming. As such, it nonetheless testifies to the truth of an objective world, which is open to the transcendental realm: to, that is to say, a dimension beyond the confines of the subject and of his spiritual powers of imagination and projection.

It is not only this encounter between art and its beholder that is characterized by ecstasy, however, for Balthasar argues that the artist himself – precisely in his greatest moment of genius – is also so marked by it.

[I]n the phenomenon of inspiration there exists a moment which the heathen has always sensed but which only the Christian can grasp with all the preciseness of faith. This is the moment when one's own inspiration mysteriously passes over into inspiration through the

[100] Thomas Aquinas, In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio, c. 4, lect. 10, 439 (Taurini / Romae: Marietti, 1950): "non enim ideo aliquid est pulchrum quia nos illud amanus, sed quia est pulchrum et bonum ideo amatur a nobis." Such, then, is what he means when he presents the beautiful as that "which please[s] when seen" (ST I, q. 5, a. 4, ad. 1: "pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent").
[101] ST I, q. 39, a. 8: "primo quidem integritas sive perfectio, quae enim diminuta sunt, hoc ipso turpia sunt; et debita proportion, sive consonantia; et iterum claritas. Unde quae habent colorem nitidum, pulchra esse dicuntur."
[102] Baltahsar, "Revelation and the Beautiful," 107. Hence, "truth cannot be explained outside of its circumincessive relation to the other transcendenals" (ibid., Theo-Logic I, 10).
[103] Jan Aertsen, Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of St. Thomas Aquinas (Leiden / New York / Köln: E. J. Brill, 1996), 359. For this reason, Aertsen insists that "the beautiful is not a distinct, 'forgotten,' transcendental" (ibid.). In other words, it does not express "a universal mode of being […] that is not yet expressed by the other transcendentals" (ibid., 337). Jacques Maritain, on the other hand, argues that precisely because the beautifuf can be reduced to the good, it should be considered a transcendental. See Maritain, Art et Scolastique in idem, Œuvres Complètes I: 1906-1920 (Fribourg, Suisse / Paris: Editions Universitaires Fribourg, Suisse /Editons Saint-Paul, 1986), 615-788. English translation: Art and Scholasticism (London: Sheed and Ward, 1939).
[104] ST I, q. 5, a. 4, ad. 1: "pulchrum et bonum in subjecto quidem sunt idem"; "Pulchrum autem respicit vim cognoscitivan"; "Nam bonum proprie respicit appetitum : est enim bonum quod omnia appetunt."
[105] The Glory of the Lord I, 450. ["Das Seinsgeheimnis, das offenbar ist, ladet den geschöpflichen Geist ein, sich von sich weg und über sich hinaus dem Geheimnis anzuvertrauen und zu überantworten." (Herrlichkeit, I, 433)]

genius, the *daimon*, or the indwelling god, a moment when the "spirit that contains the god" (en-*thusiasmos*) obeys a superior command which as such implies form and is able to impose form.[106]

When, in other words, the artist acts by inspiration, he cannot be considered as simply imposing upon a marble block a vision out of his self-consciousness or even out of his own necessarily limited imagination: limited by what he has seen and experienced; for as Ecclesiastics puts it all too well, "What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun" (1:9). In the moment of inspiration, in contrast, there is something radically new that shines upon the horizon, something that literally breaks into time and man's perspective from outside of his time and perspective.

A similar phenomenon occurs when one is overtaken by love or beauty. Dante might well have immortalized the lovely Beatrice, but only after her incredible beauty inspired him to greatness, transporting him outside of himself:

And when this most gracious being actually bestowed the saving power of her salutation, I do not say that Love as an intermediary could dim for me such unendurable bliss but, almost by excess of sweetness, his influence was such that my body, which was then utterly given over to his governance, often moved like a heavy, inanimate object. So it is plain that in her greeting resided all my joy, which often exceeded and overflowed my capacity.[107]

VI. The Creative Power of Beauty and Love

In the above example of the transporting quality of beauty that awakens love there is nothing of that falsified beauty that we call seduction: that manipulative effort to subject the beholder to one's own power, thereby reducing him to an object, much as feminists perceive men to have done to women throughout the centuries. Instead of respectfully (indeed, lovingly) receiving the other in view of forming an authentic communion of persons wherein both are enriched in a way that sexual fruitfulness makes explicit in exemplary (though certainly not exclusive!) manner, seduction allures the other in order to trap him, as it were, for one's own purpose or that of another: as in the use of women's bodies to sell everything from toothpaste to pornography. As such—as manipulative—seduction not only objectifies the other, by inciting his base desires in view of a obtaining a certain end (or profit) from him, it also objectifies one's own self: at least as one is presented to the eyes of the other, namely in the reductive sense of the body, as an outer shell, or "packaging."

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[106] Ibid., 35. [… es gäbe im Phänomen der Inspiration den Augenblick, den der heidnische Mensch immer geahnt hat, den der christliche aber im Glauben genau erfasst: da die Eingebung des eigenen Selbst geheimnisvoll übergeht in Eingebung durch den Genius, den Daimon, den einwohnenden Gott, da der Gott-einbergende Geist (en-thous-iasmos) einer überlegenen Weisung gehorcht, die als solche Gestalt meint und auch durchsetzen kann." (Herrlichkeit I, 32)].

[107] Dante Alighieri, La Vita Nuova (1290), XI, translated by Barbara Reynolds (New York / London /Victoria, Toronto: Penquin Books,1969), 41. [« E quando questa gentilissima salute salulava, non che Amore fosse tal mezzo che potesse obumbrare a me la intollerabile beatitudine, ma eli quasi per soverchio di dolcezza divenia tale, che potesse obumbrare a me la intollerabile beatitudine, ma elli quasi per soverchio di dolcezza divenia tale, che lo moi corpo, lo quale era tutto allora sotto lo suo reggimento, molte volte si movea come cosa grave inanimata. Sì che appare manifestamente che nele sue salute abitava la mia beatitudine, la quale molte volte passava e redundava la mia capacitade. » (Introduzione e comemento di Vittorio Cozzoli, Milano: EDIS Edizioni Culturali, 1995, 45)].

From this perspective, *eros* is reduced to what we commonly refer today as the erotic. In the profound words of Pope Benedict XVI, which almost echo the insights of his predecessor:

Eros, reduced to pure "sex", has become a commodity, a mere "thing" to be bought and sold, or rather, man himself becomes a commodity. This is hardly man's great "yes" to the body. On the contrary, he now considers his body and his sexuality as the purely material part of himself, to be used and exploited at will. Nor does he see it as an arena for the exercise of his freedom, but as a mere object that he attempts, as he pleases, to make both enjoyable and harmless. Here we are actually dealing with a debasement of the human body: no longer is it integrated into our overall existential freedom; no longer is it a vital expression of our whole being, but it is more or less relegated to the purely biological sphere.[108]

As a case in point, C. S. Lewis points us to the terrible hero of George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, who before sleeping with the heroine asks: "You like doing this? I don't mean simply me; I mean the thing in itself."

The thing is a sensory pleasure; that is, an event occurring within one's own body. We use a most unfortunate idiom when we say, of a lustful man prowling the streets, that he "wants a woman." Strictly speaking, a woman is just what he does not want. He wants a piece of apparatus. How much he cares about the woman as such may be gauged by his attitude to her five minutes after fruition (one does not keep the carton after one has smoked the cigarettes).[109]

Or, to put it in the words of blessed John Paul II, even the man who "looks" at a woman in such a reductive way—as a body—"makes use" of her, of her femininity, "to satisfy his own 'instincts'."[110] In so doing, he simultaneously devalues or impoverishes an "authentic value," namely, "that dignity to which the integral value of her femininity corresponds in the person in question."[111]

"The sexual instinct," writes Karol Wojtyla, "wants to take over, to make use of another person, whereas love wants to give, to create a good, to bring happiness."[112] In the first case—which we might qualify as a "love" of concupiscence—one cannot really be said to suffer ecstasy, St. Thomas teaches. Because, to be more specific, he seeks to have a good for himself, "he does not go out from himself simply, and this movement [of love or desire] remains finally within him[self]," as differing from one who seeks the good of the beloved "for his [or her own] sake."[113]

The man, on the other hand, who is truly enraptured by a woman, in the classic sense of *eros*—that of a transporting love in the classic (heightened) sense[114]—does not simply

[108] Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter on the Love of God, Deus Caritas Est (25 December 2005), no. 5.
[109] The Four Loves, (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960, 1991), 94.
[110] General Audience of 8 October 1980, in idem, Man and Woman He Created Them, 298.
[111] General Audience of 22 October 1980, in ibid., 309.
[112] Love and Responsibility, 137.
[113] ST I-II, q. 28, a. 3: "non exit simpliciter extra se, sed talis affectio in fine infra ipsum concluditur".
[114] As John Paul II explains, "According to Plato, '*eros*' represents the inner power that draws man toward all that is good, true, and beautiful. This 'attraction' indicates, in this case, the intensity of a subjective act of the human spirit." This Platonic meaning he contrasts to "the common meaning—as also in literature—of attraction "above all of a sensual nature" (General Audience of November 5, 1980; in Man and Woman He Created Them,

desire a pleasure that she might grant him. What he desires, rather, is the woman herself[115]: not as a commodity to be possessed, of course, but as a person with whom he can more fully or more completely express, develop, and realize his own humanity, including his proper sexuality. Far from debasing both herself and the man as the seducer might be thought to do, the beautiful woman—and truly every woman is beautiful, as is every flower—invites (again simply in virtue of who she is) a regard from the man that might be understood as uplifting, or ecstatic, in the positive sense of the term: as that which literally draws him out (ex-) of himself toward that which is befitting, even ennobling, of his own humanity.[116]

If, moreover, she might be said to "do" this in virtue of who she is, as human and as female, it is obviously toward her very self (her person) that he is drawn, but not—and this is no minor point, for this is where we might also draw a fine line between seduction and love, on the one hand, and between passion and love, on the other hand—as the be all and end all. If, in fact, a person can never be possessed, the only proper end of the drawing attraction toward a person is communion with him or her: a communion wherein each might nevertheless more fully discover and realize the meaning of his or her own humanity and sexuality.

For a human being is always first and foremost himself ("a person"), and in order not merely to live with another but to live by and for that other person he must continually discover himself in the other and the other in himself. Love is impossible for beings who are mutually impenetrable—only the spirituality and the "inwardness", of persons create the conditions for mutual interpenetration, which enables each to live in and by the other [to enter, that is to say, into the other's interiority].[117]

This mutual indwelling of persons requires, of course, a willingness to freely open or unveil oneself to the other, in what might be understood as an authentic gift of self: a gift in virtue of which the other is granted entry within one's own interiority, as it were.[118] Precisely

316, emphasis his). Where the spiritual is thus contrasted to the sensual, we obviously have recourse to that which specifies the human person as such: namely, the spiritual dimension.

[115] "Without *Eros* sexual desire like every other desire is a fact about ourselves. Within *Eros* it is rather about the Beloved" (C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves, 95). Similarly, Wojtyla expresses the "superiority of the value of the person to that of sex" (Love and Responsibility, 197).

[116] As St. Thomas very fittingly expresses it: "[N]othing is hurt by being adapted to that which is suitable to it; rather, if possible, it is perfected and bettered. But if a thing be adapted to that which is not suitable to it, it is hurt and made worse thereby. Consequently, love of a good which is unsuitable to the lover, wounds and worsens him." (ST I-II, q. 28, a. 5: "Nihil autem quod coaptatur ad aliquid quod est sibi conveniens, ex hoc ipso laeditur, sed magis, si sit possibile, proficit et melioratur. Quod vero coaptatur ad aliquid quod non est sibi conveniens, ex hoc ipso laeditur et deterioratur. Amor ergo boni convenientis est perfectivus et meliorativus amantis, amor autem boni quod non est conveniens amanti, est laesivus et deteriorativus amantis.") Hence, as St. Augustine would fittingly have it: "whether for good or evil, each man lives by his love" (Contra Faustum 5.10; Migne, PL 42: 228: "quia ex amore suo quisque vivit, vel bene vel male." Cited by Josef Pieper, "On Love," 166).

[117] Karol Wojtyla, Love and Responsibility, 131.

[118] The illusion here is more spiritual than sexual, although the one certainly need not exclude the other. Edith Stein explains this phenomenon with profound insight: "I look in the eyes of an animal and from there, something looks at me. I look into his interior, into his soul, which perceives (spürt) my regard and my presence. But it is a mute and imprisoned soul: imprisoned in itself, unable to go back beyond itself and to grasp itself, unable to go out of itself to come to me. I look into the eyes of a man and his regard (sein Blick) answers me. He lets me penetrate in his interior or he repulses me. He is the master of his soul and can open or close its door. He can step out of himself and enter into the thing. When two men regard one another, an 'I' stands before another 'I'. There can be an encounter before their doors or an encounter in the interior. If there is an encounter in the interior, then the other 'I' is a 'you'" (Edith Stein, Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person. Vorlesung zur philosophischen Anthropologie. Gesamtausgabe 14 [Freiburg im Breisgau / Basel / Wein: Herder, 2004], 78).

this unveiling of the self provides, moreover, the occasion whereby the person might not only be revealed to the other, but also to him or her own self: by, that is to say, the loving regard that this unveiling invites from the very one to whom he or she has entrusted the mystery of his or her person (or interiority).

As Balthasar once again explains in his comparison of the artist and the lover:

A model […] disrobes before the artist in the expectation that the latter's eye will look on him as no one but the artist could behold him—as even the model himself, if he chanced to catch a glimpse of himself in the mirror, could not see himself. […] This special gaze, which is possible only in the loving attention of the subject, is equally objective and idealizing. That these two qualities can be compatible is the grand hope of the object [who, in this case, is a person, and thus also a subject]. It [the person who is the object of the other's regard] hopes to attain in the space of another the ideality that it [he or she] can never realize in itself [him- or herself]. It [he or she] knows or guesses what it [he or she] could be, what splendid possibilities are present in it [him or her]. But in order to develop these possibilities, it [he or she] needs someone who believes in them—no, who sees them already existing in a hidden state, where, however, they are visible only to one who firmly holds that they can be realized; to one, in other words, who believes and loves. Many wait only for someone to love them in order to become who they always could have been from the beginning. It may also be that the lover, with his mysterious, creative gaze, is the first to discover in the beloved possibilities completely unknown to their possessor, to whom they would have appeared incredible.[119]

This simultaneously objective and ideal (realist and transcendental: metaphysical) regard of the beloved in the eyes of the lover is, Balthasar insists, "as much subjective as it is objective. Its subjectivity does not consist in the fact that, say, it does not conform to the truth; it is subjective because its truth attains to real, objective truth only through a subject, just as a fruit can come to maturity only in a certain climate."[120] By this the Swiss theologian means, more specifically, that the lover "conceives [*erzeugt*] an image" of the beloved which the latter would not otherwise have necessarily accredited to him- or herself, and "when love is genuine and faithful," it gives the beloved the power to approach it in likeness. The beloved "does not want to disappoint; he wants to show himself grateful that someone takes him so seriously and expects so much of him [or her]."[121]

To be sure, the human lover does not create the good and the beauty within the beloved;[122] rather, he perceives, affirms and rejoices over it: over, that is to say, the beloved

[119] Hans Urs von Balthasar, Theo-Logic I, 114-15.
[120] Ibid., 115.
[121] Hans Urs von Balthasar, Convergences: To the Source of Christian Mystery (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 128-29. I have taken the liberty to change the official translation from "produces an image" to "conceives an image" which is more accurate not only linguistically but also philosophically and psychologically: it is a mental image that is addressed here.
[122] St. Thomas explains this with penetrating realism in the distinction that he draws between divine and human love: "God loves everything that exists. Yet not as we love. Because since our will is not the cause of the goodness of things, but is moved by it as by its object [cf. ST I-II, q. 27, a. 1; q. 25, a. 2] our love, whereby we will good to anything, is not the cause of its goodness; but conversely its goodness, whether real or imaginary, calls forth our love, by which we will that it should preserve the good it has, and receive besides the good it has not, and to this end we direct our actions: whereas the love of God infuses and creates goodness" (ST I, q. 20, a. 2: "]M]anifestum est quod Deus omnia quae sunt, amat. Non tamen eo modo sicut nos. Quia enim voluntas nostra non est causa bonitatis rerum, sed ab ea movetur sicut ab obiecto, amor noster, quo bonum alicui volumus, non est causa bonitatis ipsius, sed e converso bonitas eius, vel vera vel aestimata, provocat amorem, quo ei

him- or herself, who is manifest to the lover as good and beautiful. This perception accounts for the objective dimension of the love: "We must have experienced and 'seen' that the other person, as well as his existence in this world, really is good and wonderful; that is the precondition for the impulse of the will that says, 'It's good that you exist!'"[123] Or as Balthasar would have it: "The image was only concealed in the beloved, and the eyes of love had to come and raise it from the depths."[124] On the other hand, in the experience of sensual beauty, we are not simply referred "to something that is "present and discernible." Far from arriving at some sort of satisfaction of our desire, the experience of beauty awakens one to "expectation": "We do not see or partake of a fulfilment," Pieper explains, "but of a promise."[125]

What precisely is anticipated, Pieper suggests, is the lover's union with the beloved. The delightful cry of affirmation, "It's good that you exist!" expresses the lover's specific desire to be one with the beloved. And, "This once again confirms, from another angle, that love's act of approval is not intended as mere verification; rather, it is an impulse of the will that takes the person of the other as its partner and is involved in the other himself'."[126] Such is thus also an invitation that the lover bestows upon the beloved. His is not only an objective love; it is also an ideal one: a summoning, or encouraging, love; a love which Pieper perceives as "a continuation and in a certain sense even a perfecting of what was begun in the course of creation" when the divine Artist brought forth the universe by his Word (the Son) and, by the same Word, affirmed that it was "very good" (Gen 1: 31).[127]

As for the beloved, who consciously experiences this simultaneously realist and idealist love, Pieper imagines him responding in the words provided by Robert O. Johann: "I need you in order to be myself. . . . In loving me you give me myself, you let me be'."[128] Certainly, this does not literally mean, as Dean Martin put it in his 1960 hit: "You're nobody 'till somebody loves you." To assent to any such proposition would be to deny the objective dimension of love: to the fact that it is not simply founded upon an idealized (even idolized) image of the beloved, but upon the actual impressed image of the beloved in the mind's "eye" of the lover; for as Pieper would rightly have it, "there can be no true love without approving contemplation."[129] Balthasar nonetheless suggests that the beloved knows that "the realization of his best potentialities is, not his merit, but the creative work of love, which impelled him to realize them, held before him the mirror and the ideal image, and bestowed the strength to attain the goal." Hence, and in short, "In this creative happening"—that of the dynamic encounter of lover and beloved—every distinction between subjective and objective becomes meaningless."[130] Within the parameters of love, it is true to affirm: "It is in the Thou […] that we find our I."[131]

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volumus et bonum conservari quod habet, et addi quod non habet, et ad hoc operamur. Sed amor Dei est infundens et creans bonitatem in rebus"). See also idem, Super Ioan. 5, lect. 3, no. 753; and ST I-II, q. 110, a. 1.

[123] Josef Pieper, "On Love," 198.

[124] Balthasar, Theo-Logic I, 115.

[125] Ibid., 251.

[126] Ibid., 197.

[127] Josef Pieper, "On Love," 172.

[128] Ibid., 177. Pieper cites in this passage Robert O. Johann, Building the Human (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 161.

[129] Josef Pieper, "On Love," 161.

[130] Balthasar, Theo-Logic I, 115.

[131] Idem, Convergences, 128.

VII. Conclusion: Christ, the Divine Archetype and the Moral Norm

If the particular love of *eros* between man and woman is, as Pieper and Balthasar suggest, paradigmatic of what the latter calls the "basic law" of human existence (namely that it is in the "Thou" that we find our "I"), it is in the love of God revealed by Christ that this "law" receives "its full truth."[132] By this affirmation Balthasar means more specifically that "The archetype of every creature lies in God, and, because it is conceived and beheld by God, this archetype contains and expresses the entire plenitude of the creature's perfection (which is possible only in God)."[133] Hence, in the revelation of his glory in his incarnate Son, whom Balthasar fittingly presents as the Creator's "greatest work of art,"[134] God might be thought of as simultaneously affirming our natural goodness and beauty and encouraging their growth and development. He who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) in whom "all things were created" (v. 16) is also "the first-born of all creation" (v. 15), the One who—John Paul II reminds in *Veritatis Splendor* (as he so often did throughout his pontificate)—"fully discloses man to himself and unfolds his noble calling by revealing the mystery of the Father and the Father's love".[135]

"The one who is Beauty itself," writes Pope Benedict XVI, allowed himself "to be slapped in the face, spat upon, crowned with thorns," precisely so that in his "so disfigured" face there might appear "genuine, extreme beauty: the beauty of love that goes 'to the very end'" (cf. Jn 13:1). "Whoever has perceived this beauty knows that truth, not falsehood, is the real aspiration of the world."[136] Whoever, in other words, has perceived this "(literally) 'trans-porting' beauty,"[137] knows not only the beauty of divine love, but also the beauty of his or her own humanity: a humanity, whom God did not hesitate to assume for the purpose of likening us unto himself in a manner that profoundly respects our freedom.

In the powerful words of John Paul II:

Christ, precisely as the crucified one, is the Word that does not pass away, and He is the one who stands at the door and knocks at the heart of every man, without restricting his freedom, but instead seeking to draw from this very freedom love, which is not only an act of solidarity with the suffering Son of man, but also a kind of "mercy" shown by each one of us to the Son of the eternal Father. In the whole of this messianic program of Christ, in the whole revelation of mercy through the cross, could man's dignity be more highly respected and ennobled, for, in obtaining mercy, He is in a sense the one who at the same time "shows mercy"?[138]

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[132] Ibid., 129. See also Margaret Mc Carthy, "'Husbands, Love your Wives as Your own Bodies': Is Nuptial Love a Case of Love or its Paradigm?", Communio 32 (Summer 2005), 260-94.
[133] Balthasar, Theo-Logic I, 265; cf. Jn 1:3-4. Similarly, the angelic doctor teaches that all creatures "necessarily [...] pre-existed in the Word of God even before they are in their own proper nature[s]," just as the plans of a house exist within the mind of the architect before its actual construction (Summa Contra Gentiles IV, 13, 10). See also ST I, q. 45, a. 6.
[134] Balthasar, "Revelation and the Beautiful," 117.
[135] Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes, 22. Cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 2.
[136] "The Feelings of Things, the Contemplation of Beauty," Message to the Communion and Liberation Meeting at Rimini (August 24-30, 2002) in The Essential Pope Benedict XVI: His Central Writings and Speeches, edited by John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 51.
[137] Balthasar, The Glory of the Lord I, 221.
[138] John Paul II, Encyclical letter, "Rich in Mercy," *Dives in Misericordia* (November 13, 1980), no. 8.

Precisely in this revelation of the infinite love of God in the Cross of Calvary, the human person thus comes to understand the profound mystery of his or her own desires: the fact that we naturally long "for love more than for freedom."[139] These words published in 1960—nearly twenty years before John Paul II's pontificate began in 1978—were echoed all the louder in his first encyclical:

"Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it. This […] is why Christ the Redeemer "fully reveals man to himself". If we may use the expression, this is the human dimension of the mystery of the Redemption. In this dimension man finds again the greatness, dignity and value that belong to his humanity."[140]

It is not simply the revelation of our humanity that is accomplished by the magnificent gift of his death on the Cross, however; for Christ simultaneously elevates it (especially human freedom) by entrusting us with his own Spirit, through whom "he gives the grace to share his own life and love and provides the strength to bear witness to that love in personal choices and actions (cf. Jn 13: 34-35)." In precisely this way, "He himself becomes," as we read in *Veritatis Splendor*, "a living and personal law, who invites people to follow him." [141] Hence:

[Whoever] wishes to understand himself thoroughly—not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial and even illusory standards and measures of his being—must with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter him with all his own self; he must "appropriate" and assimilate the whole of the reality of the incarnation and redemption in order to find himself.[142]

It is thus obvious for one who has discovered him- or herself in Christ and who lives by his (Christ's) Spirit, that the divine Artist does not so much act upon us, as within us (cf. Gal 2:20): in, that is to say, a manner that profoundly respects our freedom. It is, after all, by "performing morally good acts" that the Christian is said by John Paul II to "strengthen, develop and consolidate" his or her "likeness to God."[143] He or she is therefore both "artist and artifact."[144]

From this perspective—that of *Veritatis Splendor*—there is no better way to bring about a cultural appreciation for the beauty of the truth than to be enraptured by it.[145] Love is possessed only when it is given away, and beauty is seen only when one is surrendered to it. It

[139] Karol Wojtyla, Love and Responsibility, 136.
[140] John Paul II, Encyclical letter, "The Redeemer of Man," *Redemptoris Hominis* (March 4, 1979), no. 10.
[141] Idem, *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 15. Similarly, Balthasar holds that "the polarity […] between objective norm and subjective conscience […] is modified for believers by the Incarnation of Christ, for Christ himself becomes the norm that dwells in a new way within his followers without their ever being able to control it" (Epilogue, translated by Edward T. Oakes [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004], 76).
[142] John Paul II, Encyclical letter on the Redeemer of Man, *Redemptoris Hominis* (March 4, 1975), no. 10; cited in idem, *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 8.
[143] Cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 39.
[144] Balthasar, The Glory of the Lord I, 221.
[145] Balthasar puts it well: "If all beauty is objectively located at the intersection of two moments which Thomas calls species and lumen ('form' and 'splendour'), then the encounter of these is characterized by the two moments of beholding and of being enraptured." (The Glory of the Lord I, 10).

is by living in accord with the truth of our own humanity (and thus also our sexuality), as it might be discovered in the natural law and still more profoundly in Christian revelation, that we will increasingly discover its meaning and lead others to do the same. For, while "the splendour of truth shines forth in all the works of the Creator," it shines "in a special way, in man, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26)."[146] Discovering and experiencing this splendour nonetheless requires that we take time to listen and contemplate the Creator's mind in his creation—including the creation of our very persons—and thus also his intentions for our lives. This, in turn, means letting go of all that deafens our hearing and obscures our sight from the perception of beauty and truth. This requires faith: a profound trust in God's goodness and his power. It also requires humility, because what is given does not originate within us. We have claim to it only as having received it.[147] Yes, this is pure and simple gift, but gift calls to gift as "deep calls to deep" (Ps 42:7). And if we are not to be slaves to our own freedom, we must, as John Paul II so aptly expressed it, be "free with the very freedom of the gift."[148]

In the final analysis, the woman of faith will discover herself neither in a heavy block of stone (an image of naturalism in the reduced "form" of physicalism), nor in modern man who—as the history of modern feminism would have it—risks reducing her to a projection of either himself or of his interests upon her (as in the Sartrian brand of existentialism), far less still in her isolated self (modern idealism). Rather, it is in the affectionate regard of the lover, who keenly perceives her natural beauty and goodness and simultaneously encourages her to become who she is—the beloved (indeed, the chosen) one who is invited by his love to love in return[149]—that she will most fully discover the mystery of her own humanity and thus also of her sexuality. Precisely this realist vision—which Balthasar suggests is as much transcendent as it is objective—is a paradigm of the love of God in Christ Jesus: the divine Archetype in whom we were chosen "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph 1: 4). If, however, we have perceived, in his loving regard, the affirmation of our natural goodness and beauty and have heeded his call to live accordingly, this is because we have been enraptured and transported by "the light of God's face shin[ing] in all its beauty on the countenance of Jesus Christ."[150]

[146] John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, prologue.
[147] "The creature can no more claim the values it carries as its own property," Balthasar fittingly explains, "than the artwork can pass itself off as the artist, even when it contains the artist's best." (Theo-Logic I, 236).
[148] General audience of January 16, 1980 (Man and Woman He Created Them), 185. Emphasis his.
[149] "The Bridegroom is the one who loves. The Bride is loved: it is she who receives love, in order to love in return" (John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 29).
[150] Ibid., no. 2. Cf. Ps 4:6; 2 Cor 4:6.